

Tradition and Individual Creativity in  
Enuani Igbo Tales

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Thesis presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Oriental and African Studies,  
University of London

May 1984

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Dedicated to my first teacher  
ever, Achanu A. Okoh, who did  
not live long enough to witness  
the growth of the several trees  
which she had planted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who carries out a study of this nature necessarily makes diverse demands on individuals, sometimes too many to be mentioned. For making available the basic material for this thesis, I am grateful to a great number of Enuani informants - narrators, literary critics and connoisseurs - for the numerous nights of tale-telling and recording. And for giving more of his time than anyone else, I am particularly grateful to Udene Okohai, the finest Enuani performer and a highly enthusiastic believer in the power of 'our traditions'. Over the years, his selflessness and that of his friends - Ojedeh, Jebose, Osubor, James and Philip - has constantly proved a source of encouragement.

The support from the University of Port Harcourt has been even more reassuring. In the face of severe economic problems the institution has managed to fulfil its financial obligations towards me for the period of my studies in London. To my colleague, Edet Akpakpan in Port Harcourt, I am deeply indebted; engrossed as he was in his own academic labours, he remained a thoughtful friend.

I seize this opportunity to thank all my teachers at SOAS, especially Professor Gordon Innes and Mr. F. D. D. Winston. I recall with gratitude the numerous hours spent with them, discussing this thesis, from its embryonic to its final stages. Their theoretical approaches have been very stimulating and I have benefitted immensely from their suggestions and criticisms. However, I must take full responsibility for any errors that may still be lurking in the work.



My acknowledgement would be incomplete, indeed irrelevant, if it did not pay special tribute to my wife, Nnidi, and my two little girls, Nedum and Ijeoma. Without the cooperation of these three, the writing of this thesis would certainly have been impossible. I thank my wife for her tolerance and understanding attitude, and the little girls for putting up with a father who seemed to be coming and going perpetually. The writing of this thesis has not only schooled all three in patience, but also called for numerous sacrifices on their part. In the face of very serious and apparently interminable difficulties, they kept faith with their husband and father till the end.

I am grateful to SOAS, for a grant towards the typing and binding of this thesis. Certain individuals gave me some encouragement and assistance, sometimes without knowing it. In this regard, I am grateful to Mr. R.K. Taylor, Mrs. C. Sonola, Mr. J. T. Bishop, Dr. J.E. Maw, Mrs. K. Henderson, and all others not mentioned here who contributed in one form or another to the writing of this thesis. Finally, I wish to thank Miss Patricia de Winter, who came to my rescue when typing problems arose towards the end of the work, and was able to complete the typing at very short notice.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate that while great regard is paid by the Enuani Igbo to 'tradition' in oral narrative performance, there is in fact a considerable scope for individual creativity. After the Introduction (Chapter 1), the study is divided into three major parts:

Part One, 'Some traditional elements of performance', (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) examines features of the narrative tradition shared by all performers.

Part Two, 'Tradition and the individual artist', (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) comprises an investigation of the nature of literary creativity in this society, based mainly on a detailed study of one of the most outstanding Enuani artists, Udene Okohai. The main features of Okohai's innovative narrative technique are investigated, especially that of the 'mixed mode', which is unique to him.

Part Three, 'Evaluation', (Chapters 8 and 9) draws substantially upon data recorded during story-telling sessions, interviews and conversations on how the Enuani themselves conceive of their oral tales (or, more specifically their performance). While some desirable features of performances are examined, the emphasis here is on the Enuani notion of 'tradition'.

This thesis concludes by arguing that the two important demands made on the Enuani artist - that he adhere strictly to 'tradition' and that he exercise his creative freedom within the framework of the traditional style - are by no means opposed to each other. Every good tale performance displays a balance between tradition and individual creativity.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 The Enuani Igbo background

Rising on the eastern slopes of the Foutta Djallon in the republic of Guinea and meandering majestically on its long, southward journey to the Gulf of Guinea, the Niger traverses Igboland,<sup>1</sup> cutting it into two unequal parts. But although there are superficial differences between them, the Igbo who live on the east and west banks of the Niger are a single people, revealing a wide range of cultural similarities and traits. Dialectal differences occur but these by no means preclude inter-intelligibility whether among all the West Niger Igbo communities or among them and the East Niger Igbo.

Forde and Jones (1950.46) show clearly that the West Niger Igbo comprise 'Northern Ika (west bank of the Niger, west of Onitsha), Southern Ika or Kwale (between Ethiope and Adofi rivers...) and Riverain Ibo (Niger flood plain area)'. The first-mentioned includes the Enuani with whose oral literature (or, more specifically, tales) this thesis is concerned. It is now generally accepted that the founders of most West Niger Igbo communities migrated from

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1. The spelling 'Igbo' is to be preferred to 'Ibo'. The name is applied both to the people and to their language. Cf. Chukwuma (1974) who erroneously asserts: 'A distinction is made between Ibo as a binding nomenclature embracing the totality of the people and Igbo which is the language spoken by Ibos'. This misconception is further propagated by Chukwuma's use of the spelling 'Ibo' throughout her work.

Benin. The Enuani lawyer-historian, Lawrence Okpuno, devotes a substantial portion of his book, A short history of Eze-Chima, Idumuje, Odi Ani clans (n.d.) to the flight of an Enuani clan - Ezechima - from the ancient Benin kingdom. According to oral tradition, Chima, the founder and ancestor of this clan had attained the rank of chief in Oba Esigie's<sup>1</sup> government. Returning from a futile firewood-fetching mission to Chima's farm, the Oba's servants reported having been attacked by Chima's aides. Incensed at this attack which he considered an insult, the Oba promptly ordered the arrest of Chima while the latter took to flight to escape the fury of his powerful monarch. Leonard (1906.35ff.) also cites the firewood episode as being responsible for the flight from Benin.<sup>2</sup> Although Isichei (1973) does not specifically attribute the dispute between king and chief to this incident, her comments reflect the traditions concerning the migration from Benin: 'In the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, there was some kind of political upheaval at Benin, which led to a migration, led by Chima, in the course of which a number of Ibo states were founded' (p. 39).

This early connection with Benin survives to the present day and, as an examination of our corpus immediately

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1 Egharevba (1960.27) cites 1504 as the year in which Esigie ascended the throne while, according to Isichei (1973.41), the reign is thought to have lasted until c. 1550.

