

Review

The place of poetry in contemporary Chinese and Igbo politics

Onukwube Alex Anedo

Department of African and Asian Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
E-mail: onunedoal@yahoo.com.

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This article is a study of Chinese and Igbo political poems and their significance in the socio-political interaction of both cultures. It gives examples of their political poetry. The paper traces their different political situations that gave rise to the songs under study. To the Igbo, the article, explains the Aba women protest to the tax and land policies of the British Administration, subsequent independence giving rise to formation of political parties along ethnic bias in Nigeria. For the Chinese, it gets into the Cultural Revolution and the message carried along through poetry. This paper divides the political poetry into three categories, promotional, derogatory, and protest. It gives examples of each and from the enterprise; one can confirm the effectiveness of this poetry as a weapon of social construction, how poems aid politicians in conveying their messages to the electorates of the two different political ideologies. It studies the use of languages to communicate emotions and feelings in poems. It emphasizes that there are poems for different purposes that include that of political. The paper also discusses the three main political poems, promotional, derogatory and protest political poetries. It concludes that political poetry has the capability to build as well as destroy. Therefore, that political poems, which will propagate national policies such as War Against Corruption (in Nigeria), Population Control Policy (in China), then National unity, National Integration and war against terrorism all over the Globe, should be given more prominence and greater encouragement on radio and television programmes.

Key words: Poetry, Chinese in politics, Igbo politics.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one of the most striking and interesting values of folk poetry is its role in the political activities of both traditional and modern societies. In communist China, the former Soviet Union and United States, the political role of this poetry has been attested. In modern Africa, political parties have accepted songs as vehicle for communication, political pressure, orientation and education. In attesting to the aforementioned fact, Finnegan (1970: 294) states:

“By the late 1950s and early 1960s, political songs in Africa seem to have become a standard accompaniment of recognized political parties and the election campaigns that were by now becoming more a feature of political activity in African colonies and ex-colonies.”

Language is used to communicate emotions and feelings of joy, anger, and sorrow and these characteristics of

language can be very important in political songs. Writing in *West African Voices*, Osadebe (1965: 18) says, “We have a wealth of culture and fine feelings with fine expressions in music and poetry. We sing when we fight, work, love, hate, when a child is born and also when death takes a toll.” This statement underlines the expression that there are songs for occasions and so, one can categorize songs according to occasion or purpose of use. One of the distinctive characteristics of language are that it is creative, imaginative, it educates, entertains, persuades and offers vicarious experiences and excites the emotion while reflecting the realities of human existence. This is the function of Igbo and Chinese languages in the poetries under discussion. Whether they are elegiac, panegyric, ritualistic or political, songs are part of oratory and they appeal and inspire the human spirit as well as act as a mirror by which man can see the realities of life. Among the Greeks of the 15th

century B.C, as history tells us, they did not only recognize songs in their stories, poetry and drama but also in their acts and dances. Art (of which song is a part) encourages virtue and denounces evil. According to Danby (1982), "...art sets out to educate the society in the most detailed ways", and he further argues that "...utopia intention of art is to illuminate choice and to activate choice; its aim is to communicate truth, and this aim, the audience, reader or critic can further or frustrate." In other words, Dandy is arguing that interest in nature of art and perhaps the cultural background of the people could help reinvigorate any particular art. Conversely, lack of enthusiasm, the un-benefiting nature of the art work and of course, the cultural background of the society being prone to foreign influences, can affect adversely the standards of any art work. The impact of songs on the individual and the society depends on the significance attached to them by members of the society. It has been a discovery that the African and the Asian attach more significance to songs and music than the European does. Regarding this,

"Algerian musician and rai rebel Rachid Taha has told BBC World Service that he believes Western radio stations are more restrictive in what music they play than their counterparts in the Middle East because they refrain from airing political songs. You hear no political songs on the radio in Europe - just Britney Spears and that sort of thing" (Freemuse, 2005 on web: www.freemuse.org/sw8672.asp and downloaded on 26 November 2009).

This is why a typical African or Asian traditional music is full of anecdotes, pun, puzzles, riddles, proverbs and idioms, including other forms of figurative languages, which constitute the art of speech and song. Since songs constitute an integral part of literature or rather art, one can agree that songs perform a very useful function to the society that gives it sustenance. Song like every other art reflects what is happening in the society. One becomes aware of other people's state of mind and the changes that take place within them through song.

POLITICAL POETRY

Many political leaders in Africa and Asia including China and Nigeria have realized the effectiveness of folk songs in a society whose electorate is largely illiterate or semi-illiterate. In a place like Nigeria where the written election manifestos is of little significance to majority of the electorate, a song or poem, which is a conventionally acceptable form of communication can be of immense advantage and an effective means of disseminating political ideology. In China also, songs and poems tell her past political history (Odiase, 1987: 486). Examples are the five songs that tell the story of Chinese revolution.

Thus, many political leaders exploit songs to their own advantage. For instance, "Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia asked poets to write political songs in Zambian indigenous languages, specially composed for the party, and often sung by official mass choir" (Ezikeojiaku 1993: 273). Even in China

"...though frowned on by some purists, the dissemination of popular works of entertainment was also accelerating in the late sixteenth century, making for a rich and elaborate cultural mix. City dwellers could call on new images of tamed nature to contrast with their own noise and bustle, and find a sense of order in works of art that interpreted the world for them" (Spence, 1999).

