A STUDY OF THE FORM, CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE OF AGATU SONGS

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented in any previous application for a degree either in part or whole. All quotations and sources of information are acknowledged by means of quotation marks, indention and bibliography.

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to Almighty God, and to my beloved wife and children.

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My unalloyed appreciation goes to the Almighty God who sees the end from the beginning, and who never minded my terribly humble background, has decided to move me out of mediocrity to the present academic height. To him alone be the glory, honour and dominion forever. Amen

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate the song genre and its continued relevance to cultural studies in general and literature in particular. This is the first study that attempts a systematic analysis of Agatu songs. The thesis analyzes a representative corpus of Agatu oral songs and demonstrates that these songs are essentially the aspect of Agatu oral poetry. All the data collected transcribed, translated and analyzed in this study was done at the location of performances. Functional approach is applied to this study.

Chapter one introduces the subject of the study; it defines the singers' training, career and status, statement of research problem, aim and objective, justification for study, scope, methodology and historical background of the Agatu people.

Chapter two defines the conceptual reviews of related topic which include: songs in general functions of Agatu songs, reviews of previous studies and theoretical framework.

Chapter three discusses the form and content of *Akpanchala* songs. It attempts a systematic discussion of this song-form from formulae to poetic conventions such as ideophones, metaphor, alliteration, and assonance.

Chapter four examines *Okpeke* songs under the umbrella of panegyric or praise song. In tracing the origin, nature, performance and functions, the study shows that Agatu people evolved such a form as they grappled with the contradiction of the Agatu environment.

Chapter five discusses *Ayon* song which is the satiric variety of *Akpanchala* and *Okpeke* song forms as a traditional artist, highly ranked because his art is a social function.

Chapter six brings together and summarized the findings of this study.

The second part of this study is made up of 12 songs with each song having its appendix which central theme is similar, and the annotated transcription and translation of each song is followed by a prosodic analysis and commentary.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the Study

Agatu people and their art-forms like most minority language artforms in Nigeria are not much documented. This study therefore investigates Agatu song genre via its form, content and performance in order to introduce it to the field of orature as a valuable source of qualitative data for cultural studies in general and literature in particular.

Form and content have an inseparable relation such that their fusion is considered by various views as very important and highly desirable in the work of art. According to Marjorie (1953:7), "content is a mental aspect of form". By form, Marjorie meant "the way and manner a performer approaches his or her material". These materials are the 'content' or 'subject-matter'. From the above it can be deduced that what gives 'content' its meaning or effect is form. Form is an organization or structure of a work of art in relation to its effect. It weds all parts of the individual literary work or genre into a whole so that its constituents such as words, thoughts and diction will be defined and harmonized.

Abraham (1981:67) observed that, "form is one of the most frequently discussed and variously interpreted term in literary

criticism." The general agreement by various views in the conception of "form is that form is not simply a fixed container like a bottle into which the 'content' or subject-matter of a work is poured. It is viewed as a combination to the principle of decorum, or mutual fittingness. The traditional poetic features associated with form intonation, alliteration, assonance are the physical aspects of form. The physical aspect of form is the structure of the work of art. Therefore, the content of a work of art and the manner in which its message is conveyed are inseparably tied to its form. The content of a work gives meaningful significance to the form while form propels the content. In other words, content determines whatever form art may take.

The Radical School strongly claims that content the innate or organic form is really the dynamic and significant aspect of art. The school also contends that there is no need for a preconceived form; form should be allowed to shape and develop as the artist presents the realities of human existence with all its inherent contradictions. Form and content of a genre can be understood in terms of the degree of involvement between performer and audience. Form refers not only to the structural and linguistic elements of a work but also to its thematic structure. Thus, if a work of art has internal unity, one form cohere with another. This is to mean that in the case of song, the rhythmical

form, the form of lineation and pattern of diction need to bear some relationships with the form of ideas, the message that the artist wishes to send to his audience.

The study is therefore, based on the premise that the form, content and performance of Agatu songs reflect the structure of Agatu society within which it is produced, and aids understanding of the society. Within Agatu, various criteria are used in identifying the different kinds of songs performed in the community especially, the subject-matter of individual singers, the kinds of instruments used, the kinds of vocalizations adopted, association to which the performance occurs. Agatu orature therefore, comes in different forms. The concern here is with the song form. Agatu song helps to maintain the structure of society by influencing members to conform to it. It is also capable of influencing change in the behavior, not only of individuals, but of the community as a whole, by introducing new ideas in its content and form. At the same time, changed in society causes changes in the content and form of Agatu song like any other oral literatures.

Songs among the Agatu are of various types. The *Akpanchala* song, *Okpeke* song, *Ayon* song, and *Aja* song are the most popular and highly patronized forms of Agatu songs. Indeed, they are not superior

to others such as *Ahyuku, Ono, Ekwu-menji, Ajika, Idando* and *Ekwuchala* songs, but they are the most social and mutually intelligible to Agatu speakers. The accessibility in terms of their language make them more popular and frequently patronized than *Ahyuku* and others. The language of *Ahyuku* in particular is so esoteric to even the native Agatu speakers because it is a religious song which belongs wholly to the "initiated".

The attention devoted to songs in this study recognizes the potency of songs in Agatu culture and social life. In other words, songs are of crucial importance in Agatu social life. This study therefore reveals the way songs help to preserve the moral structure of Agatu society by heightening the awareness of the consequences of good and evil. Above all, Agatu society has a rich poetic tradition which is worth preserving and which provides a good basis for the development of modern Agatu poetry.

This study notes that Agatu songs are hinged on everyday experience and are heavily loaded with imagery and symbols of Agatu community. Agatu songs therefore, serve as a veritable link between the older generation and the younger ones. This is inevitable as the performances draw the attention of the audience of various age groups. This attraction makes the performances serve as media for

non-formalistic apprenticeship for younger ones due to their direct observation and involvement.

It is therefore, necessary to emphasize that in spite of the primacy and potency of songs in Agatu culture and social life, they have regrettably remained undocumented and unknown to the field of orature. It is on this account that this research investigates the three form of Agatu songs. These are *Akpanchala, Okpeke* and *Ayon* song-forms. These song-forms are almost the oldest and most patronized in the community because of their artistic and didactic messages. Currently, these forms of Agatu songs are undergoing changes as a result of cultural dynamics and contacts with outside influence.

This study therefore, adopts the empiricist approach to the study of oral literature. Contextual analysis of songs texts as well as a discussion of the training, career and status of Agatu song performers are used as the basis for functional and aesthetic judgements on Agatu poetic expression. It is the intention of this thesis to examine these songs from the point of view of their form, content and performances.

It is obvious that the function of Agatu song hinges on the cultural peculiarities of any given societies. A certain degree of uniformity is observable in the role song plays in Agatu social life. Agatu songs manifest themselves in various fields of human

endeavours such as domestic activities, professional skills, worship and recreation. Agatu song performance tends to predominate in the affair of both the ordinary and distinguished members of the society. Agatu song performance is a living reality of daily experiences of the Agatu people. Songs address themselves to everyone. They are meant for everybody's listening pleasure and attention because they talk about what men all over the world search for; good-luck, peace, friendship, fortune, health and so on. These are universal themes. Almost always, Agatu songs uphold virtues and condemn vices, making the people assimilate the cultural values, which I believe is a way to national development. This is one of the most prevalent reasons why this study is undertaken.

It is pertinent to state that with the penetration of Western culture into Agatu land in 19th century through missionary activities and colonial administration (Michael 1976), everything changed including the traditional songs. The changes have affected the performance and number of times songs are performed and listened to. It is therefore, imperative to take a study of this art-form in order to document them and preserve them because most of the Agatu familiar oral artists are nearing death and some dead. Since there is no

continuity of oral traditions with the death of every oral artist, a study of this form becomes necessary to avert their total extinction.

1.2 Training, Career and Status of Agatu Singers

It has been revealed to this study that all the singers in this work have no formal education, so they neither read nor write. Their major occupation is farming. If at any time they sell in the market, it is because of the interdependent nature of human existence. They have to sell their farm produce to obtain their needs. Both the *Akpanchala, Okpeke* and *Ayon* singers are not professional singers. Most Agatu songs are improvised even those already composed change during performance since the singer responds to changing performance situations – for instance during the performance, a new arrival may be welcomed and that becomes part of the song. While other incidences at the venue may be commented upon. This is to say, the pressure on the performer is further heightened by the presence of the audience which could easily be bored.

In terms of training, the singers have no formal training. They all went through what is called 'informal training' (Okpewho 1976:21). The singers only loosely attach themselves to the art practiced in their social milieu and absorbed the skills associated with

it through social interaction. A child whose father or uncle is a song composer or performer automatically picks the art of composing as the young child grows under the composer. This is however, dependent on the interest such a child has in the art of composing. There are other singers who claim that one acquires the art of composing through mystical means. But in most such cases the lineage or family bestows on an individual the art of composing as well as singing. This only happens however, in cases where they have been other composers in the family.

Before the incursion of western culture into Agatu community in the early 1920s, Agatu oral singers were respectable elders of Agatu community who almost always, participated actively in decision making among their respective village councils of elders. As singers, they were considered highly intelligent and so regarded with high esteem as custodians of village morality. Their songs freely expressed the feelings of the people. Through the *Akpanchala*, *Okpeke* and *Ayon* songs, honest and generous members of the community were praised while the corrupt, stingy and bad behaved members of the community were equally lampooned. The role these singers played in Agatu society formed a strong 'conduit line' through which Agatu society passed its 'soul' from the older

generation to the younger one. As singers, they were people of knowledge and chroniclers of events in Agatu. The Singer recreates the history of the society, and this was done through narrative songs. But the influence of western culture has changed many things including the singers' status. Songs were a traditional way or medium for conserving Agatu experiences, philosophies, ethos and history. But in recent times, electronic media of mass communication, and even politicians have hijacked the genre for selfish interest. This change has limited the status and the socio-cultural and functional role of the performer and his art.

The form and practice of oral poetry, especially the song form, has also changed. Most oral pieces are now being waxed as records bearing the names of individual authors. This negates a fundamental aspect of orature which is its communal orientation. *Akpanchala,* for instance which was a communal efforts of the people, now bear the name of the lead-singer (Adamu Owo). Some of the hegemonic tendencies of the imperialists plus that of the elites in Nigeria in misappropriating traditional performances are what Okwori (1998:6) examined to be not in the right direction for several reasons:

> *It encourages a movement away from the collective approach to work by emphasizing the individual approach; it removes the performances from their localities where they make meaning in performance to situation where they become mere entertainment, devoid of their ritual or social functions, it removes the direction of the cultural and social values of the society from the hands of the performers as the change creates a resemblance of harmony in artistic production by parading such forms, so misappropriated and laden with elastic values, to look like those of the society as a whole.*

Based on the above reasons therefore, it is safe to say that, culturally, the destruction of the material and political basis of a people's life as a result of individualistic norms and values introduces by capitalism led to the decline of Agatu communally oriented art. The singer now sees his art as a commodity destined for the market. This has been the experience of Agatu singers.

1.3 **Statement of Research Problem**

The Agatu speaking people of Benue State like other nationalities in Nigeria, possess rich oral traditions, which comprise among others, the folktales, proverbs, songs, myths, and so on. These folkloric traditions operate in Agatu to educate, project culture, entertain and provide recreation through imagination and also to provide socially approved ways or allowing taboo which the society

ordinarily would have frawned at. Most of Agatu oral traditions are created around the events and realities of daily life and happenings.

Part of the crisis the colonialists had brought to Agatu society, was the desire in the word of Okwori (1998:108) "to sell their values while creating the belief that they are advancing the culture of the people". The consequence of this is that, over the period of years and with the increasing modernization and westernization, the forms of Agatu traditional songs have been undergoing changes and all forms of Agatu cultural life have not been unaffected.

The point of interest here is the investigation of the relevance of song genre to the Agatu society particularly, as the song impacts on their cultural values and social ideas. The study is therefore engaged in the investigation of the problematic of the effect of both the internal social dynamics and western influences, particularly, the imposition of new beliefs, languages and culture which saw outside influence on Agatu traditional songs as potential catalysts to the continuity of their oral traditions.

The subject of this statement may be defined by a problem that has emanated due to negative impression about the presentation of African oral literature in certain academic circle in the West. The colonialists denied African a culture – history. In the words of Onoge and Darah (2008:334), some of their specific theses were:

> *…that we had no complex socio-cultural structure such as Kingdoms; that we had no institutions that could be validly called religions; that the pre-colonial past was a Hobbersian state of disorder. And because colonial historiography considered state formations, religion and order, as criteria attributes of civilization; a tradition of proving the existence of these features in our past, has been a mark of African scholarship.*

Consequence upon these negative impressions, the Europeans have therefore, among them helped to establish an unfavourable image of Africa which writers, travelers, missionaries and political adventurers have exploited throughout history. These presuppositions and negative impressions could have major consequences on the culture, belief, thoughts and even lives of the people. To debunk these negative stereotypes therefore, this study examines form and content of Agatu songs to prove that Africa, particularly, Agatu people have history, culture, social organization and above all literature.

In light of the above, this study poses and attempts to answer among others the following specific research questions:

i. What exactly is a song for the Agatu?

ii. Do the Agatu songs reflect the world-view of the people?

iii. How do the specific contexts influence the Agatu songs?

iv. Do the performers depend on certain norms and shared knowledge to perform their songs at any giving situation?

v. What is the relationship between the performers and the audience in performance situation?

vi. What is the state of Agatu oral song in the face of modernity.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is the investigation of the aesthetic and other principles underlying the composition, performance and public appreciation of Agatu songs. The study would therefore, evaluate and discuss selected Agatu songs in the light of the functions of those oral songs and the inherent challenges they face in the face of modernity.

The study therefore attempts a demonstrable awareness that through Agatu oral songs, the sum-total of the people's cultural and social norms are evaluated, understood and accepted, and by implication, ensures the continuity of the existence of their community.

The study is therefore, set to achieve the following objectives:

1. The urgent need for collection of Agatu oral songs to avert them going into extinction.
2. To demonstrate Agatu oral artistry, and to prove that Africa, particularly Agatu people have a thriving orature.

3. To validate the fact that the Agatu song is a medium for the transmission of history, values and ancestral wisdom.
4. To contribute to the process of documentation of a minority language song in the field of Nigerian orature.
5. To attempt to correct the negative impression of African orature in certain academic circles in the West.
6. To hopefully provoke further research in this field of study by any interested researcher.

1.5 Justification for the Study

There has remained a healthy scholarly interest in the investigation of the aesthetic and other principles underlying the composition, performance and public appreciation of the oral literary arts in traditional African societies (Dundes 1966:576). In realization of this, this study is deemed necessary because it introduces the oral tradition of a people that has not been known to the field of orature as a valuable source of qualitative data for cultural studies and literature.

The study also considers the importance of the functionalist theory which takes into consideration changes and causes of changes in the society. It allows a study of the dynamics and the aesthetic values attached to the performance of songs in the society. In recognition of this theory, this study deems it necessary to adopt the

functional theory as it can aid the examination and understanding of Agatu song culture and in illucidating the functions of Agatu oral songs

The three forms of Agatu songs under examination are gradually facing extinction as a result of internal social dynamics and external influence on the Agatu song tradition. Viewed against this background this becomes necessary as focus is on the collection and documentation of a cultural values that is fast diminishing. The collection and documentation of this art-form will encourage the literary people to ensure that every old theme and motif of African literature will not be completely cast away and forgotten.

1.6 **Scope of the Study**

This study is on a study of form, content and performance of songs and is primarily focused on Agatu society of Idoma extraction of Benue State. The scope of this study is limited to Agatu songs and how this art-form is used as a tool for socialization and rationalization.

The study posits that Agatu has a rich repertoire of songs, incantations, proverbs and myths. However, the singular attention

devoted to songs in this study is in recognition of the primacy and potency in Agatu culture and social life.

Significantly, therefore, the study does not capture other parts of Idoma ethnic groups but hope that other subsequent researches would compliment this effort.

1.7 **Methodology**

Most of the data collected for this research were obtained through direct participation in live songs performances. The songs and composers chosen are representative of various forms of Agatu songs. All the songs from the three forms of Agatu songs were collected using a portable tape recorder to record them. Interviews were granted to the researcher by the singers and other knowledgeable members of the audience at the end of the song performances. In some cases, these song performances had to be simulated due to the absence of some members of the groups who had died and some have taken other forms of employment due to irregular performances. For example, *Okpeke* singer had to perform with only two backup singers in the absence of other six who have died. Furthermore, the songs were performed unaccompanied because the

Okpeke instrumentalists (Adiyo Anyebe and Ngbede Ogwola) have died.

This research was carried out between 18th October and December 2010. Songs are tied to Agatu people and culture, and so this researcher went down to the root of the culture, and to those who could provide this research with the expected data particularly the aged who are closer to the source and those interested knowledgeable people. The data was collected from four villages where the performances took place. These include. Enugba, Ogbaulu, Obagaji and Aila villages respectively.

All transcription was done by the researcher with the assistance of Ongwatabo Sunday, both of whom are native speakers of the language. The orthography used is the acceptable orthography introduced and used by R. T. Dibbie, (a missionary), and which is still being used in Agatu society. In translating the songs therefore, this researcher is aware of the fact that terms denoting a clan certain forms of marriage or inheritance, or magic can none of them be given their true meaning by the corresponding terms of European language. As a result, there is an attempt to interprete the songs leaving the general ideas intact. However, certain words which cannot be interpreted in English language without destroying their meanings are left in the

vernacular forms. Such words include ideophones, exclamations, proper names. Other include names of objects, beliefs systems to which there are no English equivalents. For instance, the names *Egbulu, Odugbo* and few others don't have English equivalent to convey the actual essence of the word or the cultural implication attached to their use.

The songs are referred to by their composers thematically but we have provided first line titles. In case where the first lines are made up of only names which form the central thematic thrust of the songs, the names become the title. These occur in such songs like *Akpanchala* song titled "Ije g'ichenkwule" (The dilemma of Ichenkwule) and *Ayon* song titled: "Agbo g'edunga". The titles have not been based on themes because different people have different ideas of what the theme of a particular song is.

The study classifies the selected songs based on the content and functions such songs perform in the Agatu society. *Akpanchala* songs recorded in this study are dirges which are used to mourn one's bereavement, and also narrative song. *Okpeke* songs are mostly panegyrics and satirical, and as well as *Ayon* songs. Most of the songs are mostly a mixture of other forms so the classification is merely for

expediency, and is sometimes based on the type of songs for which a particular singer is most popular.

The secondary sources that were considered as part of the adopted methodology are the influences and deductions of content analysis of authors relevant to the subject-matter of this study. Furthermore, the radio and television as well as the internet were also depended upon in undertaking this research. However, a tape-recorder was used in the fieldwork to cover the live performances in Agatu community.

1.8 Collection of Songs and Translation

All the data analysed in this study was collected from Agatu community. The recordings were done at the location of performances. Another method was through attending and making observations at performances. One significant thing for this study is that the area of the study has one dialect and any analysis of oral literature will be better obtained from a concentration of one dialect. In this study, the songs collected from *Akpanchala, Okpeke* and *Ayon* singers are representative enough of the form, content and performance of Agatu songs, and are adequate for a work of this scope.

Few of the songs were recorded where formal events took place. The examples of such songs were from *Akpanchala* singers when they performed at a burial ceremony in ogbaulu village in December 2010. This researcher happened to be there for the purpose of collecting songs for this work. Others were recorded by prior arrangement between the researcher and the singers. In each case, the groups of singers that performed the songs were visited to decide the venue and timings of performance. For instance, Oigokponu, and *Ayon* singer was visited at his home residence in Aila village. The first day we visited, the singer was not at home. However, the second visit to his compound the following day was fruitful as he and his group were able to perform for us in front of his compound. The same thing applied to *Okpeke* singers. The *Okpeke* singers took us out of the village to a farm plot where they performed. All the songs were collected by the aid of tape-recorders.

Transcribing Agatu songs could'nt pose great difficulty due to the fact that there exists an orthography for the language. The orthography for Agatu language attempted in 1949 by R. T. Dibbie remains up to date, thouth with few inconsistencies and sound misrepresentations. However, this study uses the orthography for

transcriptions of the songs collected as it is widely accepted and upheld by the Agatu people up to date.

In terms of transcription, one of the major problems, is how the full meanings of Agatu songs could be conveyed into another language, since the translation bothers on trans-cultural translation. The complexity of language is always revealed through translation with a different cultural background. In this work, it is noted in the course of translation that English is grossly inadequate and unable to capture some aesthetics, or grandour and association of Agatu language. This means that certain literary devices or techniques used by the Agatu singers in this work, such as alliterations and assonance are lost in translation. What is however used in this work is near literal translation to avoid the designed effect. This approach is adopted in order to enable the researcher to transfuse part of the cultural content, imagery and other literary characteristics of the material into the target language.

Agatu treats language as an expression not only of culture but also of thoughts, aspirations and life-philosophies of the members within the culture. The psychology, culture and historical circumstances of the Agatu determined their linguistic expressions. Agatu songs therefore, cannot be contained nor understood within the

narrow bounds of phonological, morphological and syntactical structures. However, Agatu songs are an experiential totality of heritage, a heritage which in the hermeneutical encounter must come to be experienced.

1.9 Historical Background of the Agatu People

The history of Agatu speaking people cannot be told in isolation from the history of the entire Idoma people. Agatu people constitute part of the population of the Idoma ethnic group in Benue State of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Apa Local Government area to the south, Guer –West to the east, Nasarawa State to the north and Kogi state to the west (Armstrong 1955:X). Agatu has a population of about 130,000 people (Joseph 2009). 'Agatu' literally means 'gathered into hiding'. This name came into being due to turbulent conditions of war experienced between 15th and 17th centuries.

Most of what is now known as Idoma history is constructed from their oral traditional sources – manly music and dance performances. This source has proved very useful in the absence of documentation (Okwori 1998:7). Idoma people underwent functional changes during the process of war, migration and settlement. By the mid-18th century, the process of migration and settlement in the

present Idoma settlement area had virtually been completed. Erim (1981:20) has pointed out that, the political landscape was characterized by a mixture of ‘kingdoms’ in Igumale and Agila, chiefdoms in Ugboju, Otukpo and Adoka; and chieflets in Agatu and Ochekwu.

The origin of Idoma people has largely been a point of controversy over the years. The history of Idoma like most other societies in the world began with their traditions of origin and migrations. Several accounts have been given to clarify the vagueness of the people. Though, not single account has ever been exhaustive; they all help to give an insight into the historical background of the people.

Erim (20) argues that the Idoma migrated into their present settlement areas from Apa. He further stressed that ‘Kwara-Apa otherwise known as ‘kwararafa’ was a house nickname for the people of Beiji, the former capital of Jukun empire. ‘Kwara Kaura’, according to this source was the name of the River Niger and River Benue and people occupying the lower Benue which was thought to be an extension of the River Niger, were called Apa. The Apa was said to be a disolate area in Muri division of the present Adamawa State. It is argued that the migration of Idoma people from Apa was

probably as a result of the consistent succession disputes among the Jukun for the Kwararafa throne. Apa is the putative ancestral home of the Idoma within the Gongola basin. That is the ancient home of Idoma.

Armstrong (1955:98) claimed that Idoma migrated from Apa because of demographic explosion and its subsequent political, social and economic problems in the area. This account means that the 13th and 14th centuries saw the entire upper Benue and Gongola valley in turmoil most probably as a result of expansion of the Songhai empire into the part of Hausaland. This might also have led to chaos in the Benue valley which caused their migration

We had an interview with one of the elders at Enugba Agatu on how Agatu came to their present settlement. He claimed that Idoma people migrated from Apa, an ancestral homeland in the kwararafa kingdom of the Jukun. After the eventual settlement in the area, east of modern day Wukari there was a massive invasion by the Tiv. It was at this point that the people known as Agatu people today migrated to their present settlement area far in the northern part of the Idoma settlement area to avert further invasion from the Tiv people.

An understanding of the performance traditions of the Agatu/Idoma people comes therefore, from an understanding of their history, the history which also explains the non-monolithism of their performance systems (Okwori.10).

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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Studies of Agatu oral traditions in general are very scanty or scarce; and those of the Agatu songs are almost non-existent. It is only a couple of serious inferences and deductions of content analysis of authors relevant to the subject-matter of this research seen worth mentioning. It is the aim of this chapter therefore, to try to present more or less order of representation, all significant writings to date related to the subject of our study.

However, other minor but relevant materials will only be cited later where appropriate in this thesis. This strand will tremendously assist us assess the state of our present recorded knowledge in the field in general, and in the song traditions in particular. The chapter is divided into three broad sections. The first deals with conceptual reviews from the topical point of view while the second is on the reviews of previous studies. The third deal with the various approaches that serve as theoretical framework for research analysis. This work has however, adopted multidisciplinary approach instead of a single approach because of its numerous values and benefits to humanity.

2.2 Conceptual Review of Ralated Topics

Under this section, the related topics reviewed, range from songs in general, Agatu songs, origin and classification, and general functions of Agatu songs.

2.2.1 Songs in General

The concept of songs in general is defined by various views. Peak (1980) views a song as ‘an artistic form of expression based on sound with distinct pitches, pattern and form, generally considered a complete work, whether musically or lyrically”. It can be wordless or with words. Written words created specifically for music or for which music is specifically created are called lyrics. If poetry, a pre-existing peom is set to composed music, that is an art song. Songs that are sung on repeated pitches without distinct contours and patterns that rise and fall are called chant. Chants may be slightly or highly ornamented. Song may be sung by one singer with background singers who accompany with minor parts or by a group.

