

ABIGBO SONG OF MBAISE: AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY OF ITS NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

EMMANUEL A. IWUOHA

Abstract

This paper looks at the socio-cultural significance of the Abigbo Song of Mbaise people of Imo State. It traces the meaning and origin of Abigbo Song to the ancient time of the people. The writing looks at the traditional essence of the music and song in checking the social ills and other human excesses from the religious and political viewpoints. The songs are analyzed and interpreted in relation to what obtains in the contemporary society. The first song condemns some of the practices by some spiritual leaders who give Holy Communion to people with questionable character. The second song centres on civil disturbances in the country due to ethnic political and religious differences. The third song touches on corruption in all walks of life in Nigeria. While the fourth and last song dwells on the disappointment of the masses by the elected political class who do not live up to their pre-election promises to the people. The paper concludes, by identifying Abigbo Song as a weapon against the social and political ills that plague not only the immediate community of the artists but also the Nigeria nation by extension.

Introduction

Challenges of our contemporary time provide ample opportunities for writing and performance by creative artists. Such challenges are on relevant issues that touch on the people and the society. Social and political developments as well as leadership problem in our nation today are among the topical issues of concern to the people. These problems mostly hinge on corruption. Chinua Achebe captures the corrupt picture of the Nigerian nation when he asserts that Nigeria corruption has gone beyond the alarming and entered the fatal stage. He adds; "Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed" (58). Such areas are captured and adequately addressed by the Abigbo songs of Mbaise people of Imo State.

Meaning and Origin of Abigbo Music/Song

The word 'Abigbo' means "abu Igbo" in Igbo language, which means "Igbo song". "Abigbo" is the traditional music of Mbaise people of Imo State of Nigeria. The origin of the music is traced to the ancient time of the ancestors. Information collected from Mr. Linus Amadi of Egberede na Eziala in Umunneato autonomous community in Aboh Mbaise LGA, holds that Abigbo music came into being in Mbaise to check the evil practices by people in the community, by exposing the perpetrators of such evils and condemning such through songs. This is achieved through the songs' identification and condemnation of people who engage in such evil acts which the society abhors. Such detestable behaviours in the community captured and condemned in Abigbo songs include stealing, poisoning, murder, incest, adultery, raping and other anti-social acts identified among the citizens.

Robert Onuoha of Umunneato autonomous community Mbaise, in his own historical account on Abigbo music in Mbaise says the content of the song and music is historical and satirical, and cuts across religious, cultural, political and social boundaries. The Abigbo group, he asserts, picks its information from what goes on in the society at the political, social and religious levels. The essence is to inform people of what is happening in the society- the social ills, with a view to stopping them. Defining 'folk music' as an "expression of a group of kindred people bound together by ties of race, language, religion or custom", Leon Dallin finds in the music composition, songs and dances originating from the common people (287). He posits that songs are on mundane phases of everyday life with genuine texts not foreign to the genre. Abigbo song originates from the Mbaise people of the rural area.

Onuoha says a lot of lessons are learnt from Abigbo songs, some of which are direct and some in the form of satire. The wordings of the songs are so coined that they look idiomatic. The composition of the song may be full or half way for listeners to take judgment. They may start a story and leave it half way expecting listeners to complete it. For instance, the song may start to tell the story of politicians destroying the society, without mentioning names. At the end of the song they may hang it and say:

"nde anyi kagha amarala"

"those we are referring to know"

The song may begin with a statement like:

"Enwere kweshon anyi na-aju"

"there is a question we are asking"

The above lines entertain the public by creating a scene of capturing the attention of the audience especially when they want to draw an analogy between what happened before and what is happening at present. For instance, what is the difference between "Ochichi Mbakwe" and "Ochichi di ugbu a"- the government of Mbakwe then and the present government in Imo State? The song states and compares the achievements of the previous governors and the present. Such statements leave the audience listeners with food for thought.

Abigbo songs are satirical in nature. Hugh Holman explains satire as a literary technique which combines a critical attitude with humour and intelligence with a view to correcting and improving humanity. "The New Encyclopedia Britannica" defines satire as "a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured". It adds that satire exists when wit is used in exposing something foolish or vicious to criticism whether in song or sermon, in painting or political debate on television or in the movies (173). J. A. Pope in Cuddon (2014) sees a satirist as a "self appointed guardian of standards and ideals of morals as well as aesthetic values". As a satirist, he writes corrects and ridicules the "follies and vices of society" by bringing "contempt and derision upon aberration from a desirable and civilized norm" (832).