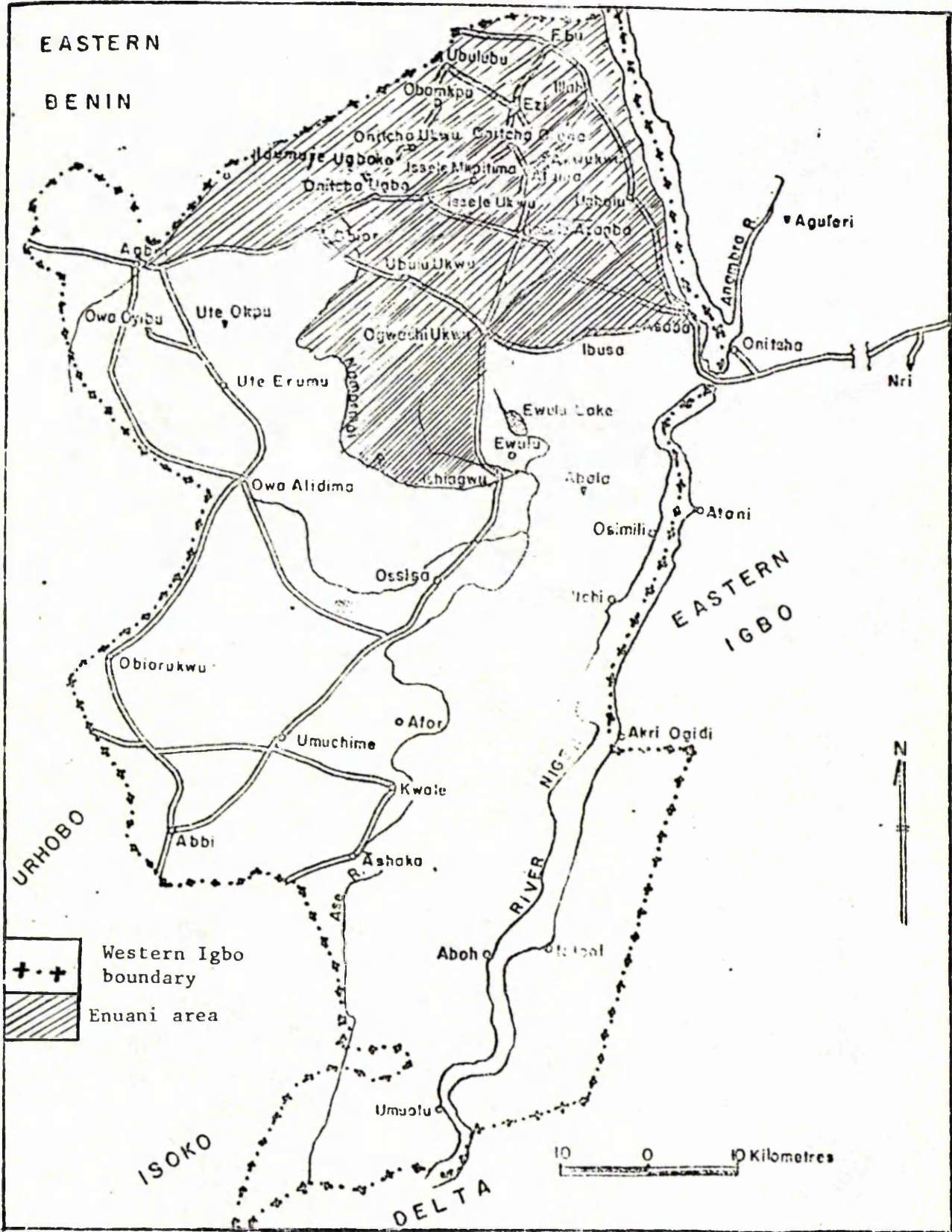
2 For further information pertaining to the Bini origin of several west Niger Igbo communities, see, for instance, Thomas (1914, IV, p. 3); Meek (1937, pp. 11-15); Isichei (1973, pp. 37-43; 1978, pp. 139ff.).

reveals, virtually all the tales which constitute the Enuani repertoire are set in Ani Idu 'Idu (Bini) land'. This setting accounts for the high frequency with which the Oba ('ruler, king') occurs as a prominent character in the tales. Also, several present-day Western Igbo chieftaincy, or title systems such as the Obi, the Iyase and the Izomo are modelled on the Bini pattern.

Formerly called Aniocha Division, the Enuani region has recently been split into two local government areas (Oshimili and Aniocha) for administrative purposes. The term 'Enuani' is here used to embrace both local government areas, and to denote that part (of Bendel State) which stretches west from Asaba on the Niger, is bounded by Ebu in the North, demarcated from Ishan territory on the north east by Idumuje-Ugboko and from Agbor territory in the south by Ishiagwu (see map) - extending from about 6° 30' N. to about 5° 55' N. Not only is this the name which the people apply to themselves and their language, the terminology has already been adopted in the meagre scholarly literature which exists on this region of Nigeria. Forde and Jones (1950.48) remark that 'The Northern Ika are known to the people of Onitsha as 'Nnuani', a term apparently meaning "highland people"' while the entry in Williamson's dictionary (1972.112) reads 'dry land (as opposed to water); highland between Asaba and Agbor'.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cf. Ogbalu and Emenanjo (eds. , 1975.135): 'Enuani is the dialect cluster spoken in parts of Asaba and Aniocha areas of the Midwestern [now called Bendel] State'. See, also, Basden (1938.xii): '... the hinterland of Asaba is known locally as Enu-Ani highland'.



WESTERN IGBOLAND



In this thesis the term Enuani will be used, purely as a matter of convenience, in place of the longer and more accurate 'Enuani Igbo'.

1.1 Research methods: collection of tales

To prove useful for an analysis such as this thesis attempts, tales have to be collected in their natural environment, that is, the recording not only has to be made in the indigenous language, but also on the traditional occasions (mainly evenings) of narration, and in the presence of a participatory audience. Only thus can the flavour of the cultural context be preserved. All the tales in our corpus (with the exception of Tales 95 and 96; cf. p. 228) were tape-recorded during the conventional story-telling sessions.

For any scholarly study of an item of oral literature, especially of a free-phrase genre like the tale, tape-recording must of necessity take precedence over other methods of collection such as dictation. With regard to the retention of the tale's content or plot core, dictation may well have some usefulness, but it is grossly inadequate in terms of the capacity to capture the non-verbal aspects of the story-teller's style such as his dramatic change of narrative speed or other vocal mannerisms, clearly important elements which give the plot verisimilitude. A collector taking down his tales manually will of course be anxious to keep pace with the story-teller's narrative tempo. Such preoccupation precludes the possibility of presenting a 'complete' performance as the collector may be compelled to disregard such elements as the narrator's

asides, the audience's interjected remarks or, worse still, the songs which usually make a considerable impact on the performance.

The availability of battery-powered tape recorders has proved an immense advantage for modern-day collectors, enabling them to enhance the quality of their collections. The scholar whose tales have been tape-recorded can indeed broaden the scope of his investigation by transcending the level of content analysis which is, invariably, the only one to which tales collected by less satisfactory methods yield themselves. Ideally, however, only a full range of audio-visual equipment can adequately capture or convey the essence of the ephemeral experience which an oral narrative performance amounts to, reproducing it exactly in its verbal, dramatic and mimetic totality.

Most of the one hundred tales which constitute our corpus were collected between November 1977 and January 1980, while additional field work was carried out between July and September 1981. The aim of the 1981 trip was twofold: first, the collection of Enuani commentators' views on a wide range of questions relating to their oral literature and, second, the enlargement of the corpus essentially by the addition of tale variants. The latter exercise is considered imperative for the kind of analyses undertaken in this thesis, as many an argument and investigation in some of the subsequent chapters is supported by the comparison of texts or extracts from texts.

From the initial attitude of the people (most expressed surprise that anyone would desire to record such

'common' stories), there does not seem to have been a precedent of serious tale-collecting in this region. This situation, coupled with the fact that the present writer is Enuani, produced one advantage: the rapport between researcher and informant - so crucial for the success of any field work - was quickly established. The above point is not to be construed as suggesting that carrying out field work in one's culture necessarily guarantees a successful venture, or the establishment of rapport or indeed obviates other difficulties<sup>1</sup> associated with field trips.

As a rule no financial rewards were offered to informants and narrators. In general, the opportunity afforded of 'speaking into that "talking thing"' (my battery-powered tape recorder) and, more especially the urge or excitement of hearing portions of their tales reproduced at a later stage often proved to be sufficient incentive to the narrators. In all the sessions, however, it was necessary to have in constant circulation such items as kola nuts, tobacco, cigarettes, biscuits, soft drinks and palm wine. Token presents were made to certain narrators at a much later stage, perhaps months, even years, after the collection. Being able to dispense with monetary remunerations

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1 For example, a hostile or uncompromising reception may occasionally be encountered. One performer at Ubulu-Uku misconstrued the project as an entirely commercial one. The tales, he vigorously asserted, were not for the writing of a 'book', but for the making of gramophone records. He thus felt justified in demanding a huge financial reward (₦35, about £28). His expectation was fuelled by the knowledge that the present writer was from a university, a supposedly rich institution. Needless to mention, the session proceeded without him.

had the advantage of not only further encouraging the informal atmosphere by which Enuani story-telling sessions are traditionally characterized, but also ensuring that future collecting projects - whether by this collector or by others - do not prove to be unduly expensive.

