

# African Research Review

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*An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*

*Vol. 3 (4), July, 2009*

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print)

ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

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## **A Literary Discourse of Nigerian Children's Accretive Songs**

(Pp 92-108)

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### **Abstract**

*A general doubt about the artistic or literary usefulness of the Nigerian childlore is still evident among Nigerian scholars. Confirming the situation is the paucity of literature or critical works in the genre. The most common response to this lore however are studies related to pedagogical issues. Observation in the past ten years or so shows that some systematic studies of the lore as a literary genre are gradually becoming obvious. The paper has chosen to discuss Nigerian childlore and specifically children's accretive songs with a view to highlighting their socio-cultural, political and aesthetic values. Furthermore, the paper shows how children's play culture reflects broader debates about creativity; thereby confirming the symbiosis between adults' and children's lores; and the significant contributions of the latter to the overall image of the Nigerian literary output.*

### **Introduction**

It is not very certain when this started; but it is obvious that for as far past as possible, critics and prospective critics of African children's playlore have been having verbal battles as to the relevance or meaningfulness of African children's oral culture. This of course is applicable only to those who by some design or reason think there is a playlore. Those who are sympathetic to the genre have looked at it from a mere functional point of view as what children engage in when adults want them out of the way or something they

engage in when they have nothing useful to do. Therefore those who have looked at playlore from a pedagogical stance have seen children's play culture as a purely instructive entity which ought to be investigated by one or perhaps more disciplines: education for teaching purposes; healthcare providers, for therapeutic purpose; psychologists who need such a lore to enhance their investigation for possible solutions to problematic children or adults; linguists who are studying Babel language or Babbles. Should African children's lore be studied for its literary merits? Does the genre exhibit sufficient aesthetics or poetry to attract serious investigations by serious minded researchers of note? These and similar questions, often meet with derogatory comments or responses which include: "What is there to study in a noisy melee"? Some scholars like Inih Ebong, Eneke and Camara Laye all hold the view that African children's ritual poetry or songs are usually esoteric. For this purpose they are therefore meaningful as they are symbolic. But the non-ritual verses are thought by some individuals including Akpabot (1981: 92) not to make any sense sufficient to attract serious critical attention.

Somehow, it seems, these critics all in a hurry forget their childhood culture. Perhaps at the risk of denial, some also forget those values they imbibed; not at home but during play; the team spirit and resilience they acquired from playgrounds. They forget the beautiful poetry which spoke about their rich culture, their flora and fauna like no other composition could ever do, and the rhymes or chants which helped to correct some speech defect they had. Some adults no doubt appreciate this important phase of their life and the tradition which characterized it. With nostalgic feelings they recall them in their works. It is observed however, that such mention are in the main peripheral. All the same these scholars, like Omoha, do acknowledge the fact that the "old and new must blend and dissolve unseen" thus affirming the theory that literature is a continuum. We find this in the works of notable scholars like Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. Limiting itself to Ibibio and Yoruba Children's playlore, as arche types, this paper attempts an analysis of some Children's accretive songs providing refreshing insights into the genre and highlighting their socio-cultural values, religious implications; language and literary relevance. In this regard the present article points to the compelling need to acknowledge Nigerian and indeed African children's play culture. The paper further contends that African children's oral poetry or playlore exhibit considerable technical skills in choice and arrangement of words and in addition reflect language skills and literary merits which place

them side by side with oral poetry or traditional songs elsewhere. The view just expressed here is discussed in another paper entitled "Men, Women and Children's Oral Poetry Compared". Chosen for specific consideration in the on-going discussion are four accretive songs usually performed competitively by girls (and boys sometimes) between 10-12 years of school going and non school-going. These accretive songs like the Yoruba "Aro" "not only portray a variety of human experiences (Thompson 1980:165) but are relatively long narratives usually sung with much dexterity. The songs are in the form of a "suspended chain, the lines hanging on one another... should a line be removed from within the [song] then a vital link is cut off."