Songs composed for personal use, for casual group activities, in simple style, are referred to as folk-songs. Songs that are composed for professional entertainment are called popular songs, in that they do not require an education to necessarily appreciate, and that they

have broad appeal to many people. These songs are composed with the intent to earn money by professional composers and lyricists. Art songs are composed by trained classical composers for concert performance. Songs may also appear in plays, musical plays, stage shows of any form, and within operas. A song may be for a solo singer, a duet, trio or larger ensemble involving more voices, although the term is generally not used for large vocal forms, including opera and oratorio songs with more than one voice to a part are considered as choral works.

Keil (1979:21) has the view of song as:

> *the energy generated by friction between individual and society, personality and culture, male and female, angles and circles, intervals and tonics, language and dance. Song is sextual friction, sublimated or transcended, and social conflict transformed. Song is an energy, a power, a life force.*

In view of the above therefore, it is safe to say that one of the most functional art form that is widely used in the society as a medium to report and comment on topical issues for propanganda and to reflect and mould public opinion is oral song. This topical function of song can be an aspect of work songs, lyric and praise song.

Songs can be broadly divided into many different forms, depending on the criteria used. One division is between ‘art song’,

‘pop songs’ and ‘folksongs’. Other common methods of classification are by purpose (sacred or secular), by style (dance, ballad, lied etc) or by time of origin (Renaissance, contemporary, etc).

Art songs are songs created for performance by classical artists usually with accompaniment, although they can be sung solo (Peake 1980). Art songs require strong vocal technique, understanding of language, diction and poetry for interpretation. Though, such singers may also perform popular or folksongs on their programs, these characteristics and the use of poetry are what distinguish art songs from popular songs. Art songs are a tradition from most European countries, and now other countries with classical music traditions. German-speaking communities, according to Peake (1980) use the term art song (‘Kunstiles’) to distinguish so-called ‘serios’ composition from folksong (volkslied). The lyrics are often written by a poet or lyricist and the music separately by a composer. Art songs may be more formally complicated than popular or folksongs, though many early lieder by the likes of Franz Schubert are in simple strophic form. The accompaniment of European art songs is considered as an important part of the composition. Some art songs are so revered that they take on characteristics of national identification.

Art songs emerge from the tradition of singing love songs of someone present or someone ideal or imaginary. They also come from religious songs. The troubadours and bards of Europe began the documented tradition of romantic songs, continued by the Elizabethan lutenists. Some of the earliest art songs are found in the music of Henry Purcell. The tradition of the romance, a love song with a flowing accompaniment, often in triple meter entered opera in the 19th century, and spread from there throughout Europe. It spread into popular song and become one of the underpinnings of popular songs. While a romance generally has a simple accompaniment, art songs tend to have complicated, sophisticated accompaniments that underpin, embellish, illustrate or provide contrast to the voice. Sometimes, it is the accompaniment that has the melody, while the voice songs a more dramatic part.

Folksongs on the other hand are songs of anonymous origin (or are public domain) that are transmitted orally. They are frequently a major aspect of national or cultural identity. Art songs often approach the status of folk songs when people forget who the author was. Fork songs are also frequently transmitted non-orally (that is, as sheet music) especially in the modern era. Folk songs exist in almost every culture. Popular songs may eventually become folksongs by the same

process of detachment from its source. According to Keller (1982) folk songs are more or less in the public domain by definition, though there are many folksong entertainers who publish and record copyrighted original material. This tradition led also to the singer-song writer style of performing where an artist has written confessional poetry or personal statement and sings then set to music, most often a guitar

Genres of popular songs are many including torch songs, ballads, novelty songs, anthems, rock songs, blues, souls and other commercial genres. Folk songs include ballads, lullabyes, plaints, love songs, mourning songs, dance songs, work songs, ritual songs and many more.

From the above discussion therefore, one can rightly point out that song is an artistic medium through which song performers communicate indirectly to someone with the hope to influence while at the same time avoiding the open danger of speaking directly. Finnegan (1977:273) observes that at a local level public singing can take the place of the press, radio and publication as a way of expressing public opinion and bringing pressure to bear on individuals. She opines that topical songs therefore often give a vivid personal picture of a general situation and the attitude to it, and as

well as of the specific events they comment on. Songs undoubtedly reflect the society and culture in which they exist.

Abah, in preface to Okwori (1998) Ije: The performance tradition of the Idoma, talks about Ije (song) as "an evocation with aural and physical association and meaning. According to him "beyond its aural through oral to physical manifestation, it reaches to the chthonic". So, in talking about song in general, we are bringing forth an entire gamut of physical presence at the temporal and spiritual levels. Song is therefore both a text and narration of philosophies as it is an explanation of cosmologies.

2.2.2 **Agatu Songs, Origin and Their Classification**

The term for Agatu song is 'Ije-owo' which Okwori (1998:1) classified thus:

> *Ije embraces music, song, poetry and dance though each item could be described with an adjective qualifying the Ije, like 'Ije-ogwo' (song), Ije oje (dance), Ije ogwo (music). Each cannot stand on its own and make meaning until a qualifying term is attached to determine the aspect.*

'Ije owo' (song) in Agatu is an artistic form that gives pleasure or bodily enjoyment, merriment and celebration. Harper (1981:2) is of the view that "the acts make explicit images by which a society recognizes its own values and thus offer a means by which the

members of a community may express and evaluate new elements in their lives". Agatu like any other nationalites in Nigeria has rich repertoire of songs and the contents of the Agatu songs are determined by the situation under which they are performed. The sources of their performances are found in the Agatu society and the people's culture, and their social set-up.

There are several contexts in which Agatu songs are put to use. Examples of such contexts include churches, funerals, folktale session and so on. Agatu songs however, are mostly lyrical; accompanied by musical instruments and can be danced. Reymond (1990) acknowledges the relationship between poetry, song and dance thus: "whether one starts out to talk or sing or gesture, he may end up doing three…." It is obvious that it is an effort in futility to divorce song from music and dance which accompanied it.

Agatu songs generally, in most contexts talk about the Agatu people among whom the songs originate from. Their songs almost, always recreate the rich experiences of the people in history. The songs consist of dirge, panegyrics, narrative song and so on, and they are performed with images, metaphor, simile and symbols. There is no entertainment for entertainment sake in Agatu song tradition. Their performances are targeted towards entertaining their audiences. This

is an agreed craving among Agatu people to produce things that are satisfying and enjoyable.

Generally however, Agatu song performances take place during the dry season which spans the months of November to April, when all farm activities must have been put to rest. Agatu basically is agrarian and most of the Agatu song performers are farmers. Performances of Agatu songs in most cases take place either at the sponsors residence, or village square depending on the context. Agatu song performances are not strictly tied to specific timings. It could occur either at night or in the day (exception however, is made for ritual songs).

In using performance criterion, Agatu songs comprise of various types. These include ritual or masquerade songs, entertainment songs and so on. The Agatu ritual songs, among others include *'Ajika', 'Ekwu-ono' (Oyo)*and '*Ahyuku'.* The second category of forms of Agatu songs include *Akpanchala, Okpeke, Ayon* and *Aja,* among which the first three are the thrust of this thesis. The forms also fall under the category of dirge, narrative songs, and panegyrics or praise songs. They are performances in everyday life of the Agatu people. There is the need to introduce one of the ritual songs briefly as

much attention shall be devoted to the entertainment songs in the succeeding chapters. I will take on *Ahyuku* song form.

Ahyuku Performance

Ahyuku is not performed for entertainment like other Agatu songs. It is only performed when an elder of the village dies or where there is a second burial of a very important elder of a village. The language used by *Ahyuku* song performers is so esoteric to even the native Agatu speakers because it is a religious song which belong wholly to the 'initiated'. *Ahyuku* is a ritual song and its avowed intention is to transport the dead into the ancestral world. One of the *Ahyuku* performances was witnessed in November 2013, at Enugba Agatu. The song performance started at mid-night and ended at 3:48 am in front of the deceased compound. The *Ahyuku* performers were seven including the lead-singer who were surrounded by 47 male adults within the ages of 20 and above that constituted the audience.

It was observed that the song was performed exclusively away from all female children and female adults. The male children within the ages of 1-19 were also excluded. The researcher asked one of the elders in the arena, and the answers were simple. He claimed that Agatu is a strict patriarchal society where women and children are

lumped together as weaker vessels, whose voices are repressed. The elderly man (Enegedoh) also asserted that any female child or woman who by any chance see *Ahyuku* in a live performance context is likely to give birth to a "tabooed child" (though a myth). A "tabooed child" is one whose physical formation is unusual. It is either, the child comes to the world with only one eye, no leg at all or some other physical deformities, or the child is completely imbecile with disapproving behavious. In a situation like this, according to elder Enegedor except if the woman goes through a purification rite, the retribution from the gods of the land is unavoidable.

The retributive justice from the gods, according to our informant, is grave and no Agatu woman would like to be a victim. The male children within the above ages are not allowed because they might describe the scene and the *Ahyuku* performers to their mothers, and by doing that, they transfer the ancestral curse to them. This belief in *Ahyuku* appears to defy the notion of westernization till date in Agatuland.

Before *Ahyuku* could perform in any burial, the deceased must be in good old age. Agatu people do not believe in premature death as a natural occurrence. The only acceptable age an Agatu man or woman attains before he or she dies and is considered natural must be

in good ripe age. It is at this age that Agatu people would always believe that the dead could be welcomed and celebrated in the ancestral world by the ancestors. For the dead to "make his journey" it is the voice of the *Ahyuku* performer that has to transport him into the ancestral world. In this context, the *Ahyuku* performer has to be in trance and to speak some incomprehensible words depicting the language of the dead.

In the same *Ahyuku* performance witnessed at Enugba village on the 14th November 2013, the researcher struggled to make meanings out of the songs as an Agatu native speaker of the language, but failed because of the use of abstruse language belonging to the "inner circle", or the "initiated". The diction of the song did not signify any specific meaning. The idea is that the spirits would understand the message. Therefore, it represents what may be called "nonsense syllables". An informant (Elder Enegedoh) was asked in this case to assist in decoding the language for easy translation, but the elder also failed to assist because he claimed that *Ahyuku* language is the language of the 'dead' which only the 'initiated' can decipher. Few lines could be extracted from the language of the song by one of the 'initiated' (Ochegba Yahaya). Excerpt:

Agatu:

Solo: *Ai g'owu lee, owu loo*
A ce j'owu taa galo d'owu yee loo
Chorus: *Owu loo, owu loo*
A ce j'owu taa galo d'owu yee loo
Solo: *Ai g'owu lee, owu loo*
A ce j'owu taa galo d'owu yee loo
Chorus: *Owu lee, owu loo*
A ce j'owu taa galo d'owu yee loo
Owu lee, owu loo
A ce j'owu ta'a galo d'owu yee loo
Solo: *Oda g'aje tama owu joda g'aje gile loo*
Chorus: *Oda g'aje je me, owu joda g'aje gile loo*
Oda g'aje je me lee
Oda g'aje je me lee
Oda g'aje je me lee

English:

Solo: The children of the wind lee, the wind loo
Allow the wind to blow for us to follow the wind loo
Chorus: The wind lee, the wind loo
Allow the wind to blow for us to follow the wind loo
Solo: The children of the wind lee, the wind loo
Allow the wind to blow for us to follow the wind loo
Chorus: The wind lee, the wind loo
Allow the wind to blow for us to follow the wind loo
The wind lee, the wind loo
Allow the wind to blow for us to follow the wind loo
Solo: The land produce is here, whether the wind has blown it away
Chorus: The land produce is here, whether the wind has blown it away
The land produce has been taken lee
The land produce has been taken lee
The land produce has been taken lee

In the context of performance, the lead performer holds a hollow carved bone and sets it in-between his lips which produces

shrilled sounds different from the normal human voice in order to reflect the ancestral voice. The other instruments that are put to use include some stringed beaded large jugs. These jugs were held by the support performers who formed a circle round the lead performer. When the lead performer started his song, the support performers began to bounce the jugs on the ground rhythmically, and this produced some pleasant rhythms. The support performers moved in circle while the lead singer continued to lead in the songs.

Ahuku performance always take place at night with few exceptions. This is done to avoid women and children taking a glimpse at the scene. At the night, what was heard was some very pleasing male voice groups, singing sonorous songs through the night air, giving joy to the old and the 'initiated' while striking chilly, if not deadly fear into the hearts of women, children and 'uninitiated boys'. *Ahyuku* language in the true spirit character, is often esoteric, abstruse and unintelligible to mortals – ordinary human beings. When translated, they may bear no serious meaning and so may be regarded as "nonsensical words".

However, emphasis will be more on the forms of *Akpanchala, Okpeke* and *Ayon* songs in the succeeding chapters. Within these song forms, there are entertainment forms, prominent among which is song

performance which provides the peak of personal and collective display at seasons of events or festival. These poems share the same quality of being pieces which make use of song in form. However, the individual performers compose their songs in different ways.

Agatu song performers can handle any theme imaginable – either on nature - rain, sun, living creatures, human experiences etc. Two of such songs on nature and creatures as recorded, transcribed and translated by Sule (2002) are good examples here. The songs composers are anonymous and the materials are communal, essentially used by virtually all Agatu villages during age-mates casual evening plays. Excerpts:

Agatu: *Owo, owo dogwa loo*
Owo, owo dogwa loo
Ene g'ijenebu lee owo dogwa loo
Owo, owo dogwa loo

English: Rain, rain, a torrential rain loo
Rain, rain, a torrential rain loo
The mother of Ijenebu lee, a torrential rain loo
Rain, rain, a torrential rain loo

The second song is premised on millipedes which has a characteristic attitude and philosophy of human beings in Agatu mythology.

Agatu: *Igbankolo kw'ita guwa kala?*
Igbankolo kw'ita guwa kala?
Opu lun nu gun l'opu nu
Oba lun nu gun kw'owe gede
N kwowe gede gun g'ole Ada
N gole Ada gun I'ije bi wa
Ije nence w'ije no
Ije epepe w'ije ma
Ije g'abu g'ijaga
Ije nence w'ije no

English: How do the millipedes make their proverbs?
This is how the millipedes make their proverbs
If my mate drives me out of matrimony, I drive her out
If my husband drives me out I go my way
I go my way to my father's house
I go my way to return my bride prize
Old money is no money
Only new money is money
The money of Abu Ijaga
Old money is no money

Agatu people by virtue of their geographical location in the Savannah are predominantly agrarian. The agrarian life of the Agatu can be discerned when one listens to the contents of their songs or watches their performances. The first song is a celebration of the arrival of the rain which heralds the planting season in Agatu land. The anonymous singer is not only celebrating the arrival of the rain but announcing the torrential magnitude of the rain to his wife

particularly the mother of Ijenebu. The first rain as torrential as it seems in the song, does not only bring joy and hope to the people, but also to the creatures such as frogs in Agatu rivers, birds and other creatures as the arrival of the first rain symbolizes the arrival of new beginnings in Agatu land.

The second song interpretes marital malaise in Agatu land epitomized by the mythological philosophy and proverbs of millipedes. Through the song, the millipedes, the coiled creature always resolve that a woman cannot send it packing from its original habitation – this time marital home. Naturally, it is always observed that if this creature is picked up in its coiled form and thrown far away by a woman it will definitely creep back to the same place. But if it is thrown far away by a man, it will never return back. Agatu singers, drawing from this allusion bear it on the matrimonial resolve by the women folk. An Agatu traditional woman believes that man is naturally polygamous in nature and so belongs to many women he can afford through marriage. In this respect, it is the resolve of the woman that her co-wives cannot send her away from her matrimony since she is brought into her husband's house the same way others came. Quitting her matrimony in the circumstance of quarrel is tantamount to cowardly act which must be echewed.

Basically, however, Agatu songs are mostly complemented by musical instruments. The kinds of instruments that are always put to use during Agatu song performances involve drums, metal gongs, rattles and pots. The songs in this case use local imagery, symbols and gossip. Okwori (1998:48) observes that:

> *When these symbols become outdated the songs too begin to lack contemporaneity. This and the fact that people are in constant guest for something new, force the group to abandon the dance, in favour of new ones.*

This observation above tells volumes of the changes that have taken place in Agatu song forms.

Origin of Agatu Songs

The origin of Agatu songs can be traced to the beginning of man, to the root art. Thompson (1946:20) argues that "…the art of song broke away from the labour process, songs were improvised at leisure, when the body was at rest…". He states that at the beginning human labour was conducted collectively. As men engaged in this collective enterprise the movement of their hands – their strokes on wood or stone – was complemented by vocal sounds and that this led to the emergence of speech. He argues further that the vocal compliment became unnecessary for the labour process as their skills

improved and this gave way to the technique of rehearsal which the collective performed before undertaken the actual labour activity. This rehearsal was in the form of a dance in which the collective enterprise was enhanced and the labour movements hitherto attached to the task were regulated. As human beings progressed, speech manipulated into songs to assist the labour process, bestowing upon it a melodious mesmeric temperament.

It is expedient to add to this argument that the need for recreation, for leisure, amusement and relaxation led to the Agatu to seek for entertainment forms. Agatu like any other people in other societies evolve in song performance as a means of entertainment which relaxes body and mind and enhances fitness, agility and memory. Agatu songs are culturally bound, and since this art- form evolved as compliment to labour, it then means that the kind of environment and labour available to the Agatu people determine the kind of songs they evolve. Agatu people are predominantly agrarian. The agrarian life of the Agatu can be discerned when one watches their songs and dance performances. Their song performances reflect a way of life, attitude and habits of the people living within a homogenous community. Agatu song forms evolve as a statement of life in Agatu community.

However, it is imperative to state that no one can exactly tell when and how Agatu songs originated. The interview we conducted at Enugba Agatu on the 27th December 2014 with one of the Agatu elders, Peter Imanyi (age not ascertained) has revealed that the early Agatu songs composers were anonymous and that the materials used by the singers were basically communal. According to him, what was prevalent then were ritual songs which emanated from Apes through great Agatu hunters, in line with Agatu mythology. Ritual songs in Agatu community uptil today are highly religious, expressing the world-view of the Agatu. It is a means of reuniting the physical world with the ancestral world from which they have been severed. In realizing this, songs are used to transport the dead but qualified members of the community into the ancestral world and to bring them forth in the form of masquerades. Such occasion provides a meeting point for entertainment for affirmation of the communal identity, for the celebration of that life which is part and parcel of the Agatu people.

Apart from this mythological account of the origin of Agatu songs, Agatu people also borrowed some songs from other cultures which they domesticated to such an extent that they become part of the culture of the Agatu people. Many of the songs that thrived in the

past and some that are still surviving to date were borrowed through cultural contact with other cultures. Some of these songs though, masquerade songs were acquired through Agatu cultural contact with Igbira from whom they were said to have acquired the art of *Ekwu-Afia* masquerade, and Igbo from whom also came 'Ajika and Ekwu-ono masquerade masks, songs and dance steps (though domesticated).

The Agatu therefore, acquire parts of their songs performances by evolving them or through cultural contact. Once such skills of performance are acquired, they are assimilated and they become part and parcel of the culture of the Agatu people. This is not to say that the main sources of Agatu songs are from cultural contacts. The Agatu people also evolve many of their own indigenous songs. Such songs are heavily laden with imagery and symbols of the community. These kind of songs involve performers greeting those who hold titles in the community by singing their praises and in so doing, they reinvigorate the socio-political preferences of the community. Such song performances progress to social criticism and the performers harangue the audience using satire, ridicule and insult to comment on activities which are anti-social and harmful to the normal life of the community.

Classification of Agatu Songs

Many scholars of oral literature have increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with the existing criteria for classifying oral literature. The criteria scholars use for classification have been influenced by the various approaches to the study of oral literature they adopt, hence the tendency of the classifications to reflect the weaknesses of such approaches. The dissatisfaction with classifications, therefore, is linked with such weaknesses as exist in the approaches.

Okpewho (1980) narrows down the numerous approaches to the study of oral literature to what he calls "two basic strands which he identifies as the 'formalistic' and the functionalistic approaches. According to him, 'the epitome of formalism, and the best manifestation of its weaknesses is in its arbitrary classifications of literary genres into such designations as legends, myths, proverbs, tales and jokes. Okpewho (6) shows, by comparing the legend and the memoir, that aspect of each designation can be found in the other, thus any distinctions between them are arbitrary.

The functionalistic approach Okpewho argues, makes similar 'indiffensible' distinctions with 'prose proverbs, riddles, ballads, peoms, tongue-twisters, and other forms of verbal art …" (Okpewho 7), and includes that the functionalistic approach is just as inadequate

as the formalistic, since careful scrutiny shows that the distinctions made cannot be sustained. This can easily be seen in trying to distinguish between a ‘ballad’ and a ‘poem’. He also points out that the term ‘prose’ is not usefully applicable to oral narrative.

An example of the influence of formalism on the classification of oral literature is in Babalo (1966:23) suggestion for the classification of Yoruba poetry. Yoruba poetry in general, according to him is best classified not so much by the themes as by the stylistic devices employed in recitals “He is supported by Olatunji (1984:67) who divides Yoruba poetry into two sweeping types; the chanting modes and the features type. The inadequacy of this approach is seen in his inability to make distinctions between the two ‘types’ for he shows that some characteristics of the features types’ are found in the chanting mode’ and vice versa.

Another good use of functionalistic approach is in Awoonor’s (1975:355) classification of Wewe poetry as ‘occupational’ ‘work’, ‘social’, ‘praise’, ‘blame’, and ‘love’ songs. Apart from the fact that occupation or work is more likely to provide the occasion, rather than the genre of a song, it is obvious that the so called ‘praise’ song might be performed in a ‘work’ or ‘social’, or even ‘occupational’ context. The same applies to ‘blame’ or ‘love’ songs. This artitrary

classification does not seem to take into consideration either how the composers themselves see the songs.

Advocating what he calls the 'qualitative approach in oral literature studies, Okpewho suggests careful weighing of what informants say against the fact before the investigator, so that the investigator can draw valid conclusions. I have adopted a similar approach in classifying Agatu songs.

In this respect therefore, on seeking the opinions of Agatu song performers, they offered suggestions that proved useful in classifying the genres of Agatu songs – for example, *Akpanchala, Okpeke, Ayon* and *Ahyuku.* These forms if described according to English genres are 'dirge', 'praise or panegyric', 'satire' or 'blame songs' and 'ritual songs'. All these correspond to themes of the selected songs examined in this study. *Akpanchala* songs tend to express sorrow over loss or misfortune, *Okpeke* tends to extol good qualities in persons, and resemble what might be called panegyric. *Ayon* songs tend to criticize or satirize vices abhorred by Agatu and might thus be described as blame songs, and *Ahyuku* tends to express the 'religious beliefs of the people, and might be called ritual songs.

This analysis shows that the genres and mutually exclusive and it agrees with the perception of Agatu songs. There is enough

empirical evidence therefore, to consider the classification of Agatu songs used in this work as valid.

2.2.3. General Functions of Agatu Songs

Agatu society like any other societies of the world is an organized society with well defined roles and norms. So one of the roles Agatu songs play in the society is to set the record straight about the nature of the Agatu society.

The Agatu song-forms are relevant for sociological and historical reasons. Their songs reflect the conflicts, the joy and sorrows of the society that create them. Agatu songs therefore, are not a mere extemporization but a conscious effort of people in Agatu society at entertainment and acculturation or socialization and exercising social control on themselves. Most of their subject-matters are common issues which are essential to the existence and survival of the society. The topical songs under investigation in this study subsist on the society's belief and yet add to and confine those beliefs with the result that they are a significant force which social homeo-status.

The role the Agatu song-forms play in the society form a strong conduit line through which Agatu society passes its 'soul' from the older generation to the younger ones. What this means is that, Agatu songs contain the ingredients for traditional education, a process that derives from the people's belief system and ways of life. They thus

ensure that the younger generation develop the personality of the society. The songs help the Agatu people to know all the things that make life meaningful to the people, even their tradition. This aspect helps the younger generation to know the aesthetics of their tradition, especially the cultural dances, religious worship, ceremonies of marriages, burial, cooking methods and their belief system. Lester (1979) states that: "…the culture which each generation purposely gives to those who are to be its successors in order to qualify them for at least, keeping up, and if possible for raising the level of improvement which has been achieved'. The Agatu song performers are a people of knowledge and also chroniclers of events in Agatu society. Within their song contexts, they almost always recreate history of their society and this is done through narrative songs. Songs are a medium found by the Agatu people for conserving their experiences, their philosophies, their ethos and their history. The social and historical contexts of the Agatu songs therefore, seem to be most important aspect. Through their songs, Agatu people are made to know their people's background by giving a genealogical account of each family and the achievement made in the past by the family.

Imawa Edoh (Okpeke lead singer) almost always. Mirrors in her songs, the deepest thoughts of her people. Her songs serve various functions in the society. Her topical songs in most cased criticize society's weaknesses, and serve to create awareness in the people who

therefore, seek to correct the ills revealed to them. The issues that are hardly discussed publicly by the people for fear, are usually exposed fearlessly through the *Okpeke* songs. The case of two bad sisters (Chapter four) competing over a man in marriage is an important example. While people gossip over an issue such as this, *Okpeke* singer as a torch bearer, a satirist and a guardian of village morality exposes them. What is important about *Okpeke* in the traditional context is that, her song performances rationalize the Agatu existence and may function to expunge evils and ensure peace and continuity in the community.