What roles do songs play in the political activities of the Chinese and the Igbo? Among the Igbo and Chinese, songs serve social, political religious, psychological, literary and topical functions. In many Igbo communities, the use of songs to achieve definite goals is inherent. This explains the high incidence of apt, localized songs during sporting and other students' activities in colleges and universities in Nigeria, for example.

*"Nzogbu, nzogbu!
Enyimba enyi
Nzogbu, nzogbu!
Enyimba enyi
(Stampede to death, stampede to death
People's elephant, elephant
Stampede to death, stampede to death
People's elephant, elephant)"* (Chimezie, 1981).

The hugeness and strength of the biggest animal came to a focus in the above excerpt to intimate an opponent. The song features a literary device called figures of repetition that aids in reinforcing the intimidation.

Among the Chinese, by implication of their demonstrations on the television, books and during direct contacts with them, a foreigner calling everyone of the Chinese, Florence Nightingale, should not be making a mistake because virtually 90 percent of Chinese can sing melodiously (CCTV, 1st October 2009). Examples of political poems and or songs.

Igbo

*"Ive k'anyi ive k'anyi
Anyi kacha mmadi
Ive k'anyi bu so avivia
Ive k'anyi bu so avivi'o
Dagamaee lyaa!
(What is greater than us
what is greater than us
What is greater than us
is only grass*

we are the most populous among human being (as many times as possible) What is greater than us is only grass Rein enforcing them by praising their town (Sound of response from the crowd)."

The numerous and population strength of grass on earth is introduced previously to intimidate other competing community both in population and in wartime. The song features a literary device called figures of repetition, which aids reinforcing the intimidation.

Chinese

For Chinese version of political poem or song, I like to make use of William A. Joseph's (2005) translation of Songs of China's Cultural Revolution: (wjoseph@wellesley.edu).

*"The East is Red
Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman
The People of the World Will Surely
Be Victorious
Long Live Chairman Mao
We are Chairman Mao's Red Guards
I Love Beijing's Tiananmen!
March of the Revolutionary Youth
I am a Little Member of the Commune
Little Ping Pong Ball
The Force at the Core Leading Our Course"*

The portrait of Chairman Mao signifies the greatness of the revolution and hope for the country's futures and on the other hand, expression of support from the people. Another example of such song goes like this:

*"We are the Red Guards of Chairman Mao
Our red heart steeled in storms and waves
Armed with Mao Zedong Thought
We dare to Storm Mountains of swords and seas of flames
Dare to criticize, dare to fight
Revolutionary rebellion never stops
Dare to criticize, dare to fight
Revolutionary rebellion never stops
Thoroughly smash the old world"*

Revolutionary rivers and mountains shall be red ten thousand years! Red ten thousand years!

*"We are the Red Guards of Chairman Mao
Most firms is our proletarian class stand
Following the footsteps of our fathers' revolutionary path
We take on the important task of these times.
We are the Red Guards of Chairman Mao
The vanguard of the Great Cultural Revolution
United with the masses, going into battle
Sweeping out all injurious vermin"* (Vivian, 2000).

In the traditional social sphere like communal labour, work songs, warfare songs, recreational songs or wrestling songs, etc., serve as moral booster and invigorator. Such songs are effective means of enhancing team spirit and co-ordination. They can be used to report and comment positively or negatively on current affairs, for example satirical poetry (Abu Ikpe in Igbo and in Chinese). Women often use lampoons as a means of communicating and expressing enmity and hostility between individuals. Their psychological functions are undoubted as they are means of releasing paint-up emotions and tensions in this excerpt.

Igbo

*"U-unwunye mbuba zuo ohi. A naha abiachie e-e
U-unwunye mbuba zuo ohi. A naha abiachie e-e
Anaha ele agbata anya n'onu. Ka ha mata a ga-ekwu
Anaha ele agbata anya n'onu. Ka ha mata a ga-ekwu
A gbata a maghi ihe a ga-ekwu. Ma ihe a ga-ekwu di adi
A naha abiachie e-e!"* (Egudu and Nwoga, 1971).

"If the wife of a chief steals, they try to cover it up. If the wife of a chief steals, they try to cover it up. They look at the lips of the public in order to know what they will say, they look at the lips of the public in order to know what they will say, but the public do not know what to say, but what to say is therein still they cover it up".

This excerpt, which is rendered in three stanzas, is a means of expressing a pent-up emotion without a glaring exposure of the poet or the audience. The public is aware that if it exposes itself, it would merit severe punishment from the royal father. This is why it couches its experience in a satirical song, which refers to the chief as mbuba, whose wife's bad deeds are not to be exposed. In the literary dimension, songs like birth songs, which are exclusive to women and lullaby for which babysitters are known, help to serve artistic purposes as valuable sources of humor, enjoyment and amusement. They can also be expressions of satirical, meditative and, or inspiring comments on the circumstances of life, including politics. What political situations give rise to political songs in Nigeria and China including Igbo culture area? This study would have highlighted the Chinese type of satirical poems if not because of ban placed on satirical poems by the Government hence "In China, Satirical poems lead to jail time" (Axelrod, 2006). Any way, let's use one of the revolutionary songs that may be in support of People's Government. Such an example is:

*Anti-imperialism requires anti-revisionism (fandi bi fanxiu)
Smash the dog's heads of Soviet revisionists (zalan suxiu goutou)
Step on them with one foot (tazhe yizhi jiao) Never let them free themselves! (rang ta yongshi bu de fanshen)
"Liu Shaoqi, who cares about you*

(*Liu Shaoqi ni suan laoji*) Today I will seize you!
 (*jintian laozi yao jiu ni*) I'll make your muscles cramp
 (*chou nide jin*) Take off your skin
 (*bo nide pi*) Play socker with your skull!
 (*ba nide naoke dang qiu ti*)”

POLITICAL SITUATIONS

For a vivid understanding of the functions and relevance of political poetry in both Igbo and Chinese party politic, a brief review of some of the situations that gave vent to it is essential.

