

AFRICAN UNITY, IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOME CONTEMPORARY IGBO POEMS

Nkoli Mercy Nnyigide*

&

Martha Chidimma Egenti*

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Abstract

Poetry is a literary genre that gives poets the opportunity to mirror the society, addressing socio-economic, political, religious and security issues. Over the years, the issues of African unity, identity and development have been of great concern to Africans. This explains why the Organisation of African Unity (OAU); which later metamorphosed into African Union (AU) was formed. Obviously, some Igbo poets like other members of the African society equally express their interest in contemporary issues in Africa through their poetic works. Although, many literary scholars have been done some researches on the Igbo poetry, but it is observed that some of their works have not addressed some contemporary issues in Africa extensively. It is against this backdrop that this study examines some contemporary Igbo poems that address contemporary issues bordering on African unity, identity and development in general and Nigeria in particular, so as to determine the extent to which the poets have addressed them. The study adopts the Marxist literary theory. The theory is employed to enhance the analysis of the selected poems. From the study, it is observed that the selected poems really address contemporary issues in Africa such as unity, identity and development by satirizing, criticizing, correcting and admonishing Africans. Therefore, the paper recommends that the teaching and learning of literature especially African literature in African languages is indispensable and should be encouraged. This will no doubt, awaken the reading culture and interest in the society at large.

Introduction

African unity, identity and development are topical issues that attract the attention of some patriotic individuals in African society. These

concepts have been viewed by different scholars from different perspective. Wehmeier (2005: 1614) defines unity as “The state of being in agreement and working together; the state of being joined together to form one unity”. Erikson (1963) views identity as “... an individual’s sense of placement within the world- the meaning one attaches to oneself as reflected in the answers one provides to the question, “Who am I?” and “Who am I to be?”. Atchley (1989) also drew on the work of Erikson when he suggested that identity is “...a set of characteristics that differentiates self from others and that persists over time. People are distinguished and identified from others by their characteristics, feelings, and beliefs. Obviously, every nation, culture or individual has its own identity which differentiates them from others. Hence, Kidd (2002) identifies three forms of identity viz: individual, social and cultural. The social form of identity is the interest of this paper because social identity according to him is a collective sense of belonging to a group, identifying themselves as having something in common with other group members.

The concept of development on the other hand, is viewed by Odimegwu (2004:86) as:

a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it is physical, material and economic; it is psychological, affective and intellectual; it is moral, religious and spiritual. At the level of human society, development could be scientific and infrastructural, technological and economic, social and political

Following from the above conceptual explication, this paper attempts to look at the various ways African poets have addressed the issues of African unity and identity and how much impact it has on their development. The Marxist literary theory was adopted in analysing five contemporary Igbo poems that address the issues of unity, identity and development in Africa. The poems are: “Afrika Enwerela onwe ya” (Africa is liberated) by Nnamdi Olebara in *Akpa Uche* edited by R.M. Ekechukwu, “Naijiria bụ Enyi Mba” (Nigeria

is a great nation) by Goddy Onyekaonwu in *Uche bu Afa*, ‘Naijirịa’ (Nigeria) by Nkechinyere Okediadi in *Ije Uwa*, ‘Naijirịa’ (Nigeria) by Inno Nwadike in *Echiche Miri Emi* and “Ụkọ n’ Uju” (scarcity in the midst of plenty) by Nolue Emenanjo in *Utara Nti*. This is to determine the extent to which the poets address the issues as aforementioned. The concept of African unity and identity before colonialism will be discussed alongside a review of literature on contributions, challenges and the role of Igbo poetry. The analysis of the poems and conclusion will form the latter part of the paper.