The importance of these kind of songs is the "training of the participants to develop a retentive memory and a high level of oracy" in the language of the song. The travel motif is usually fraught with adventure and hazards as outlined in the songs. Metaphorically the travel symbolise life of man fraught with risks, adventure and hazards. The first song to be discussed is entitled:

<b>Adiaha Umöñ körikö</b>	<b>Translation</b>
Adiaha Umöñkörikö, Akene ebe odäk inam	Went into Inam seclusion with her husband
Idäk Inam enye ikponnokpon	Went into seclusion and was not fat at all
Etie k'ufök adia mkpö	She sat at home to eat
Amaaña ikpöñ eyin ufökñwed	She ate the school children's coco yam
Akappa ñwed ikuö önö	
Adiaha Umöñkörikö	And gave them a song book in exchange

	<b>Translation</b>
Mme mkpetitie?	Should I sit?
Mme mkpenaana?	Should I lie down?
Mme mkpetitie?	I tried to sit down
Enye ifönnö fön	It was uncomfortable
Mme mkpenaana?	I tried to lie down
Enye ifönnö fon	It was uncomfortable
Mkpõñ ñkedia ikpõñ ke ntuen oku	Yesterday I ate cocoyam with pepper (sauce)
Ntuen ayaayad owo	Pepper is very hot.
Mfin mbodia k'ubo ekaeka - o	Today I'll eat it with vegetable soup
Öyöörö yörö	Oyoroyoro
Adiaha amaa daka isañ	When Adiaha takes a walk;
Enye umik umik	She walked umik umik
Atuak ada unek	And then stops for a few dance steps
Amaana adakka isañ...	Then she walks umik umik;
Enye umik umik,	And stops again to dance a little more....
Atuak ada unek	

This game song is usually performed with the view to establishing the most eloquent, coherent and the most accurate rendition. The context of the song is a famous religious institution of yester years called “Inam”. “Inam” was considered as the highest and most expensive religious order among Ibibio and Anaang people of Akwa Ibom State. Membership comprised aged men and women who were divinely called. Such persons would have been initiated into all the “secret and non-secret societies of the land, and he or she had to be pious and religious and of unquestionable integrity”. The prescribed number of years that one had to enter Inam was 49 years in

multiples of 7 years. Esema, J.D.(2002), Udo, U. E. (1983), Okoko, E. U. (1988), Ekong, E.E. (1983), Esen A. J. A. (1982) all confirm that Inam was a period when divinely called men and women of great wealth went into seclusion to undergo treatment of the body, mind and spirit in order to regain vitality and to commune with the supernatural beings. During the seclusion, the initiate was required to undergo fattening, observe certain dietary taboos among other paraphernalia. At the end of the seclusion, the initiate went in a procession to the market where he or she was required to perform various sacrifices, present himself or herself to the public and fete the populace. When a "veteran came out successfully from Inam seclusion, he was regarded with great respect and honour". This extensive information is necessary if we must understand and articulate both the socio-cultural context; the literary impact of the song and the predicament of the protagonist. From this background it is obvious that Adiaha was neither divinely called nor was she by reason of age or character and circumstance of life qualified. Her marital status was not a criterion.

The song treats a situation that has a direct bearing with Inam and a gluttonous woman. It deals in a comprehensive way with aspects of the protagonist's lifestyle stretching from her going into Inam unadvisedly; to her greed, to her physical looks (which was more of a curse than a blessing from the gods), to people's reactions to her wantonness. Understandably, the emphasis is on Adiaha's lean flesh for venturing into the seclusion with her husband which was against the law of the institution; because initiates were "divinely called". To bring out her size as an evidence of the failure of Adiaha's obtrusive endeavour, the poem uses ideophonic devices to describe her steps as "*umik umik*" thus giving the picture of a thin and skeletal frame. We notice that Adiaha not only broke the initiation law, she did not adhere to the strict rules defining the order. She stayed in the comfort of her home and ate at will; thus breaking the dietary rules. This meant that she neither farmed, traded nor was she involved in any meaningful social activity. She took to a wild life of eating, sleeping and ease.

"Etie k'ufok adia mkpö	She sat at home and kept eating
Mme mkpetie?	Should I sit down?
Mme mkpenaana?	Should I be sleeping?

This obviously is the dilemma of a lazy drone Adiaha became a nuisance to all including school children; whose food she did not spare;

Amaña ikpön eyin ufökñwed	She's eaten the school children's cocoyam
Akappa ñwed ikuö önö	And gave them a song book in exchange.

Here “ikpon” and “eyin ufokñwed” are metaphorical expressions depicting the extent to which her inordinate appetite has reduced her. The food imagery is also an expression of the people's culinary delight. It may well mean here that Adiaha told them tales with accompanying songs by way of diverting the children's attention from food or hunger.