The Igbo case

One can trace the root of political songs in Nigeria to the organized protests to the tax and land policies of British Administration, which led to the formation of the earliest political organization in Lagos. The first of such organizations was the People's Union of 1908 which protested against the imposition of water rate in Lagos. The late Herbert Healers Macaulay, who at the time was the most outspoken critic of the British Administration, campaigned vigorously against the water scheme. By 1914, he and J. P. Jackson had become the leading exponents of nascent nationalism in Lagos. “That was a political protest which import was felt through communi-cation in speech and songs” (Ogunsina, 1985: 8).

Then, the next national protest was the Aba Women's Riot of 1929 in which the aggrieved women marched to the British Administration to protest the imposition of income tax on their husbands. It is believed that one of the motivating factors in the protest, which had positive effect, of course, was the war slogans and or songs that orientated sympathizers who joined and brought their protests before the British Administration (Chinweizu and Madubuike, 1980).

Between 1922 and independent in 1960, Nigeria nursed a string of constitutional conferences and weaned four constitutions namely: Clifford, Richards, Littleton and McPherson. Following Richards (1946), three major political parties sprang up in each of the three major ethnic groups – Hausa/Fulani North, Igbo East and Yoruba West (Sklar, 1963). In addition, the three main political parties were the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG), each with a strong political father. In the first Nigerian Republic, the late K.O. Mbadiwe, the leader of the Democratic Party of Nigerian Citizen (DPNC) heralded the birth of his party for preparation of the 1959 elections into the Federal House with the following political phrases

*“Light after darkness
 Forward ever
 Backward never.”*

These short poetic lines are couched in three pairs of

binary lexical items-‘light’ and ‘darkness’, ‘forward and backward’; ‘ever’ and ‘never’ arranged paradigmatically and systematically for poetic effects. The theme is a portrayal of the new political association as a progressive and dynamic party intended to excel others. With the preparation for civilian rule in Nigeria in 1978, three major political parties namely, NPP, NPN, and UPN, which were in fact reincarnation of the old rivals – NCNC, NPC, and Ag emerged. Thus, the political scene was again replete with ethnic rivalry mutual mistrust, ambivalence and various forms of distressing antiparty. It is against this background that this paper is going to give further analysis of the political poetries that characterized these parties in Igbo land.

The political poems and or songs collected for this title fairly represent those of the aforementioned parties in the Igbo language, and their composition and rendition in local traditional tunes make them very easy and readily available to the generality of the people. Besides, the people easily pick them up, learn them by heart and transmit them orally from clan to clan and from village to village. The poems composed and rendered in this way help to form a real and symbolic link between the educated leader and the illiterate masses. In this way, the poems are the most effective means of political propaganda. In some cases, the singers render them in conformity with the dialectical tunes. The political leaders, who realize the powerful effect of the language on the electorate, often exploit the use of these dialectical forms to their advantage. Thus, there are variants of the poems collected from various dialect areas of Igbo.

Chinese case

Works intensely political in nature have dominated poetry in the People's Republic of China during the past 30 years-a kind of poetry known by the name zhengzhi shuging shi (political lyric) According to Yu (1983). “The function of this poetry is to eulogize current political movements and to generate public support for them.” These phenomena reached its height during the Xin Minge Yundong (New Folksong Movement) of 1958 when millions of peasants were mobilized to write poetry to praise the Great Leap Forward and the people's commune. Even when the Great leap backfired and a widespread famine ensued, poetry was still boasting of “commune members pilling rice all the way to sky.” The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) proved a greater disaster than the Great Leap Forward, hence, the greater need for poetry to supply optimism. It was also a time of personality cult and xiandai mixiu (modern superstition); poetry was therefore, obliged to provide eulogies. To meet these demands, large quantities of what poet Gong Lin called “huanhu shi” (hail-to-the-chief-poems) flooded the market. Many of them were considered a little more than “rhymed lies”.

In the post-Mao era, political poems still constitute a

sizeable portion of poetry being produced, but the nature of these poems has undergone a significant change: instead of eulogy, they voice protest and criticism. The event that marked new era was the Tian'amen Square mass poetry movement of 1976 known as the April Fifth Movement. On that day, a crowd estimated at more than two million strong congregated at the Tian'amen Square in the centre of Beijing to pay tribute to Premier Zhou Enlai who passed away in January of that year. As befitting their literary heritage, these people mourned their beloved premier with poems. They also denounced Madam Mao (Jiang Qing) and her three cohorts who collectively later came to be known as the "gang of four". These poems of grief and indignation were the first voice of the people coming out of China in the wake of Cultural Revolution. Their spirit of protest set the tone of the poetry that followed.

The Nigeria-Biafra war was one of the political wars in which songs played great role. As recorded by one observer, the war was not just another African tribal skirmish. One can compare it with American and Spanish civil wars. In both wars, it were desperate affairs fought to bitter ends by determined people who shared a common past and a common language. It was a political war hence its songs are relevant in this paper. Generally, some of the goals of abu ntubiko include the exaltation of the image of the party leaders, consolidation of party image, propaganda of party ideologies, protection of the members' loyalty to their party, edification of the image of the party leader, and these objectives are glaringly depicted in the excerpts of the poems used for illustrative purposes here.