African Unity, Identity and Development

Before colonialism in Africa, some Africans especially the Igbo people were really aware of the concept of unity, identity and development. They usually express some of these concepts, as well as their norms and ethics through their literature, especially the oral tradition as in some proverbs like: “Igwe bụ ike” (unity is strength). “A nyukọ maamiri ọnụ, o gbo ụfufụ” (unity is strength), “egbe bere, ugo bere, nke sị ibe ya ebela, nku kwaa ya” (live and let live), “onye kpọ ọba ya m kpokorō, agbataobi ya ewere ya kporo ahijia” (if anyone belittles his identity, others will mess it up/play with it), etc. Besides, their poetry serves as a medium through which they express their philosophy, norms and beliefs. Nwadike (2006: v) says, what can be regarded as the Igbo poetry is that which represents the Igbo worldview in an artistic language. Before colonialism, a typical African man is easily identified by his dark colour, language, clothing, etc. But it is obvious that colonialism has tampered with their sense of unity and identity.

Agashi (2012: 226) agrees thus,

The plague of colonialism cannot be removed or disassociated from the present pandemonium of underdevelopment in Africa. Our culture and identity were mutilated and at best mixed up or perhaps replaced with the western civilization and culture through acculturation and exploitation... Basically, African identity is inestimably relevant for African development, because it gives ground

for the African to be beyond egoistic and utilitarian needs of self.

From the above view, it is obvious that colonialism really tampered with the African identity. Besides, Okolo as cited in Agashi (2012: 229) observes, “Contemporary Africans are becoming more and more Europeans and less and less Africans in their values mentality and general outlook...”

The most important thing that can be used to identify an individual, a group or tribe is language. But it has been observed that some Africans particularly the Igbo have been underutilizing the language. Some Igbo people show negative attitude to their language. They prefer the colonial masters, i.e. English language than their indigenous language. Because of the underutilization of the Igbo language by the Igbo people, it was reported that the language occupies the second position among those that will go into extinction in the next fifty (50) years. In support of the above view, Maduka (2007) says,

The educated Igbo elite generally prefer using English to Igbo in their daily communication. This is because they find it extremely difficult to think in Igbo. In rural communities, illiterate dwellers who speak only Igbo now feel deserted by the Igbo language... The taking of the oath during installation ceremonies of some of the traditional rulers of various Igbo communities is often done in English... an attitude of mind which makes a mockery of the ceremonies which are quintessentially cultural activities whose spirit can only be captured and articulated in Igbo language.

Even in the presentation of African literary works, some African indigenous languages are underutilized. Some factors are responsible for this. Eme and Mbagwu (2011: 121) observe government policies that could encourage the use of African languages in African literature are absent. For instance, no African language is the only

official language in any African country. African languages that are official are regional. This is the case of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria.

Emphasizing on the need to enhance identity in Nigeria, Achebe as cited in Mbunda (2007: 178), says,

If the leadership hopes to develop and sustain an awareness of nationhood and a sense of national pride based on the cultural heritage of the ethnic groups in Nigeria, it must enable Nigerians to imbibe the fact that they “did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless and primitive, but had a philosophy of great depth,... poetry and above all, that they had dignity.

Based on the concept of African development, Odimegwu (2004: 89) says that

African development then would refer to the realization of the potentialities of the African continent and peoples in the principles and values of our Africanness in the course of the interactions of Africans and other peoples in the pursuit of the realization of African nature and African end.

Obviously, colonialism really influenced some Africans negatively. But in recent years, African unity, identity and development are issues that attract the attention of some Africans. Presently, some African scholars, writers, artistes, poets, etc. show great concern on these issues through their creative works. Equally, some contemporary Igbo poets do use the instrumentality of their poetic works to address these issues as they do on other societal issues. However, in order to rekindle consciousness among Africans, to promote unity, identity and development in African countries, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established on 25th May, 1963 in Addis Ababa with the aims among others; to promote the

unity and solidarity among African States, co-ordinate and intensify their co-operation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa (International Relations and Cooperation, 2013).

Theoretical framework

This study adopts the Marxist literary theory and its focus is based on using Igbo poems as a medium for representing class conflict and reinforcing class distinctions. This theory also champions and recognizes authors who have sympathy for the working classes and whose work challenges economic inequalities as it is found in capitalist societies.