F.U. Chima traces the origin of satirical songs in Africa to the early stages of man when he used it to check his fellows on matters that deserve "strict obedience to the societal norms". Satirical works therefore, serve the important purpose of making the people live in conformity with the norms of the society for good social relationship to exist among the people.

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Some Abigbo songs visit the area of students' behaviour in academic institutions of learning by alerting parents of what happens in the institutions, such as; students indulging in cultism, exam malpractice, indecent dressing, sexual immorality, pre-marital pregnancy and other vices, with a view to informing parents to watch out.

The song may centre on married women who starve their husbands. The song alerts men to watch when they see such signs. For instance a song praises hoteliers and fast-food dealers for coming into rescue of the men who are suffering in the hands of their wives. Abigbo song advises such men to go out and eat in the fast-food centres.

At government level, Abigbo captures the unequal distribution/provision of government amenities to the people by the politicians in power who tend to be lopsided in providing the necessary facilities to the citizens. Here we note the continuity between traditional political poetry and poetry of modern politics in which Ruth Finnegan sees poetry serving as pressure to "those in authority" and being used to "comment on local politics". (273). The songs bring such ugly practices by the ruling politicians to public knowledge for reaction by those neglected. Issues of marginalization and unfulfilled pre-election promises by ruling politicians are addressed by songs in this discourse.

Abigbo traditional music group is composed of only male members from the age of twelve years and above. The music instruments are: Ekwe (slit), Ogwe (long drum), Nkelebe (small drum) Oyo (Maraccas) and whistle. The combination of sounds produced by the above instruments produces a rhythm. While the song goes on, there is a soft music at the background. At the end of the message, there is a full grown dance and dancers follow the rhythm of the music. The song is tuned first by one person and the response comes after the tuning, by the entire dancers.

Statement of the Problem

The areas of Oral literature and Igbo studies have not received adequate attention from students and researchers at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This fact urges the researcher to move into this seemingly neglected area for exploration to unearth the academic materials for study in the area. This is to stimulate the interest of would be researchers to do

their studies in the area of Oral literature. Some students attribute their failure to research in Oral literature to lack of materials in the area. This study is undertaken as a step to providing some of the needed academic materials for students to access for writing. Some people erroneously believe that the Igbo and African people have nothing positive to contribute for the benefit and advancement of the society in terms of culture. Our study here is aimed at proving such people wrong through Abigbo renditions and how such can profer solution to social, political and religious problems in our country for the emergence of a better society and nation. Social vices in our society today have threatened human existence. Abigbo song addresses such vices with a view to effecting a positive change in the society.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses the major social, political and religious problems of the society with a devastating attack on "corruption" which has eaten deep into the fabrics of our society. It helps to reduce or eradicate the social ills in the locality and nation. Our study on Abigbo is significant because Abigbo songs check the excesses of our spiritual and political leaders, and bring them to order. The songs are worth studying because they aim at appealing to the conscience of the nation's citizens to change for better. The study will set the Nigerian citizens free from corruption and other social ills.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

- i. To condemn and eradicate evil practices and their perpetrators in the society.
- ii. To have a better society and nation.
- iii. To ensure religious institutions serve the purpose for their establishment.
- Iv. To have true spiritual and secular leaders who are not selfish and materialistic.
- iv. To have selfless and patriotic citizens.
- v. To eradicate evil practices that have plagued our nation.
- vi. To inform people of the social ills within them with a view to eradicating such ills

Scope of the Study

This study is focused on the Abigbo traditional song of Mbaise people of Imo State, the analysis of the song and its national significance. All songs presented and analyzed in the context of this study are rendered by only Abigbo group. The interpretation of the songs is in relation to the society or environment within which Abigbo operates and the Nigerian nation by extension.