Rather than grow fat Adiaha became so inconceivably bony that sitting or lying down was problematic:

Mme mkpetietie?	Should I sit down?
Enye ifonno fon	Sitting down doesn't solve the problem.
Mme mkpenaana?	Should I lie down?
Enye ifoono fon.	Lying down doesn't solve the problem.

Next Adiaha thought of over spicing her food or taking cocoyam with pepper if that would help her situation but found that attempt intolerable. Her pathetic size is further shown through the use of ideophone, a literary technique which Kolawole Gboyega describes as phonoaesthetic, that is, “a representation of extra-linguistic gestures such as human looks, actions, movement posture...”. The song demonstrates the fact that Adiaha is unproportionately so thin that her size can better be captured ideophonically as “umik umik”. The reduplication is a further stress on her endeavour and the difficulty in walking. Her constant dance “Atuak ada unek” not only confirms her frame but effort at gaining some breath to survive the procession and “win” some sympathy. The song is a lampoon of any lazy, wrong-headed and arrogant girl or even grown ups who put themselves above the law of the land. Repetition is the occurrence of a particular feature in a given literary context. In traditional rhetoric, especially in children's playsongs, repetition is very prominent. It serves the purpose of emphasis and memorability among others. In this song the repetition of lines 7-10 and 13-16 is of great significance as it exhibits the confused state the protagonist finds herself and her restlessness of mind and body. The day of showing forth has come and she is neither ready anatomically nor financially to meet the expectations of the order and the community. Symbolically, the song condemns those who ride on the back of others or well placed relations to achieve goals they are not qualified for or ready to work for. It also

condemns wild pursuit thus affirming the truth that all that glitters is not gold. This seems to be the protagonist's case who was neither called divinely into Inam order nor did she exhibit the discipline in compliance with the order. Her dilemma becomes obvious as she indulged in every inconceivable act that contradicted the principles of the institution. Therefore, in the place of honour and respect which usually attended Inam graduands, Adiaha got the punishment of the gods.

A very striking feature of this song is the vivid image painted with words and sounds: the compelling picture of Adiaha's failure and her skeletal frame. These all distinguished her from the robust smooth-bodied and healthy happy looking divinely called initiates whose steps can be describe as "idoko idoko". The ideophone "umik umik" is symbolic of Adiaha's unenviable frame, obstinacy and tragedy. The song is instructive as it teaches what happens to upstarts and the consequences of violating laid down principles or traditions. The exercise which usually ushered in a life of plenitude, dignity and honour brought Adiaha public ridicule, shame, poverty and destitution, thus warning against abuse of constituted authority. There is some political undertone here as the song presents a sarcastic picture of some moral laxity and inmentionable social ills some individuals engage in, thinking they are not noticed. The predatory image couched in the following lines

Amaana ikpon eyin ufoknwed      She's eaten the school  
children's cocoyam

Akappa nwed ikuo ono      And given cocoyam in exchange

paints the picture of plundering African leaders who after their tenure usually leave white papers for the masses to peruse, and their nation, more impoverished than they met it. Generally the song is replete with simple ornate and symbolic elements. In corroboration Eyoh (2003:116) says the diction is apt for its message, contributing significantly to its beauty.

While Adiaha sings the song of sacrilege and shame; the next song gives the picture of a smart and uncompromising woman who took steps to avenge herself against acts of exploitation and disregard. "Odom Iya" is the title of the next game song; which like the first is enjoyed for its length accuracy and accretive property.