Oigokponu, *Ayon* singer's song-form is also purely social and for entertainment. Within his performance contexts, while the members of his audience are entertained by his songs, he sees his performance as a moral boosting to his society. Good people are always praised and evil men exposed and satirized in most of his songs – (analysis in chapter five). This aspect of the function of his song-form is to encourage people in his society to uphold good and reject evil. The *Ayon* singer, Oigokponu, is not driven to this game by frustration and hatred, but he is out to play his role of social reformation.

Heighet (1962:235) says:

> *There are two main conceptions of the purpose of satire, and two different types of satirists. One liked most people, but thinks they are rather blind and foolish. She tells the truth with a smile, so that ignorance which is their worst fault. The other type hates most people, or dispises them. He believes that rascality is triumphant in his world; or he says that though he loves individuals, he detests mankind. His aim therefore, is not to cure but to destroy.*

The *Ayon* singer is obviously in the former, not in the later. His is rather an optimistic reformer who believes that folly and evil are not innate in humanity, or if they are, they are eradicable. There are diseases that can be cured. They are mistakes which can be corrected. No one arts willingly, sinners are not devils fallen forever. They are men, self-blinded and they can open their eyes. The role the *Ayon* singer plays in his society through his art-form is to bring out people's short-comings (including his own shortcomings), opens the people's eyes to the right directions. He thus, does not only denounce ills in such a way as a deter, he offers positive advice and solution.

The functions *Akpanchala* song-form also performs are as important as the afore-mentioned. Very significantly, however, the importance of *Akpanchala*, *Okpeke* and *Ayon* forms as representatives of other Agatu song-forms can not be over emphasized. The performances of these song forms attempt to debunk the negative stereotype of African orature in certain academic circle in the West. Chadwick (1970:56) posits that, the anthropologists arrived at a

conclusion that: “we have not found any trace of developed narrative poetry in Africa and oral prose saga rarely rises above the level of folktale. Agatu song forms examined in this study, among others will assist in finding out whether or not some of those conclusions were right or wrong.

In response to this kind of negative impression about African orature by the early anthropologists, Okpewho (1979:1) assertively states that:

> *They seldom tried to get to the roots of the aesthetics principles on which the art was executed; as a result, they generally devised blanked theories that had an exotic appeal but were incapable of giving us an insight into the fundamental creative spirit. that brought such art to be.*

This study therefore, re-examines the literary elements and aesthetic values of songs in order to reaffirm the African dignity, values and beauty especially now that anthropologist is on the state of decline. Since the Agatu songs reflect the cultural values and ideals of the people, it could then seem that the attempt by the anthropologists to over-stress the communalism of traditional African is invalidated by the Agatu songs, for they evidently show the depth of intellectuality and personality of sound people.

2.3 Review of Previous Studies

Not much published materials on Agatu oral literature available to this study have talked to a significant degree about the subject selected for this research. Some works undertaken as far back as 1949 by R.T. Dibble on Agatu orthography entitled: *Okoce g'okpa oje* (lesson on alphabet) happened to be the first book on Agatu language. The orthography attempted here is not only poor, but grossly inadequate as the author only concern himself with establishing orthography than documenting Agatu songs.

Another book published on Agatu language by R. T. Dibbie was in 1952 entitled: *Okpa g'oca g'Agatu* (Agatu folktales). The book contains twenty five familiar folktales which are popular and well known among Agatu. The author is a Christian missionary under the United Bible Society. As a missionary writer, most of the Agatu popular folktales were embellished and printed to suit his evangelical missions. At the end of every tale Christian morality is infused which is avarian with African belief system or does not reflect the Agatu culture.

R.T. Dibbie, in his quest for evangelizing Agatu community, translated Christian hymns to Agatu language and published in 1956 as *Ije gace gi Kraist* (Christian Hymns). Both the content and form of

the hymns are European origin and are meant for the propagation of Christianity. The hymns are used in church, and of great significance to early documentation of Agatu oral literature. The value the hymns have for Agatu mainly is the provision of orthography for writing Agatu language.

The United Bible Societies made another effort by translating the Bible into Agatu language in 1984 titled: *Okonu Epepe Nondu Galo ja ti galo* (The New Testament Bible). This again is an evangelical effort of the missionaries to integrate the Agatu into an alien belief system. The translated version of the Bible is however, completely alien to Agatu cultures.

Perhaps the work that is closest to this research is a book published by Sule (2002) entitled: The Agatu Culture: songs and dances. Here Sule provides an assemblage of Agatu songs and their performers devoid of indebt literary analysis. The book only describes and concerns itself with who sings what and where. That is, the author traces the origin of the forms of Agatu songs, the performers and their villages without a clear picture of what constitutes the function, and aesthetic values of such songs. This study therefore, goes beyond the mere assemblage of Agatu songs to the study of the forms, content and performances, and at the same time to point out the functions and

aesthetics of the song forms. So far, Agatu oral literature is not treated in any significant details.

However, much works have been done on the oral literature of many people in Africa. Such efforts have contributed greatly to the development of oral literature studies. A mention must be made in particular of a study edited by Okpewho (1990:5-23) in which oral literary scholarship is shown to have advanced beyond the purely ethnographic information and literary analysis.

Ogede in his review of the Okpewho's book graphically describes the book as having great importance or usefulness especially by showing great care and attention to detail with which the contributors set about to capture the spirit of oral literature as a performing art, while paying close attention to the artistic devices that account for the subject's richness. This concern to many ethnographic research and literary analysis has engendered the study of specific performers in specific performance arts, leading to more valid statement about oral literature.

The functionalist theory contends that literature is and ought to be relevant to the society that has given birth to it as well as nurture it. The theory, which is psychological in nature, examines mental processes and how they relate to human behavior, by so doing

literature plays a major role in reflecting and affecting social and intellectual changes within the community. In this way, literature becomes a potential weapon used to bring about enduring positive changes in the community that engenders it.

Finnegan (1990) says that the role of literature can either reflect the society or uphold its statusquo. The functionalists also believe that any cultural phenomenon that does not have any use in the society will not endure. Ikechukwu (2007) notes Udeh (1994) as saying that "functional literature or functionalism is an approach of literary study. Its principles or precepts are based on those of "social commitment" (Udeh 1994). Social commitment is an aspect of social criticism that has received a considerable attention in the pens of modern literary critics. The functionalist approach is used to press the point that literature is and ought to be relevant to the society that has given birth to it and so well as nurtures it.

Lostraco and Wilkerson (1974:8) buttress the point when they note that literature distills life and condenses human experiences. It presents us with a concentrated imaginative vision of ourselves and world in which we live. Functional literature to us in this study is that literature which uses advocacy devices to sensitize individuals or groups in fighting or struggling for a common course in order to

achieve social justice. In Agatu traditional community, oral song is accorded a high position because it is a part of everyday living. The account for why the oral art forms have persisted over generations while new ones in terms of composition, performance and entertainment are evolving and employed by the Agatu people.

Our choice of Agatu society in this study to represent what obtains in other ethnic groupings of Africa and other cultures of the world that share similar oral art forms is justified by the views of Beier (1956), Febb's (1997), Gunner (2007) and Oyebade and Mbah (2008). Fabb's (1997:59) study notes a seemingly universal tendency of similarities and dissimilarities in poetic literatures when he suggests a universal patterning and counting of meters for cross-cultural oral art forms. Beier (1956:23) had already pointed out this universal poetic tendency in Yoruba culture thus, "there is no occasion in Yoruba life that is not accompanied by songs". Birth, marriage and funeral are all occasions for lyrical songs of great beauty. Every day, life is also accompanied by a great deal of impromptu singing a kind of musical thinking, in which the singer puts everything to a tune, which happens to pass through his head.

Beier's view cuts across cultures and genders in both compositions and performance. For example, in the study of Oyebode

and Mbah (2008), there is an illustration of similarities among cultures when they draw attention to other groups' cultures.

Gunner's (2007) study allays the fear of the disappearance of oral art forms in cultures of the world when she points out that even in this era of literacy and globalization, orality has not disappeared but has often adapted itself in its different forms to become a vehicle for the expression of the fears and hopes of new generations of people. She further observes that oral performances in African societies combines with music in that form of song and dance and which are performed in public and private plays a crucial role in constituting and reconstituting the social life, ideology and aesthetics of their different societies. Agatu oral poetry which is delivered mainly as songs with musical accompaniments and dance does not lose sight of the socio-cultural functions of such performances.

Emenanjo (1986) agrees with the view that since literature draws from its milieu, it must be seen performing some functions, thus since it draws heavily from traditional literature, creative literature in Agatu cannot afford the luxury of arts gratia arts. Literature is fully involved in the Agatu milieu which brings it into being. It is equally involved with the wider Nigerian society and with man as a universal being.

Uzechukwu (2001) notes that traditional oral poetry while aesthetically satisfying, is also functional and socially oriented. He further observes that the three principal ways by which social etiquette and societal values are upheld in traditional society are satire, admonition and praise. These three ways, which thus acts as weapons for social control find expression in Agatu panegyrics, funeral songs and other forms of Agatu traditional songs. Agatu people have some values and norms which they cherish such as marriage, good behaviour, good home making, kindness, respect for elders, care of good parents and others. They satirise and admonish different types of people who transgress against the social norms in the society: the men and women, the young and old, the rich and poor and the religious and non-religious. They also use praises and eulogies for those who adhere to the societal norms and provide social amenities to the suffering communities and this help to imbue heroic essence, 'which is the hallmark of patriotism into their audience.

We observe that satire is a very effective tool for correcting misdemeanor because the message that oral poet communicate quickly gets to person(s) concerned. Deviant behaviours in the society are satirized with the purpose of punishing the delinquents by bringing them to ridicule. The oral artists through this medium invite the

culprit(s) to a change in behavior and this is the essence of the Agatu traditional education. The role and relevance of the Agatu oral artists in the society cannot be overemphasized. Many oral literary scholars such as Emenanjo (1989), Uzochukwu (2001), Babalola (1966), Finnegan (1979) have defined the concept of the oral artist and his functions which are in consonance with the Agatu world-view.

Ezejideaku (1996) in Ikeokwu (2002) defines a poet as a man or woman of many parts. She is at one and the same time a visionary, a reformer, a political or social and cultural watchdog, a satirist, a praise singer, a chronicler of events, a teacher and the people's spokeman.

Ikeokwu (2002) moves a step further and observes that because of the special standing of the oral artists in their different localities, they seem to observe the social life of their localities with keen interest, and by so observing, they see what the ordinary people in society do not see, feel what they do not feel, go to where they do not go, hear what they do not hear and touch what they do not touch. Armed with these priviledged attributes, they become better placed or positioned to comment on the social lives of their different localities. They bring to fore all social ills as well as virtues that pervade the community with the aim of bringing about effective and affective revolutionary changes in the behavior and attitude of the populace.

Ugonna (1982) observes that every civilization has its own tradition which moulds it and gives expression to such a civilization. He further views poetry in terms of artistic composition, imaginative language, patterned arrangement, depth of thought or feelings. It follows then that people are defined by their literary tradition which encapsulates their culture and world-view. Maduako's (1991) view corroborates Ugonna's when he observes that poetry does not basically consist in arranging words in lines and stanzas as some poets believe. The words have to movingly convey mental pictures which evoke emotions be they social, political or etcetera values in the mind of the reader or listener.

In Agatu society, oral song tradition is practiced by almost every member in the community. It can be performed by one person or group of individuals and it comes predominantly in singing, dancing and drumming modes, which exist in simple structure, words, images and body movements packed with emotions that express the dynamism involved in the cultural and daily life of the people. These include loan and archaic words, borrowings, coinages and neologism. Since the themes addressed by the Agatu singers are both traditional and modern, and revolve around their joys and sorrows, it becomes

necessary for singers to use themes that evoke and reflect the spatial and temporal settings of the desired emotions in the audience

Okpewho (1990) notes that the text of an oral composition is as important as its context without which it remains lifeless. The context of Agatu song includes occasions such as marriage, birth, funerals etc, the vast areas which Agatu oral song covers and also the place of dense, rich poetic language as carriers of public social values and ideologies testify to its importance in the society

Lending credence to Ebeogu's view on oral art form, Eyoh (2010:20) notes Kolawole as saying where oral art forms are practiced they are principally or solely practiced by youths and women in their various African societies for the organization and development of such societies.

2.4 **Theoretical Framework**

The purpose of scholarship is to develop ways in which our knowledge could be better organized and presented. Theories are significant because they are relevant to formalizing descriptions, to systematically explaining data relating to phenomenon and also to predict possible new form.

Our literature, like any others, has been among Agatu people and is subject to all the rising and falling fashion in the criticism and interpretation of literature and the human mind (Finnegan 1970:45). There has been the hidden feeling in the minds of early scholars that oral literature is not really literature at all and that they have no aesthetic claims to be considered as analogous to proper written literature, let alone on the par of it. But in recent past, orature has been gaining prominence in Nigeria through academic researches on the subjects as well as through the media such as books, newspaper, journal articles, radio, television and so on.

This study is based on the premise that the form, content and performance of oral literature reflect the structure of the society within which it is produced, and aids understanding of that society. Also, oral literature helps to maintain the structure of society by influencing members to conform to it. It is also capable of influencing change in the behavior, not only of individuals, but of the community as a whole, by introducing new ideas in its form and content.

This study has considered some existing theories that relate to the analysis of the arts in a research such as this. The analysis of this thesis did not restrict itself to one literary school. The analytical approach to be adopted in this study will be in line with the theoretical

views advanced by Finnegan (1978:327) where she argues that in trying to understand genres of this kind one needs to approach it the same way or method one would a literary piece. But she warns that in using this approach one must be mindful of the implication of its orality for its study. Thus this approach will offer the researcher the chance to examine the chosen category of "Agatu oral folklore" not only in relation to established norms of literature but also to performance transmittal and social context.

Functional Theory:

The best and clearest articulation of the functional approach to folklore study comes from Basscom a student of Melville Herskovits. Bascom coined a new word for folklore "verbal arts". According to Dorson (1972:21) verbal art is "the creative compositions of functioning society, dynamic not static, integrated and not isolated, central not peripheral components of culture". Isidore (1983"21) observes that the functions of folktales are the "parts, which they play within the integral system of culture".

Functional approach to the study of oral literature is therefore aimed at discovering the factors that enhance the survival, contentment and moderation of the social order through expressive literature. It also looks into the contributions folklore makes to the

maintenance of the structural (cultural) continuity so as to enhance the survival of the cultural system. To this end Bascom (19:333-49) believes, proverbs help settle legal decisions, riddles shapen wits, myths validate conduct, satirical songs release pent-up hostilities.

Therefore, verbal arts, folktales or folk life are all meaningful and indispensable oral literature. It is basically for sociological purposes as long as the functions are reflected in the day-to-day spiritual, social, economic, political, educational and intellectual facets of our lives. An approach to discover and appreciate all these is referred to as functional theory. Thus this method should be applied to the present study because it is the most appropriate.

Ideological Theory:

The ideological theory sprang-up from the romantic nationalisms of the nineteenth century in the twentieth century. The ideological theory is interested in the study of the soul of the people revealed in the native dialects. “The folk tales and folk songs carried in those dialects; the literature developing the themes of the folklore and the history glorifying the deeds of national heroes”. (Dorson:1972:15).

The Marxist principles governing the ideological theory of folklore are:

(a) Folklore is an echo of the past, but at the same time it is also the vigorous voice of the present.

(b) Folklore has been and continues to be a reflection and a weapon of class conflict. The ideological theory therefore sees music and other genres of folklore such as proverbs, folktales, folksongs, riddles as controlled expressions of the populace ideals.

A study of the form, content and performance of Agatu songs will no doubt and clearly reveal that they constitute the powerful expression of the ideology of the Agatu people and should therefore be applied to this study. The theory has also aided in examining and understanding the Agatu song culture, and in elucidating the functions of Agatu oral songs. Based on the above, the theory is adopted for this study.

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CHAPTER THREE

FORM AND CONTENT OF AKPANCHALA SONGS

This chapter examines the Akpanchala performance tradition via its form and content. The *Akpanchala* song form is an association of adult male singers which is created for Agatu tribal occasions such as burial ceremonies, coronation and other seasoned events. *Akpanchala* songs could be used to pass on tribal history, standards of ethical conducts and religious believes to other members of the tribe. Like most other Agatu song-forms, *Akpanchala* has its lead and chorus structure. The solo which usually consist of a separate stanza, is performed by the lead singer alone while the other stanzas, the chorus are performed by the support singer.

Apkanchala songs serve various functions in the Agatu society depending on their thematic preoccupation. The *Akpanchala* songs teach the virtues of fairness, honesty and respect for the elders and their wisdom. Almost always, *Akpanchala* songs are hinged at fostering social regulation through a reaffirmation of the norms of the society. This is observed to be true because in praising or criticizing the follies of vices of the society, certain ideals are upheld and reinforced.

The enquiry made on the art-form was done on the 18th November, 2010 at Ogbaulu village. The *Akpanchala* lead singer is popularly known as Ademu Owo. He approximated his age as seventy two years. He is not a

professional singer. This include his support singers. These are Umoru Adikwu, Ngbede Idaba, Abu G'ada G'ekwu, Ajeibi, Adam-Aboh, Ochumana, Anyebe and few others. Their major occupation is farming. They don't have formal education, so they neither read nor write.

The *Akpanchala** singer introduces his thematic preoccupation in one of his songs (appendix 1) titled: Odugbo g'oluba *(Oluba's inestimable Beaded Jewel). Lines 1-5 are concerned with the persona's dilemma who mourns the loss of her husband who is seen in the metaphor of "my inestimable beaded jewel".

Agatu *Odugbo g' oluba loo, odugbo gun*
Odugbo g' oluba loo, odugbo gun
Oluba jikwu g'obunu loo, odugbo gun
Odugbo g'ace ha'a nun ba t'oko nee
Ijagwuda lum odugbo bye

English Oluba's inestimable beaded jewel, "My Jewel"
Oluba's inestimable beaded jewel, "My Jewel"
Oluba mourns for her husband
The people's inestimable jewel I borrowed
Armed robber has robbed me of my jewel.

The epithet or sterling qualities are mentioned in a personal way as they relate to the persona directly rather than generalized. In the first line, the persona extols the personal qualities of the deceased calling him the "inestimable beaded jewel". What is referred to as Odugbo* in Agatu and is translated as inestimable beads are the kind of beads worn by the rich

particularly, wealthy women in the community. Odugbo * are very fat beads though of different sizes. The fatter the size, the higher the value in monetary terms. A woman's social status is measured by the size of her beads. In this song therefore, the persona metaphorically calls her late husband "Odugbo"* who is highly priced by her.

*Akpanchala** singer, in his creative ingenuity handle this dirge form intelligently. There are two types of dirges: the non-specialized, spontaneous ones as well as the specialized formal ones. The former are performed at funeral or memorial rites while the latter, in addition to being performed at actual funerals, can also be performed as elegies.

This dirge is a remembrance of a husband who died in a motor accident on his way to Otukpo. We are not told of the time of this incident. The singer introduces his audience to the theme of wickedness. He tells the audience the cause of the death of Oluba's husband. The singer reveals that the spirit of the deceased's father happened to take the son away – "the father died and took the son away" – (line 19). In Agatu world-view, premature death is not a natural death. More importantly, a situation where a father died and the son died shortly after suggests that, the father had taken him away. The spirit of the father is supposed to chase his son out of the world of the dead even if the son happens to die naturally. This is why the singer condemns the deceased's father thus:

Agatu: *Ada gekwu goi go yece*
Ada gekwu ca loinu bye nyo?
Ada nee mama ca w'ada g'alaci?

English: A father died for the son to stay alive
The father died and took a son away
The father like this is a malicious father.
(appendix 1, lines 18-20)

The personal varies her tone in the song as occasioned by her anguished pains, particularly in line 10-11. In line 10 the persona starts with the dramatization of anguished pains with the repetition of "Odugbo* gun". (My inestimable beaded jewel) for emphasis. The persona's statement shows the object of deep concern in a traditional society – the need for a son who will give his father a befitting burial and for daughter and relation to lament when the father dies. It also concentrates on the loss suffered by the wife as an individual and not on abstract comments on death. The persona feels a sense of betrayal by her father-inlaw, and this is what affects her dramatic confrontation with the deceased's father when she calls him a "malicious father (line 20). Towards the middle of the song, the *Akpanchala* *singer who plays the persona, changes his tone to that of unbelief as the singer asks some rhetorical questions:

Agatu: *Oyi jelan ni lo bye gb'ela?*
Ukpa ni l'oci ne I l'oje no
Oka l'okonu ni ya l'abo?
Oje I hyolan I lo bye n'owa?

English: Should an innocent son be ill-treated?
Beetle that eats wood, can it also eat iron?
Should the mere invocations of words be demonstrated by hand?
Can iron not cooked by fire be sharpened?

The intention of the persona here is not to evoke an actual reply but to achieve an emphasis. The deceased was not old enough to die, and so, the persona wonders why such an innocent young man is ill-treated by death.

In this song the singer takes as its starting point the actual death of a person and then reflects on life generally. It is a song that contains thoughts about life and death in a wider sense of loss. The whole song is figurative. This deviation motif is applied by the singer in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. At the end of the song, the voice of the persona is heard submitting to the supremacy of God:

Agatu: *Onye gw'owe toda n'oco ya gila?*
A'ka jam, oda ni ya me, onye gw'owe to gila?

English: Who can undo what God has done?
Tell me, who can undo the done

Typical of *Akpanchala** singer, almost always, he uses flash back to relate similar incidents. In a song titled: "Olowu My 'owu gunu" (The

owner of breath) (Appendix 2), the singer deviates from using the voice of the widow to his own personal voice by reflecting on the death of his own mother in 2006 after a brief illness. Here, again, he uses a clear tune of traditional lament e.g. in (line 1) – "Olowu my'owu gunu mee loo". In Agatu tradition, the dirge is known to be a common genre of orature through the ages. Dirge to Agatu people gives expression to the deepest human emotion – sorrow or hopelessness.

In the song which we derived the title from the central theme as "the owner of breath", the transition from the first song to the second has a slight difference. The difference is in content and not in form, for example, while the persona in the first song underlines the sterling qualities of the deceased here in song II, the persona's voice is the voice of the son in total submission to the will of God. The voice here does not apportion blames as to the cause of his mother's death, rather, he recognizes the supremacy of the 'owner of life". The attitude of this persona is different from the formal because the deceased in the latter died at the riped age which conforms with the expectation of Agatu people for death. The persona, though, mourns the death of his mother, his cry is rather a cry of a proud child whose mother has lived to see her great grand-children. The voice of the singer in this circumstances, wails swiftly from mourning "ee lee, Eneg', Ademu lee' (line 2) to pure singing voice again – "Olowu my'owu gunu loo" (line 3). In the first and second line above, the ideophones "Ee lee loo"* symbolizes the

wailing voice of a mourner in Agatu funeral context – a voice that expresses a deep sorrow and excruciating pains of the bereaved. This device is employed to convey a very clear impression for achieving an impact. The crucial component of this dirge is its enduring emotional appeal in lines 14-16 as repeated in lines 34-36. The persona in grief demands for the impossible:

Agatu: *Oce ni lepa de go loye jalo la*
Oce ni lepa de go loye jalo la

English: Who has two mothers to lend us one loo
Who has two mothers to lend us please

This passionate appeal captures the deep sense of sorrow the persona is going through. No one in real sense of life has two mothers to give out one if a relation or a friend loses his mother. Here we are faced with a situation where the singer is making emotional appeal to demonstrate his grief. What is remarkable about the dirger is his ability to compose his lament in an orderly way in a moment of emotional stress, particularly the funeral of his own mother. Although, he uses a flash back technique to reflect on the death of his mother, the persona uses the dirge as an immediate and spontaneous means of giving verbal expression to his grief.

*Akpanchala** singer in this song uses the formula which almost all oral singers use - repetition of theme throughout. For example, "oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath". This appears throughout the song

(song 2, lines 1, 3, 10, 11, 13, 17, 20, 23, 24, 28, 29, 32, 37, 39, 43, 48, 52, 61). This shows a significant repeat because it is an affirmation of the central idea of the song – his hopelessness and deep feeling of grief. Repetition gives his audience both the aesthetics and utilitarian values. This is what Okpewho (1977:71) says: "serves certain practical purposes in the overall organization of the oral performance". Almost all the lines of the poem are repeated for emphasis, and as a mark of deep feeling of grief. And because these ideas are crucial for the expression of his grief, the singer repeats them eighteen times.

He introduces us to the theme of helplessness in the hand of God – "the owner of breath". This underlines the insecurity of man in a world in which he is pitilessly exposed to the forces larger than himself. In the song therefore, it could be implied that, man is a helpless and vulnerable creature whose life could be demanded anytime by his creator. This invariably generates a sense of perpetual insecurity in man.

Within this song performance context, when the *Akpanchala** performers give us signals for a pause, by lowering their voices to diminuendo and they eventually paused for fifteen minutes to refresh themselves with *Burukutu,** we were told by one of the elders among the *Akpanchala** singers (Elder Eje g'ela) why death is considered the most grievous incident in Agatu society. According to him, Agatu people right from their forefathers believe that the world of man is directly under the

surveillance of the world of the dead and the two are intrinsically linked. He further states that, it has always been the belief of the people that, death is a transition from the material world to the world beyond by instant disappearance of breath which makes it impossible for the bereaved to see his or her beloved one again. In a situation like this, according to him, death is grievously considered as a violation of peace which brings excruciating tragedy to the bereaved than any other incidents in Agatu.