For the purpose of economy, we will simply categorize all the political poems used here under promotional, derogatory and protest types.

Promotional type

Some Igbo and Chinese political poems and songs are useful vehicles for focusing interest, admiration and attraction on a person or the image of a political leader. Many and varied of this poetry are designed to endear a leader to the electorate or a group. In some of the poems, there are deliberate exaggerations of facts for emphasis. Personalities are eloquently elevated in the songs while the singers conspicuously castigate enemies as in these excerpts, where they depict the People's General, Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu as a sleeping lion that would devour an enemy if awakened from slumber, as well as an Eze, (a king):

*"Gowon, tiwe, tiwe, tiwe! !
Titee nwa agu no n'ura,
Mgbe nwa agu tetara,
Ebelebe egbuola.
(If Gowon shouts, shouts, shouts
And awakens the sleeping lion,*

*When the lion awakens,
Here will be total annihilation)
Another one reads thus:
Ojukwu bu eze n'ala Biafura
E dere ya ede n'Aburi
Awolowo na Gowon, unu enweghi ike
Imeri Biafura n'agha
(Ojukwu is king in the land of Biafra
It was so written in Aburi (Ezikeojiaku, 1990)
Awolowo and Gowon, you have no power
To defeat Biafra in war)"*

In the same manner, Chinese Revolutionary poem is a promotional poem whereby the people promote Chairman Mao and his brave thought thus:

*We are the Red Regiment of Rebellion
Mao Zedong is our red commander
Rebellion is justified, fight to the finish
(yi fan daodi)
[We fight] as easy as crushing dry weeds and smashing rotten wood
(women cuiku-laxiu)
Nothing can stop us
We are Mount Tai, we are the Great Wall
(women shi Taishan shi Changcheng)
We make imperialists, revisionists and counter-revolutionaries tremble with fear
(women shi di xiu fan danzhan-xinjing)
When the Red Regiment of Rebellion occupied a building in Beijing, this march-like song was heard from speakers installed on the rooftop.*

Some Igbo political poems, especially war songs, are for solidarity, motivation and orientation, determination and togetherness. In some of the songs, living in Biafra is clearly preferred and demonstrated than living in Nigeria, which the Biafrans despised and utterly rejected because of the treatment meted to them during the pogrom. Here is another excerpt.

*"A-kwaa-aja-a-hu-ogu
Otu-uriom-ohu-nnangwa-na-achu,
Anu-a-na-achu-ama-okwa;
A-na-agba-ya-egbe-o-na-ata-nri;
Egbe-igwe-olu-mba,
Nwata-rie-awo-o-ju-anu
Aka-kara-aka-na-agba-egbendu,
Isi-kara-aka-na-ebu-ogidi,
Azu-aka-adi-mma-nrukwu,
Oku-tiwara-okwa,
Dike-e-ji-aga-mba
(When-wall-is-pushed-down- war-begins
A-chick-that-is-pursued-by-twenty-foxes
An-animal-that-is-pursued-by-announcements
An-animal-that-is-busy-eating-while-it-is-being-shot
The-thunderbolt-that-fights-a-nation
A-child-who-eats-toad-and-refuses-meat
A-strong-hand-that-harnesses-oil
A-strong-head-that-carries-coffin*

*The-back-palm-that-is-never-folded
The-pot-that-breaks-a-mortar
The-warrior-that-is-used-for-an-important-visit)."*

The unforeseen panegyric text is all a calculated attempt to portray Ojukwu as a worthy and dependable leader. It is a bold and vivid portrayal of Ojukwu as a fine physical specimen and symbol of manliness, intrepidity and heroism.

In other songs collected, most political leaders are portrayed as leaders who are affluent in both wealth and work force therefore capable of ruling their states. They are attempts to convince the electorate that their leaders are men of rare attributes and that they should vote them into power. The NPN supporters did not present the physical portrait of their leader, Alhaji Shehu Shagari; instead, they declared him as inescapable choice of the hierarchy. The excerpt that follows, which is in a question and answer format, unequivocally declares the choice of Shagari as President, Ekwueme as his Vice President, Ezenwa as Governor of Anambra State and Collins Obi as Governor of Imo State as inevitable. Since God Himself has chosen Shagari, it becomes binding on the people to accept him as their leader. The last stanza of the text exalts NPN as a political party worthy of ruling Nigeria:

*"O budi onye ga-achi anyi?
Shehu Shagari ga-achi anyi
O budi onye bu onye ochichi?
O budi onye ga-achi anyi?
Ekwueme ga-achi anyi
O budi onye ga-achi Anambara?
Ezenwa ga-achi Anambara
O budi onye ga-achi Imo?
Collins ga-achi Imo
NPN ga-achi anyi o-o!
NPN di anyi mma o-o!
(Who will rule us ?
Shehu Shagari will rule us
Who is a ruler?
Who will rule us?
Ekwueme will rule us
Who will rule Anambra?
Ezenwa will rule Anambra
Who will rule Imo?
Collins will rule Imo
NPN will rule us o-o!
NPN is good for us all!"*

In another excerpt, the NPP supporters, after winning the polls in Imo state, depict Collins Obi, the defeated NPN candidate, as a lion that was trampled down dead by their leader Onunaka Mbakwe in these words:

*"Onye zogburu nwa agu?
Ka anyi laanu*

*Ka anyi laa ka anyi laa!
O bu Mbakwe zogburu nwa agu
Ka anyi laanu
Ka anyi laa ka anyi laa.
Who trample lion to death?
Let us go back
Let us go back, let us go back
It is Mbakwe who so trampled it
Let us go back
Let us go back, let us go back"*

The edification of the image of the political leader is the priority of members of a political party, this goal is glaringly depicted in many of the political poems. In one of the texts, the NPP in Imo state employs a form of propaganda to focus attention on its leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, during the 1979 elections. In the particular excerpt, which is full of alliteration, the supporters of NPP are implying their victory at the centre (an expectation, which proved unrealizable at the end of the presidential election). At the end of the presidential election, supporters of NPN reversed the NPP political song against Azikiwe.