ODOM AFIA	AKEKOOK	Translation
<p>Odom akeköök afia Ete mien di yep Nyep nyep mma Ete mien ke wod Nwod, ñwod mma Ete mien ke bak Mbak mbak mma Ete mien ke tem Ntem ntem mma Odom ebem ata ama Inöhö odo' mi Inööhö odo eyin Ndäk esit ufok Mben okpoho edip Kpanyaha ke'kpan Eme mmi adoodo Mben okpoho duop Kpanyaha ke'kpan Ame'yin adoodo Mben okpoho iba Kpanyaha ke'kpan Ameebe odoodo Kpanyaha k'iwuod Nsaña idoko idoko Nsaña idiata idiata Ñkewuö udua Mbiommo akpan nnim Kpanyaha k'isoñ Nsio okpoho edip Ndep ukod enañ Ame mmi adoodo Nsio okpoho duop Ndep ukot ebod Ame'yin odoodo Nsio okpoho iba Ndep ukot nsäñ</p>	<p>My husband laid a trap He said I should watch it I watched and watched He said I should kill the game I killed and killed the game He said I should cut the meat I cut and cut the meat He said I should cook it I cooked and cooked it My husband sat back and ate all He did not give me any bit He even did not give our child So I went into the room And picked 20 manillas Kpanyaha in my shopping basket That's for me I picked 10 manillas, Kpanyaha in my shopping basket That's for our child Then I picked 2manillas Kpanyaha in my shopping basket That's for my husband Kpanyaha on my head Then I walked "idoko idoko" I walked "idiata idiata" When I arrived the market I put down my shopping basket Kpanyaha on the ground I took out 20 manillas And bought cow leg That's for me. Then I took out 10 manillas And bought goat leg That's for our child I took out 2 manillas And bought the leg of a fly</p>	



<p>Ake ebe adoodo  Kpanyaha ke'kpan  Kpanyaha k'iwuod  Nsañ a idoko idoko  Nsana idiata idiata  Ñkewuö ufök  Nsio ukot enañ  Mföp mma nta  Nsio ukot ebod  Mföp nnö ayin  Ayin ata, amö ama  Adido ak'ebe  Ndäk edem esa  Mbenne ukod nsän  Mbök nnö ebe  Ebe adia, amin iso  Nt' ebe ns'e emin?  Amin uso; amin uka?  Amin ekpo, idäñ ndufo?  Ebe mkpö' do etie nte;  Iya iñ wana, iya iñwana  Ebe mkpö 'do etie nte  Iya inwana, iya iñwana</p>	<p>That's for my husband  Kpanyaha in the basket  Kpanyaha on my head.  Then I walked idoko idoko  And I walked idiata idiata  On getting home;  I pulled out the cow leg,  Roasted it and ate all  I took out the goat leg  Roasted it, for our child  Our child ate all of it  In my husband's case  I went behind the house,  Took the fly's leg  And made soup for my husband  My husband ate and winced  Then I asked my husband why did you wince?  You're doing that to your father and mother  And to the gods of your land.  My husband, it appears  We're going to fight; we're going to fight.  In my husband's case</p>
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### **Discussion**

Here like the first song, a domestic scene is presented. It is a narrative which gives the picture of a family whose story started well with a subservient wife, a quiet child and a domineering husband. A very typical African family. But by the 10<sup>th</sup> line the story changes recalling the man whom Uko Akpan (Iwokedok, 2004; 2007) describes as “ Ekpo ebe akama ndiyañ itie ndidia” (The mean husband who carries a whip during harvest/at meal time. One who spies on his wife at harvest time thereby denying her access to the proceeds of her labour.

The song has 4 stages all combining to make the offence heinous and the revenge appropriate. The first stage is a graphic picture of a man who laid a

trap but asked his wife to oversee its success. Assiduously she watched “nyep nyep mma”. Luck smiled on her and there was a good catch. In the second stage, the husband further gave her the responsibility of handling the game till it became food. Traditionally this is abominable, that is for a woman to handle game or meat generally. This aversion they capture in their proverb which says “Nniehe ufök se owoñwaan edeeme iyak” (I can’t have a home where a woman shares the fish). Here we see the man relegating his social and leadership responsibilities to his wife. Very unsuspecting and considering it as her normal matrimonial chore, she puts her best to it and prepares the meat for food. Unfortunately and to her chagrin or utter bewilderment, the husband eats all the meat without giving a bite to his wife or child. Infuriated but in subdued anger the protagonist reacts.

The third part of the narrative discusses the protagonist’s reaction to her husband’s mean and senseless exploitative behaviour. Against the social norms, she goes in, picks money differently designated and proudly but confidently leaves for the market. The presence of the husband became inconsequential at this point as tyrants often are in the face of a matching opposition. The last stage of the story is when the protagonist verbalises her anger drawing our attention to her readiness to defend her integrity and react to her husband’s meanness.