Since the Enuani country held no barriers - linguistic or cultural - for me, no guides or interpreters were necessary. But I was constantly accompanied by friends and relatives who had developed an interest in the project. Trips were made to such towns as Onicha-Ukwu, Ogwashi-Uku, Asaba, Okpanam, Idumuje-Uno, Ezi, Idumuje-Ugboko, Issele-Uku, Onicha-Ugbo and Ubulu-Uku. In each of these locations, tales and interviews were recorded from a wide cross-section of the community, regardless of age, sex or story-telling ability. Thus our corpus contains stories by both run-of-the-mill narrators and by experts.

#### 1.2 Translation of the tales

The task confronting the researcher in an oral literature may be tackled or viewed in terms of definite phases; first, the formulation of a sound research methodology, followed by rigorous collection in the field. The next phase, involving an attempt to make the oral data communicate via the printed word is a crucial one. The exercise of translation, the conversion of an oral text into a visual one, is particularly fraught with problems and pitfalls for the collector. The attempt to make Enuani tales come alive in English, for example, involves not only the change from one language to another, but also the change from the oral medium to the written, and difficulties in

translation are apt to arise from the fact that different literary conventions may obtain in the two mediums. This point is made en passant and in anticipation of a later discussion backed by examples from our oral texts.

It is necessary first to point out that with regard to translation, the intention here is to maintain a high degree of fidelity to the original material without doing violence to the target language. This approach remains a via media, not primarily concerning itself with achieving elegance in the target language nor attempting to summarize the tales or present a literal translation. Clearly, literal translations have such a capacity for distortion that the final product scarcely reflects the speech patterns of the culture which created the tales.

Every endeavour is made to convey something of Enuani narrative style and linguistic flavour. Towards this end, the translation has retained not only such features as opening and closing formulas and the songs which frequently occur in the tales, but also some of the oral performer's devices such as the use of ideophones. Such ideophones as gwodom, gidim (to represent the sound of heavy falling, Tale 4), legede (indicative of unwieldiness, Tale 16), nyaka nyaka nyaka (suggesting clumsiness, Tale 34), gwudum gwudum gwudum (depicting the sound of heavy treading, Tale 3) are left untranslated. In Enuani, as in several African societies, ideophones are a marked feature of story-telling and everyday speech. It is therefore necessary to reflect the pervasiveness of this linguistic element.

Two examples are given to illustrate differences

in literary conventions that may exist between the oral and written modes of communication. Tale 69, our first example, opens thus:

Enye m unu nzu-o. Enye m unu nzu ekpo atọ.  
Oke ita m echipu. Oke ita m anwulu Oba. Oke  
ita m anwulu ndi orinzele e. Oke ita m anwulu  
Iyase Oba. Oke ita m anwulu Odogwu Oba...

Confronted with this passage and conscious of the aversion to excessive repetition in the written medium, a translator will probably alter the quick succession of abrupt sentences, introduce many more pronouns, finally producing such a translation as 'I present you with white clay. My fantastic tale proceeds, encountering the Oba and other members of his ruling council'. However, the desire to remain faithful to the original and to reflect Mbuliche's narrative style (obviously different from others') has prompted the following translation:

I present you with white clay. I present you with white clay three times. My fantastic tale proceeds. My fantastic tale encounters the Oba. My fantastic tale encounters the members of his ruling council. My fantastic tale encounters the Oba's Iyase. My fantastic tale encounters the Oba's Odogwu...

Although the above extract is only a short and introductory portion of Tale 69, it gives considerable insight into some of the features of the oral style. Mbuliche's sustained use of the phrase 'My fantastic tale' oke ita m suggests a deliberate attempt to impress upon the audience that the forthcoming tale is a thoroughly entertaining one and, more importantly, that their host now about

to regale them is a highly accomplished raconteur. Our translation above perhaps cannot convey adequately any effect which Mbuliche's style here had on his listeners, but in itself suggests that some impact was certainly made.

Both translations convey essentially the same 'information'. But more than the first, the second emphasizes one fact clearly, namely that rather than confine himself to a mere mention of 'the ruling council', the narrator further introduces the device of listing, enumerating the chiefs who comprise the Oba's governing body.

Our second example, Tale 31, opens thus:

The seven-headed spirit went wrestling. There was a young man who wrestled very well, the two of them went wrestling with each other. It is he that they call Tumobia - he and the seven-headed spirit went wrestling with each other. There was no one who could throw him - Tumobia, there was no one who could throw him in the whole world.

So one day he said he was going to the spirits to wrestle - he was going wrestling. So one day - before he had said that he was going to the spirits to wrestle, everything gbe gbe gbe [absolutely everything] there was nothing he did not do supremely well. As for farming, there was no one to match him in farming. When he reached his farm one day, he began to dig yams - because the yams he digs up, there is no one who can have such yams in the world, there is no one for whom yams grow like that in the world.

He dug up a yam, dug up a yam, pulled it up like this, and there, where he pulled out the yam, he saw the village square of the spirits. There, where he pulled out the yam, he looked again into the hole where he had pulled out the yam and saw the spirits' village square, and spirits who had marked out a wrestling ring and were wrestling. He went on looking and looking, and said, 'In any wrestling there is no one to challenge me, there is no one I will wrestle with, and yet there is this one where they have made a wrestling ring which I did not see! I am going wrestling with the spirits'.

This extract, like that from Tale 69, reveals a prominent use of repetition. More importantly, it is distinguishable by its 'jerky', rather circumlocutory and in fact 'incoherent' style. It is highly probable that other translators whose aims may differ from those already stated above will find the elimination of such features desirable. But these features are in themselves interesting, exemplifying one area in which the oral medium differs from the written; the artist working in the latter medium employs a good deal less repetition, avoiding such a 'loose', superfluous presentation of material and advocating a considerably more direct style.

Another major area of difference (which in fact seems to account for the 'jerkiness' which we have observed) lies in the fact that unlike Mbuliche, our narrator above, the artist in a literate culture can revise what he has written, a process which is concerned with rendering the piece of work error-free before its eventual publication. This possibility is non-existent for the oral performer. Parry (1930.77) summarizes the situation thus: 'Unlike the poet who writes out his lines, - or even dictates them, - he [the oral poet] cannot think without hurry about his next word, nor change what he has made, nor, before going on, read over what he has just written'. Indeed, from the apparent unrelatedness of some of the sentences, the impression is created that Mbuliche made a false start to Tale 31. It would of course be wrong to suggest that the oral artist, in this case, the story-teller Mbuliche, never corrects himself. However, if such attempts at rectifying a



lapsus linguae occur, they must be brief as no oral performer can afford to indulge in them too often.

It would be quite possible to prune or even eliminate the repetitiveness, 'jerkiness' and rather fragmentary style of the extract above and still effectively preserve the content of the passage or tale in general. Such suppression, however, would be contrary to the objectives already stated. More importantly, it is argued that these self-same features - apparently disjointed ideas, expressed by faulty, fragmentary sentences; false starts, repetitiveness, a generally simple even if loose style - indeed lend Mbuliche's or other oral performers' works much of their charm. Indeed such features are widely encountered in oral narrative. The use of typographical features such as paragraphs and punctuation marks are of course the responsibility of the translator, although the material itself invariably provides some indication. The narrator's pauses may well determine the choice of punctuation marks: commas for short pauses and periods for long ones which demarcate one complete utterance from the other. Similarly new paragraphs may be determined by shifts in narrative tempo, action or scene.