Review of Related Scholarship

Theoretical Framework

Chinyere Nwahunanya sees good literature as one that is capable of liberating the society through its expression of observations of fallings of the society. Such literature, Nwahunanya asserts, should "point the way forward in the right direction". (33) This study is anchored on the theory of functionalism. Ashley Grossman identifies this theory with works of Emile Durkheim, whose interest was in how the society will be stable or how social order is possible. Herbert Spencer and Talcott Parsons are among other theorists associated with the functionalist theory. For Grossman, functionalism interprets each segment of the society in relation to how it contributes in the over all stability of the entire society. Durkheim sees society as an organism which each component part plays a vital role in the functioning of the organism.

Abigbo group in her songs plays the necessary role for the realization of a better society and nation.

Conceptual Framework

The Abigbo songs address religious, social, political and economic issues of concern to the people.

Religious: Among songs in this aspect is one which condemns the practices of some of the spiritual leaders of our religious denominations who accord honour in the church to wealthy people with questionable character in order to benefit from them. Such spiritual leaders do this to get material and cash benefits from such people whose means of wealth acquisition are questionable and against religious teaching. Such ugly practices by some religious leaders are condemned in Abigbo songs. Below is one of such songs against priests who give Holy

Communion to known armed robbers. The song titled "Onye nyere onye Egbe Ujishi Oriri" reads:

"Onye nyere onye Egbe Ujishi oriri",
Onye lere onye egbe ujishi nye ya oriri
O gadu eluigwe o ga-akwusi ohi?
O gakwa izu ihe o huru n'eluigwe
O gakwa izu Chineke ohi n'aka
Ya aburu ihe ga ifu uka n'eluigwe
Onye ohi enwee mmete
Onye huru ya n'uzo m'obu n'ama
Ya gbawa oso
Ka o hapu imechi ama

Translation

"He that gives Holy Communion to an armed robber"
He who gives Holy Communion to an armed robber
Will he stop robbers from getting to heaven?
He will steal whatever he sees in heaven
He will steal from the hand of God
And that will become a case in heaven
Armed robber has no remedy
Whoever sees him at home or away
Let him run
In order not to terminate the lineage.

The above song condemns the practices of priests who connive at the unchristian practices of some known armed robbers and other wealthy and influential people with dubious character, and give them Holy Communion in their churches. Such spiritual leaders do this to please such people and to get some rewards from them, instead of calling such people to the right track. This ugly practice and failure of the spiritual leaders prompted Wilfred Cartey to assert that the church has defaulted as the director of the "spiritual and moral well-being" of the people. Cartey extends his argument on the weakness of the church saying that the continued existence of the church as institution indicates the betrayal of the precepts for the foundation of Christianity. (108). The song points to the failure of such spiritual leaders who live contrary to what they preach.

Political, social and economic: Various government administrations and people's experience under them are captured in Abigbo songs. Below is one of such songs which commend the administration of the first democratic governor of Imo State, late Chief Sam Mbakwe (1979-1983). The song is titled "Enwere kweshon anyi na-aju"- "there is a question we are asking".

Enwere kweshon anyi na-aju

Onye ga-agara anyi ije ka Mbakwe?

Mbakwe ma si ya bu onye Igbo doo ochichi

Wetakwara anyi oke n'ochichi

Nwa Igbo ga ire nwa Igbo ibe ya

Ukwu alola ya.

Ya shikwa na mochuari hu ulo anya.

Translation

"There is a question we are asking"

There is a question we are asking

Who will go for us like Sam Mbakwe?

Mbakwe realized his Igbo identity and contested election

And brought us share from government

Any Igbo citizen who will betray his fellow Igbo citizen

May his leg not return from the journey.

Let him see the house from the mortuary.

The above song commends the administration of Chief Sam Mbakwe whose achievements as governor in the then old Imo State has never been challenged by any other administration. All Imo governors after Mbakwe, the song implies, who will betray Imo (Igbo) people must die and see their houses as dead corpses brought home from mortuary.

In another satirical song titled "O bu etu anyi ji awu otu"? "Is it how we are to be one or united?," Abigbo song laments on the dispossession of some Nigerians of their belongings by fellow Nigerians and doubts how the nation can move forward as one country, with practices under which peace cannot thrive. The song rendered by Robinson Chukwu reads:

"O bu etu anyi ji awu otu?"

Govumenti chigani

O bu etu anyi ji awu otu wa yee?

Ajuju anyi juru n'oge mbu

1 si idi n'otu by n'ezi?