Another role of political poem is the exaltation of political parties. Most of the political leaders recognize the importance of promoting the good image of their party; hence, all of them make use of these poems to achieve this goal. As we observed earlier, many of their poems serve as propaganda and support to the party. Such poems assert the stability and solidarity of the party. The poems frequently solicit and, and at times, whip up popular support and admiration for the party, as in the following excerpt:

*"NPN supa pawa-a-a!
NPN supa pawa-a-a!
NPN ozo Igbo ndu
NPN i laferela
NPN ozo Igbo ndu
NPN i laferela
(NPN, Super power
NPN, super power
NPN, saviour of the Igbo
NPN, you have already succeeded
NPN, saviour of the Igbo
NPN, you have already succeeded)."*

The repetition of the acronym NPN six times is not to create fun. It instantly produces an emphatic effect. In the unforeseen rendition, each of the first two lines is given a prolonged tempo, which in turn produces sentimental and emotional effect. The subsequent and alternate repetitive lines are further marks of great importance and recognition of NPN as a party with super power, and a saviour of the Igbo.

In the same 1979 campaign activities, the supporters of NPP exalted their party by instilling fear into NPN

supporters, asserting that their party is a lion, which whether it is alive or dead, the NPN dare not challenge because if it does, the supporters of NPN the consequences would be disastrous. But at the end of the 1979 elections, the supporters of NPN castigated NPP supporters and exalted themselves for their success in winning the presidential seat, by describing the NPP as good for nothing people who were crying for economic crunch called *otanisi*. They likened NPP to someone who cultivated no food and naturally expected nothing to reap, for example, the excerpt rendered in Onitsha dialect thus:

*“NPP amalugo na ikpe malu fa,
NPP amalugo na ikpe malu fa.
NPP amalugo na ikpe malu fa,
Onye na-enwero ife o fulu
O tibe otanisi
(NPP knew that it has lost,
NPP knew that it has lost,
NPP knew that it has lost,
Someone who fails to work hard,
Shouts austerity).”*

Various parties employ different party symbols for easy identifications, orientation and direction during campaigns and election. While the NCNC used the cock as its political symbol, the Ag used the palm trees. During the 1979 party campaigns, the NPP used human beings to symbolize its ideology while the NPN utilized the symbol of a house to signify protection and security for its electorate; two maize- plants to signify agriculture and a crown to signify that it has been selected by divine power. From all these symbols and symbolisms sprang powerful political slogans that form part of the poems under study. In such slogans, the parties use symbols to interpret symbols. Some of our collections have verbal constructs that paint lucid pictures and in one of the texts, the NPN members depict NPN as an embodiment of a king, who can provide shelter and food for its electorate.

During the December 17, 1990, local government elections in Nigeria, between the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), all the parties judiciously utilized political poems. As one of its campaign strategies, the NRC supporters coined this song, whose theme is instructional in nature because of the open ballot system of voting.

*“NRC, zi m ndi gi
Ka m kwunye.
Ka m kwunye n’atughi ujo-o-o.
Zi m ndi gi,
Ka m kwunye
Na e kwere m ekwe-e-e.
(NRC, show me your people,
So that I will line up with them
So that I will line up without fear
Show me your people*

*So that I will join them
Because I strongly support you).”*

The phrases, which portray the ideology of open ballot system of voting, in the aforementioned excerpt are, “*ndi gi*, your people and *kwunye*”, ‘lining up’. The theme is that of direction and identification which is obviously very advantageous to the illiterate members of the electorate. It is an aim at the proper orientation of the voters.

Recently in just concluded February 6th 2010 Anambra State gubernatorial election, where twenty five gubernatorial candidates from twenty five political parties vied for Anambra government house seat, almost all the parties likened their gubernatorial candidates as *Onwa* (Moon) hence the song:

*“O bu onye ga-achi anyi-o-o?
Mgbo-o-o mgbo-o-o
O bu onye ga-achi anyi-o-o?
Mgbo-o-o mgbo-o-o
O bu Onwa ga-achi anyi-o-o
Mgbo-o-o mgbo-o-o
Onwa na-etili ora na mmadu apuro ina ‘a
Mgbo-o-o
Onye Chi meli eze na mmadu apuro inabu ‘a
Mgbo-o-o mgbo-o-o
Onye Chi meli eze na mmadu apuro inabu ‘a
Mgbo-o-o, mgbo-o-o
Onwa na i di anyi mma
Mgbo-o-o
Onwa na i di anyi mma
Mgbo-o-o
Ngige na i di anyi mma
Mgbo-o-o
Ngige na i di anyi mma
Mgbo-o-o
Onye Chi meli eze na mmadi apuro inabu ‘a
Mgbo-o-o
(Who will rule us?
Mgbo-o-o
Who will rule us?
Mgbo-o-o
It is the moon that will rule us
Mgbo-o-o
The moon that shines for every one, no one can take
from him
Mgbo-o-o
Whomever God ordained, no one can take it fro him
Mgbo-o-o
Whomever God ordained, no one can take it from him
Mgbo-o-o
The Moon, you are good for us
Mgbo-o-o
Ngige, you are good for us
Mgbo-o-o
Onye Chi meli eze na mmadi apuro ina ‘a
Mgbo-o-o).”*

