

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Whenever an animal that was once caught in a trap, and fought hard to escape, sees a stick bent in the likeness of another trap, it must take extra caution – An Okpe adage.

8. 1 Out-come of Igoru counsel and warnings

As in all human cultures, Okpe not an exception, musicians perform prophetically, foretelling future consequences of certain actions taken by men and women in the society. Igoru musicians, in their foresight, investigate, evaluate, probe and foretell future events in Okpe. We argued earlier in chapter six that in traditional Okpe society, life experiences are shared, whether they are sweet or bitter, painful or joyful. Things that are capable of causing pains and grief to families and communities are therefore issues of primary concern to the Igoru musicians. It was therefore necessary for them to warn and counsel their audiences against some wanton attitude and practices that could result in painful experiences. Some warnings and counsel from Igoru musicians, as discussed in chapter six, were directed to individuals, communities and the entire Okpe nation. We shall discuss these further under the following sub-headings.

8. 1. 1 Succession to the Orodje's (king's) stool

The theme of song 3 in appendix I, for instance, provided a warning from the poet to Okpe citizens in general. The poet, in the first instance, revealed an evil plan that was underway to dethrone the king by means of assassination and thereupon warned against the execution of the plan. The poet implied in his/her warning that any evil against the royal father by his subjects would offend the ancestral spirits who would certainly avenge fearsomely. The poet puts this proverbially that 'it is what the hand causes that the head pays for'. Death, as is known in Okpe culture does not always mean the physical demise and departure from the earth. But also means 'life without direction' and 'life of irreversible conditions of hopelessness and shame' that are associated with evil offences the sufferer partook of. Thus, if a murderer for instance becomes insane subsequently in his/her life time, the public would say he/she is dead alive. Or, if a refractory decease puts an offender of the ancestral spirits into a helpless and shameful condition where, for instance, he/she begins to pass out waste in the house for a long time before his/her actual death, members of the society would say he/she died alive. We argued in chapter three that Ezezi I at the time of his assassination cursed the Okpe, that they would not have a king after him. Since then the people have had two interregnums and are currently having some difficulty crowning another king after the death of Orhoro I in 2004. All these experiences prove that warning from musicians is very important to every living society. If the warning from Igoru musicians concerning the assassination of Ezezi I was heeded, perhaps there would have been much stability in the succession to the Orodje stool.

8. 1. 2 Commercial sex trade and STD

Earlier in chapter six we discussed the themes of song 40 (A1 – 67) and song 43 (page A1 – 71) which suggest that the subjects were counselled and warned concerning the paths they took morally. The composers narrate the consequent events that followed the failure of the subjects to heed the counsel and warning. Since in community life, Igoru musicians kindled societal conscience, they offered these sort of counsel and warning to community members about some dangers ahead. These performances create more awareness about the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STD) through promiscuity and the consciousness to avoid it.

8. 1. 3 Itsekiri and Ugbukurusu wars

Song 23 (page A1 – 36) and song 24 (page A1 – 38) inform the audience that the Okpe gave land to the Itsekiri to inhabit (not to possess) and when they had lived in the land for long, began to contend the ownership in order to possess it. The theme of song 25 (page A1 – 38) says ‘we shall pour out sand from the sack that we filled, which turned to insult us, so that it falls and rot.’ This was a call on the leadership of Okpe to order that the Itsekiri be dispossessed of all Okpe land they inhabit before they come back in warfare to contest the ownership as they did contend Sapele land in the 1940s. Song 26 (page A1 – 39) contains similar warning to the Okpe who harbour the same people in various communities, saying ‘the water would swallow’ the hosts, if they do not take caution.

In the early 1990s, farmland dispute ensued between some members of Ugbukurusu and Obotie communities. Both communities are in Okpe land by the river side. By 1997 the land dispute degenerated and an Itsekiri inhabitant of Obotie killed an Okpe of Ugbukurusu in the farm. The Okpe regarded this to be mere land dispute between families and allowed it to be treated as such. By 2001 the land dispute degenerated further and enlarged into community clashes. The Itsekiri of Obotie attacked the Ugbukurusu, killing and burning houses of the Okpe. And the Okpe launched a reprisal attack that levelled Obotie community that year.