Ochichi sharia adodiala agha

Ajuju e ji lee Abigbo kpo ha ugwo.

Eluwa lee ... gewe nti anyi juo ha ...

Umu anyi gara oku

Juo ha ma ha ezuola?

Anyi aruchaala ulo ha akushia

Any agaala oku ha ebughara

O bu etu anyi ji awu otu wa yee ...

Anyi lee m'obu lezi?

(culled from Emma Ekeocha's M A Thesis)

Translation

"Is it how we are to be one or united?"

The ruling government.

Is this how we shall be one or united?

The question we asked first time

Do you say unity is achievable?

The reign of Sharia has caused war

The question for which Abigbo is hated.

Let the world see ... listen, we ask them...

Our children who sojourned for livelihood.

Ask them whether they are complete?

We have built houses, which they demolished

We have acquired wealth, which they confiscated

Is this how we shall be one or united ee?

Let us see if it is true.

The above song is on the introduction of Sharia and its practices in some parts of our country, Nigeria. Life is unpleasant for non-Moslems especially the Christians and Igbo people who can hardly co-exist with the Moslem on account of religious difference. The enforcement of Moslem religion, Islamic laws and practices on the Christians living within Moslem environment does not augur well but encourages religious and ethnic crisis. Emefiena Ezeani observes this ugly situation of some Nigeria citizens among fellow Nigerians when he asserts; "the phenomenological episode of Igbo hatred seems to be more of a reality than a myth". He cites Abati (2001) as bringing back to memory the periodic killing of the Igbo in the North by the Northern Moslems. Ezeani notes Ralph Uwazurike expressing concern on the killing of more than 5,000 Easterners as a consequence of the "Introduction of the Shaira legal system" in some Nigeria states (163).

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa reminds us of the need for cultivation of ideas that accommodate common understanding among a nation's citizens. Among such ideas he puts forward is the non-imposition of one's self or a country on another person or country (67). Religious difference has often ignited unavoidable disturbances in parts of this country. Such has often led to loss of lives, property and forced citizens to tee their homes. Business set ups, houses and other means of livelihood are abandoned by people forced to move away from their places of business establishments, to save their lives on account of religious and ethnic crisis. There is need for our national government to address properly the remote causes of these incessant national problems.

Frances Ngozi Chukwukere calls on our leaders to encourage functional education capable of assisting in peace building by "curbing hate induced crimes". Ipso facto she makes a clarion call to our national leaders and the government to check not only

hates induced crimes but also utterances and actions by .people, likely to generate breach of peace in the nation. Chukukere includes conducts, violence and "prejudice against a given group or individual" under hate speech that must be curbed by legislative acts. Any form of law, act or utterance likely to incite hatred and violence among groups of people in Nigeria should be seriously discouraged by legislative act and actions taken against the offenders of such provisions.

Abigbo song is made more appreciable by its performing dance group. The song belongs to the African traditional poetry composed by artists described by Tanure Ojaide as "demonstrative poets". The song demonstration realized in performance context, associated with movement and action, fulfills Isidore Okpewho's definition of Performance as "the total act as well as the context or environment involved in the delivery of oral literature" (16).

Themes of serious threat to the society are addressed by the songs. Such themes are of social relevance because if well absorbed by the target audience can liberate our society and set the country moving in the right direction. Chinyere Nwahunanya posits that good literature should liberate the society by expressing observations of society's failings and "point the way forward in the right direction" (338)

Corruption, greed, selfishness and lack of moral discipline which have remained the bane of our society, are among the areas of attack by Abigbo satirical songs. Jasper Onuekwusi upholds such attack on the prevailing anti-social behaviour for a sound moral nation to re-emerge from a society of vices. Such vices with which our nation's citizens are identified, according to Onuekwusi include; bribery, embezzlement, contract inflation, oil bunkering, kidnapping etc (31). The above anti-social acts by Nigerians are articulated in a song titled "Corruption" by Chukwu Robinson. The song reads:

Koropshon

Enwere okwu di mkpa anyi na-ekwu
Ajuo ya na kweshon ya aka mma
Ihe a akpowa koropshon o wu gini?
O bu madu dika anyi bu?
Ka O bu oria loro alo?
A ya ji Naijria adila mma
Zaanu m kweshon mu alawa
Onye gara Mahadum si ya amaa ya
Govmenti AIDS na koropshon ole ka mma?
AIDS wu ishi kote ebu ya agbaa ya
Ma koropshon ji onye ozo
Mere otutu madu anwuchuo onwu
Uzo shi porakot gaa Enugwu no na bojet afo nille
O bu koropshon kpatara ya
Ndi nkuzi na ndi Oru ahuike kwusiri oru
Fek drog egbuolo otutu madu
Ihe koropshon mega ka nku
Enwekwara onye Sineto, Jooji, Govano achuru n"oru
Koropshon churu ha n'oru
Ha gaa na Penson, NNPC, Avieshon fond ha ezuru
Ndi kwoga ugboala bege akwa
Polis kuziiri ndi ami naga ego
Ochichi firm uka n'oge mbu

Jukwaa Go wan na Ojukwu

Ebiwalaha Votu aloghata

Ndi ji koropshon mere uwe.

Translation

Corruption

There is an important word we are talking about

It is better when asked as a question

What is this thing called 'corruption'?

Is it human being as we are?

Or a sickness that has come to us?

It is responsible for Nigeria's ugly situation

Answer my question for me to go

University graduate says he does not know it

Government, AIDS and corruption which is better?

AIDS only kills one that contracts it

But corruption in another person

Caused the premature death of many people

The Port Harcourt Enugu expressed road appears in budget every year

This is caused by corruption.

Teachers and Nurses are always on strike

Fake drugs have caused sudden death of many people

The consequences of corruption are enormous.

There is a Senator, a Judge, a governor dismissed from service.

They are dismissed because of corruption.

They stole from Pension, NNPC and Aviation funds

Vehicle drivers are crying

Police taught the Army to collect money

Leadership has generated a serious case in Nigeria in the past.

Ask Gowon and Ojukwu about this.

They are coming back, printing voting cards

Those wearing corruption as dress.

The artist states in the above song that corruption in our country, Nigeria is more dreaded than AIDS disease because the corrupt practices of Nigerian citizens have left the people and nation in a worse situation than AIDS has done. In his "There was a Country", Chinua Achebe identifies Nigerians plagued by home enemy which includes indiscipline and corruption found in the ruling class (234). He notes his disappointment and frustration in politics where he found majority of the politicians to be, for their "selfish advancement". (244). The song establishes its point on the ugly situation which corrupt practices by people in different fields of life in Nigeria have left the people and nation, giving clear instances of such. The song mentions different categories of people in different areas whose involvements in corrupt practices have collectively plunged our nation into the current social and economic mess in which it is.

Involvement in corruption is seen in road contracts which are not executed or completed because the approved fund for such was embezzled or diverted to another project for selfish interests of some government officials. Incessant strikes are embarked on by civil servants for non-payment of salaries because the money meant

for such is misused by the authorities in control. Pensioners die of hunger and sickness because they are not paid their pension to take care of themselves.

National Assembly Members, Governors, NNPC, Aviation and Pension fund officials, and even High Court Judges are identified in the song, among those dismissed from offices for corrupt practices identified with them. The police and Army are not out of the corruption scene where they unlawfully demand and collect money from motorists, some of whom lost their lives from police and army gun-shots for refusing to give them money. The song advises us to beware of politicians who wear corruption as clothes when they come again for election. It warns politicians to learn from Ojukwu and Gowon, the destruction done to Nigeria by the Nigerian Biafran war of July 1967 to January 1970 which was caused by the struggle for leadership in Nigeria.

Albert B. Lord captures the singer as one who accumulates materials for his themes to enrich his art. Lord sees the singer as an artist who never stops to gather, recombine and reshape "formulas and themes" in order to come to perfection in his art of singing (26). The artists in this discourse gather the materials that inform themes of their songs from the religious, social, political and economic trends in the country. The themes of the songs are not far fetched from what is obtainable in our society. The artist's compositions are enriched by materials gleaned from the locality.