This is a promotional song for Dr. Chris Ngige, the gubernatorial candidate of Action Congress which symbol is broom. Others have similar songs and tunes. As they sing, they carry the photograph of their leaders and their symbols. Among other top six political parties in that election are All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) with Cock as her Symbol and Mr. Peter Obi as her candidate and People's Democratic Party (PDP) with Umbrella as her symbol and Prof. Chukwuma Soludo as the candidate. Others are People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) with Mrs. Uche Ekwunife as the candidate; Hope Democratic Party(HDP) with Mr. Nicholas Ukachukwu as the candidate and Labour party (LP) with Dr. Andy Uba as the candidate. In that election, both the candidates and their supporters were more civilized in the use of songs. They did not use derogatory songs rather, each of them chose to promote her candidate with melodious songs that the electorate easily remembered while voting.

Derogatory type

Whether it was during the first or second Republic, almost every party has some grudge or the other against its political opponents. This situation can be perhaps, attributed to the cutthroat rivalry that usually existed among political parties. The practice of using ridiculer and abusive songs as well as ignominious utterances during political campaign meetings ended with the military takeover in 1966. Moreover, it is gratifying to note that during the preparation for second republic, the use of songs to express extreme bitterness and antagonism among political opponents greatly reduced. The form and content of the political songs of this category, between 1979 and 1983 were rather protective. For instance, the party followers of NPN declared their protest on the former Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Jim Nwobodo and his educational policy in these words:

*"Iwe, iwe na-ewe unu-o-o?
E-e-e, iwe na-ewe anyi-o-o!
Nne na nna na-ebe akwa-o-o!
Ugwo akwukwo ebugo anyi-o-o!
Gbanwe Nwobodo, iwe!
Iwe na-ewe anyi-o-o! Iwe!
(Anger, are you angry?
Yes! We are angry!
Parents are crying!
Over exorbitant school fees!
Change Nwobodo, for we are angry!
We are angry, angry!)"*

One of the most notable roles of political poetry is its use in the propaganda of political ideology. NPP had no specific political aim in providing free education for its electorate. The NPN and UPN exploited that state of affairs to their advantage by condemning NPP for not

providing or promising free education to its electorate. The UPN, in particular, used this loophole to instigate the electorate against NPP because it knew that many parents are likely to vote for any party that would provide such an important amenity.

Another function of political poetry is to castigate and ridicule a political opponent and stir up bad sentiments against him. In the 1983 senatorial district election in Onitsha senatorial zone of Anambra State, NPP supporters, under Dr. Edwin Onwudiwe, ridiculed and stirred up bad sentiments against Ikemba Nnewi, Dim Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (NPN) in these words:

*"O biara mbu agbakwala oso.
Isi nkwocha lee, lee!
Edi afoonu le-le!
Ndi i gbulu na-akpo gi-o-o!
Olee ndi i kporo gaa agha?
I gburu egbu ka i tara ata?
I dali mbu i ya-ada abua!
Edi afoonu, le-le isi nkwocha le!
(He who surface before let him not run away.
The baldheaded, come, come
The bearded-hyena, come, come!
Those you killed are calling you.
Where are the people you took to war?
Did you kill or chew them?
You failed in the first round; you will fail in the second.
The bearded hyena, the bald headed, come, come!)"*

In the foregoing eight lines, the poem describes Dim Ojukwu not only as a hyena- a wild flesh-eating animal with wild beard but also as baldheaded.

Nevertheless, most touching thematic aspect of the verse is reference to the loss of men during the last, which was led by Ojukwu. The resultant sentiment and emotion aroused from such a reference are immense. Such a very serious mode of castigating an opponent is enough to make a contestant like Ojukwu lose all his votes in Igbo land. For, to date, many families in the former defunct nation have not forgotten the sore memories of their lost ones. The choice of words in the text is not only apt and solid but also strong and metaphorical.

Some derogatory songs focus on avarice. In one of the collections, the opponents of NPP accuse Zik and Nwobodo of avariciousness while describing Shagari and Obi as those who bear the welfare of the electorate at heart. There is a mild degree of hurt in the text, which contains a verbal phrase – *na-achogbu* in the negative-positive construction, repeated three times in the prepositions. This particular phrase signifies the degree of avarice alleged to be associated with NPP leadership.

Among the cherished values of political songs is their use to express success, victory and achievement. They are part of means of congratulating winners at the polls. To acknowledge the victory of all parties at the polls after

the 1979 elections, a renowned musical singer, Emily of Nkwele (Emili na-ebi) of Imo state rendered the following political song:

*“Asi m ndi na-achi achi,
Anyi kwere ka unu chiwa.
Asi m ndi na-achi achi,
Anyi kwere ka unu chiwa.
Ndi na-achi achi n’ime Naijiria,
Welitenu obi elu-o-o!
Anyi kwere ka unu chiwa-o-o!
(I say to the rulers of Nigeria
We uphold your Rulership
I say to the rulers of Nigeria
We uphold your Rulership.
I say to the rulers of Nigeria,
All rulers of Nigeria,
Lift up your heart for better governance,
We uphold your Rulership)”.*

In the two-stanza verse focused on solidarity, Emily, the artist, represents the entire citizens. The artist not only acknowledges the acceptance of all the rulers by the nation but also admonishes to rule Nigeria better. She appeals for peace, unity, tranquility and good governance.