The Marxist theory springs up in the 20th century due to the Soviet Union's social-government system. The theory is associated with a German philosopher and economist Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883). Friedrich Engels (1820-1883); a political economist is also a proponent of this theory who in collaboration with Karl Marx put together the principles of communism which was later called Marxism.

This theory argues that the means of production structures the society. Dobie (2012:87) points out that a society is shaped by its “forces of production” and the methods that is used to produce the material elements of life. In other words, as Ogene (2010:33) puts it, Karl Marx and Fiedrich Engels claim that “the historical evolution of man and his institution is determined by changes in the basic mode of its economic production. Other claims as enunciated by Abrams (2005:155) include,

changes in the fundamental mode of material production effect changes in the class structure of a society, establishing in each era dominant and subordinate classes that engage in a struggle for economic, political, and social change. Also, that human consciousness is constituted by an ideology i.e, the belief, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive, and

by recourse to which they explain, what they take to be reality...

However, the principles of this theory revolve around these concepts: economic power, materialism and class conflict; the theory is based on a system of thought that sees inequitable economic relationships as the source of class conflict. As such issues such as inequalities in social classes, imbalance of goods and power among people, and the manipulation of the worker by the bourgeois are focus of this theory.

With regard to the place of literature in Marxism, Joseph Stalin is known to have founded and headed the soviet writer's union which provided a new way of reading and understanding literature. Prominent among the major critic of Marxism is George Lukacs, a Hungarian who is associated with concept of reflectionism/vulgar Marxism which sees the art as a mirror that reflect society class structure or economic base; it assumes that a text will reflect the society that produce it. It claims that literary works of the last century have been dominated by bourgeois ideology; hence, they call for social realism to replace this sort of influence. On the contrary, Louis Althusser opposes Lukas's view that literature is not a reflection of a society but that literature and art can affect the society, and even lead it to revolution by the proletariat (i.e workers in a society) that can change the society's base (methods of production). The concept of 'production theory' is associated with this scholar. The economic base as exemplified by Dobie (2012:89) is depicted in the story the 'Diamond Necklace' by Maupassant who paints a picture of economic power, inequalities in social class and class struggle between a minor clerk; Mme, Loisel's husband and his employer who controls Liosel's social relationship with him and his professional life as well while, on the other hand, is Liosel and Mme her Covert friend who belongs to the upper class. In the words of Dobie (2012:89), the story has it that,

The bourgeoisie give elegant parties, while the clerk and his wife eat potpie. The "petty clerk" is not expected to fraternize with his betters except by rare

invitation (so eagerly sought after by him) that comes his way. And on such occasions, it is with difficulty that Mme. Liosel can achieve the appropriate appearance – dress, jewels, wrap. As they take on less attractive jobs to pay back what is owed, they are even less acceptable in the corridors of wealth and power. In the end, as noted, Mme. Liosel's friend does not recognize her

From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that the Marxist theory lays emphasis more on the political and economic aspect of literature. Its strength lies in the fact that it connects literature with life i.e. with everyday concerns about economics, class and power. However, it does not take aesthetic matters into account which is essentially non literary. Kennedy and Gioia Dana (2007:654) assert that there is “imposition of the critic’s personal politics on the work in question and then evaluating it according to how closely it endorses that ideology.

Contributions, Challenges and the Role of Igbo Poetry

Some literary scholars have contributed to Igbo poetry through their works. Their aim is to enhance the development and growth of the literary genre. Here, some of these works are reviewed, so as to determine the extent to which they have explored it and to show how the present study differs from their works.

Ugonna (1982: 23) examines the extent to which the Igbo poetry has grown. He observes that a thorough examination of Igbo poetical works will reveal that Igbo poetry has grown not only in quantity but also in quality and with the growth of Igbo poetry standard Igbo is being firmly rooted. From the above observation, it is revealed that the growth of Igbo poetry will help in the promotion of standard Igbo.