*Akpanchala** singer is most appreciated in terms of the richness of his repertoire of songs, his command of formulas and the skillful handling of themes. He changes the content of his songs easily and perfectly to suit the context of his performance. Even when he is handling the dirge form, he can easily change to lyrical songs in order to entertain and create comic relief. He sometimes uses extensive praise songs. In the night of the same funeral, the *Akpanchala** singer praises his song form in a song title: "Enyi to pe " (The flowing stream). In handling this song, the singer uses a poetic device such as parallelism to show his potentiality in the art.

Agatu: *Enyi to pe ojowe gunu*
Ano gi l'eye go loka degbulu
Igbano ni kela go loka do ko
Ebe ni tote go loka deje
Oje yebe g'onowa
Ije-owo yebe g'oce ni j'owo

English: The flowing stream knows its root
A covetous bird needs to enquire from Egbulu*
A talking bird needs to ask the parrot
A hunting animal should enquire from tiger
Iron belongs to blacksmiths
The craft of song lies with a good singer
(song 3, lines 7-12).

Paralles are drawn between the flowing streams and its roots, a covetous bird with *Egbulu** (a tiny bird that perches on crops particularly rice and millet without getting satisfied): a talking bird and a parrot, a hunting animal and the tiger, iron and blacksmiths, craft of songs and a good singer. Parallelism is a formulaic device which allows the oral performer to bring a diversity of ideas within a convenient structural identity. Viewed from the above, *Akpanchala** singer uses this device to demonstrate his mastery of the art of singing. He brings together ideas and images in a balanced relationship that seemed independent of one another. Okpewho (1997:78) posits that:

> *For a performance … to succeed, the imagination of the artist will need to do a delicate jobs of selecting details that may seem to be independent of one another but at the bottom has a common affinity and of bringing these together to present a convincing picture or image.*

*Apkanchala** song performance has its extenuating circumstances and the devices of narrative and dramatic expression chosen by the singer would be those which best suits his purpose. In the same funeral ground, in the

deceased compound at Ogbaulu village, the *Akpanchala* singers were surrounded by people drawn from the village and its environs, and the lead singer uses a narrative song as a form to create moral standards in his society which we titled "Alo gole golohili lo" (let us seek the wisdom of the wiseman) – song 4.

The singer introduces his topic (lines 5-9), setting the story in a remote time-past; the absence of a specific date pointing to the timelessness of the story (quote lines 5-9). He narrates a story of a very haughty and wicked king and his adulterous wife. He said the king has seven wives, among whom the last and the youngest wife is the most beloved. Ironically, the youngest wife involves herself in adultery and dies in bed with her lover. The young man was terribly confused and cried out in agony on what to do in order to escape this graved offense punishable by death according to the law of the land. He seeks the wise counsel of a wise man in the land immediately. He is told by the wise man to secretly construct a beautiful box and lay the body of the king's wife in it and drop it at a cross road leading to the village. He was told that three thieves planned to rob the village that night.

At night, the three thieves while passing through the crossroad saw the beautiful box, thinking they had met a fortune, and they picked it home joyfully. To their bewildered stupor, when the box was opened, it was the

body of the king's wife. They were confused, and they began to cry for help secretly:

Agatu: *Alo g'ole go lohili lo*
Alo g'ole go lohili lo
Alo g'ole go lohili lo
Ohili lo, ohili lo

English: Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man lo
Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man lo
Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man lo
Wisdom lo! wisdom lo!

The robbers ran to the wise man to take counsel together. The wise man advised the robbers to package the dead body of the king's wife and take it to the forest. "At night, three men would be on their way to a forest to harvest honey from a particular tree". He advised them to take the dead body of the king's wife there to be discovered by the three honey harvesters. In compliance with the instruction, they took the dead body and stood the body by the tree and set a long stick on her hand having fire on it and then pointed it directly on the honey comb. When the three man came shortly after, they discovered a figure standing presumably harvesting their discovered honey. Without applying wisdom, they became furious and struck the dead body down.

On a close examination, they discovered amazingly that their culprit was the king's wife who had been declared missing for the past three days.

They were terrified and troubled. They hastily ran to the same wise man of the land to receive counsel on what to do. The wise man advised them to:

Agatu: *A lifa y'okwu ne ti g'opa gunu*
A l'okwu ne bye welele g'uponu g'oceh
A lo bye yeje l'opokinu geinu babo no gole me ma

English: Dress the dead body in her cloth
Sneak in the dead body to the king's palace
Sit her on a chair in front of her room as if she has returned.
(lines 43-45)

This time, because the king had vowed to kill her out of hatred and jealousy, he came out in the night to discover a figure sitting in front of his wife's house. Without applying wisdom, the king hastily ran into his house, picked up his cutlass and beheaded the wife that had died some days ago. News went out immediately that the king's wife had returned but the king had beheaded her.

In the narrative song, the *Akpanchala** singer wants his audience to understand some moral principle guiding the conduct of the Agatu people. Among the Agatu, adultery is not only regarded as a sin but a sacrilegious offence against the land and the ancestor. The retribution of this is death. According to the singer, the death of the king's wife is a retributive justice from the ancestors. On the other hand, it is implied that, wisdom is a principal thing in human existence. With wisdom, one can turn the crown. The wise man applies this in various ways and eventually shifts the

responsibility of the death of the king's wife to her husband. Another moral lesson the singer passed to the audience in this narrative song is the concept of patience when confronting serious issues. Impatience could not allow the king to tackle his wife's disappearance with caution, and so, the king has to take the blame of his wife's death. Wisdom to Agatu people, is better than strength and weapons of war. The narrative song does not however abide by the rules of poetry especially in the arrangement of lines, metres and rhymes.

The themes of the songs *Akpanchala** singer handles in this evening include just about every topic imaginable. There are songs about wives and husbands, the relationship between variety in the human and the natural world, animals, kings and so on. The lyrics about people, events and personal experiences are more common to *Akpanchala** singers. But the *Akpanchala** singers also observe the natural world as very significant to them especially the animal world. For example, one of the songs recorded in this night (song of spurfawl). The song starts in a story form and leads directly to the events:

Agatu: *N l'oka go ka*
Abo n'oka gun ne le ma

English: I have a story to tell
And my story goes like this

The story is a statement on human dilemma. As the bird sets out for hunting, it meets its fortune. The first fortune is when it meets *Edeh**. Edeh* asks whether it has a wife, and the bird admits that it is a bachelor. On hearing this, Edeh gives the bird his daughter for a wife. The bird, in advancing its his hunting expedition meets *Ikoh**, and the Ikoh* asks whether the bird has a wife. The bird denies that it has never been married. Ikoh at this juncture extends the same benevolence to the bird. The bird comes back home with great fortunes having been freely bestowed upon with two wives.

In a short while after returning from the hunting, the bird receives messages from its fathers-inlaws that the two of them are sick. Before the bird could think of what to do, the bird received another message that the fathers-in-law have died. The bird finds itself in a dilemma. In the confusion, it climbs a locust bean tree standing on a cross road and begins to cry:

Agatu: *N g'ole g'Edeh loo*
Kwee kan g'ole g'iko loo
Che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo
Che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo
Ole g' Edeh loo kan g'ole g'iko loo
Alei kwayi gun hoi hoi jam

English: Should I go for Edeh's burial or for Ikoh's?
Should I go for Edeh's burial or for Ikoh's?
Che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo
Che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo
Whether to Edeh's burial or Ikoh's burial?
Take care of my children for me well.
(Song 5, lines 26-31)

The song is an irony and paradox that characterizes human life. The allusion of life of the animal world were meant to provide a lesson to that of man. This recalls all the efforts of a man to have the desirable peace out of his achievements, but the ironic and paradoxical human existence makes living an effort in futility. With the death of his fathers-in-law, there is a termination of man's efforts as a futile endeavour. The persona therefore, compares his state with the allusion to the animal world. This is heightened by the formular - "che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo (line 31) - a dramalization of psychological pains. The persona speaks on his own voice in such a way that conveys the tension in his mind: "N g'ole g' Edeh loo kwee kan g'ole g'Ikoh loo" (Is it to Edeh's house I should go or to the house of Ikoh?)

*Akpanchala** songs contribute to the upholding of the functions. This is exemplified by the rendition of the song titled "Alo g'ole g'olohili lo" (Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man) as earlier analysed. Here, the singer passes a message quite fundamental to the existence of his society. In

this song, it is implied that wisdom is considered as a basis upon which a society thrives. Wisdom, according to the singer is better than a crown. He demonstrated this view in the narrative song by using the wisdom of a wise man to exploit the wisdom of a wise man to exploit the gullibility of a king who is considered impatient and haughty. The king's wife who had died several days, the responsibility was shifted to the king by the manipulative wisdom of the wise man.

It can safely be claimed that Akpanchala* songs performances reflect the cultural values of ideas of the people. The songs teach the virtue of fairness, honesty and respect for the elders and their wisdom. Almost all the *Akpanchala* songs are hinged at fostering social regulation through a reaffirmation of the norms of the society. The songs serve as the watch-dog of the society's morality, upholding virtue and chastening vice.

Most significantly, there are certain language patterns that provide a useful index for an appraisal of the form of *Akpanchala* song. Though, the *Akpanchala* singers hardly ever receive formal training on his art, he nonetheless demonstrates remarkable sensitivity in his use of language. *Akpanchala* singer has learnt to develop a complex art form over the years, embedding sound elements such as ideophone, onomatopoeia, parallelism and grammer-related devices including antithesis, epithet and nominalization. There are other several devices such as metaphor, simile and symbolism which the singer regularly employs. He most often uses

concrete and dignified language because his images are drawn from natural environment, human occupation and practical engagements which are fundamental to the day-to-day survival of the people.

Akpanchala singers uses ideophone as a device in most of his songs. Ideophone, like onomatopoeia, is a descriptive device of sound which creates pictures and feelings relating to colour, smell, manner and so on, by appealing to the visual, auditory and other senses. But in both structure and suggestiveness, ideophone is a more subtle device than onomatopoeia. The form of ideophone can enable us to gain a considerable insight into its meaning. An ideophone may be monosyllabic or polysyllabic; suggestive tonal patterning and reduplication of sound are also its major features. Examples of polysyllabic ideophones in *Akpanchala* songs include:

(a) *Eu lei-le-le-lee-ee (1.30)* – An unsteady and miserable tone reflecting the situation in which the persona is faced with at the moment of anguish pains.

(b) *Che-che-chenkwule loo* (5.31) – sound creating feelings of dilemma of the persona at the cross-road of indecision.

It would be seen from the above presentation (a) – (b) that ideophones are bound to have significant semantic relationships with their non-ideophonic context. Ideophones also readily lend themselves to phonological analysis since their ability to function properly depends primarily on their phonemic and tonal structures. Both *Eu lei-le-le-lee-ee* and *Che-che-chenkwule loo* illustrate the reduplication of whole stems,

emphasizing the ideas conveyed. It is a dramatization of psychological pains which conveys the tension in person's mind.

Parallelism is another device that Akpanchala has exploited in his songs. Parallelism is a form of repetition consisting of binary or other structure in which similar or related ideas are illustrated. It is effective in strategic variation of ideas and provides coherence and structure to oral production. The example in this regarded is provided in page (52) of this thesis where paralles are drawn between "flowing strams' and its root, 'a covetous bird' with Egbulu', 'a talking bird' and 'a parrot; 'a hunting animal' and the 'tiger; 'iron' and 'blacksmiths', and 'craft of songs' and a 'good singer'. In the above lines, the Akpanchala singer deploys this device to affirm his oral artistry above other singers. Two related ideas are presented and they are slightly varied but effectively linked by the motif of the might of his art form.

Epithets, the commonest feature of panegyric composition, are noted in his songs for their pictorial, connotative values. They may be simple adjective phrases such as "Odugbo gun" (1.10 & 11). In this lines, the noun-phrase stands for the object of description. The singer's fascination, and praise of her late husband come out clearly. Formulaic epithets are a regular feature. In consonance with the stature of the persona's husband among men, the persona considers its suitable to address him at various stages of performance in glowing epithets (song 1).

Akpanchala songs are constructed orally using devices such as repetition, alliteration and other paralinguistic techniques to facilitate memorization and recall. The singer composes his songs for example, from memory, using the vision he had learned as a kind of mental template. This process allows the *Akpanchala* singer to add his own flavor to his song, although, fidelity to the traditional versions of the song was generally favoured. His songs are composed in performances, and the audience is the most significant influence on the shaping of the performed songs. In most cases, so much is the performer's reliance on his audience that without the audience contributions the songs would be only a bare framework of words, since every oral performance devoid of the presence of audience cannot be said to be a real performance in the normal sense of the world. It is in view of this that Okpewho (1992:57) points out that: "an oral performance truly exists where there is an audience that compels the respect of the performer and puts the performance on record (whether on memory or of tape)".

The nature of the audience in Agatu society is an important consideration by any singer in the choice of subject and style. Oral song to Agatu people is a shared experience. It is more obvious in the song performance context where the singer, audience and art merge into one explosion of creative energy in which creation is itself the art. Bowra (1961:215) observes that: "Each performer has audience before him, often

large which listens to him and he has to keep its attention, to make everything clear and interesting.

The *Akpanchala* performance is always given a kind of electrifying intensity. *Akpanchala* is performed in two ways. The first is when two poets perform alternately. The first sings a verse and provides material for the other, who takes off from that stage, challengingly. They utilize the initiating rhythms. The deep, moody voice slurs, and is replaced by the other one light, low and piercing. This is the more sonorous voice of the second singer. This battle of words continues until when their repertoire is depleted. For example:

Agatu: *Alo gole go l'ohili lo*
Alo gole go l'ohili lo
Alo gole go l'ohili lo
Ohili lo, ohili lo

English: Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man
Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man
Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man
Wisdom, wisdom!

(Akpanchala song 4.37-40)

The analysis of *Akpanchala* songs shows that, his songs tend to extol or advocate good qualities in persons or objects, and resembles what might be called panegyric or praise songs. Other songs tend to express sorrow over loss or misfortune, and resemble what might be called dirge or lamentations.

This analysis show that the genres are mutually exclusive and it agrees with the perceptions of *Akpanchala* singers and audience about the genres of Agatu songs. There is enough empirical evidence therefore, to consider the classification of Agatu songs used in this work as valid and *Akpanchala* song-form is one of the obvious proofs.

End- Notes

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CHAPTER FOUR

PERFORMANCE OF OKPEKE SONGS

This chapter discusses the performance of *Okpeke* songs and at the same time, to point out the functions the song-form performs in Agatu Society. The *Okpeke* song-form falls into the category of praise-song and Satire. It is one of the oldest song forms known to Agatu people. *Okpeke* is the parent stock of most Agatu panegyrics. The songs freely express the feeling of the people. The honest and generous members of the community are praised, and the corrupt, stingy and bad behaved members of the community are equally abused and satirized as a corrective measure. Currently, *Okpeke* songs serve to inculcate Agatu moral and cultural values into the younger generation who may not have been aware of such values otherwise. As a social commentator, Okpeke singer always moves from one role to another, to comment on issues panoramically as they suit her moment of performance.

In a song, *Okpeke* singer could cover both praise-song or panegyrics, satire or dirge depending on the retentive abilities of the singer on issues at the particular performance. This aspect talks good of her artistry as digression as a device is fundamentally important in oral poetry. It is this attitude of the singer to her songs that makes most Agatu songs to be multi-thematic and so to consist of many forms.

The enquiry made on this art-form was on the 22nd November, 2010 at Engugba Agatu. The interview with the *Okpeke* Singer (Imawa Edoh) revealed that the origin of *Okpeke* started as far back as early 1940s and it was an age-mates coming together to share jokes every evening and this art-form later metamorphosed into a social association. The moral and didactic nature of the songs, attracted the Agatu people to invite them for social functions such as marriages, births, coronation ceremonies second burials and so on.

On the biography of the Singer (Imawa Edoh), she said due to the level of illiteracy in their time, her birth day was not recorded. She only conjectured her age to be seventy eight. She got married to her late husband (Ngbede Ogwola) when she was barely twenty two years. (This is still conjectured). According to her, she had her first child within the first one year of her marriage and that happened to be my mother. She had had four children in all, twenty eight grand-children among whom I am one, and twenty three great grand children, my four children inclusive. Her major occupation is farming. If at anytime she sells in the market, it is because of the interdependent nature of human existence. She had to sell her farm produce to obtain other needs. She and other *Okpeke* singers have no western education, and are not professional singers.

Unlike the *Akpanchala* signers, the composition of *Okpeke** songs depend solely on improvisation. Most of the *Okpeke"* singers have died,

leaving only three still alive including the lead singer (Imawa Edoh). When this researcher contacted her to organse a song performance, her complaints were that *Okpeke* songs were always performed with drum accompaniments, but now, Okpeke instrumentalists Adiyo Anyebe and Ngbede Ogwola have gone to join their ancestors. "It is not possible to organize a full performance again,' she said. According to her, the only alternative was to call her two co-singers and perform unaccompanied. During the one hour thirty minutes recording, the whole songs were rendered through unaccompanied quite different from what it used to be. The Okpeke lead singer with the two other women singers, my two friends and I were the people present when they presented the songs. The performance took place at a farm area near the singer's village.

As a satirist, *Okpeke* singer almost always satirizes the evil doers in the community and equally advises the people to do good. She handles this theme when she renders a song titled. 'Ayi g'ene epa" (Two bad sisters) (song 1). The two sisters did an unprecedented thing in Agatu community. One was originally married to a man and the other one came on a visit, made love to her sister's husband and eventually married him. She later succeeded in putting away her sister from her matrimonial home and replaced her in the marriage. *Okpeke* singer now says:

Agatu: *N'mamanilee, n'pomani lee*
N'mamani lee, n'pomani lee

Ayi g' Adam g'oloje Inagwu
N'mamani lee, n'pomani lee

English: I have not heard, I have not seen
I have not heard, I have not seen
The children of Oloje Inagwu
I have not heard, I have not seen

The persona here bemoans the reversal of integrity, virtue and value in contemporary society. This is done by contrasting the ignoble attitudes of contemporary children with the idea and attitudinal refinement of their predecessors. The singer was interjected mid-way into this song by the researcher who wanted to know why the singer considered the attitude of their age quite different from the attitudes of the contemporary children. She could not state her claims clearly however, she simply said: 'it is the world that is changing and if the world changes, language, idiom and attitude of the people must change'. The researcher pressed further to know if her unpleasant feeling is not an attempt to apportion blame on either the parents or the children. We were not told who is responsible for the reversal of attitude of the contemporary children. (Children in this case are those far below the ages of the *Okpeke* Singers).

This song therefore, is a lament on the changes apparent in contemporary society which are quite antithetical to the *Okpeke* singers. The song also carries the sense of nostalgia, as the singer repeatedly recalls

the unprecedented incident different from their own time. The singers voice of lamentation in these songs evokes malaise which attempts to destroy the entire fabric of Agatu, if possible all traditional society's social life. Throughout the song, it is observed that neither the causes of nor the panacea of these ills are addressed. The singers simply ends her song by reiterating the warning of her father:

Agatu: *Odulunya g'oda g'oceh gbegbe no*
Adam W''Edoh g' Aluba
Ogbegbe, gbegbe g'adam yola

English: Forever and ever my father vowed
My father Edoh Aluba
Forever and ever my father vowed

The Singer passes a warning to her audience that someone's belonging are mysteriously dangerous and so people should desist from taking what does not belong to them. As a moralist, *Okpeke* singer condemns such acts completely especially when it has to do with two sisters of the same parents sharing one husband, she fearfully points out the children of whom they are. 'Ayi g'Adam g'Oloje g'Inagwu-song 1, line 5) She demonstrates her disgust and total rejection of this kind of disapproving acts, in this song which she considers being at variance with the ethic and ethos of her familiar world. No wonder she says, 'the sisters like this are a problem to our world' (lines 12). The happening in this new world awakens her

sensibilities and reshapes her psyche. This feelings is given expression in the opening line of the song:

Agatu: *Ayi g'ene-epa lee"!*
Ayi g'ene epa I'myoba geiwa lee-lee-lee-lee
N'mamani lee, npomani lee
N'mamani lee, n'pomani lee

English: Oh! Two bad sisters lee
Two bad sisters competed over one husband lee-lee-lee
I have not seen, I have not heard
I have not seen, I have not heard

Here she employs the use of formulaic ideophones to create the feeling of impatient irritation about this extremely repugnant act. Throughout the song, the device is being put to use by the singer. Ideophones is a descriptive device of sound which creates pictures and feeling relating to manner, colour, smell and so on, by appealing to the visual, auditory and other senses. *Opkeke* Singers in most cases use polysyllabic ideophones. For example 'Elee-le-le-le-le" (Unstable and miserable voice) which emphasizes the ideals conveyed.

Okpeke songs function in ensuring fair play in the Agatu Society. That is, the people who try to move away from the communal norms in order to assert their individualistic behaviours are normally exposed, chastised and corrected through the examples of similar characters in this song. This is why *Okpeke* singers could not allow an evil such as this goes

unexposed. We asked the singer why she or the community considered it an abomination for the two sisters to share one husband. The three *Okpeke* women spoke out at once as if it was rehearsed. "our ancestors forbid it". The lead singer simply said; "Whatever is adjudged as "bad" by our fore-fathers remains an outstanding guiding moral principle in the community, and the deviants must be punished.' According to her, for a sin such as this to be discouraged *Okpeke* singers have to lay emphasis on it through their songs to avoid further occurrence in the community. Though, the incidence happened in remote past, the singers still bring it to fore as a reminder to the younger generation to desist from such abominable acts.

In the song, the lead singer called on some members of the community as if drawing their attention to the scandal she was about to reveal, and them proceed to reveal it:

Agatu: *Oyi G'enen Ichekpa g'Inagwu*
Otoceh goceh dee num gi yoda loo
Ayi gene-epa imy'oba geiwa lee-le-le-le
Ayi gene lema itela joya loo
Olokita g'enen onya go sani g'enen g'Eba
Olokita W'onya go sani
Ayi g'ene lema itela j'oya loo

English: My Sister Ichekpa Inagwu
Hypocrisy among people make them do the unusual
Two sisters competed over one husband lee lee lee
The Sisters like this are problem to our world
Olokita the wife of Sani, the mother of Eba
Olokita the wife of Sani
The two sisters like this are problems to our world.

In considering the magnitude and gravity of such exhibition of moral platitude, the singer employs hyperbole as a device to express her disgust "Nmamani lee, n'pomani less (I have not seen, I have not heard) (lines 3-4&6). She is quick to point out that incest is an unprecedented sin ever committed in the community. The singer asserts that "the sisters like this are a problem to our world. The statement is made by the singer to express her shock and disgust at the spate of corruption in the family where such act takes place. The singer also uses repetition as a device to emphasize her dismay and disenchantment with the two sisters of the same parents. Several lines of the song are repeated for emphasis in order to draw a moral injunction of the effect of this seemingly abominable or shameless act on the family and the community at large.

In reality *Okpeke* Songs are hinged on every day experience, and are heavily loaded with imagery and symbols of the community. Suffice to say that *Okpeke* Song performances are intended at educating, informing and entertaining the audience. Their song performances are judged by their

functions in the Agatu community. The entertainment mode of *Okpeke* song performances to the Agatu People become the Medium of instruction, correction and information. Before its gradual dimunition, the functions of *Okpeke* Song performances to the Agatu community are likened to the functions of the Modern times electronic and print media. The people particularly, the women within the age bracket of *Okpeke* singers derive pleasure from the didactic aspect of Okpeke song performances. It is noted from the lead Singer that the functions of their songs performed make the performances free devoid of restriction of any category of audience. In a song, *Okpeke* Singer could cover both praise-song or panegyrics, satire or dirge depending on the retentive abilities of the singer on issues at the particular performance. This aspect talks good of her artistry as digression as a device is fundamentally important in oral literature.

As a social commentator, *Okpeke* Singer moving swiftly from one role to another, comment on issues. This is obvious because there are many songs in their repertoire which grow daily as situations and events take place, and as the people think about the ways of the world. In Okpeke Song 2 titiled" "ECe Ipy'abo" (Life is Ephemeral), the singer touches on issues concerning different people such as Omalali, son of ugboga and Iyake, the singer's mother. The singer is forced to pass through a new terrain of life by the wind of chance and the stronghold of Westernization on her society. By this, her eyes became open to the dynamism of human

existence. This is demonstrated in this song. In the song therefore, *Okpeke* singer admonishes a man called Omalali a proud man, to desist from being proud because the world is dynamic, and that life is ephemeral (lines 1&2). In other words, Omalali is reminded about the futility and ephemerality of life. In this manner, typical of Agatu Song, it could be implied that *Okpeke* songs are structured on a binary scale of struggle between vice and virtue. While the singer praises the good doers in her society, she equally frawns at evil doers particularly pride of life. Pride, to the singers is evil which must be exposed in her song. She is of the view that pride is a futility of life which does not add to one's value. This goes to mean that, pride only incurs injury into one's psychology, and also a debasement of one's physical well being. He asserts in (line 7) that: "Apa by'ije Joyi g'obe, ikwu loda kwoi g'obe" (The Lizard only fosters the baby alligator, alligator is alligator). This line also mean that, no matter how well someone apes himself, that does not change his original form.