The first stage of the song symbolically shows how the protagonist ministered to her husband socially, domestically and economically; but was meanly and heartlessly cheated of the proceeds of her faithful labour. The song rises to a crescendo with the wife making soup with the leg of a fly for her husband who eats and winces. It is his reaction that sparks off the verbal duel couched in these rhetorical questions:

Nt’ebe nse’meemin?	Then I asked my husband why did you wince?
Amin usö amin uka?	You’re doing that to your father and mother?
Amin ekpo idäñ ädufo?	You’re doing that to the gods of your land?

Then the song ends with an invitation to a fight. These last 8 lines of the song are not only integrative functionally; they actually bear the burden of meaning of the song and the protagonist’s discontent and intention to warn against the ugly consequences of exploitation. The song is a smart and uncompromising attack against cheating and exploitation. The theme of

revenge is here worked through a normal domestic chore which culminates in the vengeful act of the protagonist and a readiness to defend her position. The repetition of the last 4 lines confirms the certainty of a fight and more so the wife's victory.

"Odom Akeköök Afia" brings to mind the female characters in Alkali's *THE DESCENDANTS* and Clark's *THE WIVES' REVOLT* who assert themselves in spite of the hostility from the male folk and society in general. There is a strong reference here to the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. While the people and their land produce the oil that enriches the nation; they and their land remain impoverished politically, educationally, economically and socially, to say the least. The song further recalls the exploitation of Africans by colonialists and now by African leaders; at the same time it denounces the administrative and cultural oppression witnessed in developing countries particularly Africa.

Couched in an imaginary dialogue this song creates a very tense and deeply emotional atmosphere through some contemptuous, harsh and violent expressions. The husband is no longer referred to as "odom" a more endearing name for husband but he simply called "ebe". Fly's legs for food one may say is mean of the protagonist; but the man in this text requires mockery and thoughtful laughter to bring him back to his senses. That to a great extent is what the protagonist did. The ideophonic expressions "idoko idoko" and "idiata idiata" all depict the protagonist's assertiveness and defiance. In addition to the tone is the local colour the song bears. This is evident in the use of "odom" husband, "afia" trap 'okpoho' manilla, 'akpan' shopping-basket.

"Odom Akekook Afia" sets to remind the men and the society that women are not as weak and gullible as they are often thought. It recalls the Women's Riot of 1929 thus reminding us of what the proverbial penis said when asked why he was staring so intently at the floor. His reply was that he was contemplating on the best line of action to take. A woman's silence may not always be a sign of weakness or fickle mindedness. She is actually strategizing. J.P. Clark's work already mentioned, captures this thought very aptly. The song forecasts a bright future for African women who are poised to assert their right against any form of marginalization.

Life it is said is a journey. Shakespeare says it is a stage where each person comes and goes at his or her set time. The next accretive song which is a travelogue captures this thought succinctly.

“EYIN NSABO (Cobra’s child).	Translation
<p>Ih-Ih-Ih Eyin Nsabo                      Ih-Ih-Ih Eyin Nsabo                      Nsaña nsaña nsaña                      Ñkop fruuk kpoop                      Nte nsinam ado?                      Ebök et’imö inam                      Nte anaanam nso-o?                      Ete itop eyop                      Nte ñwakka ndi?                      Ete wakka di.                      Ñwakka ñka do.                      Mben ökpörö keed                      Mbuuk ke mfäk emi                      Mben ösöök keed                      Mbuuk ke mfäk aken                      Nsaña nsaña nsaña                      Ñkekid ama mmi añwaan</p> <p>Nsio ösöök keed                      Nnö enye mbe ekim                      Nsaña nsaña nsaña                      Ñkekid ama mmi edeen                      Nsio okporo keed                      Nno enye mbe ekim                      Mkpook mbara ubok                      Mkpook mbara ukod                      Nnim k’ ökpösüñ                      Ekpo ikaañake                      Idem ikaañake                      Aasabo adikaaña                      Akpa anaado                      Mben ndöñ udua                      Udua inyamake                      Mben ntem oto                      Ötö inwuöñoke</p>	<p>Ih - Ih - Ih cobra’s child                      Ih - Ih - Ih cobra’s child                      I walked and walked and walked                      I heard fruuk kpoop                      I asked “who did that?”                      Monkey said he did                      I asked what are you doing?                      He said he was harvesting palm fruit                      I asked if I could help myself to                      some fruits,                      He said I could                      So I went.                      I picked one palm fruit                      And saved it in my right cheek                      I picked another                      And kept it in the left cheek                      I walked and walked and walked                      Then I met my lady friend</p> <p>I pulled out one fruit,                      gave her and continued                      I walked and walked and walked                      Then I met my bosom friend                      I pulled out the other fruit                      Gave him and continued .                      I trimmed my toe nails,                      I trimmed my finger nails                      And kept them at the crossroad                      The gods did not cross over them                      Ancestral spirits did not cross over                      them                      But the cobra went over them                      And died instantly                      I sent the meat to the market for sale                      But it was not a market day                      I used the meat to prepare pottage                      But the pottage was not delicious</p>