In his own contribution, Uzochukwu (1982) highlights some problems facing the appreciation of the Igbo oral poetry, classifies the Igbo poetry and examines how the features associated with poetry are manifested in the Igbo poetry. Ikwubuzo (2001: 217) in his analyses of some Igbo poems highlights some conditions that can

help to achieve unity and sustainable development in a nation according to him, “for national unity and sustainable development to be achieved in Nigeria, there is no alternative to peace and harmony as a necessary conditions”. Obviously, peace and harmony are indisputable conditions that can attract unity and development in any nation.

Based on the effort of some Africans in promoting and projecting the African culture and identity, Ikwubuzo (2006) analyses one of Chukwezi’s poem and observes,

Chukwezi’s allegiance to Igbo culture, his advocacy for its dignity and potentiality of the black race do not find expression only in his dramatic works but also in his poetic creativity. His literary expression depicts him as an uncompromising Africanist who believes that the African heritage should be guarded rather than deformed or distorted by the influence of an alien culture.

The above observation shows that there are still Africans who are really proud of African culture and identity. In addition, Ikwubuzo (2007: 55) makes a brief appraisal of the growth of written Igbo poetry in terms of extant texts, the factors that have contributed to the growth as well as the factors that militate against it. He also considers how the study of Igbo poetry has fared and suggests some steps that can be taken to sustain the growth of written Igbo poetry in the 21st century thus, “Igbo literary studies should be made compulsory and the teaching of Igbo poetry should start from the Nursery school so that interest in poetry can be developed in time”, among other suggestions.

Nwokoye (2012: 154) analyses some poetic devices in some Igbo poems. She observes, “... learning the elements and poetic tools used to build a poem will help to understand and analyse poems”. Furthermore, Nnyigide (2012) identifies some philosophical and satirical elements in some Igbo poems. She observes that some

poets employ satire in the poetic works to ridicule some societal ills, with the intention of correcting them. In addition, Nnyigide (2013) observes that some Igbo poems can be used as tools to promote national unity, identity, security and social stability.

With regard to the role of poetry in the society, it has been observed that poets are important members in the society. They play an indispensable role. They mirror the society and use their poetic works to criticize, satirize and correct some societal ills. This supports the fact that poems are not created in a vacuum. Their society forms the framework of their poetic works. Some literary scholars have examined the issue of poor leadership, some roles of poetry and contributions of some poets to the society.

Based on the issue of poor leadership in Nigeria, Acholonu (2003: 13) observes,

Our collective predicament is both caused and compounded by our societal ills, as many Nigerian leaders seem so careless about the welfare of the ruled majority. The many development problems facing Nigeria today include the fact of a disintegrated bourgeoisie or middle class, the near – collapse of our socio-cultural and political system and structures, seriously weakened by the roles of many of our incompetent, dishonest, corrupt, selfish and unpatriotic leaders.

But Ikwubuzo (2002: 176) opines,

A poet, a novelist or a playwright is not insensitive to the socio-political realities of his time. He is affected by them like any other member of his society. During the apartheid era in South Africa, for instance, a number of independent African countries identified with its struggles. Within the apartheid enclave itself, freedom fighters were not only those that carried physical arms. Others like the famous lady singer, Mariam Makeba used satirical music to agitate for political and social change. The lyrical content of her music disparaged the while

minority regime and reflected the political aspiration of her people.

From the above observation, it is very clear that a poets, novelists, playwrights and singers can use their works to bring freedom, liberation and social harmony in their society.

Similarly, Jenkwe (2007: 165) observes, "... contemporary Nigerian poets have successfully played the role of participating actively in offering solutions to the socio-political and moral problems of the nation through their advocacy". The above observation shows that poets really play significant role in the society.

Akpotorbaro (2008: 37) examines the relationship between poetry and society thus,

While the poem originates from the heart of the poet, it is also in one-way or the other, the expression of the socio-political realities of its word. The experience of the poet is very often a mirror of an aspect of the life and socio-conditions of the society in which the poem is written.