The creative role of *Okpeke* song performances make her songs original, and to serve the tastes of the member of the society of whom she addresses her compositions. (Parry (1921:1) posits that:

> *Between him and them, there exist a common stock of experience which enables the author to mention an object or to express an idea with the certainty that his audience will imagine the same object or will grasp the subtleties of his ideas.*

In rendering this song, the singer takes up a verse and the group follow immediately in union which produces pleasant melodies. What this means is that, the verses are known to all the singers. The lead singers first invokes the first lines and the group takes it up. In this manner, we see that the leader and the group performed both as lead and chorus.

In the same song, the singer moves swiftly to another issue as the voice of another persona resonated through her. The persona is a lady who expects her lover to pay her dowry earlier but he is seen dilly-dallying. In (line 80 she says: "Ihio gun imoje gen ne go lipu kajam gun lei gwo" (if my lover has no money, he should open up to me let me forget). Her husband to be has no money so, he ceases to see her, rather he uses his mediator to perform his role-(line 10). The persona who is disappointed by this arrangement, appeals to her two relations for intervention particularly, the son of Ojepa and Idoko, the man she addresses as her father (line 11). To assert her personality, the persona points out her redeeming feature as she metaphorically calls herself "Okadigbo". *Okadigbo** is an ancient cloth well priced and valued by the Agatu people in the past. A lady of this category must not be messed up by a man not to talk of a man who could despise her. "*Okadigbo** must be dyed and be pounded in a motar for the dye to be firm on it. The persona therefore, likens herself to Okadigbo* who has gone through good parental atitudinal refining upbringing to be desired by every man.

In using digression as a technique to show her oral artistry, the singers' memory swings to the experience of her own mother in her trying moment in life. She exposes the attitude of her mother, and asserts that her mother is not known for happiness.

Agatu: *Ene gace ka g'okpa ka yeye*
Iyake Enem g'okpa I conu.

English: Other mothers go to stream laughing
My Motehr Iyake goes to stream in anger
(lines 13-14)

This time we asked the singer why her mother had to pass through the experience highlighted in her song. According to her, her mother was betrothed to a man outside her love. As an obedient growing child, she could not express her mind to her parents. She affirms that her mother though, had stayed long in the marriage, never happy in life. Her mother is consoled in the song by considering the temporariness of the world which she referred metaphorically as "a market place". (line 17).The persona admonishes her mother to desist from an attitude tantamount to fruitlessness in life. "*otu nobi le b'abununkpa ch'ukpakwu ma*" (Worries of life is like a wasp stinging a tortoise shell, it wastes its stings) – (line 19.) Wasp is a slender black and yellow-striped social stinging insect that typically has well developed wings, biting mouth-parts, and a narrow stalk. Tortoise on the other hand is a slow-moving land-dwelling reptile with a large dome-

shaped shell. When the wasp stings the tortoise, it only wastes its sting because the sting will not have effect on the tortoise's shell.

The Okpeke singer draws the analogy of fruitless stings to that of "worries of life" which do not yield any fruitful result, rather than compundimg the situation of the person. It is safe to affirm here that, *Okpeke* songs stimulate creative artistic and social growth in the community because of its didactism. The *Okpeke** songs are referred to thematically, but this researcher decides to provide the first line titles. The title is not based on themes because the ideas of what the theme of a particular song is, is not fixed.

The singer makes use of contrast here, especially when she considers the attitude of her mother visa-avis other women on their way to the stream. In order to get her mother out of the long lingering malaise, the singer uses metaphor of a market as a consolatory mechanism- "This our world is a market place" (line 17). Many other poetic techniques or devices are put to use in this song. These include simile which she uses to convince her mother of the fruitlessness of worries in life; metaphor and alliteration. The use of these figurative expressions or language compares the things the singer has in mind with something with which her society is more familiar with. She uses the allusion of a market metaphorically in order to compel her hearers or audience to look at the ephemerality of the world as a temporary rendezvous of people called "market" where they are engaged in

buying and selling, and then die or disperse. The figurative expression is made by the singer to create in the minds of her audience a picture or image of events and situations,

The use of simile as a technique in this song is important. He uses it to demonstrate where likeness is definitely or formally expressed. (line 19). These are two different things compared with one feature in common. The aim of the singer in this respect is to assist her audience to have a clear picture of the concept of similarity. In the absence of drum accompaniment, the singer asked us to clap our hands to produce rhythms. In nostalgia, as the clapping and singing follow simultaneously, *Okpeke** lead singer and her co-singers attempt old dance step. Moved by the dance steps nostalgically, Mama Ikpankele stood up also as they began to twist their bodies, especially waist, legs and hands. This in itself produced humour and entertainment. Surprisingly, one of the singers started crying in remembrance of the good old days with their late age mates in times like this. At that moment, the atmosphere temporarily became sombre for about six minutes, but for the purpose of continuity, we urged the singers to blaze up and put the past behind them.

When the singer resumed from the temporary silence created by the nostalgic feelings, the lead singer's voice came up, this time slowly but steadily. She starts by creating a story of the life experience of our fathers in a song titled: "Oyi nobi l'onya pe wame" (The Dark Boy has Driven

Home His Bicycle). The singer uses the song to tread on the path of social reconstruction of past situations. She gives detail gyneological accounts of each family at Enugba Village, and narrates the past achievements of each member of such a family. In this case, she uses the myths and legend of the people to foster group solidarity. A good example is this song which celebrated three legend's virtues, handworks and determinations for the attainment of social height in the society. In this song therefore, the singer salutes the bravado of the three village legends who ventured out as far as "*Eko*"*(Lagos) in May, 1946 where they achieved their goals. She recalls the names of the first people in Enugba Village, who through their hardwork were able to bring bicycles home from their commercial farming adventures into a far land. At this time, according to the singer, non had ever bought a bicycle in the community. Bicycles were first seen across the River Benue (Loko, in the present Nasarawa State). Few individuals from her village were fascinated by this modern means of transportation, and took a bold step out of the community to hire out their labour in commercial farming in order to obtain the bicycle.

Almost always, *Okpeke* Singer reflects on individual achievements particularly, those who in their personal struggles were able to obtain some pioneering heights. Here, in this performance, *Okpeke** singer uses character portrait which contains panegyrics elements to reflect on legendary figures such as distinguished men who come under the singer's

focus. The image of the three village legends, for instance are variously impressed on her audience. For examples, the dark son of Imanyi is described as: "Oyi g'ahana g'Imanyi (The doyen son of Imanyi) (Line3). Alokpa Oco is depicted metaphorically as "Ejeh degwu" (The gentle Tiger) (Line 9), and Alula Eheda as "Alula g'Abakpa g'Ehagada" (An Hausa born son of Eheda – line 13).

The Singer in this song, recreates legendary tales that gives the village legends a place of honour among men and women. She therefore, eulogises them by simply mentioning their names by pouring encomium on them in order to encourage others to follow their steps. The traditional Agatu society is conscious of the fact that the song as a form of oral art, helps to mould the people's convictions and characters through the aesthetic experience that the songs evoke. The singer were able to tell us that at the time the three men brought their bicycles home, the singers were just within the ages of fifteen and sixteen years old. This tells volumes of their adolescent stage at the period. As a chronicler of events, the *Okpeke* singer in a flash back brings this legendary stories to our knowledge to show the importance of life struggle that leads to high attainment in the society. *Okpeke** songs are historical and the interpretation of the histories is tended to give hope to the people. That is why the singer can use the situation prevailing at any time in her song, though, the tune remains the same.

The moral aspect of this song is to encourage her audience to follow the path of honour. In praising these legends, the singer makes reference to the value Agatu people attach to hard work and achievements. Values are used to mobilize members of Agatu Community for the productive social activities that sustain the community. That is why persona's voice is heard throughout the poem, full of praises for the object of love, her husbands, with whom she had a kind of symbolic relationship.

For the purposes of emphasis and making impression, repetition is put to use throughout the song to compel attention and subsequently aids understanding of her audience. For example line 1 is repeated in line 5: "Oyi nobi g'Imanyi L'onya pew ole me" (The dark son of Imanyi has driven home his bicycle) Line 7 is repeated in line 8; " Alokpa I'onya pew ole me" (Alokpa has driven home his bicycle), while line 11 is repeated in line 12 "Alula g'Eheda Oji gboyi mene? "(Alula the son of Eheda, what can be compared to a Child?). Repetition is obviously a distinguishing feature of oral Literature (Okpewho 78). Furthermore, Okpewho (Ibid) States that:

> *...the oral performer cultivates repetition both as a means of achieving auditory delight in listeners and as a convenient framework for holding the distinct element of the composition together. This device of repetition does not by any means make the oral artistry any less skilled or sophisticated than the writers, it is simply a tool of pleasure and convenience before an audience that stares the artist in the face.*

The background above provides the basis for the use of repetition by the *Okpeke** singers. In this performance, the value of their songs were more

appreciated by us when the singers began to sing in praise of the village legends; or rendered some geneological account of the people. For example, when the name of my father was mentioned in the song of "oyi nobi g'Imanyi" (The dark son of Imanyi - line 2), a quiver of excitement ran through me. In my excitement, I had to pause the singer to tell me in a clearer terms about my father, and how he came about this feat. The singer (Imawa Edoh) the *Okpeke** Singer is my grandmother and an in-law to my father who know much about my late father's struggles and achievement. Therefore, my presence as a grandson reminded her of my father and so influenced her in the rendition of this song. Her explanation made me to appreciate the performance deeper than the other members of the audience with me. This shows that *Okpeke** song like many others in Agatu community can provoke thoughtless generosity in her audience through the revelation of some facts about their ancestries. The song has the potency of putting the audience into deep thought about what their great grandfathers were. The response from us in this sense were ecstatic, very happy, excited and enthusiastic when the performer touches upon what to us are the unknown facts about our fathers.

At the same venue, after a slight refreshment, the singer opens up on her own life time experience with the song titled" 'Oba g'Ojeleba" (I married my love – song 4). The concern here is on matrimonial crisis caused

by the attitude of a husband. The first five lines is a formular used by the singer to draw the attention of her audience to herself:

Agatu: *Elageche Ene g'umama*
Eci nya nun nyinya de n'owu chum otu nee?
N loba g'ojeleba gun gweye
N'loba gojeleba le ca h'ijema?
Ojeleba lum ya doo bano g'eye!

English: Issues of life, the mother of regret
When have I started running that l am tired?
I married my love to be happy
I married my love yet live in regret
My love makes me stray about like one keeping vigil over millet farm

(Song 4, lines 1-5)

The singer uses the second line, "when have I started running that I am tired?' to open up her plight. The persona laments over the failure of her marriage. She fell in love with a man of her choice and the relationship culminated into marriage which she considered a fulfillment of her dream. Ironically, no sooner had she been married than she discovered some bitter pills about her husband which were too hard for her to swallow. Her plight is predicated on the disapproving attitude of her husband towards her. In pains of heart,

the persona starts to philosophize ideas: “Elageche Ene g’umama” (Issues of life, the mother of regret). Regrets in life spring out of issues particularly when one’s expectation or aspiration is dashed. In her, she asks many rhetorical questions to lay emphasis on her feelings for her plight. She subtly presents her questions as if expecting to get the anticipated response - (line 2). This is done to arouse the sympathy of her hearers. The rhetorical question here also reflects the mindset of the persona, and her psychological stress as a result of what she sees in her marriage which she considers contrary to her expected marital life. Again the rhetorical question is aimed at highlighting the singer’s bewilderment.

The lead singer paused the song to explain herself in a clearer term. According to her, she fell in love with a man called Ngbede Ogwola when she was barely twenty years old. The Ngbede Ogwola happened to be my maternal grandfather and who was one of the drummers for the *Okpeke* songs form. While they were in courtship, the expression of love was strong, but after barely six months of the matrimony, the husband’s attitude towards her changed dramatically which brought tension, fear and pain to her, as voiced out in line 2. The first five lines above are direct statement of truth which compels the audiences’ attention.

The persona queries her marriage: why she should plunge her head into regret when of course she married a man of her choice (line 3). The *Okpeke* singer therefore, opens up with the highlight of the ugly experience of the persona. The sudden change in attitude of her husband makes her "stray about like one keeping vigil over millet farm" (line 5). This line vividly captures the mental torture the persona goes through. In the line, she uses the imagery of farming, the occupation she is known with, to make her audience clearly understand how she feels. As a farmer, she knows the restlessness involved in keeping watch over millet farm in order to drive away birds from it. The singer therefore compares her psychological restlessness to that of a farmer watching over the millet farm.

This voice of lamentation in the first five lines registered the unfriendly, excruciating and hazardous attitude of her husband towards her. Her expectation was that once she was married to her love, she would be fulfilled in life. Her dreams and expectations were not realized. In her bewildered stupor, she says:

Agatu: *N loba g'ojeleba gun gweye*
N loba g'ojeleba le ca hyijema?

English: I married my love to be happy
I married my love yet in regret?

The singer was taken away by her own absolute personal feelings that she could not distinguish between illusion and reality in life, hence she has to pass through a "tunnel full of broken bottles in her matrimony. Her laments here, depicts her frustration in a fruitless marriage which also shows that she feels disappointed and discouraged. However, she refuses to sound consolatory and pathetic, so she changes her tone immediately as a resolve to challenge her challenger. She says pointedly, that, she is not a debased woman to be ill-treated by a man, as she asserts:

Agatu: N webu okiye gun, n'woda gojima
N wopa g'ewo gun nen, onye hyum kama ocho nce?

English: I am a shelter of responsibilities, a personality of honour
I am a cloth of many colours, who calls me a sack-cloth?
(song 4, lines 6-7)

In the two lines above, the singer uses the metaphor to point out the salient qualities found in herself before she ventures into marriage. She feels she is not the type to be treated as 'sack cloth' – "who calls me sack cloth?' – (line 7). Sack cloth here, is a metaphor of "a nonentity", I mean a person without any special qualities who could be despised easily. In a direct address, the persona's assertiveness to defend and uphold her value and integrity is found in lines 8 & 9. Her tones become unfriendly when she reflects on the

attitude of her husband (love). She is just entering (peep) into matrimony, and finds herself hiding her face in shame so soon: 'N hei kpee m'ogo, n'cha l'ogotu? (I peeped into a hole, yet hide my fore head for what?') – (line 10).

In her frustrated rage, she asks a rhetorical question in the above line –'for what?". This depicts her anger and psychological stress. The experiences she goes through, particularly, her husbands' hostility on her, and his sudden change of affection for her is what informed another rhetorical question." Onye w'efu dee nan ga w'efungu ne? "(Who is a 'wood' and I am a "wood-coat") (line 9). The allusion to 'wood and "wood-coat" is derived from the main source of fire for cooking in Agatu. Fire wood is a stem or branches of a tree hewn down and cut in pieces to prepare fire. "Wood-coat' is the dried ruptured cover around the wood. The wood is more valued than its 'coat'. When fire is kindled on wood, it is the "wood-coat" that is thrown into fire for quicker burning, but does not sustain the temple of fire. That is why wood is of higher value than it because it is the wood that sustain fire till food is cooked. *Okpeke** singer therefore, says metaphorically and assertively that she is not a negligible person to be treated as a 'wood-coat'. Her metaphorical reference here, helps to underline her earnestness as it related to her personal experience in the song.

In this song, the singer also uses the formulaic repetition in lines 3,4,8,10,11,12. The repetition is intended to show the singer's dilemma in her matrimony. She therefore, employs repetition to mark her feeling of agitation in the sense of deeper anxiety and fear of failed marriage, "I peeped into matrimony yet hide my forehead, for what"? – (Lines 8 &10). The formula is very fundamental to oral artists, including Okpeke singers.

It is in view of the above that Okpewho (1970:78) states that: ' the oral performers cultivate repetition both as a means of achieving auditory delight in listeners and as a convenient framework for holding the distinct elements of the composition together". The repetitions as used in the song however, emphasizes the singers' suffering in her husbands house and convey the singer's helplessness. There seems to be no help from anywhere. This is why, through the song as a result of the strained relationship between the singer and her husbands, there is no overt praise lavished on her husband.

In conclusion, our examination of *Okpeke** songs establishes the fact that the songs belong to women entirely (the presence of the male instrumentalists notwithstanding), and affords them exclusive opportunity to make any comment they were inclined to. The themes of their songs are about every topic imaginable. The *Okpeke** Singers could handle the themes of love, hate, marriage, family issues,

personal or community failures or achievements as exemplified in the analysis of the various songs above. This is in line with the observation by Bruce (1971:34) when he says:

> **…***while they may be 'the interpretative dramatization of experience in metrical language; the experience is not individual but collective, and the poems turn out to contribute one of the traditional way or media our ancestors found for effectively conserving their experiences, the philosophies, their ethos and their histories, in the absence of formal writing.*

The above observation summarizes the functions and aesthetic values attach to *Okpeke s*ong form examined in this chapter. Although, *Okpeke* song-form is gradually facing extinction due to several factors, the current relevance of the songs is still much upheld by the Agatu society.

End Notes

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CHAPTER FIVE

TRADITIONS OF AYON* SONGS

This chapter examines the traditions of *Ayon* songs as part of the various forms of Agatu songs. Song has traditionally been an integral part of Agatu culture as essential element in the ceremonies and rights that mark the significant events of a man's life. That is why it is safe to say that Agatu oral song is a living art-form that negates death and affirms life as it demonstrates strength, the discipline and the power of their young men and women. Agatu song is the life and value-affirming force for the Agatu people (Keil 1979:248). This is obvious because, song to Agatu people is a powerful communicative medium that reflects the peoples historical origin, social organization, religious beliefs and ancestral wisdoms. Being a repository of their values and world-view, their song clarifies social attitudes and promotes group cohesion and cultural continuity.

*Ayon** song-form, therefore, is among the many Agatu song-forms that perform various functions in Agatu culture and social life. The song form is believed to have originated from Aila village in Agatu (source: Oigokponu, one of the *Ayon** singers – 27th October 2010). According to the source, the first man who invented the *Ayon** song form was Tailor Adaidu. The founder however became unpopular when another singer called Ochefu Agbalo came on the scene using the style of Ayon* song form. in the early

1970s. Ochefu Agbalo (Ochefu G'omah) from a village called Edege, supported by David Onche became popular uptil the late 1980s. After the Ochefu G'omah, many singers came into limelight using the *Ayon* * song form to pass their messages in Agatu community. The singers in this category include: Jacob oigokponu G'idaba, Sale Agogo (Rabiu), Utu from Odejo village, Ahmed Adamu (Saa more) from Ogwule village, Esi-madam from Aila village, Godwin Abu, popularly known as Okango from Ijaha village and few others. All these singers are not professional singers and non of them could attain more than secondary education. *Ayon** song-form has mixed thematic concerns and so, has no restriction on themes. However, focus here is on Oigokponu songs, one of the most prominent singers using *Ayon* song-form.

The song of Oigokponu (the *Ayon* singer) constitutes creative social criticism and they function as powerful means of raising people hopes so that they could rise up to challenges in life. His songs contribute to upholding of the social norms of the Agatu society in which it functions. Borrowing the words of Andrzejewski (1985:33) "one of the functions of song being to pass on the bitter wisdom of experience, even if its lessons may stand in conflict with the accepted norms". The main preoccupation of the singers song is to awaken the consciousness of his audience about life struggle and also building confidence in their abilities to overcome social problems. His songs are therefore, a statement of life in Agatu community.

The *Ayon* singer's song serve various functions in the society depending on their thematic preoccupation. He comes from Aila village, a place popularly known as Agatu g'icho (upper Agatu). According to the singer he is about 63 years old, married with many children. (He refused to disclose the number of his children to us). Born to Mr and Mrs Okponu, a devout catholic family who never wanted their son (Jacob Oigokponu) to do anything outside Christian faith, but failed at last to suppress the voice of their son as he was allowed to follow his mind. Oigopkonu's songs therefore, are influenced by his catholic background as he marries the tune of traditional songs with that of the contemporary Christian songs. His songs and its accompanying high tempo beat is more suited to lively dancing and happy themes.

This song form was investigated on the 29th November 2010. Within this performance context, the audience cut across sexes, from the ages of 11-50 years old. The total numbers of people that constituted the audience that evening were 43. His performances are festive. He performs on occasions such as burial ceremony, communal festivals, marriages and so on. His materials are mainly folktale songs. However, this performance is artificially arranged for the purpose of this research. The recording only lasted for one and half hours.

In one of his songs recorded here titled: "Ambule j'onjile (sin is sin), he reflects on the hypocrisy of the people in his society. The songs are

accompanied by *Ikpata**, a king of musical instrument calved out of wood in form of a small bucket shape. *Ikpata** varies in sizes. Some are fifteen inches long. *Ikpata** has two faces, the main face is bigger than the second. The main face which is thirty centimeters wide is covered with an animal skin while smaller face is uncovered. When it is beaten, it produces pleasant rhythms. Mere palms are used in beating the *Ikpata**. In the context of song performance, the small and big *Ikpata* are combined by two instrumentalists, one beating a particular rhythmic pattern, while the other maintain higher tempo beat.

At the inception of the performance, the Ikpata* are played captivatingly loudly in order to arouse the attention of the audience before the lead singer begins to sing. The *Ikpata** subsides for the voice of the singer to be heard by the audience for proper comprehension of the message the singer passes to them. It is observed that, at the end of every verse, the Ikpata* moves to crescendo and then to diminuendo as the singer's voice comes up for another stanza.

In this performance, the singer does not waste time on platitudes. He therefore, goes straight to lampoon the evil doers in the society. He starts with the introduction of the song and then goes ahead to acknowledge his audience:

Agatu: *Solo:* *Ambule j'onjile nen*
Anma a nma menenen, Ambule j'onjile loo

	Chorus:	*Nmm, Ambule j'onjele*
	Solo:	*A pei gije nee? Ambule j'onjile*
	Chorus:	*Nmm, Ambule j'onjile*
English:	Solo:	Sin is sin
		I salute every one, sin is sin
	Chorus:	Yes, sin is sin
	Solo:	Do you understand this song? Sin is sin
	Chorus:	Yes, sin is sin

The singer introduces the theme in an abrupt manner which forms the basis of the song – "Anma, a nma menenen ambule j'onjile" (I salute every one, sin is sin). This beginning is significant to the singer because he has audience before him whose presence has to be acknowledged by paying courteous salute to them. The solo is repeated in the chorus to emphasize the theme – "Nmm, ambule j'onjile" (Yes, sin is sin).

The song reflects a way of life, attitude and habits of the society. He comments on activities which are anti-social and harmful to the normal life of the community. He equates every sin to be the same in magnitude before God which ever way it is committed or the circumstances that led to it. Finding excuse to cover up or devaluate the sin is folly. Whatever is done in the dark is transparently open to God.

In this song, he exposes the activities of witches in the society as they are considered agents of death in the way they 'snatch' the people's children: "oluwoye ga nm'oyi g'ace ha'a, ambule j'onjile" (witches are

eating people's children, sin is sin) – (line 9). Through the song, we are made to understand how the witches carry out their nefarious activities. In line 11, the singer says: "*a py'ogwugwu ga w'ole g'ace, ambule wekpenu nen"* (You turn to owl visiting people in their homes, sin is sin). In Agatu culture an owl is a bird that witchcraft spirits possess and inhabit them and use them for evil. There are certain hours of the day in which the bird must not be seen in the village, particularly in broad day light. If it is seen, the sight potents bad omen for the society. The singer, drawing from the belief system of the Agatu people, castigates those possessed with the witchcraft spirits and turning to owl to kill people. As a social critic and the eyes of his society, oi'gokponu has no fear of the scourge of reprisal from the castigated persons. He made a close observation of the society, and highlight his close relationship with his society.

The song is a direct address to the various categories of evil doers in Agatu society. The singer is conscious of the fact that where evil is evident, judgement is inevitable, as he reminds the evil doers of the impending judgement against them:

Agatu: *Eno g'oci eno g'eco epo giwa eno amome*
Agaba g'ujuda giwa okela gunu le bakpabana ma
Agaba g'ujuda giwa ikpei gunu le b'inyanya ma
Agaba g'ujuda giwa igbenyi gunu le b'owo hy'ogwa ma

English: Tomorrow, a day after, there will be judgement at the end
The lion of the tribe of Judah will come his voice like thunder

The lion of the tribe of Judah will come his eyes like lightening
The lion of the tribe of Judah will come his tongue like rainbow
(lines 19,21,23,25)

In the above lines, the singer resorts to Biblical allusion in warning the evil doers. "The lion of the tribe of Judah" here refers to Jesus in Christendom as a judge who is expected to come to judge mankind at the end of the age. The song is a didactic song that seeks to teach or instruct his audience on the essence of morality. It is purposely designed by the singer to correct the moral degeneration in his society, and for them to follow the path of correct mode of behavior. In doing this he employs the use of satire as a device to convey his message.

In line 26 "Aya ga nmoi g'oceha nee, ambulle j'onjile" (As you went to eat people's children, sin is sin), he exposes the wicked ones on the society whose intensions are nothing other than killing people's innocent children. In Agatu, like most of the societies, in the world, the death of a child is the most grievous thing that could happen to surviving parents. Here, we are told by the singer that the children are the prey of these wicked persons possessed with the witchcraft spirits in his society. To discourage this dastardly act, the Ayon singer has to condemn them in totality in his song. That is why he makes it clear to them in line 28, that; "owa g'oyi iwowo g'oje no…" (the creation of children is not like blacksmitting an iron). The sense of comparison here is obvious considering the value attach

to divine gift of childhood. Iron could be picked by anybody anytime anyday, you want the blacksmith to transform it to something important to you. Children cannot be leisurely and willingly picked up on the street or market. In view of this, those possessed with evil spirit and having the children as their prey must be expunged through any medium available, including the art of song such as this.