The final feature of our translation that deserves mention relates to the names of animal characters. Certainly one of the major characteristics of Enuani, indeed, of African tales lies in the prominent use of animal characters. In Enuani society's conception of the tales, the majority of the animals are in some degree representations of human characters, effectively carrying out human

activities such as putting on clothes or constructing high-rise flats. Since the tortoise, for example, can do whatever the Oba (or any other human character) can do, the two characters may be considered functional equivalents. The practice adopted here, then, of writing the names of animal characters with initial capital letters has been influenced by the fact that the animals commonly and successfully assume human roles or engage in peculiarly human activities such as speaking. This approach thus reflects the 'more-than-animal' status accorded the animals in tales.

In tackling the problem of translating the names of animal characters, some writers (cf. Umeasiegbu, 1969, pp. 53-4; also p. 67) have resorted to such appellations as Mr. Goat, Mr. Rat, Mrs. Goat or Mr. Tortoise. This practice of adding a title before the animal character's name is not adopted here since it does not reflect Enuani linguistic usage. In some African societies, in contrast, a title precedes the names of the main animal characters; in Mende, for example, the spider is commonly referred to as Ka Silo<sup>1</sup> in tales.

### 1.3 Collections of Igbo tales published to date

In 1921 Reverend G.T. Basden referred to the Igbo as 'a little known African people'. As recently as 1971, Professor E. Obiechina called attention to the fact that 'Igbo life and culture have up till now been inadequately exposed'; for the publishers of The Conch, this fact became

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1 The equivalent of 'Mr. Spider'. Cf. Brer Rabbit.

the raison d'être for Volume 3 (No. 2, September 1971), an issue devoted entirely to '... what has been most neglected since 1900: a comprehensive and authoritative review of Igbo traditional life and culture'. Ogbalu and Emenanjo (eds., 1975.i) remark that 'It is almost a cliché in the field of African studies that not much is known about the Igbo, their language, their history and their culture'.<sup>1</sup> Their book<sup>2</sup> is thus 'meant to contribute somewhat to fill that regrettable gap'. In the last three decades, however, publications particularly by Igbo scholars have appeared with increasing frequency in such fields as Igbo history, anthropology, politics and oral literature.

Tribute must be paid to the pioneering efforts of European missionaries and anthropologists who sometimes extended their interest to the field of oral literature. In 1906 the British administrative officer, Major Leonard, published his The Lower Niger and its Tribes, a chapter of which incorporated samples of 'proverbs and fables', some Igbo. In 1914 Northcote Thomas, officially designated 'Government Anthropologist', devoted two volumes (III and VI) to Igbo proverbs and stories while in 1918 he published a handful of Igbo tales in the journal Man (XVIII, pp. 23-5; 45-47). In 1921 G.T. Basden included a few tales and proverbs in his Among the Ibos of Nigeria. The efforts of

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1 Cf. Emenyonu (1978.102) who rightly complains of an 'almost total lack of a substantial body of literature in Igbo'.

2 Ogbalu and Emenanjo (eds., 1975), Igbo Language and Culture.

Margaret Green are of course well known.<sup>1</sup>

The fifties and sixties witnessed an increased number of Igbo writers and collectors in the field, and such indigenous efforts have been sustained to the present day. Publications or collections of tales which have so far appeared include Ekwensi (1954), Umeasiegbu (1969), Okeke (1971), Achebe and Iroaganachi (1971), Egudu (1973; cf. Egudu and Nwoga, 1971), Ogbalu (1972), Iroaganachi (1973), Emenanjo (ed.) (1977), Ekechukwu (1975) and Umeasiegbu (1982). With the possible exception of Umeasiegbu (1982), all the collections cited (whether made by expatriates or by Igbos) do not attempt any analysis of the tales. Mention must be made also of Chukwuma (1974) and Azuonye (1979) two theses which in varying degrees deal with Igbo oral narrative.

It is necessary for the collector to provide a brief introduction, including, for example, the name, age, town, sex and social status of the narrator and any other information considered relevant to the particular performance. Earlier collections of Igbo tales regrettably lack even such basic documentation, as is attested, for example, by Egudu (1973) who gives no indication of how his tales were collected, much less provide the names of his informants. Failure to give adequate consideration to the texture of

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1 Not only has her 'Unwritten literature of the Igbo-speaking people...' (1948) become one of the best known early articles on Igbo oral literature, she has written extensively on Igbo grammar, language and social life. See, e.g., Green (1947); Green and Onwuamaegbu (1962); Green and Igwe (1963); Igwe and Green (1964); Igwe and Green (1967, 1967, 1970, 3 vols.). Cf. such journal articles as Green (1936) and Green (1974).

the tales - whether in collecting, translating or annotating them - brings the scholar's work under suspicion and indeed raises serious questions about its overall value. Nearly all the collections now available are clearly haphazardly made and present, it must be emphasized, 'emasculated examples'<sup>1</sup> of Igbo tales. It may be argued that these collections are intended for the general reader, but such argument merely reinforces the point that Igbo tales have so far received little or no scholarly attention.

Of all Igbo collections so far published, only Umeasiegbu (1982) demonstrates some degree of scholarship. Although his introduction runs to a mere sixteen pages, it briefly examines or at least touches upon such aspects as the narrator-audience interaction, the content and style of the tales - topics which one would naturally expect to be discussed by any serious collector of oral literature, but which have been disregarded by almost all collections of Igbo tales now available. It is interesting that in this book Umeasiegbu also abandons the earlier practice (in The Way we Lived) of preceding animal characters' names with titles. Umeasiegbu rightly assigns the latter work to the category of 'collections of tales... made by amateur collectors' (1982.16) while his Words are Sweet shows considerable evidence that he is there working from 'the perspectives of a professional folklorist' (p. 18).

Umeasiegbu is certainly not the first to collect Igbo

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1 Rattray's (1928.5) phrase to describe samples of Ashanti folklore 'which have been published from time to time'.

tales but he points the way for future Igbo collectors. His work is significant as being the first to indicate that no serious collector should conceive of his work as consisting solely in making field trips or merely accumulating tales. Although, as we have pointed out, there is no alternative to going into the field and tape-recording the tales in their natural setting, future Igbo collectors must go a step further and provide some analysis or at least some background information on the materials which they publish.

The paucity of satisfactory analytical studies noted above is as prevalent in Igbo as in African oral narrative research generally. In her trail-blazing work, Oral Literature in Africa (1970), Finnegan remarks that '... when we consider the vast amount published it is surprising how poor much of it is'.<sup>1</sup> Dundes' (1971.174) observation that '... the state of African folk narrative research is comparable to pre-1910 European folk tale scholarship' is clearly prompted by this conspicuous lack of analysis. And although Legman (1964) is by no means directly concerned with African oral narrative, his comments are pertinent here:

It is not enough, and it will never be enough, to publish raw collections of folk-tales and folk-materials, or hundredth reduplicative versions of overcollected song texts. What is necessary now, and long overdue, is to base publication deeply upon some meaningful and mature interpretation - socio-analytic, or psycho-analytic, or any other kind of analytic so long as it is analyzed -

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1 Finnegan (1970.317). See, also, pp. 315-316.

of what the material means, and meant to  
the people who have transmitted it;...

(p. 254)

Other writers who have remarked on the lack of analysis include Berry (1961.23), Andrzejewski and Innes (1975. 44ff.) and Crowley (1979.11).