The recent crisis in Warri and environs, principally between the Ijaw and Itsekiri, reaching its heights from 1997 to 2003, with massive killing and burning of Itsekiri settlements by their warring opponents, the Itsekiri shifted their attention to the Okpe. To capitalize upon the 2001 conflict, the Itsekiri planned a fresh attack to seize, not only Ugbukurusu from the Okpe, but to invade all Okpe communities around the riversides. On January 17, 2004 the Itsekiri invaded Ugbukurusu during a night burial, at about 4.00 a. m. and carried out massive killing and burning of houses. Their plan being to capture all the Okpe communities around the riverside and take possession of them because the Ijaw had rendered most of them homeless, they invaded Ugborhen, Ikeresan and Igbeku by the following day January 18, 2004 with their weapons of warfare and fuel to burn the communities to ashes. Although the Ugborhen youth mounted a very strong resistance and defence that delivered other Okpe communities, the musicians' prophecies were fulfilled in these events.

8. 1. 4 Christianity, traditional ethos and philosophy of healing

In song 65 (page 112), the poet provides a warning to the Christian converts who were transforming some manifestations and characteristics of traditional worship into the Christian faith. In song 66 (page 115) the same composer and performer queries some aspects of the Christian faith. He poetically remarked that he, Udogu Olocho had investigated the Christian church and found that Hallelujah (God Almighty) heals people; but that Hallelujah (now referring to the priests) neither could kill a tsetse fly nor a house fly. He gives meaning to the parable by adding that the cripple was taken to the Church and could not rise to walk. Likewise the blind was taken there, but could not see; those with swollen scrotum could not be healed and those seeking for children still could not give birth.

It is noted that the composer does not mean to dispute the fact that God can heal. He in fact acknowledged that in the opening lines of the song. What he intends to communicate to the audience is that God had provided human beings with the herbs and other sources of healing. And that healing divinely must be in consonance with the will of God, according to his time and wise purpose. Thus, healing sometimes could be gradual and at other times be instantaneous. The composer must have observed that all the times people were taken to the Christian worship ground for healing, not all the people received healing at once. This means further that no one can actually force the hands of God to do the immediate things human beings desire.

8. 2 Dividends of Igoru music

The composer of song 87 (page A1 – 157) proclaimed that the young ladies in Okpe were at liberty to live profitable lives. Stating further that those children who know the rules do not break them; and that only those who do

would be punished through Igoru satire. He/she suggests that Igoru musicians are only doing their best to help mould character and moral standards in the society and in doing this must be wary not to let things go out of hands. The composer implies that when discipline is too severe (non-commensurate with or) for offences, children could become more hardened to continue with the same offences for which they have been punished. He/she therefore remarks that he who extinguishes fire does not have to hold palm nut shafts (fuel) in his hand.

From the late 1980s to the early 2000s in Nigeria, media reports have pointed out that some young ladies travel to other countries to engage in commercial sex business. Some of the recent reports state that some of them have been repatriated back home, and the ethnic groups from which they come are sometimes mentioned. www.iss.org.za provides the following:

Yet although smuggling is illegal, it is not criminal. However, the Nigerian diaspora is also involved in organized crime. This appears to be the result of factors such as endemic local corruption, which facilitates illicit trafficking; the Biafra civil war, which contributed to a proliferation of firearms; the oil boom of the 1970s, which led to the embezzlement of public funds; and the economic crisis of the 1980s, which was accompanied by a rise in robberies. The expansion of the Nigerian diaspora and organized crime went hand in hand. Global migration boosted prostitution, drug trafficking and fraud, the three main activities of Nigerian syndicates. The smuggling of Nigerian sex workers became a whole industry that now extends from Switzerland to France and Italy (where black prostitutes are called “fireflies”), and has even reached the prudish kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from which 1,000 women are said to be deported every month by the authorities.