The above view states that poetry can serve as a mirror through which other members of the society view, socio-political realities in the society.

The study of the relationship between poets and society cannot be complete without mentioning some contributions of Ezenwa-Ohaeto; a renowned African literary scholar, who has used his literary works especially poetry to address some societal ills in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. However, Nwachukwu-Agbada (2009: 8-9) examines how Ezenwa-Ohaeto uses some of his poems "I Wan Bi President" and *If to Say I Bi Soja* to address the issue of poor leadership in Africa. He observes,

Ezenwa-Ohaeto's contribution to national development is particularly noticeable in his constant harping on the poor leadership evident in

the running of our polity. In his *I Wan Bi President*; collection of poems (in both formal and pidgin English), he leaves no one in doubt as to what he thinks of the leadership of his country.... It is also for such an uncaringness that the poet sarcastically regrets not being a soldier, a soldier in Africa being a highly privileged fellow wielding a gun and serving as a ruler...

From the foregoing, it is evident that Ezenwa-Ohaeto has made very outstanding contribution in addressing some societal ills in Africa.

In addition, Okodo (2009: 157) analyses one of his poems, “*I Wan Bi President*”. He observes that Ezenwa – Ohaeto,

...Satirises bad presidents who would not work, who would make enjoyments; who would disregard price increase, non-payments of salaries, sanitation exercises and religious crises. He would like to be a good president that would provide for all the people and no area should be termed special.

Still on the importance of poetry to the society, Nwokoye (2012: 274) makes a critical appraisal of the interventionist role of literature in the society and precisely Igbo society especially with poetry. She observes that a poet can use his poetic work to ridicule some societal ills with a view of correcting them.

Similarly, Nze (2012: 700) says,

The relevance of any writer is premised on his ability to reflect the social needs of his community. It is his responsibility to interpret the aspirations of the society in which he finds himself. At all times therefore, his work must be a reflection of the social values, norms ... as well as the problems which his society faces. Not

only this, the writer must offer suggestion on possible ways to regenerate his society.

The above view also point to the fact that literary writers, especially poets play significant role in the society. In support of the above view, Nwamuo as cited in Nze (2012: 700) observes,

All literature is derived from society as depicts the values of a people within a particular period. However imaginative a writer may be, the framework of his writing must always be the society which he knows and is familiar with... His responsibility is to explain and interpret the nuances of his society to others, to the extent that his enlightenment concerning the values and activities of that society can be facilitated by studying its literature.

Obviously, creative writers, especially poets play an indispensable in the society. They serve as a mirror through other members of the society view the situation in the society. However, the society can be the poet's framework of writing. Furthermore, Obi (2012: 719) opines,

Literature plays important role in the lives of people in the society. By its nature, literature offers training... and critical reasoning and also develops the reader's analytical mind. Literature being a mirror of its time makes it a useful instrument for educating people in the society....

From the above opinions it is very glaring that literature, especially poetry can be used as a wonderful instrument in addressing societal issues. Besides, the above observations reveal that poetry has gone beyond entertainment.

Data Presentation and Analysis

One of the poems selected for this study is titled “Afrika enwerela onwe ya” (Africa is liberated) by Nnamdi C. Olebara. The poet is a renowned Igbo literary writer who uses his literary works especially poems to address societal issue. In the first stanza of the poem, the poets states that Africa is liberated and rejoices over the freedom of Africa. But in stanza two of the poem, the poet observes that the freedom of Africa is ironical. He laments over the slavery of some Africans. In fact, the poem reveals that Africa is still under the negative influence of colonialism. According to the poet,

Ihe oma Afrika enwerela onwe ya
Site na Verde ruo na Horn
Site na Gibraltar ruo na Cape Good Hope
Nuriya Afrika
Ee, anuri maka ndi isi ojii

Ma Afrika, olee anuri gi ?
Olee is ii nwerela onwe gi?
Ebe otutu umu Afrika bu obia n'ala ha
Ebe a chupuru umu nne gi n'ala oma ha
Chuga ha ebe ala kporo nkukwue?
Afrika, obia n'ala ya
Gee ntị na South Afrika, Zimbabwe na Mozambique
Nụ olu umu nne
Ka ihere onwe gi mee gi
Tufia! Afrika ndo.