Mkpö keed k' esid ikod Ekere önönö eto Inöhö ekpö, inöhö ndem (All) Akekepeene ekpe amäm	There's a tree in the bush Called Giver-Tree It neither gives to the gods nor to spirits Whoever is last will be caught by the Lion.
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This song accompanies a hide-and-see game. Like the second text, “Eyin Nsabo” is a dramatic monologue rendered in the first person. This technique arrests the personality of the protagonist thus making his pretence and action felt. The 3<sup>rd</sup> line with *nsańa* repeated thrice is a metaphor portraying life as a journey with the different stops typifying the different stages in a man's life and his eventual death. Ibibio traditional superstitious belief is brought to bear here:

Ekpo ikannake ...	The gods did cross over it
Asabo adikaańa ...	The cobra went over it
Akpa anaado ...	And died instantly...
Ötö iwuońńoke ...	The pottage was not delicious

Also noticed is the people's cosmological belief in ancestors “ekpo” and “ndem”. It is a belief generally upheld that whatever the gods reject, man should not dare to identify with it. That was cobra's fate. It trod where the “gods” feared to tread.

“Eyin Nsabo” represents a journey through life and all its attendant problems and prospects uncertainties and expectations. It connotes man's search for fame and the untold hardships of near success but eventual failure. Monkey here represents the spirit of benevolence which showers blessings on mankind.

As the journey progresses, the protagonist encounters a dilemma resulting from the fact that Asabo meat cannot be sold, bought or eaten. We see Ibibio people's tendency towards superstition clearly shown in this song, that is, the belief in preternatural beings like ‘ekpo’ and ‘ndem’ and also in the unity of nature; that man, animal and trees are a united entity. Note the conversation

between the man and Monkey and the tree that gives; then Lion that is personified. In this text 'ekpo' is used by the protagonist to enunciate his pessimism about the worth of the dead Asabo. The song at this point presents the theme of futility. The ultimate outcome of the quest as exemplified in this text is futility and death: recalling Okara's illusive 'it'.

The entire song is a great metaphor on life and death: the journey is symbolic of man's journey through life. Concrete visual images combine with metaphors to produce the tone of futility and death. There is the use of common and uncommon words and expressions. Common words and expression like *nsañã*, "etop eyop"; "okporo" "ama" *udua oto*. These all relate to our day to day experiences of life. The uncommon words and expressions like "onono eto", "ösöök", capture the intricacies of our philosophical and religious inclinations. The rhythm of the song understandably is slow and musical (rendered in a call - response pattern) and can be danced to: showing that life is a long tortuous journey which cannot be attained in a quick dash, but in stages: from cradle to old age. Repetition of words and phrasal structures: *ñsañã nsañã nsañã* creates a sense of tedium, rhythm and musicality. The onomatopoeia "fruk kpoop" is used to imitate the fall of palm fruit. The song is richly augmented with figurative expressions which though now uncommon; are still useful like *ösöök*, *ökpörö* used to describe palmfruit otherwise called "*ñkua - eyop*". The abundance of sibilant sound adds to the sorority and memorability of the song.

Using the travel metaphor, the protagonist presents a catalogue of the different stages of life. Starting with the Monkey and palm fruit he progresses step by step to also present the different aspects of human relationship. The song not only ends with nothingness thus signifying that at the end of life all that man spends his energy to acquire ends in worthlessness:

Mben ntem ötö I used the meat to prepare pottage  
ötö iwuöönöke But the pottage was not delicious

Finally the song ends with a threat and a jeer at whoever gets caught by the Lion. This ending provides the picture of man's complete and total handicap at the moment of reckoning with death.