1.4 Place of thesis in Igbo and African oral narrative research

Clearly, considerable work has been done with regard to the collection and publication of tales but the problem - whether in Igbo or African tale scholarship - is that we still have relatively little analysis of the materials collected. By investigating a body of Enuani materials, stressing its literary and, to some extent, aesthetic aspects, this thesis aims at making a positive contribution to African tale scholarship, a field which certainly deserves more analytical studies (dealing with different societies) than are available at the present time.

All the publications or tale collections so far mentioned share one common characteristic, namely they deal primarily (in most cases, exclusively) with material collected from Igbo areas east of the Niger.<sup>1</sup> If Igbo life and culture have been insufficiently exposed, the oral literature of the Enuani has been even less so. Indeed, after an exhaustive search it has been found that virtually

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1 For example, Chukwuma (1974. pp. 359-431) presents the texts of twenty-one Igbo tales, none of which is Enuani. This is not to deny however that similarities may exist between tales from the Enuani region and those from Igbo areas east of the Niger.

nothing has been published,<sup>1</sup> whether in the form of tale texts, books, journal or scholarly articles on the Enuani inu 'tale'. In this regard mention must be made of Northcote Thomas who did extensive anthropological work on the Igbo particularly around the Enuani town of Asaba, west of the Niger, and the neighbourhood of Awka and Onitsha, east of the Niger. Thomas (1914, VI) includes ten tales, nine of which were collected by members of his staff who, presumably, were natives of 'the Asaba district'. However, commendable as Thomas' tale-collecting efforts are, his collection is vitiated by the accompanying literal translation. The very first 'sentence' of the collection; 'Greater Hornbill sees Rat at noon, blows horn; monkey answers horn on the iroko; branch of the iroko broke off killed child of crow pheasant...' clearly illustrates perhaps the foremost feature inherent in a literal translation, namely its lifelessness or unreadableness. This thesis is based on the first sizable collection of Enuani tales and, more importantly, is (so far as we know) the first oral literature study that deals exclusively with the Enuani.

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1 The observation that minimal work has been done with regard to the collection or analysis of Enuani tales also holds true for other genres of Enuani oral literature or written literature. E.N. Emenanjo, an Enuani, remains a lone voice, advocating a pan-Igbo approach to the study and use of the Igbo language (see, for example, Ogbalu and Emenanjo (eds.), 1975.135). A linguist by training, Emenanjo has recently extended his sphere of interest, making some significant incursions into the field of oral literature (witness, for instance, his 'Some notes on Igbo folk-tales' which constitutes the bulk of his introduction to Emenanjo (ed.), 1977).



1.5 Enuani oral literature: an overview

For the researcher in an African oral literature, it is methodologically sound to proceed from the indigenous taxonomy of the society being studied, rather than force the data into a preconceived mould, that is, set out by attempting a cross-cultural application of categories derived from European oral literatures. By first ascertaining the oral literary genres 'recognized by the people themselves' (Green 1948.838), the researcher necessarily adopts the lexical terms by which the given society denotes the different categories.

Enuani oral literature may be divided into inu and abu. Inu is a key descriptive term the meaning of which usually depends on the context in which it occurs. When contrasted with abu 'song', inu denotes spoken art. When the term inu functions as the object of itu 'to quote, to pose, to compare or make an analogy' it denotes 'riddles', contrasted with atutu inu 'proverbs'. Also, when inu is the object of ita 'to tell, narrate, relate' it denotes 'fictional narratives', as opposed to ita 'non-fictional narratives'. The occurrence of inu in different contexts may be summarized thus:

- |     |                      |   |   |
|-----|----------------------|---|---|
| (A) | <u>itu</u> = 'quote' | { | <u>inu</u> - 'riddle'                           |
|     |                      |   | <u>atutu inu</u> - 'proverb'                    |
| (B) | <u>ita</u> = 'tell'  | { | <u>inu</u> - 'fictional narrative'              |
|     |                      |   | <u>ita</u> - 'factual, non-fictional narrative' |

In (B) inu 'tell' can occur with the object inu 'tale' but not with the object ita 'non-fictional narrative'.

It is apparent from (B) that the Enuani, like many other African peoples,<sup>1</sup> make a lexical distinction between fictional and non-fictional prose narratives. The terms 'fictional', 'factual' or 'non-fictional' are relative and cannot be applied too literally. An account believed to be factual or true by one ethnic group, narrator or member of the audience (a child, for example), may be considered mere fiction for the gullible by another.<sup>2</sup>

As already shown, inu denotes 'spoken art' as opposed to abu 'song'. In contrast to the Enuani classification which utilizes a key term (inu: 'tale, riddle, proverb') the exact meaning of which can only be inferred from a given context, the taxonomies of several other Igbo societies make further lexical distinctions not made by the Enuani. In most Igbo communities east of the Niger,<sup>3</sup> proverbs are specifically distinguished by the term inu (or ilu); riddles are referred to as gwamgwam or nyemnyem (literally, 'tell me, tell me!' or 'give me, give me!') and tales are labelled akuko iro. But although for the Enuani the term inu has a wider meaning, it will be used throughout the thesis

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1. Cf., for example, Herskovits (1958.15) and Bascom (1965.10).

2. Cf., Littleton (1965.23): '... history, whether oral or literate, is never wholly factual or objective'. See, also, Kilson (1976.18) and Herskovits (1958.13).

3. See, for example, Carnochan (1963.48), Achebe (1964.vii), Chukwuma (1974.24) and Ugonna (1974.pp. 54 and 57).

as having the more restricted meaning of 'tale' or 'fictional narrative'.

It is of course impossible to name the originators of any Enuani inu, whereas a very high percentage of songs circulating in the community can, with little or no difficulty, be attributed to known composers. For members of the society, virtually every event calls for singing and, for the composers, provides suitable material for the composition of new songs. Because songs permeate every aspect of Enuani life, they commonly derive their names from the different occasions on which they are performed (or from which they arose). Examples include abu olu 'work songs'; abu ukpukpe 'burial songs'; abu ogbanigbe 'ogbanigbe festival songs'; abu nwa 'birth songs'; abu agha 'war songs' and abu echichi 'title songs'. Here, as in other areas of classification, it is futile to envisage watertight compartments, for the singing of certain songs is not necessarily confined to only those occasions from which they arose. A work song, for instance, may be employed expressly to lighten a given task, regulate the rhythmic movements of participants, even rouse or sustain their morale. Such 'stipulated' use does not preclude members of the community from singing the song on other occasions, primarily for its aesthetic appeal.

The earlier point about adopting the indigenous taxonomy, that is, of giving particular thought to how members of a given society themselves conceive of their oral literary genres may here be illustrated more forcefully. For the scholar accustomed to thinking in terms

of 'drama' or 'poetry', for example, even the most rigorous and prolonged search of word lists from different Igbo communities cannot produce corresponding lexical terms, for they simply do not exist. Yet the concepts are not unknown in Igboland. Songs and oral poems are an integral part of the daily life of the people, as already indicated, while numerous manifestations and dimensions of the dramatic art are found on such occasions as festivals, masquerades and ritual ceremonies. Having taken the first step of basing his distinctions on the genres recognized by the culture he is investigating, the scholar may thereafter wish to examine the extent to which the Western notion of drama - involving such aspects as stage, lighting, costume and make-up - applies to his collected data. He may also proceed to investigate the presence or otherwise of some features of poetry in Western traditions such as metre, rhyme, alliteration or assonance.

In keeping with her stated theoretical viewpoint that scholars must first discover the genres 'distinguished by the people themselves', Green (1948:840) notes two classes: '... on the one hand, the stories and songs or poems known as ife and, on the other, the great variety of different groups of songs, ...' as well as 'the wealth of proverbs, ilu ...'.