The last verse rendered in two stanzas of four lines each by the same musical singer comprises of a welcome song and a farewell song to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, during the occasion of his maiden visit to Imo State. The songs are in Igbo and Hausa Languages. Perhaps, the artist wanted to use to songs for some personal advantage from the shrewd Head of State when she rendered them thus:

*“Shehu Shagari, barika de zua-a-a,
Shehu Shagari, barika de zua-a-a,
Onyeisi ala Naijiria, barika de zua-a-a
Imo steeti na-asi gi, i biaruola-e-e
Shehu Shagari, se am juma-a-a,
Onyeisi ala Naijiria, se am juma-a-a,
Imo steeti na-asi gi, i lawala-e-e,
(Shehu Shagari, welcome!
Shehu Shagari, welcome!
The president of Nigeria, welcome!
Imo State is saying to you, welcome!
Shehu Shagari, fare you well!
Shehu Shagari, fare you well!
The President of Nigeria, fare you well!
Imo State is saying to you, fare you well!)”.*

The second stanza is a reverse of the first.

In like manner, Chinese have a kind of derogatory poems. Particularly common was the epithet "cow-devils and snake-spirits" (*niugui sheshen*) which originates in Buddhist demonology. In order to humiliate their victims, Red Guards made them sing the "Cow-devil and Snake-spirit Song" whose first lines go: "I am a cow-devil and snake-spirit, I am guilty (*wo youzui*), I am guilty." Mao

Zedong Thought was not only a weapon to fight these "enemies"--in this capacity it was often referred to as the "thousand-jun cudgel" (*qianjunbang*) of the Monkey King-but a "demon-exposing mirror" (*zhaoyaojing*). This magical property originates with the Journey to the West and is brought into action in the song "Open Fire at the Black Line" (*Xiang heixian kaihuo*):

Open fire at the black gang, open fire at the black gang
Resolutely strike down the handful of anti-party and counterrevolutionary elements
Take its black lid off (*jiekai tade hei gaizi*)
To look at its black heart (*kankan tade hei xinwo*)
Mao Zedong Thought is a demon-exposing mirror
Demons and ghosts, don't imagine you can get away with it . . . (*yaomo guiguai xiuxiang taodetuo*)
Unearth the poisonous contraband . . . (*wadiao tade ducao heihuo*).

The reactionary fortress must be resolutely attacked and smashed, must be attacked and smashed (*fandong bailei jianjue yao gongpo*).

The metaphor employed here reflects the Red Guards' "almost obsessive concern with exposure," their urge to penetrate the world of evil.

Political poems have had tremendous impact on the electorate. They serve to raise the morale of the audience and to extol the image and personality of their party leaders. The effectiveness of political poetry as a powerful weapon of political propaganda cannot be exaggerated. Apart from their conspicuous political component, they have un-doubtful literary quality. In majority of the instance, their composition is poetic. Notable in their creation are the following literary characteristics-simplicity of language, choice of words, words that are easily intelligible to the audience; deliberately constructed poignant, sharp and straight-forward sentences as well as a blend of Igbo, Hausa and English. The lexical items in the sentences are of words commonly used in the immediate environment. The nature of such words makes it possible for any one to pick up the songs and learnt by heart instantaneously.

The form and mode of rendition of the lines reveal some form of creative and inventiveness. The use of stylistic devices such as figures of speech, figures of redundancy, repetition and vivacity is appropriate and effective. In addition, the use of figures of repetition, in particular, produces various effects that make for cogency of message and clarity of intention.

PROTEST POEMS

Protest poems arise when individual or group's ideology differs from that of the government, then in order to let people share the view, it comes in such form as "Wild Beasts" thus:

*“I am a wild beast hunted down
I am a captured wild beast*

*I am a wild beast trampled by wild beasts
I am a wild beast trampling wild beasts*

*Even though barely a bone is left,
I want this detestable age to choke on me"*

In this political poem, the writer, Huang Xiang was a victim of Chinese political ideology and as such, he wrote the poem in protest. Due to his "bad" social class, his freewheeling spirit, and his non-compliance with the dominant ideology, one can see Huang Xiang as Exhibit A for China's political persecution. From 1959 to 1997, Huang Xiang spent a total of twelve years in jail. Here, he likened the government and himself as wild beasts whereby he was hunted, captured and trampled by wild beasts. He found himself because of his indifference in this situation. In most poems written before 1978, one is overwhelmed by the presence of a caged animal that rages merely to be heard. "Huang Xiang was so angry with an unjust and cruel world that he often wrote in a pitched voice, taking control of whatever words came to mind to release his pent-up emotions for the moment"(Dian, 2005).