Although young ladies from the Okpe culture have not been mentioned clearly in these recent reports of commercial sex trade in foreign countries, with the current vogue in civilization that has de-emphasized the sanctity of virginity; some young ladies have fallen pregnant out of marriage. In such incidents, the ladies and young men responsible for such pregnancies are encouraged and supported to get married and look after the welfare of the children. We observe generally that Igoru musicians have played significant roles in the moderation of moral standards in the Okpe society.

8. 3 Reasons for the fall of Igoru music

Some elders, some of whom are not Igoru musicians, have argued that the fall and transformation of Igoru music to Ighopha music was due to the fact that the musicians were attacked by means of sorcery. At the same time, elders acknowledge that Igoru music was very entertaining and functional in Okpe. Peter Etalo, a well known Igoru musician from Mereje however remarks that the fall of Igoru music was due to its misuse by some new entrants into Igoru performance. According to him, some trivial faults found with some persons were exaggerated out of proportion, while some offences that were not committed were also fixed into these latter Igoru performances and they were found to be offensive. He expresses this as follows:

Some later Igoru musicians did not do well in their performances. Some of them formulated unhealthy narratives against those who at one time or the other offended them personally. Others changed facts in their narratives. For example, as three of us are together in this house, if Mr A does expel gas from his/her bowel in a funny manner, some Igoru musicians would set it to music with exaggerating features and rather than refer to Mr A, they would insert the names of Mr B who was never present at the scene (Peter Etalo; oral interview).

8. 4 Summary of Igoru functions

We argued that Igoru musicians have played significant roles in educating and enlightening the Okpe public through their musical performances. Most Igoru themes are educative either by use of direct statements or by use of idioms, epigrammatise and proverbs that are poetically structured to stimulate further reasoning and realization of deductive meaning. Igoru musicians warned and counselled their audiences against some wanton attitude and practices that could result in painful experiences. They made efforts through their compositions and performances to criticise and correct some excesses of some community members in the belief that everything any human being does requires moderation, even if it is permissible in the society. We found in this study direct and indirect chronological references. The direct ones refer to specific events that are responsible for certain responses, while the indirect references refer to such events without mentioning them. Even when the songs are satirical, the composers still consider the value of entertainment very important. They ensure that the text of the songs and all other musical and extra-musical elements that are capable of stimulating a good sense of humour are contained in the songs.

Igoru music performs the functions of praise and commendation to deserving members, in order to encourage such persons who are doing well in the society to continue in their good deeds, as well as stimulate others to emulate them. In performances, the musicians defended their political system, their territorial land mass, traditional religion and themselves from various attacks. Many Igoru songs make reference to the political institution, where the issue of the traditional ruler (the king) was central. In fact, the Okpe in Lagos took Igoru music as a mark of

Okpe ethnic identity, thus it was selected amongst other music typologies of the culture to represent it, both in social and political-oriented activities.

8. 4. 1 Summary of poetic properties

The principal language of Igoru music is Okpe, but some Igoru poets briefly insert words from other languages like English, Urhobo and Itsekiri, known to the people, to create some effects and sensation. We refer to the use of these foreign words as language importation in the context of this discourse. The persona is also a common and prominent feature in Igoru poetry. It appears in the first person pronoun such as 'I and we'. Igoru composers use either of these personas to narrate events that took place, as if they were right at the scene of the incidents, in order to make it look real and more effective at presentation. Igoru composers undertake several processes of selecting and permutating different elements from the language and linguistic phenomenon of the Okpe culture, as well as those of music. These elements unify in the process and become a product that transmits several messages to the public in symbolic forms.