In another song, "Ndi anyi tuuru votu kuru anyi ahia" - "we suffered a loss from those we voted for by Donatus Anyanwu," the satirist expresses the masses' regret for having voted the ruling politicians into office because the latter never fulfilled their pre-election promises to the people while in office. The social and economic conditions of the people were not better than they were before the election. The government never provided the people with good roads, water and electricity, free education, employment opportunities etc as promised earlier. The ruling politicians became self centred, used government fund to enrich themselves and never cared

about the welfare of the people. This situation makes the people regret having taken the risks involved in voting for the politicians.

Empirical Framework

Ime Ikiddeh notes the power of the spoken word over the written where the former makes a greater audience than the latter (2). Thus, poetry realized as song during rendition secures and informs more target audience than those who read it in text as written poem. Ikiddeh's opinion therefore, provides and advocates for research works on cultural studies such as this study on Abigbo traditional cultural group. Abigbo educates and inform the people through the spoken word in song rendition.

Meki Nzewi strongly asserts that "stage presentations in Nigerian theatre are structured to, sequenced by, vected through, or tripled with music and dance or styled movement" otherwise such stage presentation is alien to Nigeria (433). Agbigbo as traditional music performing group educating people through music and song fits well in the scheme of Nigerian theatre described by Nzewi. Echezona Ifejirika upholds any literary work which "praise and preserves the continent's cultural heritage" (500). Abigbo traditional music group performs such literary works of Mbaise Igbo heritage that preserves our African continent's cultural heritage.

Research Methodology

This study is carried out using the fieldwork method of data collection of facts. This was done through making personal contacts with resource persons. Personal interviews with people, discussion, analysis of facts, listening to songs, question and answer techniques, story telling, explanation, text reading and conclusion are strategies for facts collection used in this work. Kola nut and cash presentations to those interviewed were also made by the researcher.

Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion

M.A.R Habib posits that the heart of literary discourse rests on the social, political and economic life of the people. He asserts, "Literature and criticism cannot be insulated from their political, social and economic frame works" (285). The song condemns the ugly social, political and economic condition which the elected politicians in government place the people that empowered them. The satiric songs are social, political, economic and religious commentaries on the life and activities of the people.

All people in government and other leadership positions have moral, social and religious obligations to fulfill before the people and the society. Any person in this cadre who acts in defiance of the above stated must expect the wrath of God. Oladele Taiwo echoes this fact when he avers that "any moral defiance is looked upon as a religious defiance" (131). This song questions the moral and spiritual justification for those in leadership position who place their personal interests before that of the public who they are empowered to serve. "Ndi anyi tuuru votu kuru ami ahia" is a swipe at the contemporary Nigerian and by extension African politicians in governance.

Abigbo songs belong to "the poetry of revolution" Oladele Taiwo sees revolutionary poetry as one that is new in both form and content and "springs from the life of the people". Such poetry he further says has cultural significance (84). The songs point to the major trends that have become topical issues in our nation. Examining literary work from the "social perspective", Ann Dobie explains moment of the artist's experience as not the writer's personal influence of his life in his work but influence of those things governing the literary age of the writing (15). Corruption, problems of ethnicity and religion are topical issues in our Nigerian nation which our songs for study address.

Peter Emuejevoke Omoko cites Ojaide (2009:53) noting that song poetry as a matter of fact has to be original and strong. Ojaide asserts that rich figures of speech of the language of the writing such as proverbs, parables and idioms must be in the writing of the song to reinforce the theme. Omoko affirms the above view of Ojaide as what all practitioners of art have in mind in their composition process and such "forms the kernel of the poetics". Abigbo artists show the originality of their art through their artistic weaving of the Igbo proverbs and idioms into their song and thus reflect the Igbo language speech tradition. The application of this speech art helps to adorn and enrich the rendition to the public as we have in the following lines of the song:

Onye ji ihe ojoo akwu ugwo ihe oma

Ya ralcwaa nnu o ga isa ya afo

I si mu na gi bu enyi

Mana I ji abali akpoga nwunye m.

Emenyonu extends Ojaide's assertion on the originality of song poetry with figures of speech when he avers that use of proverbs and riddles by practitioners of art inculcate logic in the listeners. He remarks that experienced practitioners with language adorned with "imagery, folk idiom and witticisms" impact the knowledge of "good speaking habits" in the audience (3). The artists of this study are poets of Igbo literature which makes use of Igbo folklore including the proverbs and idioms used to enrich the language of their song. Rems Umeasiegbu identifies Chinua Achebe as an exceptional literary scholar that used the proverb of the Igbo folklore "on a functional literary perspective" (65). The oral artists of the songs in this study make use of Igbo proverbs and idioms. By so doing they toe Achebe's footsteps in setting right the "centuries of damage and black mail" done to Africa and her culture, by the Europeans as observed by Umueasiegbu in Achebe's works.