Maghiel (1996) summaries that Huang Xiang's feat might have accelerated the coming-out party for Bei Dao and other Beijing poets and was an inspiration to other underground writers throughout the country. Later memories and interviews by participants of the Democracy Movement prove that he is right. His street politics aside, Huang Xiang's poetic fame mainly rests upon a series of poems collectively referred to as the "Fire God Symphony Poems." These well-constructed poems are united in their coherent references to fire symbolism—fire, light, torch, fire god—to express a compelling discontent with reality and an open advocacy of democracy and human rights. In terms of articulating an infectious spirit of defiance and rebellion, Huang Xiang at his best stands shoulder to shoulder with other famous poet-rebels such as Guo Moruo and Walt Whitman. Huang Xiang demonstrates a rare political prescience in his frontal assault on the idolatry of Chairman Mao and his suffocating ideology. Huang Xiang writes:

*"Why can one-man control the wills of millions of people
Why can one man prescribe life and death everywhere
Why should we bow and worship an idol
Letting blind faith confine our will to live, our thoughts and emotions
Let man be restored to his dignity
Let life become life once again
Let music and virtue be the soul's inner essence
Let beauty and nature be man's once again"*

These lines are every bit as dazzling. It is also remarkable that Huang Xiang was able to transcend his personal misfortune and construct an impersonal voice that measures the pulse of a nation longing for openness

and normalcy. In another poem "The Great Wall's Apologia," the poet takes the familiar cultural symbol to task and deliberates its symbolic duality—its endurance and staleness, its sheltering utility and fortress mentality, and then goes on to imagine its metaphorical demolition, bringing about China's entry to the global village. Such profound cultural critique prefigures the popular trend of historical reevaluation in the 1980s as represented by Su Xiaokang's influential TV documentary series *River Elegy* (He Shang). Another good example of protest poem is:
By a Silent, Silent Chinese

*"When we were called the Sick Man of Asia, we were the Yellow Peril.
When we are billed to be the next Superpower, we are a threat.
When we closed our doors, you smuggled drugs to our markets.
When we embraced Free Trade, you blame us for taking away your jobs.
When we were falling apart, you marched in your troops and wanted your "fair share".
When we were putting the broken pieces together again, "Free Tibet" you scream, "it was an invasion!"
So, we tried communism, you hated us for being communists
When we embraced capitalism, you hate us for being capitalists.
When we have a billion people, you said we were destroying the planet.
When we tried limiting our numbers, you said it is human rights abuse.
When we were poor, you thought we were dogs.
When we loan you cash, you blame us for your debts.
When we build our industries, you called us polluters.
When we sell you goods, you blame us for global warming.
When we buy oil, you call that exploitation and genocide.
When you fight for oil, you call that liberation and democracy.
When we were lost in chaos and rampage, you wanted rule of law for us.
When we uphold law and order against violence, you call that violating human rights.
When we were silent, you said you want us to have free speech.
When we were silent no more, you say we are brainwashed racists.
Why do you hate us so much? We asked.
"No," you answered, "We don't hate you."
We don't hate you either,
But do you understand us?
"Of course we do," You said,
"We have NBC, CNN and BBCs..."
What do you really want from us?
Think hard first, then answer...
Because you only get so many chances,*

*Enough is enough, enough Hypocrisy for this one world.
We want one world, one dream, and peace on Earth.
This big blue Earth is big enough for all of us."*

This poem is Chinese response to criticism over Tibet. In this poem, Chinese are not comfortable with the way the World look at them. They are saying that nothing done in China by Chinese has been acceptable by nations of the Globe. They are therefore confused of what to do for the World to talk good of them. Therefore, they are really telling the World their displeasure on the way other nations treat them.

The political poems and or songs collected for this title fairly represent those of the above parties in the Igbo Language and the situation on ground in China and their composition and rendition in traditional tunes make them very easy and readily available to the generality of the people. Besides, the people easily pick them up, learn by heart, and transmit them orally from clan to clan, from group to group and from village to village. The poems composed and rendered this way help to form a real and symbolic link between the educated leader and the illiterate masses. In this way, the poems are the most effective means of political propaganda. In some cases, they render them in conformity with the dialectical tunes. In addition, the political leaders, who realized the powerful effect of the language on the electorate or the lead, often exploited the use of these dialectical forms to their advantage.

CONCLUSION

The significance of political poetry in the socio-political interaction of Igbo and Chinese has been examined, and from the enterprise, one can confirm the effectiveness of this poetry as a weapon of social construction. Political poetry has been shown as possessing the capability to build as well as destroy. This poetry on various occasions, has, been employed in the edification and glorification of personalities and political parties. Art is powerful and one of the most effective means of testing the pulse of the electorate. This paper has tried to point out that this poetry can be used as an agent of destruction and disintegration, for sometimes, it is employed to sow the seeds of disunity, hatred and ethnic rivalry among people. African and Asian political parties now accept Songs as a vehicle for communication, orientation, propaganda, political pressure and political education.

There is no doubt that political poetry, especially songs can be a powerful weapon of national integration. For this, therefore, rather than compose songs that will separate and destabilize people as a nation, composition of political poetry should be geared towards socio-cultural harmony, unity and mutual understanding. The composition of songs in honour of traditional and national heroes should be seen as a worthwhile activity in the

development of Chinese and Nigerian folklores. Political poetry if properly harnessed can be effective means of spreading new ideas to the masses. For this, it is recommended that political poems, which will propagate national policies such as War Against Corruption (in Nigeria), Population Control Policy (in China); then National unity, National Integration and war against terrorism all over the Globe, should be given more prominence and greater encouragement in their states, provinces and national programmes on radio and television.

The contemporary relevance of political poetry can be illustrated with the action of the Nigerian military rulers in 1966 in banning political songs and Chinese Government in recent time (David, 2006) in banning satirical songs as part of their attempts to curb political excesses. On the other hand, the Tanzanian government appealed to musicians in 1967 to help and spread its new policies of socialism and self-reliance to the people through songs. The systematic collection and documentation of political poetry on magnetic tapes and on print for posterity is strongly recommended.

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