In Igoru music, the performers some times open a performance with an introductory speech. Spoken introduction informs the audience about the background of the song or songs to be performed and prepares them (the audience) toward the experience; an indication that the poetry of Igoru music involves both elements of speech and song. We also found variety in the choice of words, where the performing musicians/poets might insert new words that mean exactly the same as those used earlier or as those they replace. Since generally oral poetry in Okpe is not recited, except in story-telling forms, Igoru poetry does not exist as mere recitation, but in proper songs, structured into

melodies for the singing voice to communicate. The songs are either short or long, in some thorough composed narrative and varied verse forms. The simplest Igoru songs are composed in very short melodic sentences. Often, these short songs serve as preambles or introduction to the narratives. Igoru composers give emphasis to good choice of words and wise sayings. Phrasing and word selection both play important roles in the songs. Expressions that have roots in human experiences, some of which the composer might have had personal encounter and others based on the experiences handed down from past generations provide basis for philosophical constructions.

We argued that Igoru musicians follow and apply philosophical approach in interpreting the meaning of names as they manifest in the lives of people in the society. They also follow after the philosophical axiology (theory) that value is put in place by the Ultimate or Absolute, in the belief that the values handed down by their predecessors have been fixed by the Ultimate being(s). They therefore compose their songs to uphold these ethos already established and passed on from generation to generation as values that must not be breached, believing that such would have adverse effects not only on the culprits, but on the entire society. They adopt both the deductive and inductive approaches under the domain of logic to construct their musical-poetic messages as well as metaphysical approaches in getting to conclusions in the messages they communicate to their audiences. Most of the themes in Igoru music are derived from the sense of realism than idealism. The songs being quite topical had to be realistic than idealistic in tendency. The theory of essentialism and progressivism is also upheld in Igoru music, believing that the adult member ought to acquaint him/herself with the values of the society, but if there are failures in one or two individuals, it becomes necessary to instruct them through music.

Igoru musicians make use of words that are sometimes suggestive of double or multiple meaning and these conceptual words often form basis for the themes and sub-themes of the songs. The poets deliberately organize words, syllables and lines in patterns that will generate similarity in sounds; create audile sensitivity and stimulate more curiosity and emotionality. They create images in the imagination and minds of the audience by imitating and representing sounds of objects and characters so described, in order to stimulate emotional responses from audiences. We observed the use of sound elements such as alliteration and assonance; rhetoric questions and repetition; homophonic doubling of words and parallelism; *emro egbaren* – similitude of spoonerism; foundation vowel, round-off and nasality; elision, truncation, word-link and onomatopoeia.

Amongst several poetic foot schemes, we found that Igoru musical culture favours choriambic, iambic, dactylic, and trochaic feet. Versification in the songs is in free-strophic and strict narrative forms. Greater numbers of Igoru songs are composed in single verse form. The diversity of length ranges from three lines to fifteen; but of all these the nine-line single verse has the highest frequency, followed by the five-line verse often called limericks in poetry. Next to these are songs in only six, seven, ten and eleven lines that appear to have equal frequency. It is actually difficult to group Igoru music into strophic or prosodic forms, because they are composed in free style of continuous melodic flow that often runs through the entire length of the poetry. We found that rhyme is a device adopted by Igoru composers to create aesthetic effects of sound within lines or between lines of a verse. It is a creation that brings words that have similar sounds close to one another for a sort of agreement that stimulates

heightened aural perception. End and internal rhymes; couplet, quatrain or alternate rhyme, triplet rhyme and other rhyme forms were found in the study.

In Igoru music, several images are created by the composers to represent the themes of the songs and how they feel about the characters they describe. Visual image; audile or auditory image; tactile and thermal images; olfactory image and gustatory image; motile or kinaesthetic image were all found in the study. Figures of speech used for expressions that are made to describe persons and objects in manners that present connotative and suggestive meanings were also found. These include simile and metaphor; metonymy and synecdoche; personification and paradox; antithesis and pun; pathetic fallacy and allusion; bathos and climax; hyperbole and euphemism; litotes or meiosis; innuendo, oxymoron and irony. Oral poetic forms such as allegory and parable; epic and biographical praise; elegy, ode and monody; fable and memoir; satire and lampoon were also found as forms of narration in Igoru music.