Chukuma (1974) recognizes the importance of applying distinctions which derive, or are dictated from, within the material itself, but then seems to fall into the very error she supposedly sought to avoid initially, namely that of not basing 'one's distinctions on the material itself

and how the people conceive of it' (p. 23). She distinguishes four categories of Igbo oral literature: inu (genre; proverb), akuko (genre; story), abu (genre; song) and Emume (genre; Acts) [sic]. The dramatic potentialities of masquerade and ritual occasions are of course generally recognized and may indeed be discussed in their own right. Such discussion however by no means demands that the researcher abandon the indigenous classification in favour of establishing his own. Chukwuma may have been searching for a term corresponding to 'drama', but 'acts' seems an odd and highly unsatisfactory term to denote a genre of oral literature, all the more so when there is no kind of oral literature recognized (certainly not by the Enuani) as Emume.

#### 1.6 Story-telling in Enuani society

In this, as in several African societies, story-telling occurs mainly in the evenings. No prohibitions against daytime story-telling exist but the latter is rendered impracticable by the fact that people are normally occupied during the day. Several Enuani aphorisms emphasize the importance of being more gainfully occupied during the day or of giving priority to the accomplishment of the day's work and relegating relaxation and pleasure to the close of the day. Examples include Ututu ka mmadu ji akpa nkwu o ji alahu n'anyasi 'It is in the morning that one gathers the firewood needed for the evening'<sup>1</sup> and Wa adigh

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1 During the harmattan season elderly people warm themselves sleeping by a fire fed by firewood. In both aphorisms the meaning of ututu 'morning' goes beyond the literal level.

eji ututu efufo 'One does not engage in frivolities in the morning'.

For the Enuani, the completion of not only a hard day's work on the farms but also the domestic chores and evening meal at home remains the most convenient time to sit around in small groups, chat and relax. The men smoke and pass round their long ukoko pipes and sometimes sip palm wine. Among the women, conversation is buzzing and it is a particularly suitable time for exchanging gossip. Outside, the children devote all their attention and energy to playing, yelling as they chase one another about, sometimes in the dark. This general atmosphere of noisy excitement persists until somebody proposes a story, calling Enye m unu nzu 'I present you with white clay'.

#### 1.6.1 Opening and closing formulas

The opening formula Enye m unu nzu serves as a transition marker, demarcating what follows from ordinary conversation. Judging from the significance of nzu 'white clay' in Enuani culture, it seems evident that by announcing 'I present you with white clay' the narrator not only proposes a shift from the formless conversation in which the group is engaged to a structured verbal art, but also seeks to establish goodwill with his audience. White clay is considered a vitally important element in the paraphernalia of a dibia 'diviner, healer, medicine-man'. Before embarking on any ritual assignment the dibia sprinkles or 'throws' white clay on the various objects which constitute his 'medicine-making' equipment, in order to induce efficacy. The contexts in which white clay

features may vary from one Igbo community to another, but its overall significance remains the same,<sup>1</sup> for nzu is regarded as a symbol of goodwill, well-being and oneness.

To the would-be narrator's call, the audience returns, I gwoa o lee 'When you make medicine, may it be effective', a unanimous affirmation that the caller may embark on his narration. The audience's response has the implication of a prayer that the performance may (like the medicine-man's ritual) prove effective or 'turn out well' ka o daba; that it may 'fit in well'. On gaining attention, the caller introduces his tale with the formula Inu m ejegide ti - i - i - i - i - i - i - i - i, nwulu..., 'My tale proceeds ti - i - i - i - i - i - i - i [travels on and on, apparently interminably, until], then encounters' (so-and-so; an enumeration of the dramatis personae follows). A skilled narrator would employ a long, drawn-out ti - i - i - i - i - i - i - i to give his audience the impression that a great distance actually separates their immediate environment and the fictional world which provides the setting for his tale. An analogy is implied between setting out on a journey<sup>2</sup> and embarking on a tale performance. By introducing the formulaic utterance 'I present you with white clay', the narrator offers his audience an invitation to accompany

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1. For the use or symbolic importance of nzu in some Igbo communities, see, e.g., Achebe (1964b:117) and Umeasiegbu (1969:16).
  2. In some towns, variations may occur in terms of the actual words of the opening formula. Cf., e.g., Emenanjo (1977:xiv). But while the words of the formula may vary, the notion of a journey remains a constant.

him on an imaginary excursion into a far-away world of make-believe.

The use in the opening formula of the verbs nwulu (or nwui) 'catches', 'arrests', that is 'encounters', and ejegide 'goes on and on' is noteworthy; the first is highly dramatic, suggesting that the narrator is entering a world in which reality, as his listeners conceive of it, is invariably turned upside-down. It is thus appropriate that the dramatis personae are not merely introduced or presented, rather, the tale 'catches' them. The second, ejegide,<sup>1</sup> adds even greater emphasis to the ideophone ti - i - i - i - i - i - i - i, suggesting, as indicated above, the action of continuity or sustained movement.

By the action of 'giving white clay' the narrator attempts to instil in his listeners the appropriate attitude required (that of a willing suspension of disbelief) for an exploration of the tale's world in which 'reality' assumes new meanings. Clearly the foremost characteristic of the world which the narrator attempts to evoke or portray is that in it, humans, animals, spirits, even inanimate objects not only live cheek by jowl, but also freely play 'reversed' roles. In introducing their tales, some narrators actually allude to a bygone age when man and beast communicated with each other through a common language. Although the audience clearly recognize that the narratives

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1. Cf., the verb ejeme 'goes on' which it would have been possible to use. However, it does not adequately convey the idea of prolonged motion.



are fictional, a teller's evocation of this imagined period prior to the proliferation of languages certainly lends plausibility to the manifestly improbable actions and qualities attributed to the animal characters.

To signify the completion of his tale, the teller announces 'Having gone this far, I decided to return'. The concluding sentence lends itself to a number of variations, but the forms most commonly adopted throughout Enuaniland include Yaka m si jebei ba si ka n nnua 'So I stopped going and decided to return'; Aba m si boo nua-o 'Thus I came back from there'; Yaka m si si ka m je atalu unu nke e 'Thus I decided to come and tell you this'. In all the variant forms, a similarity is undeniable, both in the idea conveyed and the particular words employed. Whichever form is favoured by the narrator, the audience's reply is constant: Nnua! or Nnua-o Welcome-o! For members of the audience, it is only proper to welcome the narrator back to his immediate environment, now that he has completed his fictional peregrination.

#### 1.6.2 The audience and tale-telling session

In Enuani story-telling no constraints obtain with regard to the composition of the audience.<sup>1</sup> The audience comprises both the young and the old - men, women and children - all of whom are potential narrators, expected to be familiar with a number of tales. At such popular, informal sessions, members of an immediate family or related families seize the opportunity to entertain one another. Any member of the gathering 'presents the white clay' and, once recognized, assumes the role of story-teller, relinquishing it at the

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1. Cf., for example, Herskovits (1958.15), Finnegan (1967 .69) and Scheub (1969.21).

termination of his tale and then becoming a member of the audience once more. The audience never play the role of passive listeners but contribute in various ways to the performance.

Once a session has commenced, members of the group take turns in presenting their tales. Generally, these are short, self-contained tales with which most members of the audience have become familiar through hearing them time and again at such tale-telling sessions. In any one session, a good number of such popular tales are normally presented. In general, anybody tells any tale, although different narrators may have different repertoires, reflecting their personal interests. Sometimes a well-known oka-ita 'master story-teller' is invited to other people's homes.