(What a good thing Africa is liberated)
From Verde to Horn
From Gibraltar to Cape Good Hope
Rejoice Africa
What a joy for the blacks.

But Africa, where is your joy?
What is the essence of your freedom?
When many Africans are strangers in their land
Where your siblings were pursued from their good land

To a dry land?

Africa, a stranger in his own land

Listen in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Hear the cries of your siblings

Be ashamed of yourself

What a pity! Africa, sorry).

The poet frowns at unfavourable situation and poor condition of some Africans. He uses the second stanza of the poem to address some societal problems in Africa like exploitation, dehumanization, unhealthy relationships that exist in Africa, etc. The poem reveals that many Africans are really exploited and dehumanized.

In one of his poems titled “Nigeria bụ Enyimba” (Nigeria is a great nation). Onyekaonwu, another renowned Igbo literary scholar, employs irony to ridicule some societal ills that are prevalent in Nigeria. The poet addresses some societal ills like dehumanization, unlawful killings, insecurity, injustice and discrimination.

According to the poet,

Naijiria bụ Enyimba

Obodo achoghị mmegbu

Lee! Ọnwụ ụmụ akwụkwọ

Ndị uwe ojii gbagbusiri

Na Soweto

Na-agba ya anya mmiri

N’ihi na ahụbeghi

Ihe dị otu a na ya.

Ọ bụụzị ikewapụ mmadu

N’ihi asusụ ya?

Na Naijirịa nke a bu arụ

...

(Nigeria is a great nation

A nation where there is no oppression

Look! The death of students

Killed by the police

In Soweto

Makes her to shade tears

Because such incidence
Has not been witnessed in it
Is it discrimination of a person
Due to his language?
In Nigeria, that is abomination.)

The poet has used his poetic work to satirize some societal ills, oppression, unfair practices and poor conditions in Nigeria. The poet also reveals that some Nigerians are oppressed and discriminated due to their language.

Similarly, Nwadike, a renowned Igbo literary writer in one of his poems titled “Naijirịa” (Nigeria) observes the extent of moral decadence, poor leadership, bribery and corruption, immoral practices, inequality, unfair and careless attitudes among the President, Governors, Ministers, Commissioners, Senators and members of the House of Representative thus,

Naijirịa,
Obodo President na ndị Goyano,
Ndị Minista na ndị Kọmishọna
Ndị Sinet na ndị ụlo nzukọ
Na-adowa naira na pukunde, pukunde
N’ulọ ha, ma were ago tanye n’onu
Na-agwa ndị ọrụ na ihe e jighị kwụo ụgwọ
Bụ na ego adịghị
Naijirịa odogwu nwoke!

(Nigeria,
A nation where president and governors
Ministers and and commissioners
Senate members and members of house of Representative
Share Naira in billions
In their house, and yet deny it
Continue to tell workers that the reason for non-payment of their salary
Is lack of money

Nigeria a great man!
Leader of Africa indeed.)

The poem reveals that those at the helm of affairs in Nigeria are corrupt and self-centred. They enjoy Nigerian Naira in their different houses. They are careless about the citizens, to the extent of depriving them of their salaries. One can describe the situation depicted in the poem with this expression “monkey dey work, baboon dey chop”.

In addition, Okediadi; another Igbo literary writer, in one of her poems titled “Naijirịa” (Nigeria) satirizes the problem of poor leadership in Nigeria. Poor leadership is a major problem facing Nigeria. The poem depicts that some leaders do establish some agencies for the purpose of assisting the poor masses. But instead of assisting the poor citizens through such establishments, the leaders in turn utilize and monopolize all the benefits from such agencies. The poet refers to them as greedy people. The poet says,

Ndị oke ọchịchọ
Ụnụ hiwere amụma dị iche iche.
Ọ bụ nke gini?
I nyere ndị ụwa na-atụ n’ọnụ aka.
Onye ka o rukwaranụ aka?
N’akpa ụnụ ka ha bachara.
Ndị ọchịchị nchigbu ndoonu!