8.5 Summary of compositional techniques

We observe in the present study that the Okpe culture uses hexatonic (seven-note) scale system, out of which any number of tones may be selected for Igoru musical compositions. Igoru music is composed mostly in the compound quadruple metre, though the simple quadruple time is also in use. The songs could begin anywhere in the opening measure, in forms of anacrusis. We observe that the Okpe language, though tonal, is flexible when the words are set to music. The composers have liberty of setting the words with consideration of melodic beauty as well as communication objectives. Igoru music is highly

syllabic, in that each melodic tone is assigned to a syllable in the text with very scanty slurs expected. So far, we observed that the few slurs found in all the songs transcribed are influenced by the use of glide, doubling of vowel at the end of a phrase or sentence and the use of the foundation vowel 'e' which has the tendency to attract slurs.

Variable poetic metre, where the poetry presents unequal lines of text, and consequently unequal melodic phrases that in the theory of complementary dualism balance with one another, is a common feature in the songs. We observe conscious melodic configurations with absence of semitones in melodic progression as in Okpe musical tradition. The interval of an octave is used sparingly in the harmony. Consecutive parallel 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths and 7ths are found in the music. The perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major and minor 3rds are, in Igoru music, consonant intervals and this explains why they are used in higher frequency than other harmonic intervals. Occasional part crossing in a 2nd or 3rd occurs between the two parts in Igoru music, particularly when a final cadence is approached. At the entry of the lead singer with a solo that overlaps with the cadence of the two-part harmony some forms of triad are formed.

Almost all Igoru songs begin and move upward, particularly by use of the foundation vowel, before they continue to move around several other directions according to the theories of earth orientation, longevity and heaven-ward focus. Basically, the melodies resolve upwards from the submediant to the tonic at final cadences, though a few other forms of resolution exist. Cadences in Igoru music resolve more on the second and last beats of the closing measure. Liberty to change vocal register and often tonality adjustment are found in the theory of relativism where songs could begin at any tonal level and move to other tonal

centres, depending on the convenience of the performers. We observe too that the commonest voice range for lead singers cover a compound minor 3rd, while the widest range found in the study is the compound perfect 5th.

Responsorial and antiphonal vocal forms; strophic form; segmental narrative form; incremental recycle form and multiple recycle form are found in Igoru music. The concept of opening formula for oral performances is much evident in the songs as in the Okpe culture. While story telling has its own opening formula in a declamatory form, other music and dance typologies use musical statements as well as declamations. Closing formulas were also found in forms of short songs used by Igoru musicians to mark the final end of a very long narrative or a performance session. Receiver solo cues are used to connect the lead solo sections with the chorus or link the end of a song to its recycle.

8. 6 Recommendations

Since this is a pioneering study on Igoru music in Okpe, we do not claim to have exhausted the study of the typology. Although we have focused on its functions and compositional techniques in this study, we hereby recommend the following:

- Although we have collected large samples for this study, we do not claim to have covered all Igoru songs in Okpe. More songs could then be collected for further studies.
- Enquiry into the roles of women in Igoru musical performances is very significant in further researches.

- Traditional and popular musicians, particularly in Okpe culture, should avoid misuse and abuse of satire in future performances, since such practices are capable of creating conflict that override the essence of musical functions in the society.
- The promotion and preservation of valuable musical cultures that represent the identity of peoples and nations are significant to the human race. The leaders of Okpe, government of Delta State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, particularly the ministry of information and culture, are therefore encouraged to sponsor future researches that aim to seek, promote and preserve indigenous musical knowledge.
- NGOs and research foundations are also encouraged to provide sponsorship for further researches in Okpe generally, because the culture is still a virgin land in terms of musical research and publication.
- Leaders and peoples of Okpe and other cultural groups are encouraged to pay attention to, and take counsel and warning from musicians seriously in the society.