In line 41, he lambast some women who parade themselves as Christian mothers yet endulge themselves in fetish practices: "Christian mother" w'ogbo gi j'ije, olaya nma gi jaje" (Christian mother danced in the dancing arena, talisman fell from her pocket). This is an indictment on hypocrites in religious practices. He further turns his focus to men that flirt with people's wives in his society. Adultery is not only considered as a social evil in Agatu land but a sacrilegious offence against the land. A man found in this act faces the wrath of the people and the gods of the land. However, when Christian faith was introduced to the Agatu people, this aspect is also enshrined in the Christian law in consonance with the Agatu belief system. Drawing from the biblical allusion therefore, the *Ayon* singer warns his uncle who is guilty of this sin to desist from it as God's judgement is coming: "Ene g'Adam o l'onya bol'ole nee, epo g'oco gawa!? (My uncle that flirts about with people's wives, God's judgement is coming) (line 64). The singer employs the use of satire in this song throughout. Satire as a term is used in a literary manner, blending a critical attitude with humour and wit

for the purpose of improving human institution or humanity. The singer, using this device therefore, satirizes religious hypocrisy, on his society in order to discourage it.

Rhetorical questions are also used in the song several times. For example:

Agatu: *A pei gije ne? Ambule j'onjile*
Ayi g'ace gb'ota kai gb'ola, a ga bol'ole, oji naga loka?
Christian mother bo wo we ga yee,oji na ga doka nee?
Alikpo ch'owu ga g'ece ca likpo ch'owu ga gico?
Epo g'oco I my'umgolo no a jee?

English: Do you understand this song? Sin is sin.
People's children are sleeping but you're going about – what do you want?
Christian mother roams about – what do you want?
Why do you head for East and your canoe heads for north?
God's judgement does not accept kolanut – are you aware?

The device is employed by the singer in a manner in which his audience would be persuaded to respond in the way he wants. He presents his questions subtly as if expecting to get anticipated response from his audience. His purpose here is to lay emphasis on moral degeneration and to show a deep feeling for it.

The singer puts to use a technique of repetition in this song, particularly in lines 21,23,25 - "A gaba g'ujuda giwa …" (the Lion of the tribe of Judah is coming…). This emphasizes the singer's abhorrence to

religious hypocrisy and to convey warnings to those who engage themselves in such a disappointing attitude. He draws the attention of his audience to the implication of evil and warns that a day is set aside for judgement (line 19). He advises his listeners to desist from the attitude of sitting on the fence – "o w'eyi go w'eyi, o w'aho go w'aho" (If head let it be head, if ear let it be ear, line 43).

In this song, it is implied that lack of sincerity of purpose, and bad behavior and attitude among people negates the spirit of brotherliness and societal development. The singer observes his society closely particularly from the religious angle and he comments on its negative impact on the society. Pretence and hypocrisy are to him a twin brothers that must be expounged from the society. The need for the people to be faithful and to remain committed to their confession is what he lays emphasis on:

Agatu: *A Kaman a w'opela g'oco l'ohili kwe'ela g'oco go*
A wo ga nyo g'ece ma, Owu go ca ga nyo g'ico?

English: You say you are a Christian, be faithful to your confession
You are heading east and your canoe is heading north?
(lines 45 & 49)

The brevity of the song is in consonance with the singer's abhorrence of his society's degeneration which is endermic since its contact with other cultures. So he quickly disposes of the abhorrence task of composing a lamentation.

The singer uses the simile of the thunder, lightening, rainbow, iron and so on to explain the expected destruction on evil doers with the arrival of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah". He makes the statement that "… Okela gunu le b'akpabana me" (… his voice is like thunder) – "… I kpei gunu le b'owo oh'ogwa ma" (… his tongue is like rainbow), to capture the danger his arrival potents for evil doers. This gives an insight into the singer's attitude towards his performance.

While the voice of the expected judge is compared with thunder, his eyes are also likened to lightening. The *Ayon** singer here, artistically and creatively invokes the imagery of destruction (thunder and lightening). In this song, the imagery invoked are metaphorical or figurative. The imagery impliedly depicts the impending calamity, suffering and hardship that will be unleased on the witches, religious hypocrites and other evil doers in the society on the arrival of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah". The singer is sure of this calamity as he does not relent on his appeal or warning to the people "Eci lo a gi degba g'ojachi Kaman moo" – (that time you will shout like a horse, moo (line 67) which is still repeated in line 69 for emphasis. He concludes assertively and rhetorically – "Epo g'oco I my'umgora no, a jee ma?" (God's judgement does not accept kolanut, are you aware?"). here, it is clear that his intensions are more serious than his audience would imagine. The song constitutes a musical unit with the pitches decreasing as the verse draws to a close.

Another song he rendered in the same venue with the same number of audience a folktale song titled: “Agbo g’edunga”. Typical of narrative song, he starts the song as if he is about advancing a story – “there was a certain man, in a certain land” (line 1). He starts in this form to prepare the audience for a ground story. Here the singer narrates a story which serves to inculcate Agatu moral and cultural values into the younger generation who may not have been aware of such values.

By so doing, he arouses their attention, heightens their expectation in the story. The preoccupation of the singer in this song is to inculcate communal values in the people. Injustice is an abhorrent thing in the community which the song tends to capture. The song, though, a folktale, is implied to be a medium which serves to control social behavior since any one who deviates from the social norm will be publicly slandered. He narrates a story almost larger than life to his audience. He imaginatively transports his audience out of his world and into the world inhabited by kings and princes, heroes and monsters, witches and wizards.

It is imperative to state that many folktales and the accompanying Agatu songs provide performances in which powerful members of the community are usually ridiculed and disgraced by the less powerful, thus offering a moral lesson that in human life reckless display of power and influence to the disadvantage of the less fortunate is wrong and that society will not condone such acts. Agatu song is usually used as a tool that is

wielded by the weaker party in settling a given dispute. That is why in most cases, song is constantly used to lower or to raise the personality of people in a dispute, to cry against oppression and to distract an enemy. The song therefore, illustrates the struggle against social injustice and how this struggle is aimed at giving the down trodden confidence in their abilities to overcome injustice.

In this song, we are told about a certain farmer who is poor and hungry with his family. In the process of time he gives his daughter out in marriage to a rich man who begins to lavish him with benevolences. It does not take the poor man's daughter much time to give birth to a child for the rich man. However, there was no love between them. The rich man goes out and marries six other wives at a time, the wives begin to give birth and the sons numbered thirteen including the first son of the first wife. However, as the children grow together as a family their father begins to make his preferences for the male children commensurate to the level of his love for each of their mothers. And because the rich man does not love the first wife, he mistreats and deprives her son of all his sonship rights. The wives gave birth to twelve son.

The period was only farming era, formal western education had not been introduced. The rich man bought and brought horses for each of his sons and refused to give one to the first son – Edunga. The son of the suffering woman (Edunga) begins to cry unto his mother. The farm has a

distance of about twelve miles away from their home. Each morning the other sons would ride on their horses to farm but the first son (Edunga) makes it on foot. Before he could go half way, his brothers had finished their portion and had eaten yam, leaving nothing for Edunga to eat thereafter. The only son that shares sympathy with Edunga is the last born in the family, who almost always, hides drinking water for him and help in working on part of his portions. The last born talks to Edunga:

Agatu: *A j'oda nayi g'adam ya nee?*
I l'enyinkpo wya gbodo-gbodo, Aa maa agi nyo dee, pyee mutu gukpoci
N lenyinkpo ha lokwu gunu ebo, n lihi tola gbei go duu
Igbe g'eho go w'ahapa, n leta hyi jo me
Owoda na yakwei ga w'ole dee, n gi wa gi ba hyo l'owe

English: Do you know what our brothers did?
They polluted water "gbodo-gbodo", but when you go, look under a tree
I keep water under it for you, I also keep roasted yam for you there
The portion of your farm is seven, I have cultivated three for you
When you have finished, and about coming home, I will pick you on the way.

When the first son discovers that his father has pitched his tent with his brothers, he resorts to the power of the supernatural to overcome the injustice unleased against him by his own father. Edunga begins to make incantation throughout on the mountain. To aggravate and deepens the

frustration of Edunga, his father goes to buy and buys a three year old goat for him to ride to the farm. The strength of goat cannot carry a man, so each time Edunga attempts at riding it, the goat begins to cry – "mee-mee-mee (line 24).

The traditional Agatu society is conscious of the fact that folktale song, as a form of art, helps to mould people's conviction and character through the aesthetic experiences that the tale evokes. The son of the suffering wife therefore, begins to seek for solution to his plight. In that process he meets with ancestral agents, principalities and demons who are equally looking for three year old goat for their sacrifice. They understand that Edunga has what they need and they exchanged the goat with a mystical horse from their own coven. On this success, he comes back home with his horse at midnight and heads straight to his room with it. Unknown to his father, he comes before Edunga's door very early morning to mock and spite him, and then commanded him to get up from bed and run to farm:

Agatu: *A woyi o pahyo no nee, awo ni woyi g'onya omowe nee?*
A ce pe g'eho gba me, agbota gagbola?

English: Are you not an obedient child, you son of a suffering woman?
People have all gone to farm yet you are sleeping?

This could not humiliate Edunga because by share providence, the supernatural forces have alleviated his suffering. Edunga asks his father never to mind, as his destiny cannot be determined by a man. With this

boldness, Edunga comes out of his room with his acquired white horse, jumped on it, overtakes his brothers and finish his farm portion before his brothers could arrive. The brother become jealous of him on the realization that his horse is not natural and better than their own. His father attempts to kill the horse but fails. Attempts are made to kill him by both his father and brothers but the supernatural powers intervene and avert his death. The brothers, having failed to kill him still conspired to steal his horse, yet he recovers his horse by the help of supernatural being. They seek to go ahead to enquire of his source of powers and solicit him to help them, but they all died at the end because of their wickedness with the exception of the last born who always helps Edunga. By providence, the first son is able to overcome all his plight through the help of spirit agents who endow him with all kinds of supernatural skills and power with which he overcomes other sons. He there upon, becomes a heir apparent. All the preferred sons of his father died through the conspiracy against him.

The song solicits the audience to suspend their disbelief as the singer narrates the interventions of principalities, witches and wizards in the affairs of the living. He renders this song in order to enthrall and mystify his audience and at the same time amuse them. As the audience listened, there was a total quietude, everybody gazing at the lead singer with the anticipation of what would become the fate of the first son. The audience are enthralled and mystified because they seem to have found themselves

confronted on their own short-comings, dreams, aspiration, yearnings, defeat and anguish. Despite this, his audience still retain sufficient distance, even in their participation through empathy to be dispassionate judges of the events.

The song constitutes a fantasy world, constructed from the cultural realities. Thus the moral injunction of the story is: no matter how the cloud gathers, it cannot prevent sun from rising. In other words, the destiny of a person is not in the hands of another man, not even in the hand of one's father. Through the song, the singer advises husbands to embrace their first wives because they are a gift from God. She frawns at injustice in handling the affairs of family, particularly in a polygamous home.

The singer uses ideophones as one of his stylistic devices in the song. He employs the device in order to convey a vivid impression for achieving a stronger sensual impact than any words available in the language could have done. Ideophone gives a poet eloquence, completes his thoughts and helps him to create a fresh picture of an event. The device is used in the song when the spirit agents present a white horse to the first son". He describes the movement of the horse as "krii, krii, krii' (lines 46 & 47). Mvula (1982:62) posits that: "ideophones help the audience to see, hear, feel, smell, touch and enjoy narratives". The singer therefore, uses this style to prove that he has a sensitive feeling for language a deep sensitive attachment to sounds and their power of vivid suggestion or presentation.

He treats language as an expression not only of culture but also of thoughts, aspirations and life philosophies of the members within his culture. The psychology, culture and historic circumstances of his people determines his linguistic expressions. This is why he exploits the psychology of his people by exposing their hypocrisy in the song: "sin is sin".

In this song performance, the audience's suspension of disbelief is thus secured till the end of the song when the suffering son defeats all his foes. In this song therefore, entertainment and instruction went hand in hand. The first geared interest to the second and the second in turn gives the first its meaning or significance. The song offers entertainment because it is accompanied with *Ikpata* rhythm. It is also said to offer instruction because it is full of didactism. When asked, three young men of almost the same age which could be conjectured to be at age 18 or 19 said, that it was the rhythm of the *Ikpata* aspect of the Ayon singer's performance they liked most, while a few adults, men and women we asked, clearly said that they loved both the *Ikpata* rhythm and the song's wisdom. The singer's audience represented a cross section of the village and so, are made up of persons whose responses reflected varying depth of critical sensibility. At one end of the pole were the critics while at the other end were the appreciators.

The stature of the song performances are fully appreciated in vocal and instrumental aspect as they are set side by side with visuals. The rhythmical movement of the body, the face changing from anger to

happiness, exaggerated gestures, the hand extended in supplication and a considerable range of vocal dramatics all combine to produce a balanced performance. During this song performance the drummers or instrumentalists control the tempo of the performance. The rhythm of the instruments go with the vocal aspect of the performance. In the performances, at times the instruments dictate for singer on what next to say or sing through their rhythms especially when they are making use of traditional materials that are passed from one generation to another.

In this performance, *Ikpata* language in Agatu is part of literature because its transmission is a representation of the words themselves. The relationship between musical form and tonal form as they relate to Agatu poetry needs to be established. Tonal form refers to the tonal quality of language that is, its inherent mustical quality. The song is expressed in Agatu, a tonal language which really functions when it is spoken with its proper tone pattern. Despite the fact that its syllables can be indicated by high, mid and low tones, its musical form cannot be satisfactorily rendered in translation. A tonal language can be placed between speech and singing. It is the tonal quality which allows it to be set easily to music. That is why, in Ayon song performances by Oigokponu, there is always instrumental accompaniment. The *Ikpata* gives aesthetic values to Agatu oral poetry. The power of *Ikpata* and other instruments such as '*oke'* (talking gong); '*oja'* (stringed beaded calabash) and so on in song performances and the

effectiveness in audience's responses to it as art, places it as a means of expression of life in all its aspects through the medium of sound.

In this performance however, the instruments work in collaboration with the singer to provide aesthetic pleasure and entertainment for the audience. At the climax of the performance it was observed that the lead singer leaves the performance to the instrumentalist to charge and to carry the audience along by offering them the opportunity to dance. The young boys and girls who constituted the larger part of the audience find this moment to be the best performance stage for them and the lead dancers. Another satisfying moment was when three members of the audience joined the four main dancers in the circle to show-case their dance prowess since the *Ikpata* was used in the context of dance, entertainment and recreation. The moment of dance here provided for the audience who were present, needed aesthetic pleasure and entertainment. This aspect of performance is what Okpewho (1979:108) means when he said:

> *...members of the audience have the much opportunity of relaxing not only their bodies after a hard day but even more importantly their minds, psychological relief is not the least of the functions performed by oral literature for members of the society. The minds of both performer and audience are relieved of various problems that have been processing on them throughout the day. Some problems are of course stubborn and will not easily go away, but the entertainment at least provides a temporary respite.*

The functions the Ayon songs by Oigokponu perform for his society are multiple. It is obvious that one particular piece of his song may combine

more than one function. His songs are about almost all the facets of the people's experience usually performed in the presence of audience for entertainment, education and recreation. His songs are not mere abstract words but are meaningfully rooted in events that are familiar to the people, and so the songs influence the people in practical ways. This is why his song performances are always a group performance in order to foster group unity by reinforcing in-group values. In the song performance in this gathering, it is hardly possible to see a physical separation between the performer and the audience members. In most times, Oigokponu moves through the midst of the audience in the course of performance as he is surrounded by them. This aspect affords the audience the opportunity to express their feelings either by gesture or sound. The reaction from the audience in this magnitude encourages the singers more to perform

In explaining why there was so much excitement in him when the audience hailed him or lifted their hands to him, the singer said, each time his audience are showing such attitude, it is obvious that they are enjoying his performance or he has touched an aspect of their experiences. It can be claimed that his song performances to Agatu society are of educational value. As the audience are exposed to his songs, the songs enhance their verbal skill, enriches their words intake, and of course enlarge their knowledge of their own society and its history. His song reflects the cultural values of ideas of the people. His songs are hinged at fostering social

regulation through a re-affirmation of the norms of the society. They serve as the watchdog of the society's morality, upholding virtue and chastening vice.

This aspect of argument is captured in appendix 10 titled "Ambule j'onjile" (sin is sin) as he reflects on the moral platitude of his society. He sounds necessary warning about God's judgement during which everyone will be judged both Christian and the likes. The nature of the God's judgement is collective. That is why he uses the metaphor of "The Lion of the tribe of Judah" whose appearance will bring judgement to evil doers in the society. The idea of acceptance and rejection of God is constrated. Time is running out because no one knows when the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah' will be coming, so the singer advises against the need to doing evil. The song sounds a warning, very forceful a warning which compels the evil doers to repent from their follies or else it will be too late. The song tries to wake man from his complacency by reminding him of the fate that awaits him on the final day of judgement. The *Ayon* song form is rich in didactism as it almost always projects the course of morality and cultural values in the society.

Despite the functions of this art-form, the *Ayon* song form has been undergoing changes or is gradually diminishing. The magnitude of changes brought about by inherent dynamism and cross-cultural contact impact on the art-form greatly. The changes that have taken place have undoubtedly

affected the performance and the number of times songs are rendered and appreciated by the Agatu audience. Take for instance, it was revealed to this study that the *Ayon* singer (Oigokponu), before the introduction of various forms of already made leisure, the Agatu audience, particularly, the young men and women used to participate in live song performances. But this attitude has changed in the face of modernity. The young men and women prefer to attend parties and disco with modern instruments such as amplifiers, equalizer and so on in place of talking drums and other percussion instruments used by the *Ayon* singer.

The above is one aspect Nasisi reflects in his paper, "Hegemony and cultural imperialism: toward a historical revolution of African literature" which he said that colonialism

> *…created a new order, it created a new man to penetrate the colonized meant that their whole cultural system has to be violently relegated in status, marginalized or even relegated. Henceforth, the savaged would be speechless. To speak he must now rely on his conqueror's language and modes of signification. To function in the new world order he would rely on his master's voice.*

The above seems to give a total summation of the present state of *Ayon* form in the face of modernity. According to the *Ayon* singer, sometimes he would like to stage performances, but the audience might not be there to participate. And since no singer can perform in the absence of the audience, his desires to perform are always frustrated. Asein (2000:66) also observes that:

> *The prevalent avidity for foreign value and the simultaneous tendency towards self-effacemant and rejection of one's essential personality had to do with the tacit acceptance ... of current notions of racial superiority/inferiority in the nineteenth century.*

Drawing from the above observation, it is true that the appreciation of *Ayon* song form is rapidly diminishing as little or no time atall is devoted to the *Ayon* songs by the young men and women. *Ayon* song which was in the past, mirrored and to express the collective will of the society as well as steer the wheel of Agatu development now drifts to near extinction. Worse still, the socio-cultural and functional role of the singer and his art become limited.

Finally, *Ayon* song is an aspect of Agatu poetry and has been demonstrated through the analysis and proved that it is an artform that is functional, and a living art, geared towards upholding the Agatu cultural values, belief system and social norms.

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

There is always a relationship between songs and society. The appreciation and understanding of Agatu song is predicated upon the need to preserve historical materials in order to supply the events of the past for the utilization of the present. Song-form in time past had always been the means through which the history and the rich traditions of the Agatu people are preserved. Apart from the preservation of rich traditions, the people's song performances reflect their world-view. Furthermore, the way of life of the people is determined by their entertainment forms. This entertainment performances are educative processes to enable the people to better harness their environment.

The entertainment performances particularly, the song form has been undergoing changes as the people experience different historical situations. The song tradition in Agatu society has never remained the same due to both internal dynamics and their contacts with external cultures. Ogbu (1978:5) observed that; "customs and traditions are not static, they are modified or changed completely as a result of interaction with other customs and traditions". Agatu song tradition is a way of creating and enclotting reality. The oral song of the people is a real verbalization created and utilized by the people. It is however, regrettable to note that the song tradition which was a

rich heritage, cherished and utilized by the people is gradually getting changed or replaced by modernity.

Modernity as a concept, reflects a sense of cultural crisis which is both exciting and disquieting in that it opens up a whole new vista of human possibilities at the same time as putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Agatu songs therefore, are not opposed to modernity and progress. It is an art-form that is in continual change and development. Modernity or mass mediated culture in other words is a medium which offers many opportunities to reach thousands or millions of people including the Agatu people. According to Wole Soyinka:

> *To refuse to participate in the creation of a new cult of the self apprehended reality is one thing; to have that reality contemptuously denied or even undermined by other cultic adherents is far more dangerous and arouses extreme reactions.*

In agreeing with the above assertion, it will sound unnecessary for this research to negate the use of new technology in Agatu oral tradition. Afterall, technology if properly interiorized, does not degrade life. On the contrary, enhances it. In other words, it helps to present oral tradition of the people using another stronger medium to express their world-view which also ensures wider audience. Speaking in this direction, Finnegan (2004:208) opined that:

> *Audio-technologies enable us not only to hear but to document and embody music, volume, temposonic, structure, dynamics, intonation or intensity, and multiple ensembles as well as solo performer and bring to notice elements that had before defined out of existence by the prioritizing of that verbal.*

Taking cue from the above, it is observed in this investigation that, from the remote past, opportunities had always presented themselves for Agatu oral song performers to have one-on-one contact with the listeners in live performance. However, with the emergence of new culture from the West in the early 1920s, which introduced some new forms of leisure such as books, television, radio and tapes to Agatu land, the same opportunity abounds through these media. These media are all very important in today's world and that is why Agatu people could not lose sight of them. Kaschula (2003:8-9) posits that:

> *Those extralinguistic elements which are often lost in the transmission of orality into literacy, can again be recaptured through technology. The reaction of the audience, the performers, intonation, voice quality and emphasis, the effects of rhythm, context and the speed of performance are lost in the written version, but can once again come alive in the technologized version.*

The above and many other factors are the reasons why, in recent decades Agatu oral arts have embraced the technologized version rather than the primary orality. It is therefore, safe to say that modernity has made the Agatu oral song possible to organize the principles or oratory into scientific

art, a sequentially ordered body of explanation that showed how and why oratory achieved and could be made to achieve its various specific effects.

The Benue Radio Corporataion and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (now knowm as Harvest FM), are the favourite stations listened to in Agatu. Some of the programmes such as Idoma folk songs, Ije g'aje (4:30 pm) and Idoma evening request (10:35 pm), comes up when live song performance ought to be taking place. However, the frequent broadcast means that the threat which the mass media poses to this art-form is averted. Rather, the changing world has indirectly facilitated the large number of song form in Agatu by providing new materials for performers.

Consequent upon this change, Agatu song performers are now well acquainted with the realities of moving images in video and CD, and how they could disseminate their creation more widely than in the immediate moment and place of live performance. Not many homes in Agatu land have video sets, but usually many people gather in places where such are available. This is the aspect Lawuyi (1994:113) observed: "In recent times family members or groups of friends gather to watch local or important films or home movies that circulate from household to household.

However, it is needless to emphasize that the striking emergence of the new culture into Agatu cultural and leisure life has impacted on Agatu. Modernity has provided an opening for expression by the Agatu song composers, and the opportunity to reach larger audience. It is in this respect Keller (1995) opined that: "the power and autonomy of media imagery, the

negotiation of modernity, and especially the opportunities that these media have presented for the development of new forms of leisure". Media indeed present opportunities for new forms of leisure for Africans, particularly Agatu audience, it however, tends to individualize and alienate the people from their communal and collective cultural practices. Although, to some extent, alienation from a natural milieu can be good for one and indeed is in many ways essential for full human life, to live and to understand fully, one needs only proximity but also distance. Therefore, Agatu oral literature now flourishes side by side with, in the words of Finnegan (208), "literature, dominated by the tradition of the written word, secular and rationalistic; oriented towards achievement and individual development; at the same time, highly mechanized, perhaps bound together by artificial rather than natural links, and with a well-developed technology.

In the consideration of the above therefore, one can say emphatically that the domain of primary orality and the electronically based orality are significant to Agatu people. The slight difference is that the secondary orality generate a sense for groups larger than those of primary oral culture. In the past in Agatu, particularly before the 20th century. This researcher was told that, when there was no alternative to primary orality, the people were group-minded in live song performance at village square and at the designated areas where the song performance took place. It is safe to say that the age of secondary orality presents a striking resemblance to

the primary orality in terms of participation. This is what Walter Ong (1992) meant when he said:

> *...radio, television and various kinds of sound tape, electronic technology has brought us into the age of 'secondary orality'. This new orality has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas.*

One other important point why Agatu oral tradition presents itself to secondary orality is its sense of spontaneity. Both the primary and secondary orality promote spontaneity. This is to say that the performances in both the traditional oral song and that of mass communication culture are carefully planned to be sure that they are thoroughly spontaneous.

It is obvious that Agatu old-style orality of the past is now anachronistic and so gone into extinction. From the ages in Agatu, some important festival such as second burial, marriages, coronation and other social functions were not technologized, they could not be echoed beyond the confines of their immediate social milieu. But with the emergence of radio and television, some of these festivals and social functions involving live song performance and other traditional performances are brought to a larger audience, particularly by NTA Makurdi and the Harvest FM. For example, I was at the coronation ceremony of the 'Ochi'. Agatu (Agatu chief) in 2003. It was a great occasion that brought together Agatu sons and daughters from far and neat to witness the emergence of their new chief.