(Greedy people
You established many agencies
For what purpose?
To help the poor masses
Who benefited from that?
You monopolized everything
Bad leaders sorry!)

The poet has used her poetic work to address the problem of poor leadership in Nigeria. She observes that the poor masses are not

cared for. The leaders monopolize all the agencies created to assist and improve the condition of the poor in the society.

Besides, Emenanjo; a great Igbo literary icon employs rhetorical questions in one of his poems “Ukọ n’uju” (scarcity and in the midst of plenty) to reveal the extent of suffering some poor Nigerians experience, even in the midst of abundant resources in the nation. He says,

Kedu zi ka a ga-esi nōdụ n’anyim
Were aso na-akwọ aka?
Kedụ kwanụ ka a ga-esi nōdụ n’iyi
Kwere ncha o baa anyị n’anya?

...
(How can one be in the ocean
And wash his hands with saliva?
How can one be in the river
And allow soap to enter his eyes?)

Ugbu a,
Mmiri na-afabanyezi anyị n’eze
Ebe anyị na-achọ mmiri a ga-añu
...
(Now,
Water penetrates our teeth
As we search for drinking water...)

From the poem, “anyim” (ocean) and iyи (river) symbolize the immeasurable resources in Nigeria. It is impossible for one to be in an ocean and wash his/her hands with saliva or for one to be in the river and allow soap to enter his/her eyes. But from the poem, these situations exist. The poem depicts a very horrible condition in which some Africans find themselves. It is obvious that Nigeria is really blessed with immeasurable resources but many Nigerians are still living in abject poverty.

Summary and Conclusion

From the analysis above, it is obvious that some Igbo poets are really aware of some prevalent issues in African society. The poets of the selected poems analysed for this study address the issues of African unity, identity and development by criticizing and satirizing some prevalent issues like insecurity, bribery and corruption, poor leadership, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, mismanagement of resources, lack of basic amenities, etc. The study reveals that some African societies are still under the influence of colonialism. But from the analyses, the poets do not only satirize the African leaders, but also admonish them to live up to expectation. Besides, the poets use their poetic works to rekindle African consciousness, beliefs, identity, ethics, etc. among Africans. Obviously, their aim is to reinforce peace, unity, social harmony and development in Africa. However, collective efforts should be made to promote national unity. This will surely help to enhance the safety of all citizens. Obviously, the study has helped to clear the misconception that the Igbo poetry is purely meant for pleasure and entertainment.

Adopting the Marxist theory to analysing the poems, it reveals that the main tenet of the Marxist theory is very glaring in the selected poems. In a society where the leaders monopolize the resources to the detriment of the poor citizens, class struggle is inevitable. In a society where there is insecurity, social and political instability abound. From the poems selected for this study, therefore, there are enough instances to show that much is still required from the African Union (AU). It is very clear that some of her objectives are not yet achieved in some African countries like Nigeria as revealed in the selected poems. However, this paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Some prevalent issues in Nigeria like insecurity, kidnapping, negative activities of the boko haram sect, unlawful killings, bombing, unemployment, lack of basic amenities, bribery and corruption, poor leadership, etc. which trigger social and political instability should be given urgent attention.
2. From the study, it is very clear that the Igbo poetry is an indispensable genre of the Igbo literature. It serves as a medium through which some societal ills are addressed.

Therefore, the study of African literature in African languages should be made compulsory for Nigerian youths in their various institutions of learning. This will not only promote the languages but will help to promote healthy interaction and relationship among them.

**Nkoli Mercy Nnyigide is a lecturer in the Department of Igbo,*

African and Asian Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

nkolimercy@gmail.com

**Martha Chidimma Egenti is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.*

egentinma@gmail.com

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