Attention has so far been focussed on the private, informal, evening story-telling sessions for the simple reason that they are the most typical. In contrast to such private sessions which originate from the small groups of people relaxing after the day's work, story-telling sessions may be arranged on more public occasions such as marriage or title-taking, and the second burial ceremonies for titled men. At such occasions, which are less frequent,<sup>1</sup> only the expert story-teller gives a performance. Thus, unlike

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1. There may also be some 'private' but clearly untypical, daytime story-telling involving people of the same age or sex; for example, boys or girls on their way to the farm or stream. At school, children may also engage in daytime story-telling.

the ordinary narrator who confines his performance to the private, informal occasions, the expert performs on public occasions as well as in private story-telling sessions, sometimes turning his expertise to profit. However, we are here concerned with the private story-telling sessions.

### 1.7 Summary

An introduction of this nature could be expected to include some consideration of the social function of tales, but this falls outside the scope of this thesis, which is concerned with the literary aspects of Enuani tales. The social functions of oral literature have of course been extensively discussed by many scholars<sup>1</sup> reporting from a wide variety of societies in Africa and elsewhere. Suffice it here to mention that in Enuani, as in several other African cultures, tales are important, broadly speaking, for their educational and entertainment values. As far back as in 1948, Green recognized the educational value of Igbo tales, remarking that 'they play an important part in Igbo indigenous education. Not only do they make vivid and reiterate cultural standards and values, but they train the child to think and express himself clearly and swiftly, a matter of importance in a society where oratory plays a vital part' (Green 1948.844). In Enuani tales, as will be shown later, the didactic element is frequently given emphasis. The importance of the functions cited will be made more apparent in later chapters of this thesis.

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1 See, e.g., Rattray (1928), Bascom (1954, 1965), Dégh (1959), Wang (1965), Wonodi (1965), Obiechina (1967) and Dorson (1972).

## CHAPTER 2

### NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

2.0 The necessity of devising appropriate units for the description and analysis of oral literature has long been recognized in tale scholarship. Adherents of the historical-geographical school adopted such units as the motif and tale type which are based on content (and therefore, variable). Anti Aarne, one of the founders of this school, published the International index of tale types<sup>1</sup> in 1910 while between 1955 and 1958, Stith Thompson published his monumental Motif-Index of Folk Literature.

For classificatory purposes the motif as a unit is doubtless adequate, but its unsatisfactoriness as a tool for literary analysis is apparent, for example, from Thompson's numerous but imprecise definitions. Thompson (1946.415) defines the motif as 'the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition', adding that the motif may be a character, an object or an incident. This vague, indeed 'variable' definition is substantially repeated by Thompson (1950.753) and may also be compared to Thompson (1955.7) who speaks of 'certain items...the stuff out of which tales are made', without rigorously defining such 'items'.

#### 2.1 Conception of narrative units: new approaches

The rise of the Russian Formalist school marked a shift from an atomistic approach to a holistic, that is, structural

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1. Revised, enlarged and translated by Thompson as The Types of the Folktale (1928). A second revision (1961) has also been published by Thompson.

approach. The old 'form and content' dichotomy was de-emphasized and attention was now focussed on the order and manner in which events comprising the tale are combined or constructed,<sup>1</sup> in the words of Scholes (1974.67), 'the formal qualities of the tale, its basic units and the rules governing their combination'. The best known exponent of Russian literary formalism is Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) and, for him, concern with a structural investigation of the tale should not necessarily preclude the historical, philological approach which had traditionally engaged the attention of folklorists. He in fact contends that for the scholar it is imperative to investigate the tale's structure before engaging in historic-genetic studies. In his important work, Morphology of the Folktale (MFT, 1928), Propp comments: 'We shall insist that as long as no morphological study exists, there can be no correct historical study.'<sup>2</sup> If we are incapable of breaking the tale into its components, we will not be able to make a correct comparison' (MFT, 1968.15 translation).

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1. Cf. the Formalists' terms fabula, used to describe the events of the narrative and sjuzet, which refers to 'the order and manner in which the events are actually presented in the narrative' (Jefferson and Robey (eds., 1982.31). For further discussion of the work of the Formalist group, see Chapter 6.
  2. Propp indeed returns to the historical 'and yet as unresolved problem of the similarity of tales throughout the world' in Historical Roots of the Fairy Tale (1946), a book which however provoked considerable adverse criticism. Cf. Oinas (1972.339).

It is worth noting however that Propp was not the first to investigate tales from a structural-typological perspective, or attempt to distinguish what elements remain constant through various versions of a tale which on the surface are the same. As early as 1893 Bédier speculated upon the stable and variable elements in the tale, but did not draw a clear distinction. A. N. Veselovskij (1838-1906), the 19th century Russian comparatist and folklorist, noted that plots of tales consist of simple stable units which he called motives (motiv): 'By motive I mean the simplest narrative unit...' (1940.500). In 1924 R. M. Volkov indicated that a tale is composed of structural units but failed to provide a satisfactory definition of such units, adopting instead, Veselovskij's definition. Volkov's structural study of the fairy tale evoked some severe criticism, particularly from Propp himself (cf. MFT, p. 15). In 1925 V. Sklovskij considered the concept of tale role and of action which this tale role performs. Significantly, these two form the structural unit which both Nifikorov and Propp refer to as 'function'. Nifikorov wrote his short article<sup>1</sup> in 1926 but publication did not take place until 1928. More than his predecessors, Nifikorov succeeded in defining the narrative unit, basing it on the action of the narrative role ('function'). However, he did not develop this and some of his other ideas, such as the conception of the tale as a linear pattern. As Oinas (1971.338) points out, it is contestable whether or not the pivotal notion on which Propp's

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1. Translated as 'On the morphological study of the folktale' (1928).

analysis in Morphology of the Folktale hinges - that is, the function of the dramatis personae - was original to Propp. Propp in fact included some functions similar to Nifikorov's but, more importantly, he embarked on a more comprehensive and systematic investigation of the narrative structure of the Russian fairy tale.

## 2.2 Structural studies outside Russia

Passing mention may be made here of the rise of structural-typological studies outside Russia. In France, the name of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss is pre-eminent; his writings have provoked considerable discussion (cf. Leach, 1962, Leach (ed.), 1967; Simonis, 1968; Nelson and Tanya (eds.), 1970). However, a consideration of Lévi-Strauss' work<sup>1</sup> lies outside the scope of our discussion. Suffice it to mention that his approach, appropriately called 'paradigmatic', differs from Propp's (as well as Dundes') which, as will be shown, is 'syntagmatic'.<sup>2</sup>

Also deserving of some mention in French literary structuralism are A. Julian Greimas and Claude Brémont. Greimas' method involves an attempt at a synthesis of Propp's syntagmatic and Lévi-Strauss' paradigmatic approaches while, on his part, Brémont emphasizes that the 'function' (cf. Propp) constitutes the 'narrative atom' and that a combination of such atoms basically gives a tale its form. Meletinsky (1971.265) comments:

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1. For a full appraisal of Lévi-Strauss' theories and structural analysis of myth, see, for example, Nathorst (1969. pp. 37-59) and Meletinsky (1971. pp. 254-259).
  2. Cf. the notions of paradigm and syntax in the study of grammar. Waugh (1966.161) discusses some of the differences between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structural analyses.

If Greimas transfers Propp's conclusions about the fairytale to myth, Claude Brémont strives to extract from Propp's analysis general rules for the unfolding of any narrative theme. Moreover, in contrast to Greimas, Brémont concentrates not on the mythological context of the tale, but on the very logic of narration; not on paradigmatic oppositions, but on the syntax of human acts.