This occasion attracted the attention of the NTA and Harvest FM for live coverage of the activities such as song, dance, masquerade display etc. The activities covered by these media were broadcast to the wider public. This shows a great reinforcement, reformation and promotion of Agatu oral tradition.

The research therefore, reveal that the song which was the reservoir of wisdom and morality, and which in time past had always been the means through which the history and the rich tradition of the Agatu people are preserved, had been undergoing changes. These changes are occasioned by internal dynamics and the penetration of modernization and westernization. Admittedly, the undermining of the old and emergence of the new culture into the Agatu cultural and leisure life has its effects. While the putative hegemonic cultural power such as video, television and recently internet tend to send Agatu live song performances into extinction, modernity has provided for a new way for song composers, to reach lager audiences. This is so because the media unarguably presents opportunities for new form of leisure for Agatu audience.

However, the research also reveals that despite the benefits of technology, modernity serves as an instrument of oppression of the Agatu child because it severes him from his language root, his culture and tradition. That is why this study aims at correcting wrong impression about the presentation of African oral literature in certain academic circle in the

West. In the words of Onoge and Darah (2008:334), some of their specific theses were:

> *That we had no complex socio-cultural structure such as kingdoms; that we had no institution that could be validly called religions; that the pre-colonial historiography considered state formations, religion and order, as criteria attributes of civilization; a tradition of proving the existence of these features in our past, has been a mark of African scholarship.*

This is why the image of the black man as propagated by the scholars such as George Alfred, Henty, Edger Wallace, John Buchan and others was considered by some African scholars a depressing one. Taiwo (1976:3) posits that: "They have therefore among them helped to establish an unfavourable image of Africa which writers, travelers, missionaries and political adventurers have exploited throughout history. To debunk these stereotype therefore, this study investigates the Agatu oral song in its form and content to prove that Africa, particularly Agatu people have history, culture, social organization and above all literature.

Conclusion

The study has examined Agatu song and its continued relevance to cultural studies in general and literature in particular. The study posits that the song is one of the means through which Agatu people express their world-view. In other words the song genre right from time immemorial is an important aspect of oral artistry which gives the time picture of what

constitutes the Agatu reality and personality. That is, it is an art-form that reflects joy and sorrow of the people who create it. The educational role it performs enables the younger generation to understand and appreciate the values of the society. This aspect of its relevance makes the Agatu people unable to lose sight of this genre as the Agatu people almost always stage song performances in honour of the dead and to commemorate important events in their lives.

The study confirms that the Agatu song is the reservoir of wisdom and morality which in time past had always been the means through which the history and the rich tradition of the Agatu people are preserved. But since the penetration of western civilization into Agatu culture, their song tradition has been undergoing changes. The study therefore admits that the emergence of the western culture in Agatu cultural and leisure life has its effects. While the putative hegemonic cultural power such as video, television and recently internet are seen as part of the media capable of sending the Agatu live song performance into extinction, it is however, agreed that the opening modernity has provided for expression by the Agatu song composers, and the opportunity to reach larger audience is worth embracing. This is obvious because the media of mass communication unarguably presents opportunities for new forms of leisure for the Agatu audience, but this new form of leisure tends to individualize and alienate the people from their communal and collective cultural practices.

The study also confirms that Agatu people have a thriving tradition of oral literature which among other forms consists of tales, songs, chant, legend, proverbs and myths. But the study only examines the song genre for its social and ethical values. In demonstrating this, the study has used various criteria to identify the different kinds of songs performed in the community, especially, the subject matter of the individual singer, the kinds of instruments used, the kind of vocalization adopted, associations to which the performers belong and by the occasions during which the performance occurs. It is on this premise that this study is hinged on the investigation of the aesthetic and other principles underlying the composition, performance and public appreciation of the oral literary arts on traditional Agatu society.

In light of the above therefore, this study validates the fact that Agatu traditional song like other society's songs had been used by song performers from generation to generation as a communicative medium that reflects their historical origin, social organization and ancestral wisdom. The song performers such as *Akpanchala* (Adamu Owo), *Okpeke* singer (Imawa Edoh) and *Ayon* singer (Jacob Oigokponu) and many others in Agatu, compose their songs in performance. Because of their peculiar nature and characteristics of these performances, they cannot be described by using western aesthetic principles.

As it has been proved in the preceding chapters, Agatu song is indeed a serious and dynamic art-form among the Agatu. The song is replete with

interesting themes and ideas which contain the social, cultural and philosophical values of the people. It is educative, integrative and recreational. The song validates and criticizes conduct, and also strengthens social institution that promote cohesion in the society. The people's song also reflects their beliefs as it contains the ingredient for traditional education, a process that derives from the people's belief systems and way of life. This fact is validated in the analysis of this work by showing how the singers derive their subject-matter from the common issues which are essential to the existence and survival of the society.

It is also established in this study that the context determines the selected songs as their songs are a moment of creation, and the themes and arrangement of words are spontaneous. And because of the spontaneity of the themes and the arrangement of words, the singers depend on improvisation in the context of their songs performances especially the Ayon singer. The arrival of an important man or woman in performance arena produces another song. In some occasions, those who walk to the singer to give money during performance produces another song in appreciation to his benevolence. In the songs examined in this study, it has been demonstrated that while the performers compose their songs form memory using the vision they had learned as a kind of mental template, the members of audience are the most significant influence on the shaping of the performed songs. The complementality and fusion of these concepts in

the context of song performance make the Agatu song the life and value-affirming force for the Agatu people. The study posits that modernity acts as a catalyst, saviour and promoter of Agatu oral song. Agatu song therefore, has come into its own more than ever before, though, quite different from the primary oral tradition in the society.

In line with the empiricist approach, the study involves tape-recorded collection of songs performed and numerous interviews were held with the song performers and some members of their audience. The songs were transcribed using an orthography that is phonetic as possible, and translation that is near-literal. The aim has been to maintain a balance between the original sense in the source language and a clear meaning in the target language.

When analysed, the performers' performance skills and their materials show that their works meet the standards of artistic practice found among other African groups. As discussion of the training and career of Agatu performers, as well as the functions of Agatu songs show, the performers are largely non-professionals, but all of them approach their work with a high sense of dedication.

This study adopts the functionalist approach because of its emphasis on the social significance of songs and their rootedness in the society. A prominent view of the functional theory is that songs are meaningful only when related to the mode of living of the people from whose society they

originate. In this context, the Agatu songs preserve certain aspects of culture such as marriages, kinship, religion and so on for future generations. The songs in which these aspects feature, serve the functional role of preserving these values and more from the erosive effect of time and thereby helping to initiate future generations into those cultural activities. Agatu songs do not exist only for the purpose of continuity, but also serve in enlightening the younger ones about the norms and values of the society.

This study is deemed necessary because it introduces the oral tradition of a people that has not been known to the field of orature as a valuable source of qualitative data for cultural studies and literature.

Finally, this study becomes necessary as it is hinged on the collection and documentation of a cultural value that is diminishing. The collection and documentation of this art form will encourage the literary people to ensure that every old theme and motif of African literature will not be completely cast away and forgotten. The songs collected from Agatu local government area in Benue, therefore are an express sample used in this work as one of the manifestations of orature. The songs analysed in this work are an inexhaustible wealth of the cultural stringes of the Agatu people mostly in song performances as they are for expression of aesthetics, imagination, creativity etc, polished through performances for the entertainment and pleasure of the Agatu people.

End Notes

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: AKPANCHALA

Performer: Ademu Owo

Age: 68

Place: Ogbaulu Agatu

Date: 18th November, 2010

Odugbo g'oluba

Odugbo g' oluba loo, odugbo gum
Odugbo g'olugba loo, odugbo gum
Oluba jikwu g'obunu loo, odugbo gum
Odugbo g'Ace ha'a nun ba took nee
Ijagwuda lum odugbo bye
Oluba jikwu g' obunu loo, odugbo gum
Odugbo g'ace ha'a num ba toko nee
Ijaguda lum odugbo bye
Oluba jikwu g'obunu loo
Odugbo gum
Odugbo gum
Ai g'ole galo
Ai g'ole galo
Ai g'ole galo
Ijaguda lum odugbo bye
Oluba jikwu g'obunu loo, odugbo gum
Odugbo gum nee, odugbo gum
Ada gekwu goi go y'ece
Ada g'ekwu ca loinu bye nyo?
Ada nee mama ca w'ada g'alaci
Ado g'ai g'anana
Ai g'anana ga loluba

Oluba g’ece g’oje nee

Oi jelan ni lo bye gb’ela?

Ukpa ni loci ne i loje no

Oka lokonu ni ya labo

Oje i hyolan ni lo bye n’owaa?

Akpandede ijai g’ugwu no

Amaa okwuce we gahi g’ugwu

Uu lee le-le –le –le ee

Enyi gun j’owu me loo, ai g’ole galo lee

Ado gai ganana

Ai g’anana ga loluba

Oluba g’ece goje nee

Oi jelan ni lo bye gbela

Oka l’okonu ni ma labo nee loo

Endiya g’oce ne loo, Endiya g’ole nee

Endiya g’oce ne loo, Endiya g’ole nee

Endiya g’oce ne loo, Endiya g’ole nee

Oi nowa g’oce ne loo, Endiya g’oce nee

Oi goga g’oce ne loo, Endiya g’oce nee

Odugbo gun loo, odugbo gum

Odugbo gun loo, odugbo gum

Ijagwuda jum odugbo nee amoo

Akpa ni loci ne i l’oje no

Eko ni nmigwu ne oyokwu g’igwu

Ela cela g’akoto ne o g’ekwu tig’akoto

Odugbo gum loo. Odugbo gum

Odugbo gum loo. Odugbo gum

Ai g'ole g'alo

Ai g'ole g'alo

Ai g'ole g'alo

Ijagwuda lum odugbo bye

Oluba jikwu g'obunu loo, odugbo gum

Aje ni loda nee lokonu kato

Ikwu l'ola kwum odo

Ondu g'inu tela g'inu, inu pyojiji mee

Onye gwowe toda n'oo ya gila?

A' kajam, oda ni ya me, onye gwowe to gila?

My Inestimable Beaded Jewel

Oluba's inestimable beaded jewel, "my jewel"

Oluba's inestimable beaded jewel, "my jewel"

Oluba's inestimable beaded jewel, "my jewel"

"The people's inestimable jewel I borrowed

Armed robber has robbed me of my jewel"

Oluba mourns her husband, "my jewel"

"The people's inestimable jewel I borrowed

Armed robber has robbed me of my jewel"

Oluba mourns her husband

My inestimable jewel

My inestimable jewel

Our household people

Our household people

Our household people

Armed robber has robbed me of my jewel

Oluba mourns her husband, “my jewel”

This my inestimable jewel, my jewel

A father dies for son to stay alive

The father died and took the son away

The father like this is a malicious father

The worries of the new generation children

The new generation children of Oluba

Oluba of the new world of knowledge

Should the innocent son be ill-treated?

Bettle eats woods but can it also eat iron?

Should mere invocation of words be demonstrated by hands?

Could iron not cooked in fire be shapened?

Not all flying birds can pick up chickens

But all flying birds frighten the chickens

Uu lei le le lee-ee

My art has come to limelight o, our people

The worries of the new generation children

The new generation children of Oluba

Oluba of the new world of knowledge

Should the innocent son be ill-treated?

Should mere invocation of words be demonstrated by hands?

Oh endia the princess, Endia the princess

Oh endia the princess, Endia the princess

Oh endia the princess, Endia the princess

Oh the fair princess, Endia the princess

Oh the virtuous daughter of the chief, Endia the princess

My inestimable jewel, my jewel

My inestimable jewel, my jewel

Armed robber has robbed me of my jewel

The bettle that eats wood does not eat iron

The lice loves rabbit and dies with it

Oh my inestimable jewel, my jewel

Oh my inestimable jewel, my jewel

Our household people

Our household people

Our household people

Armed robber has robbed me of my inestimable jewel

Oluba mourns her husband, my jewel

The insatiable earth has closed her mouth on him

Death has set fire on my soul

The house owner has refused his house, the house becomes dreadful

Who can undo the done?

Tell me, who can undo the done?

APPENDIX 2: AKPANCHALA 2

Olowu My'owu gunu

Olowu My'owu gunu mee loo

Ee lee Ene g'Ademu lee

Olowu my'owu gunu loo

Ene g’Ademu lee

Ene g’obi mama woi g’ijegba

Awuta Amome woi g’Echonu

Olowu my’owu gunu loo, ene g’Ademu lee

Ikwulono g’oga wo ye

Ikwulono g’oga lee

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Olowu my’owu gunu me loo

Ee lee Ene g’Ademu lee

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Oce ni l epa de go loye jalo la

Oce ni l epa de go loye jalo la

Oce ni l epa de go loye jalo la

Olowu my;owu gunu loo, ene g’Ademu lee

Ode w’ode g’oga woyee

Ode w’ode g’oga lee

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ee hye! Ene g’Ademu lee

Ada woi g’oko ne loo

Ada woi g’oko lee

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ene g’Ademu lee

Ubaba g’Achigwu ne loo

Ubaba g’Achigwu lee

Olowu my’owu gunu me loo

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ene g’obi mama woi g’ijegba

Awuta mome woi g’Echono

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ene g’Ademu lee

Oce ni lepa de go loye jalo la

Oce ni lepa de go loye jalo la

Oce ni lepa de go loye jalo la

Olowu my’owu gunu me loo

Ene g’Ademu lee

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Enyi gun j’owu me loo, ai gole galo lee

Ada woi g’oko ne loo

Ada woi g’oko lee

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ene g’Ademu lee

Ijele gbun iye me loo, ai g’ole galo lee

Ochechi g’Andeli ne loo

Ochechi g’Andeli lee

Olowu my’owu gunu me loo

Ee lee! Ene g’Ademu lee

Ene g’obi mama woi g’Ijegba

Awuta Amome woi g’Echono

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ene g’Ademu lee

Ochechi g’Andeli lee

Oje hy’ola me loo

Ijele gbun m’iye

Ijele gbun m’iye

Ijele gbun m’iye

Oce ni lepa de go loye jan loo

Oce ni lepa de go loye jan loo

Olowu my’owu gunu loo

Ene g'Ademu lee

The Owner of Breath

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Ee lee the mother of Ademu lee

The owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

The mother of obi is the daughter of Ijegba

Awuta the last born of Echeno

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath, the mother of Ademu

Ikwulono the son of oga

Ikwulono the son of oga lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Ee lee the mother of Ademu lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Who has two mothers to lend us one

Who has two mothers to lend us one

Who has two mothers to lend us one

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Ode, Ode the son of Oga

Ode, Ode the son of Oga lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Ee hye! the mother of Ademu lee

Oh Ada the daughter of Oko

Ada the daughter of Oko lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

Ubaba the son of Achigwu lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of obi is the daughter of Ijegba

Awuta the last born of Echeno

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

Who has two mothers to lend us one

Who has two mothers to lend us one

Who has two mothers to lend us one

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

My art has come to limelight o, our people

Oh ada the daughter of Oko

Ada the daughter of Oko lee

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

Oh I feel dizzy all over me, our people

Oh Ochechi the son of Andeli

Ochechi the son of Andeli lee

Oh, the owner of breath has ceased his breath

Ee lee! The mother of Ademu

The mother of obi is the daughter of Ijegba

Awuta the last born of Echeno

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

Ochechi the son of Andeli lee

Oh my iron is now hot

I feel dizzy all over me

I feel dizzy all over me

I feel dizzy all over me

Oh who has two mothers to lend us one

Oh who has two mothers to lend us one

Oh the owner of breath has ceased his breath

The mother of Ademu lee

APPENDIX 3: AKPANCHALA 3

Enyi t'ope Ojowe gunu

O ny'onyo gbo me loo

O ny'onye gbo loo

Aya galo g'ogbaulu laa

O ny'onyo gbo loo

Ai g'okpegwa a loya go g'ogbaulu nee

O ny'onyo gbo loo

Enyi tope ojowe gunu

Ano gi'leye go loka degbulu

Igbano ni kela go loka Doko

Ebe ni t'ote go loka d'Eje

Oje yebe g' Onowa

Ije-owo yebe g'oce ni j'owo

Ongwa igbeinu noEwa W'aja g'omede ma

Ewa w'aja g'omede ma

Ebe n'oka oba yo n'ebutu ta ma

Agi W'akpanchala de a-loka d'ogbaulu nen

Eny t'ope oj'owe gunu

Ebe ni t'ote go loka d'Eje loo

O ny'onyo gbo me loo

O ny'onyo gbo loo

Alo ya go g'ogbaulu nen

O ny'onyo gbo loo

The Flowing Stream knows its root

Our departure time has come o

Our departure time o

Let us prepare to go to Ogbaulu

Our departure time o

The children of Okpegwa prepare to go to ogbaulu

Our departure time o

The flowing stream knows its root

A covetous bird needs to ask Egbulu *

A talking bird needs to ask the parrot

A hunting animal needs to enquire from Tiger

Iron belongs to the blacksmiths

The craft of song lies with a good singer

A rope does not bind itself

Beard is the honour of ram

Where there is coronation, there, dust is raised

Before you sing Akpanchala, enquire from Ogbaulu

The flowing stream knows its root

A hunting animal needs to enquire from Tiger

Our departure time has come o

Our departure time o

Let us prepare to go to Ogbaulu

Our departure time o

APPENDIX 4: AKPANCHALA 4

<u>Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo</u>

Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Ohili lo, ohili loo
O l'oceh oye yebo, olotu kwula nehi
Oceh ne l'anya ahapa, o cela go ninci fyu wa
Onya ninci ne ga lihotu j'okobia oye
Iko ni gbota agodo, onya g'oceh gekwu
Okobia ne gbo go jikwu

Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Ohili lo, ohili loo

Olohili johili janu Kaman:
"Nyo ga likpati nehi gba l'okwu lo bye tanu
L'okwu lo bye giha latepa g'owe onyepa otu
Uwi'eta l'okonu ja go wipu g'ole ga wuwi otu ne
Otu lo, uwi eta ne ga tikpati g'okwu ne bye g'ole
Otu okpoce guwa Kaman ufa gbuwane
Iko ni likpati ne wane, imokwu gbota fyongbo
Okwu ne ca w'okwu g'onya g'oceh
Uwi eta ne gbo go jikwu

Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Alo g'ole go l'ohili lo
Ohili lo, ohili loo

Olohili johili juwa oda ni chika go ya:

“Aceta l’eho pye I ga lohili tu go leho ne otu ne
Otu ne a l’okwu ne bye giba likpoci n’eho yanu ne
A lukpoci walala bye l’emu gbo kwo l’abo
Aa l’ola kw’emu gi kw’eho babo no ga l’eho ma
Otu lo, aceta ne kpobece ga l’eho
Acigili, imoce oye hai ga l’eho guwa
Eho ne woda ni kpotuce go chegba guwa ma
I pu guwotu, I l’ukpoci fyokwu waje
Okwu ne cha by’onya g’ocheh no py’otu gunu ne

I gbo go j’ikwu

Alo g’ole go l’ohili lo
Alo g’ole go l’ohili lo
Alo g’ole go l’ohili lo
Ohili lo, ohili loo

O l’ohili johili juwa Kaman:
A lifa y’okwu ne ti g’opa gunu
A lo bye yaje l’opokinu geinu babo no g’ole me ma
Oche l’eka ceinu go l’onya nun mo owoda no loma
Out lo, oceh ga w’ece ga nminchele, oga moce yaje
Oceh lo ma Kaman onyanu pyei w’ole me
Oceh nyinya ginu gunu l’onpya bye by’abo
O by’ohili donyanu oka gen, oga l’okwu oko gwo
Onya g’oceh nikwu aladi eta ne, oceh m’ikwabo gunu
Oka ye g’ebebbe-onya g’oceh pyei, oceh lo nmo

Ohili loo, ohili loo
Ohili wona ma
Ohile woda ma

<u>Let us seek the Wisdom of the Wise Man</u>

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Wisdom! Wisdom!

There lived a king, very wicked and haughty

The king had seven wives; he loved the younger one the most

The younger wife fell in love with a young man

While they were on bed together, the younger wife died

The young man began to cry:

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Wisdom! Wisdom!

The wise man counseled him saying:

"Go and construct a big wooden box and drop the dead body inside

Carry the box and drop it on a crossroad in the night

Three robbers have planned to rob in town tonight"

At the night, the thieves picked up the box

They thought they had met with fortune

On opening it, they discovered a dead body

The body is the dead body of the king's beloved wife

The thieves began to cry:

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Wisdom! Wisdom!

The wise man counseled them saying:

Three man have discovered a honey comb tree tonight

Go and stand the body on the honey comb tree tonight

Tie chaff to a long stick and fasten it to her hands

Set fire on it and direct it on the comb as if she is harvesting

At night the three men appeared to harvest the honey

Suddenly, they saw a figure standing harvesting their honey

The honey was their last hope for paying their taxes

They immediately became furious and struck the figure down

They discovered that it was the king's most beloved wife.

They began to cry:

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Let us seek the wisdom of the wise man

Wisdom! Wisdom!

The wise man counseled them saying:

"Dress the dead body in her cloth

Snick in the body to the king's palace

Sit her on a chair in front of her room as if she has returned

Already, the king has vowed to kill her if found alive

That night, the king came out to ease himself and saw her

He assumed that his wife has returned home

He rushed into his house and picked a cutlass

Without applying wisdom, suddenly, he cut off her head

The wife who die three weeks ago, the king took the blame

The news fled about "the king's wife returned, the king killed her"

Oh wisdom! Oh wisdom!

Wisdom is a craft

Wisdom is an asset.

APPENDIX 5: AKPANCHALA 5

N'nwalu g'Ichenkwule

N l'oka go ka
Abo n'oka gun ne le ma
Iko oye Ichenkwule nyaha ga ye g'ote
Ichenkwule ga d'Ede l'owe
Ede d'oka Kaman o lonya
Ichenkwule Kaman o'lonya no
Onye mmenu g'Edeh lee
Edeh l'onya bye j'ichenkwule
Ichenkwule w'ogbokolo loo
Oca g'owe ga py'olonya mee
O nyo kee gunu kpo nee
Oga d'ikoh l'owe
Iko d'oka Kaman o lonya
Ichenkwule Kaman o lonya no
Onye mmenu g'iko lee
Iko ca l'onya bye j'ichenkwule
Ichenkwule w'ogbokolo loo
Oca g'owe ga py'olonya me
O g'ole gunu kee ti g'anyanu ne
Oleho wa Kaman Ede g'ekwu
Ichenkwule gi kwiye go nyo geikwu g'Ede duu
Oleho oha ca wa Kaman ikoh g'ekwu duu
Ichenkwule ye ga l'opa n'ehe bye nm'ikpati
O l'opa bye l'oko j'anyanu
Ichenkwule ka juwa gi nyo ga l'okwu g'Adawa nyi
Ichenkwule meinu lipu gu nwalu

O nyo galei g'ukpoci g'okpehe tu l'owe ony'eba
Ichenkwule gbo go j'ikwu
N g'ole g,Ede loo
Kwee kan g'ole g'iko loo
Che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo
Ole g'Ede loo kan g'ole g'iko loo
Ole g'Ede loo kan g'ole g'iko loo
Ole g'Ede loo kan g'ole g'iko loo
A lei kwayi gun lohi lohi jam

The Dilemma of Ichenkwule

I have a story to tell
And my story goes like this
On a certain day, Ichenkwule went for hunting
He met Edeh on his way
Edeh asked him whether he has a wife
Ichenkwule answered he has no wife
Onye mmenu Edeh lee
Edeh gave Ichenkwule his daughter for a wife
Ichenkwule who was a bachelor
Has become a husband on the road
As he proceeded on his hunting expedition
He met Ikoh on his way
Iko asked him whether he has a wife
Ichenkwule said he has no wife
Onye mmenu Ikoh lee
Ikoh gave out his daughter to Ichenkwule
Ichenkwule who was a bachelor from home
Has become a husband on the road

Shortly he went home with his two wives

A message came that Edeh is dead

As Ichenkwule prepared to go for Edeh's burial

Another message came that Ikoh has also died

Ichenkwule went into his box and brought out white clothes

He shared the clothes among his wives

Ichenkwule asked his wives to go and bury their fathers

Ichenkwule found himself in a dilemma of indecision

He dazely climed a locust bean tree on a cross road

Ichenkwule began to cry:

Should I go to Ede's compound
Or I should go to Ikoh's compound
Che-che-che-che-chenkwule loo

Is it to Edeh's compound or to Ikoh's compound
Is it to Edeh's compound or to Ikoh's compound
Is it to Edeh's compound or to Ikoh's compound
Take care of my children well, well for me

APPENDIX 6: OKPEKE I

Performer: Imawa Edoh

Age: 79

Place: Enugba Agatu

Date: 22nd November, 2010

<u>Ayi g'ene lambi Epa</u>

Ayi g'ene epa lee

Ayi g'ene epa Imy'oba geiwa le-le-le-le

N mamani lee n'pomani lee

N mamani lee n'pomani lee

Ayi g'adam g'oloje g'Inagwu

N mamani lee n'pomani lee

Otoce g'oce lee

Otoce g'oce dee num ga yoda

G'Enen g'ochekpa g'Ingwu

Otoce g'oce dee num ga yoda loo

Ayi g'ene epa Imy'oba geiwa lee-le-le-le

Ayi g'ene l'ema itela joya loo

Olokita g'enen onya go sani g'enen g'eba

Olokita W'onya go sani

Ayi g'ene lema itela joya loo

Adam Edoh g'Aluba g'Elaigwu

Adam Edoh g'Aluba

Adam Edoh g'Aluba g'elaigwu

Adam Edoh g' Aluba

Odulunya g'oda g'oce gbegbe no

Adam W'edoh g'Aluba

Ogbegbe-gbegbe g'Adam yola

Adam W'Edoh g'Aluba

Oda g'oce loo, oda g'oce ede

Adam Adam g'Aluba

Odunlunya loo.