Kaalu Igirigiri in Chukwuma Azuonye (1990) asserts that his renditions are not only "from the old heroic songs" but also from his newly created songs on the events of the then period. Kaalu, according to Azuonye, states his ability to sing new songs never heard before by anybody in Ohafia (50). The artists of the songs for this study render not only traditionally inherited old songs, but also new songs of their own composition based on the day to day happenings in the society. The songs on corruption, disappointment with the elected politicians in governance and the destruction of a given people's lives and property by another people in the same country testify to the above fact. The renditions by Abigbo group match the artists with Kaalu Igirigiri of Ohafia as ideal creative oral artists.

Abigbo songs call for situations that will encourage peace and mutual understanding among citizens of the country. The traditional artist's prayer for "peace" in our nation as we note in one of the songs is equally emphasized by the English music artists as well. Such artists include Lyke Peters who, in his song titled "Let's have peace", calls for 'peace' in our society where he pleads with all and sundry to "stop killing, humiliation and destruction" for us to have some peace. Leopold Sedar Senghor joins in the peace seeking mission with his poem "Prayer of peace II" which calls for peace between Africa and white Europe. This is on recognition of the former's hatred for the latter who turned Africans into slaves. Senghor prays for God's peace between the two continents, to establish friendly relationship for people to benefit from one another, to justify the essence of man's existence in human society.

For Ruth Finnegan, oral poetry plays the role of newspapers among people of non-literate society. She notes that songs may be used in commenting on matters of the moment- "for political pressure, for propaganda and to reflect and mould public opinion" and adds that political and topical function can constitute a part of poetry (272). Her observation of the age-long political role of poetry in Africa where poetry had in the past recorded political songs and poems is noteworthy. Public singing, Finnegan extends her argument, assume the place of the press, radio and publication in expressing public opinion at the local level (273).

Good politics, our politicians should know, is practiced with the spirit of "give and take". The Pioneers English music artists recognize this fact in their song titled "Give and take" in which they advise all including the politicians to "give a little" and "take a little" because "two lovers aim at give and take". The elected politicians therefore, owe it as a duty to reciprocate the masses' 'love' for them by voting them into power, through providing what the people need.

G.A. Heron posits that "traditional songs and stories" function as enabling means for family or community members to be out of the restraints imposed on what they say to others. He observes the singer's freedom in criticizing the conduct of other people in songs using mockery (15). Abigbo artists exploit this poetic license to criticize and condemn corrupt practices, religious short-coming of our spiritual leaders and other social ills which bedevil our society. Chukwuma Azuonye points to the traditional aesthetic quality of functional principle of evaluation of songs, in which songs are assessed in line with their manifestation on culture and society, and its individual member behaviour (48). The song of our study in this discourse manifests the religious, social and political picture of our society and depicts the individual behaviour of people within same society.

Conclusion

The Abigbo Mbaise folksong stands to correct the citizens and bring the people and society to the right direction. The song draws materials from the shortcomings of our religious and secular leaders to inform its serious themes expressed in the renditions for public examination and condemnation. Ipso facto the song aspires to effecting a positive social, religious and political change in our society. The themes are of national significance for every patriotic Nigerian to appreciate. The satiric song is a veritable weapon to fight against all forms of corruption, religious shortfalls and

social ills which plague not only its immediate community but also its extended Nigerian nation.

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Interviews

Name: Dr. Robert Enyeribe Onuoha
Age: 68 years
Home Address: Egberede na Eziala, Umunneato Aut. Com.
Aboh Mbaise LGA
Occupation: Retired lecturer (AIFCE Owerri)
Date of Interview; 12th May, 2017.

Name: Mr. Linus Amadi
Age: 58 years
Home Address: Egberede na Eziala, Umunneato Aut. Com.
Aboh Mbaise LGA
Occupation: Teaching - (Government Secondary School Owerri.)
Date of Interview: 19th May, 2017.

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