The song shows how man's unbridled pursuit of the vanities of life shrinks into nothingness and death. Terminating in a threat the song, like the one before it, assets the fate of everyone who fails to heed laid down principles: "Akepeene ekpe omäm" (whoever is last will be caught by the Lion).

Aspect of the palm provides images of fecundity and the male persona is seen as he gives "seed" to a female and then a male friend. As it discusses fertility so does it discuss the motif of death "akpa anaado" "ekpe ömäm". The allusion to the trimming of nails is an Ibibio way of denunciation or absolving self from blame. This goes to support the cultural relevance of the song. The Lion is here depicted as an enemy and a symbol of evil and destruction which ought to be avoided.

In addition, the third song expresses the fact that some situations of life defy solutions. In such instances even the gods are handicapped:.

Ekpo ikaññake	The gods didn't cross over them
Idem ikaññake	The ancestral spirits did not cross over them...
Mben ndoñ udua	I sent the meat to the market for sale
Udua inyamake	But it was not a market day
Mben ntem oto	I used the meat to prepare pottage
Ötö iwüöññöke	But the pottage was not delicious.

The last song to be considered in this paper is a Yoruba children's speech poetry entitled:

Woru.	Translation
Woru o...!	Woru o...!
Woru r'oko...	Woru went to the farm
Woru r'odo	Woru went to the river.
Woru pa'ka feye je	Woru threshed guinea corn and fed it to the birds
Mo dele mo ro fun baba	On getting home I reported him to father
Baba no Woru jojo	Father flogged Woru severely
Woru da?	Where is Woru?
Labe ogede, labe orombo.	Under the banana tree, under the orange
O tise d'abe ata?	How did you come under the pepper bush?
Ide were ni t'Osun	Small pieces of brass are Osun's
Oje gudugba ni t'Oosa	Large lumps of lead are Oosa's
Sekesehe ni t'Ogun.	Leg-irons are Ogun's
E ba mi sipe fun Baale	Plead the Baale on my behalf
Ko ba mi w'ododo pakaja	To give me a ... coverlet to throw on

Gbogbo wa l'Ogun jo bi o... Paaya! Oloko o de o	my shoulders We are all offsprings of Ogun Hurrah! The owner of the farm arrives.
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Working through an agricultural images and travel motif, the song presents a catalogue of incidences of life. Beginning with a life of lawlessness and its consequences, the song progresses to discuss the Yoruba pantheon and its individual symbolic insignia. In it also, the children do not hesitate to portray fathers as disciplinarians.

Reflecting on the above discussion, some undeniable issues became apparent: that like adult traditional oral poetry; children's playsongs exhibit intrinsic beauty of themes, language and culture. The songs reflect Nigerian and in every sense, African culture. One other point of interest in the songs is their dramatic quality exemplified by the use of the first person narrative technique which facilitates the action of the poem. The poems are very appealing as they discuss very familiar issues like obstinacy, protest against injustice; the nothingness of life; concern for the sufferings and deprivation of the masses; the disgust for cheats and exploiters, among others. All the songs also reflect copiously the beliefs, traditional culture of Ibibio and Yoruba people. In this way they draw upon a familiar background, explore varied but related and relevant issues and reflect in a marvelous way the sensibility and sensitivity of the performers. They also exhibit rich poetic forms which recommend them as "remarkable aesthetic embodiments of man's cultural, intellectual 'emotional and imaginable encounters of life. They unite deep thoughts and feelings through compelling use of language", details of milieu and cultural peculiarities are not want thereby offering critics and the general audience to savor Ibibio, Yoruba and other traditional culture, poetics and language.

We notice that the language of these songs is complex stemming from the images employed in expressing the subject matter. They are dominated by conjugal and agricultural images; drawn from the players' environment. Also is noticed a preponderance of lexemes like *eyop*, *ösöök*, *ökpörö*, *ide*, *sekesehe*, *gudugba*, *asabo*, *akpan*, *okpoho*, *afia*, *inam*, *ikpöñ*, *ntuen*, *odom*, *udua*, *isañ*, *asabö*, *ebök*. It is obvious therefore to say that the fauna and flora, cultural beliefs and lore of the people define the songs. Importantly, to



note is the evidence that this paper suggests that African children's playlore portends a rich source of modern poetry or modern African Literature. In fact, the discussion shows "the debt which modern African poetry owes the traditional forms in terms of both themes and techniques". Further studies in other language areas will certainly be very rewarding.

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