The Two Bad Sisters

The two bad sisters lee!

The two sisters competed over one husband lee-le-le-le

I have not seen, I have not heard

I have not seen, I have not heard

The children of Oloje Inagwu

I have not seen, I have not heard

Oh! Hypocrisy among people

Hypocrisy among people make them to do the unusual

My sister ochekpa Inagwu

Hypocrisy among people make them to do the unusual

Two sisters competed over one husband lee-le-le-le

The sisters like these are problems to our world

Olokita the wife of Sani, the mother of Eba

Olokita the wife of Sani

The sisters like these are problems to our world

My father Edoh Aluba Elaigwu

My father Edoh Aluba

My father Edoh Aluba Elaigwu

My father Edoh Aluba

Forever and ever my father vowed

My father Edoh Aluba

Forever and ever my father vowed

My father Edoh Aluba

Oh people’s belongings, people’s belonging is dangerous

Father, my father, son of Aluba

Oh the new world!

APPENDIX 7: OKPEKE 2

Ece Ipy'abo

Omalali gw'ogili yaya

Ece I lema nyo noloo

Oyi g'olotu g'adan g'odongwo

Omalali g'adan g'omaji

Abununkpa ch'ukpakwu lee oga lope kpo konu lee

Oba g'Anyame gadam geyege

Apa by'ije joyi g'obe, Ikwu I loda kwoi g'obe

Ihio gun imoje gen ne go lipu kajam gun lei gwo

Oba g'ikwunye oyi g'ugboga

Ogbobu g'onyogwu, ogbobu g'onyogwu j'onyogwu no

Oyi g'ojepa g'Adam m'idoko

Okabido wopa nence abo g'oji yanu iye

Ene gace ka g'okpa ka yeye

Iyake Enem g'okpa Iconu

Ene g'ochacha liwo

Ene g'Echa iya lumbe

Ece gal one w'ipihi

Obi l'onye obi hyono

Otu nobi le b'abununkpa ch'ukpakwu ma.

"Life is Ephemeral"

Omalali is vain gloriously boastful of life

Be warned that life is ephemeral

The son of Olotu Odongwo

Omalali the son of Omayi

The wasp stings the tortoise shell, it wastes its stings

The husband of Ayame, the daughter of Eyege

Lizard fosters baby-alligator, alligator is alligator

If my lover has no money, he should open up to me let me forget

The husband of Ikwunye the son of Ugboga

The mediator can not assume the position of the mediated

The son of Ojepa my father Idoko

Okabido is an ancient cloth, it has a touch of a motar

Other mothers go to stream laughing

My mother Iyake goes to the stream in anger

The mother of Chacha Liwo

The mother of Echa iya Lumbe

This our world is a market place

It is sometimes pleasant and unpleasant

Worries of life is like a wasp stinging tortoise shell.

APPENDIX 8: OKPEKE 3

Oyi Nobi L'onya Pewa Me

Oyi nobi lonya pewa loo
Oyi g'Imanyi l'onya pewa me
Oyi g'ahana g'Imanyi loo
Oyi nobi g'l'onya pewa loo
Oyi nobi g'Imanyi l'onya pewa me
N'woyi gahana g'imanyi loo
A lokpa lonya pewa loo
Alokpa woyi g'oco lonya pe wame
Ejeh degwu oyi g'oco l'onya pe wame
N woyi g' Alokpa oyi g' oco loo
Alula lee oji gboyi mene?
Alula g' Eheda, oji gboyi mene?
Alula g'Abakpa g'Ehagada loo
Oyi g'Ehagada, oji gboyi mene?

The Dark Boy has Driven Home his Bicycle

The dark boy has driven home his bicycle
The son of Imanyi has driven home his bicycle
The doyen son of Imanyi loo
The dark boy has driven home his bicycle
The dark son of Imanyi has driven home his bicycle
I am the doyen son of Imanyi
Alokpa has driven home his bicycle
Alokpa the son of oco has driven home his bicycle
The gentle tiger, son of Oco has driven home his bicycle
I am the son of Alokpa, the son of Oco
Alula lee! What can be compared to a child?

Alula, the son of Eheda, what can be compared to a child?

Alula, an hausa born son of Ehada

The son of Ehada, what can be compared to a child?

APPENDIX 9: OKPEKE 4

Oba g'ojeleba

Elageche Ene g'umama

Eci nya nun nyinya de n'owu cum out nee?

N l'oba g'ojeleba gun gweye

N l'oba g'ojeleba le ca h'ijema?

Ojeleba lum ya doo b'ano g'eye!

N webu O kiye gun, n woda g' ojima

N wopa g'ewo ne onye hy'um ocho nee?

N hei kpe m'ogo ca l'ogo tu? A g'onya ne dee?

O nye w'efu de nan ga w'efungu ne?

N hei kpe m'ogo n cha l'ogo tu?

N l'oba g'ojeleba gun gweye

N l'oba g'ojeleba le cha hijema?

I married my Love

Issues of life, the mother of regret

When have I started running that I am tired?

I married my love to be happy

I married my love yet live in regret?

My love makes me stray about like one keeping vigil over millet farm

I am a shelter of responsibility, a personality of honour

I am a cloth of many colours, who calls me a sack cloth?

I peep into a hole yet hide my forehead for what?

Who is a wood and I am a wood coat?

I peeped into a hole yet hide my forehead?

I married my love to be happy

I married my love yet live in regret?

APPENDIX 10: <u>OIG'OKPONU</u>

Performer: Oi g'okponu

Age: 63

Place: Ayila Agatu

Date: 30th November, 2010

<u>Ambule Jonjile</u>

Solo: Ambule jonjile

A Nma A Nma Menenen, Ambule j'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: A pei g'ije nee? Ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Ayi g'ace gb'ota kai gb'ola, a ga bol'ole, oji naga doka mene?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Oluwoye ga nm'oyi g'ace ha'a, Ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Apy'ogwugwu ga w'ole g'ace, Ambule wekpenu nem

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Aby'ayo loyi g'oce go, Ambule wekpenu no nee?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: A by'abo kw'oyi g'oce kpululum Ambule w'ekpenu no nee?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Aloyi g'oce bye t'akpete lo bye nm'igali ola hyeen

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Eno g'oci eno g'eco epo giwa eno amome

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Agaba g'ujuda giwa okela gunu le b'akpabana ma

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Agaba g'ujuda giwa ikpei gunu le b'inyaya ma

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Agaba g'ujuda giwa igbenyi gunu le b'owo hy'ogwa ma

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Aya go nm'oi g'oceha nee, ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Owa g'oyi iwowa g'oje no, ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Ola num by'oda gun by'abo oji ca my'ola g'ojeleba ge?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Agboyi ne lun chegele ca labo kwum ame?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: N yo cici g'ole g'oce no, Ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Christian Mother b'owowe ga yee, oji no doka nee?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Ayi g'ukwaya linu g'ichochi laa, oji ni doka nee?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Christian Mother w'ogbo gi j'ije olaya nma gi jaje

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: O w'eyi go w'eyi, o w'aho go w'aho, Ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Akaman a wo p'ela g'oco l'ohili kw'ela g'oco go

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: A wo ga nyo g'ece ma Owu go ga nyo gico?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Alikpo ch'owu ga g'ece aca l'ikpo ch'owu ga g'ico?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Aga g'inu g'Aduwa, aga ca y'eci k'oce kpo?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Olambi go cekwu nye b'ekitikpi ma, ule gunu gi cho pyoo

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: O hoi g'onye b'ekitikpi ule gunu gi cho pyoo

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Epo g'oco I lapili no, ambule jo'onjile

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: N yo ne n l'abo kw'oda g'oce no, oda g'oce w'oda g'ela

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Odudu by'ugboga w'ole ma

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Awo ni w'uwi g'oce ne epo g'oco g'awa

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Ene g'Adam o l'onya bol'ole nee, epo g'oco gawa!

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Eno g'oci eno g'eco a gi l'abo pyei k'aje okwokwei

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Eci lo a gi degba g'ojachi Kaman moo

Solo: Eci lo a gi degba g'ojachi Kaman moo

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Solo: Epo g'oco I my'umgolo no a jee?

Chorus: Nmm, Ambule jo'onjile

Sin is Sin

Solo: I salute every one, sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You see sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Do you understand this song, sin is sin?

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: People's children are sleeping, but you are going about–what do you want

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Witches are eating other's children, sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You turn to owl visiting people in their homes, sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You use cane to flog people's children, sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You pointed arrow at people's children continually, sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You put people's children in a tray, frying them like gari

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Tomorrow, a day after, there will be judgement at the end

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: The Lion of the tribe of Judah will come. His voice is like thunder

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: The Lion of the tribe of Judah will come. His eyes like lightening

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: The Lion of the tribe of Judah will come. His tongue like rainbow

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You want to kill other's child, sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: The creation of children is not like blacksmithing an iron

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: The light I hold in my hand, what has quenched the light of love?

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: This young boy carries me on a bicycle and rubs my breast

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: I did not purposely visit a man

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Christian Mother roams about, what does she want?

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Choir girls stay in church longer than necessary, what do they want?

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Christian Mother danced in the dancing arena, talisman fell from her pocket

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: If head, let it be head, if ear let it be ear – sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You say you are a Christian, be faithful to your confession

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You say you are a pagan, be committed to your pagan practices

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You are heading to East and your canoe is heading North

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Your one leg on the canoe to East and other on the canoe to the North

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: If your goodness is as small as insect, you must be rewarded

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: God's judgement has no appeal – sin is sin

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: As I am, I don't touch people's property – people's property is deadly

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: It is smoke that directs stranger to unknown village

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: You that always rob people of their goods – God's judgement is coming

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: My uncle that flirts about with people's wives – God's judgement is coming

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: Tomorrow or next, you will surely cover your face in shame

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: That time you shout like a horse – moo

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: That time you shout like a horse – moo

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

Solo: God's judgement does not accept Kolanut, are you aware?

Chorus: Yes, sin is sin

APPENDIX 11: <u>OI G'OKPONU 2</u>

<u>Agbo g'Edunga</u>

Ada oye y'ebo lei g'aje oye

O w'oheho, amaa, o w'oce g'abo eyeye

O loyinu ocenya byej'olodu oye g'ole o'nyanu

Olodu ne gbo go kp'ojile gi Janu

Ow'ole g'oba g'oncenya ne bobu ne, o loyi ma

Abo n'olodu ne I kp'ije gunun ne, ocenya ne Ihy'otu no

Ada ne gbo go l'onya, o l'onya ehili le waa

Anya ne gbo go mayi, gbo go m'ampule

Anya nu lai m'igwepa

Iko nee eho ohi yoma, inokpa yo weno

Iko n'inokpa ga ne, Ada ne l'onyebe Igwepa la waa

O lonyeba ko j'ayinu Igw'epa, ota go je joyinu go bu

Oyi g'onya omowe gbo go j'ikwu hy'enenu

Eho guwa ne le b'imale Igwepa ma

Gbobu goi omowe ne gi g'atepa go we du,

Ayi g'Adanu l'eho guwa hi,l'ihi guwa t'ola le

I l'enyinkpo wya gbodo-gbodo gbobu de no gi wa ma

Oyi amome g'Adanu kajanu Kaman, A joda nayi g'Adan ya nee?

I l'enyinkpo wya gbodo-gbodo, Aa maa a gi nyo dee, pyei mutu g'oya

N l'enyinkpo ha l'okwu gunu ebo, n l'ihit'ola ebo gbei go duu

Igbe g'eho go w'ahapa, n l'eta hyi jo me

Owoda nay a kwei gi w'ole dee, n gi wa gi ba hyo l'owe

Edunga gbo go t'inagwu gboo-gbo lei g'efu

Abo n'Adanu I joda no gi ya gen ne, o lopi g'ihai eta la go ce g'eho

Iko n'eje I j'opi, opi gbo go degba, mee-mee-mee

Alekwu ti g'Anjenu tete ka tei g'opi gi hayi eta

Alekwu I gaa duu Anjenu I gaa duu, Enbili l gaa duu

I kajanu Kaman oyi g'onya omowe, A ga g'ebenya ti g'opi nee

O Kaman, Alo wayi Igweta, Adam l'onyebe lajayi g'Adam lopi la jam

N ga tei g'oce ni gi l'opi ne bye dee go l'onyebe la jam

Alekwu ti g'Anjenu ti g'Embili ce toha cincin

I lo byeg'owe g'olekwu l'onyebe hyogba janu go mo

I ka janu go moha ni h'otu de go je

Edunga l'abo j'onya n'ehe kpeekpe, olaya ga pa l'oko gunu

Oha lo no jema. I l'ajam kpo janu l'oka Janu

O gi w'ole menene, oj'ekwepa g'otu

I ko nee okatakpo I yo we no

O l'onyebe bie gboololo ginu gunu gbo g'ogweye

Abo nei nya, adanu l'abo j'ongba g'inu g'Edunga gbaa-gbaa

O kanam Awoi o' paho no ne? A wo ni woi g'onya omowe ne!

A ce pe g'eho gba me, agbota ga gbola?

Edunga Kaman, Adam, Akwula no. ane wolo gomepa gunu?

Oce ni j'oci g'omepa gunu gowa gi ka jan la

Edunga b'ece nmini ti g'onyebe nehe gunu

Onyebe l'igbenyi kwo akolo kw'ohi kwo'ikpapi

Agbo g'Edunga l'ombili ta kpa gei g'onyebe gunu

Aa po krii-krii-krii

Iyawu g'onyebe gunu yola – krii-krii-krii

Onyebe gai g'Adenu gi watepa duu, Edunga ye ga l'Eho gunu hi kwei

Hibi onyebe gunu w'onya g'Anjenu, onya g'Embili

Ai g'Adanu gbo go ch'onu Kaman adawa l'onyebe olan la j'Edunga

Oga luwa ya toha l'onyebe ogbodode la jawa

Oce yala de no h'ece otu ne dee?

Adawa l'obo gunu bye g'olonyebe g'edunga nmo

Amaa, olaya ni pa l'onyebe ne ok one, o ce duu nmo gi la no

Ai g'adamu ya gboogbo gi l'Edunga nmo O lei juwa no

Adawa ga ye gebe g'Embili ti g'Ekwunbi,
Oluwa pa b'ohu eho ma gi l'Edunga nmo
Iko n'onyebe gunu ga pyei nm'eho lo
Iko lo nai g'Adanu ka nyo g'eho aba'abo ma
Abo n'onyebe gunu gboba luwa, o l'ikpo gb'ene-hanche oye
Ene-hanche ne ya "Hee, hee, Ela ne wela gun le!"
"Hee-Hee, obagidi g'oce n'adanu lace ohu-eho kpo kikpo g'Akpa
Ka gbei gunu gi l'onmo. My'ataba g'enwu ne.
Akpa na gi cho lo, Iko na gboba lo b'ikpo ahapa kwee ahata ma
L'ataba g'enwu ne bi hyaa, Agw'epa no
A l'epa gwa, Ekwunbi ti g'embili gi l'onmo
A bo no gboba l'akpa b'ikpo ahapa ma
O l'ajan pyi lonyebe gunu kwuha ebo
O l'abo j'Ataba lo, o l'okeke kwo lo oye b'ipu
O l'ataba wa lofu, o lopyi t'enwu hyaa
Ekwunbi oh'epa c'eho g'ekwu o kwo'kwu ebo
Ekwunbi oha ni hoi ne ka jeiwa Kaman, "Aa m'ohu ni gw'alo nee"
"Oda ne nm'ebe galo, alo ca ka kpodo ma?
Edunga l'onyebe gunu kw'aje go m'oda ni gi ya ti g'okwu guwa
Embili l'okopi hye, I l'ibe hye l'opi tokwu guwa okonu
Ai g'Adanu lokonu ja ti g'Embili, Anjenu ti g'Ekwunbi
I l'onyebe g'Edunga bye g'owe g'olekwu
Agbo g'Edunga gbo go j'ikwu, "Aa mo, Aa mai g'Adan
Aa mai gAda ni wai g'Enen nee?
Oda ni wagun ca'igbela j'alece kpo?
I kajanu Kaman ai g'Adanu l'onyebe by'etu lowe g'olekwu
Oye g'Embili kajanu, "Iko na ye g'ebe n'Embili j'onyebe jo loo
O w'oda na l'onya ehili gb'aluka, om'ahapa lo a go yo la
Agbo g'edunga gbo go k'ela:

“N l’opi gun ja’a na l’onyebe jam maa
Aa la gun nmo me, Aa ca l’onyebe gun bye?
I lo ikpei gbo Kaman go nyo ga l’abo kw’onyebe gunu
O nyo gboololo ga l’abo kw’onyebe gunu l’oda gunu bye
O nye gunu nmebo ne, o ga d’eho g’epi ta
O gbo go w’epi ha, o l’owu tuwe gunu lo gbo c’onyebe
Epi nalo ka ka nee, o fa gunu ni bi dee ni yo chuga ma
O w’ole gunu nee, o l’epi je jai g’Adanu
Ai g’Adanu ka janu goluwa byi g’eho g’epi ne
O ka juwa Kaman onyebe guwa I nyo g’ebo gila no
Ai g’Adanu y’ogba to cai goluwa byi nyo A maan I gi l’onmo
Abo n’igbo g’onyo ne, Agidigbe oye ga t’owe ebo
Edunga ka juwa Kaman, alekwu, Embili ti g’anjenu ki piipu
Agidigbe lo n’ibyi de n’ije Kaman ace ka w’oluwa ma
“A gi gbedo l’ikpo kwo no”
Oi g’Adanu oha ni kwo ikwei ne Kaman:
“Edunga amgbe na gaka jalo ma”
Abo no l’ikpo gb’Agidigbe ne, Anjenu ti g’embili gbo go nuwa inya
Edunga Kaman, Ai gAdan abo na’aya mee, a ya menen
Edunga lei g’onyebe tu, onyebe gunu gbo g’owu
Inya g’onyebe ne n’ibi y’owu g’ico ma
Onyebe ne nyinya kee, o j’atakwu g’ico banajaa
O lincele nmo, ihu wa gata pataa
O ye kee, o y’okwu gico l’emi kwu, o py’efu layii
Anjenu ka jeiwa Kaman owoda nawa kwuce no
Nawa ga l’eci cincin kpo janu ne ogi lode y’awa
Abo ni kwuce nmebe g’edunga ne, I ga dai igwepa
Anjenu luwa nmo gba ga hoi amome ni t’edunga abo ne
Edunga ka janu go l’ombili ta gi c’onya gunu

Oi lo fofunu w'ole ti g'Edunga ma

Abo n'adanu ya toi ne, n'oi ne I ga yaton ne ko

Onye n'oco c'onu janu ne?

Ohibi lo, owoda n'onyawo I yolambi no

N' aiwo I y'olambi no, oco gi c'onu jo

Abo no t'onyanu ti g'oinu owe ihyayi I'gw'eho ne ko?

O mama l'ile g'ai no py'otu guwa ne gee?

Ohibi lo, Anma ai genem, onya g'afulei go na le lo

Aa yo olambi no, kwocekwu yo olambi

Agbo g' Edunga

There was a certain man in a certain land

He was a farmer but a poor man with his family

He offered his daughter to a rich man in marriage

The rich man began to provide food items to him

As his daughter joined her husband, she gave birth to a child

As the rich man did not pay her dowry, he did not love her

The rich man began to marry, he married six wives at once

The wives began to give birth, they began to give birth to twins

The wives gave birth to twelve sons

This period was only farming era, there was no formal education

When education was introduced, the man brought twelve horses for his sons

He shared them among the sons, he refused to give Edunga

This son of the suffereing woman becan to cry unto his mother

Their farm has a distance of about twelve miles

Before the suffering son could go half way

His brothers had finished their work, and had finished eating yam

They polluted the drinking water before he could come

The last born told him, "Do you know what our brothers did?

They polluted water “gbodo-gbodo”, but when you go, look under a tree
I keep water under it for you, I also keep roasted yam for you there
The portion of your farm is seven, I have cultivated three for you
When you have finished, and about coming home, I will meet you on the way
Edunga began to make incantations throughtout on the mountain
As his father was confused on what to do, he brought him three years old he-goat
When the He-goat got tied, it began to cry, - “Mee-Mee-Mee”
Ancestors and demons were initiatially looking for he-goat
Ancestors met him, principalities met him, demons met him
They said to him, the suffering son, where are you going with this he-goat
He said to them, we are thirteen, my father bought horses for them and bought a he-goat for me
I am looking for who will take this he-goat and give me a horse
The ancestors, principalities and demons agreed together
They took him to the death path and lined up horses for him to see
They asked him to make his choice
Edunga tapped the white horse “kpeekpe”, there is talisman on its neck
He chosed that one, and was given riding materials
Before he returned home it was twelve mid-night
At this period there was no wooded doors
He took the horse straight to his room rejoicing
At day break, the father tapped his bamboo door “gbaa-gbaa
He said, “are you not an obedient child? You son of a suffering woman”
“People have gone to farm yet you are lying there sleeping?”
Edunga said, ”Father, don’t mind; who is my God?”
Whosoever can determine his neighbour’s destiny should tell me
Edunga came out of his house with his white horse

The horse kissed his rips, kissed his loins, kissed his penis

Agbo g' Edunga jumped on the horse

You hear the movement – krii-krii-krii

That is the movement of his horse, krii-krii-krii

Before his brother's horses could go half way, Edunga had finished his portion

Because his horse belongs to principalities and demons, and not a normal house

His brothers were jealous that their father bought a better horse for him

And deceived them by given them useless horses

What can one do to please the world?

Their father took his spear to kill Edunga's horse

But the talisman on the horse's neck made the horse unkillable

The brothers deviced all means to kill Edunga but to no avail

Their father met demons and principalities and employed about

One hundred of them to kill Edunga

When his horse was returning from farm

It was then his brothers were just going to the farm

When his horse was approaching them, his legs stumbled on one old woman

The old woman said: "Hee-Hee, this matter does not concern me

"Hee-Hee; what a pride of a son who his father hired hundred assassin under the bridge awaiting to kill him. Take this snuff tobacco.

The next bridge before you, when you come near it like seven or eight steps

Pick the snuff and inhale it deeply, do not inhale it twice

If you inhale twice, principalities and demons will kill you

As he approached the bridge like seven feet

He drew the anchor of his horse to stop it

He opened the tobacco snuff, hit it with his elbow, embraced it

As he opened it, he fetced some and deeply inhaled it

About forty-five demons died there instantly

The remaining demons reasoned together and said, “can we see how we are defeated”?

The demons said, “the power came from us to him, why persecuting him

Edunga stopped his horse to spy on the demons for their next line of action

The demons cut “okopi” and “ibe” squeezed water out to the mouths of their deads.

His brother again conspired with demons, Ancestors and principalities

They stole the bicycle of Edunga and took it to the death path

Agbo g’edunga began to cry: “can you see the wickedness of step-brothers?

“can you see the step-brothers that are not real brothers?”

“Should what belonb to me cause friction among people?”

He was told that his brothers had taken his horse to the death path

One of the demons told him, “when you go to where demons gave you the horse

When you count six horses, the seventh horse is your own”

Agbo g’Edunga began to soliloguise:

“I gave out my He-goat in exchange of my horse

You killed my own and then took away my horse?

They tied his face and he was asked to touch his horse

He went straight, touched his horse and took it away

When he left there, he met a garden-egg farm

He began to plug them, gather them and took them home\this garden-egg was what is being transformed into modern sugar

On his return home, he gave part of the garden-egg to his brothers

His brothers asked him to take them to the farm

He declared to them that their horses were not strong to reach the farm

His brothers insisted that he must take them to the farm

As they were going, there was a trap on the road

Edunga informed them of the habitation of the demons far inside
They used the trap to know when enemies approach their home
“your legs must not touch the trap” he warned
His step-brother who was against him said:
“Edunga, you are telling us lies”
As his legs touched the trap, suddenly the evil forces started to pursue them
Edunga said: “my brothers, run for your dare lives
Edunga jumped on his horse, the horse began to fly
It was the speed of the horse, aeroplanes were measured
The horse ran a while and opened his laps
The horse urinated and urine turned to a big river
The horse again ran a while, excreted and it turned to a mountain
The evil forces resolved that if they did not desist from pursuing him
And since his power came from them, he will harm them
As they turned from pursuing Edunga, they met the other twelve brothers
The evil forces destroyed them all, exception of the last born who helped Edunga
Edunga asked him to jump on his horse
The boy was the only brother that came alive with Edunga
As the father despised Edunga, and he did not despise his father
Who did God punish?
For this reason, if your wife did not offend you
And your children did not offend you, God must punish you for injustice
As the man persecuted his son and his mother for fifteen years
Did he gained the other twelve preferred children?
For this reason, please my brothers, that your first wife,
Do not wrong her even if she offends you.

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