Although Propp's work did not make any great impact when it appeared in English translation in 1958, it gradually came to be seen by some scholars in the West as a significant break-through in tale scholarship. Jacobs (1972.195) comments that the work 'offered the most important advance in method in the history of folklore before the 1940's' while in the words of Ben-Amos (1977.iv), Propp's book 'brought forth the promise of a new era in folklore, the dawn of which we had all awaited'. Oinas (1971.338) points out that the interest provoked in the West by Propp's study had such proportions 'that hardly any work in folklore has had since the heyday of Max Müller, with the possible exception of Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough'.

The publication of the English translation of Propp's work in 1958 gave an impetus to structural studies in several countries, including America, Germany and Israel. Examples include Dundes (1962a, 1964a, 1971), Görög (1970), Maranda and Maranda (eds., 1971), Jason (1971, Jason and Segal (eds.), 1977), and Jason (1977). The influence of Propp's morphological analysis may be further demonstrated by other studies which have been either inspired by it or are in one way or another indebted to Propp. Examples include Armstrong (1959), Lévi-Strauss (1960), Fischer (1963), Brémont (1964), Waugh (1966), Greimas (1966a and 1966b, Anozie (ed.), 1970),



Horner (1970), Paulme (1976) and Dundes (1964b, 1964c).<sup>1</sup>

We shall return to the last-mentioned folklorist, but first, further remarks about Propp and his pioneering structural investigation are called for.

### 2.3 Propp's structural theories

Since Propp sought the constant elements of the tale, he rejects the Aarne-Thompson unit, the motif, which lists variables. Enunciating the principle that the dramatis personae are variable, as opposed to their actions which are constant, Propp considers the latter to be the basic components of the tale. Then he segments the tale into units of narrative action which he calls 'functions'. The 'function', which lies at the heart of Propp's analysis, is defined by him thus: 'Function is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action' (MFT, p. 21). Thus emphasis is on the 'tale-role' (seven of them), rather than on the identity of the character involved in a given action.

As indicated, one important finding of Propp's analysis of his one hundred Russian tales is that these tales could be described in terms of a number of functions, thirty-one in all. [Propp notes that all the functions do not occur in any one tale, but those functions which do occur are always in a fixed sequence. The functions or units of action may be expressed by brief phrases such as 'parents leave for the forest', 'they forbid their children to go out into the street' which, in turn, may be condensed further and

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1. Significantly, the wave of enthusiasm which Propp's work generated in the West also contributed to the revival of interest in formal studies in Russia, culminating in the re-publication there of Morphology of the Folktale in 1969.

specified by such verbal nouns as 'absentation' and 'interdiction'.

Of Propp's thirty-one functions, Ben-Amos (1966.72) comments that 'the enumerative method [emphasis mine] cannot explain why each motifeme or function is necessary to the whole artistic structure of the plot'. Ben-Amos' phrase (underlined) should be taken with care as it seems to give the impression that structural analysis consists solely of isolating or 'enumerating' the actions, that is functions, of the characters. Every function in a tale stands in a certain relationship to another, be it complementary, counteractive or causal. Not only does a structural analysis attempt to establish the component units of a tale, the method is even more concerned with the elucidation of the relationships which obtain among the units. Let us consider Propp's functions XVI ('The hero and the villain join in direct combat') and XVIII ('The villain is defeated'), for example. Clearly the latter functions as the logical conclusion of the former, as it would contradict the logical sequence of events - whether in real life or in tales - if victory were to be achieved before a struggle actually takes place.

As already indicated, there are at least two different 'schools' of structural analysis (cf. Fischer, 1963.254) in oral literature. One of the leading members of the Propp 'school' is Alan Dundes, the American folklorist. From a theoretical viewpoint, this chapter in fact substantially draws upon the analytical concepts articulated by Propp and Dundes. The latter's study, The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales (1964b) remains, in America, 'the most important work directly devoted to the structural analysis of

the tale'.<sup>1</sup> In this, as in his other analyses, Dundes, described as Propp's 'direct successor',<sup>2</sup> essentially adopts the latter's syntagmatic scheme. He however effects one terminological change, proposing that in place of Propp's 'function', the term 'motifeme' (which he borrowed from Pike)<sup>3</sup> be used.

The list mentioned above of studies that can in varying degrees be labelled 'structural' presupposes considerable discussion, even disagreement and differences of opinion regarding the aims and possibilities of structural analysis. Indeed, the model proposed by both Propp and Dundes has sometimes been the target of adverse criticism for various reasons. Some critics charge Propp and Dundes with paying little or no attention to the dramatis personae, for concentrating on text alone and conversely disregarding the cultural context, while others complain of the abstractness of both scholars' model (cf. Taylor, 1964; Waugh, 1966; Stern, 1966; Nathhorst, 1968, 1969). Jason (1983.106) contends that all structural analyses based on Propp's theories and models have an inherent weakness as a result of 'the faulty English translation of Propp's work'. While considering J. Handoo's structural researches into Indian folk literature as interesting, she remarks that it 'unfortunately, suffers from the same shortcoming as all other Western applications and adaptations of Propp's model, namely

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1. Meletinsky (1971.268).
  2. Ibid.
  3. See Pike (1967.pp.37-72). According to Dundes, this substitution would permit the use of another term, 'allomotif', for 'those motifs which occur in any given motifemic context' (1964b.59).

the ignoring of the narrative role'. This chapter is not however concerned to attempt a synthesis of conflicting views, nor does it enter into any discussion of the criticisms which different 'structuralists' may have levelled at one another.

Clearly, structural analysis may be employed to different ends; some scholars attempt to discover possible correlations between the structural patterns in the tales of a given society and the manner in which certain other aspects of the culture are structured,<sup>1</sup> while others may consider it a useful tool for comparative, cross-cultural, even functional studies of folklore.<sup>2</sup> (It may well be that some patterns discoverable in tales provide metaphors for the entire culture. In this concern with context seems to lie one of the strengths of the paradigmatic approach).

By applying some of the structural concepts of Propp (even if via Dundes at times) the succeeding sections of this chapter show the basic units which Enuani story-tellers commonly draw upon in the process of narrative composition. While these elements which Propp calls 'functions' belong firmly to the traditional, 'communal' pool, it is entirely the individual narrator's responsibility, as will be shown, to re-create them imaginatively, taking cognizance of the appropriate sequences, forming episodes and giving rise to an integrated, coherent tale.

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1. Cf., for example, Hewitt (1976) who in his study of /Xam narratives, demonstrates similar structures in tales and in other areas of the Bushmen's culture.
  2. See Dundes' (1964b.108) illustration of the usefulness of structural analysis for studies concerned with the functions of folklore.

The corpus of tales on which this thesis is based was subjected to a structural analysis on the Dundes model and the results are presented in the remainder of this chapter. The analysis here makes no claim to being exhaustive, but is seen as more in the nature of a preliminary investigation, which it is hoped may serve as a basis for further work at a later date. The analysis revealed that there are certain sequences of motifemes which recur in Enuani tales, and the commoner of these motifemic sequences - here called patterns - are described below.

#### 2.4.1 Pattern 1 : Lack (L)/Lack Liquidated (LL) tales

By far the greatest number of Enuani tales open with some form of lack or state of disequilibrium. Food is the most important single commodity which is lacked<sup>1</sup>, while the next two most prevalent lacks relate to children and brides. In the following variant performances, each of the tales<sup>2</sup> features both common lacks:

##### Tale 5 (by Okohai; 'E')

- (i) Lack: '...since it was a time of famine...'
- (ii) Attempt: 'Ada went to all the animals...but they refused to help her'.
- (iii) Contract: '...then Ada accepted Tortoise's terms, pledging her unborn baby'.

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1. Cf. the following: 'One year the animal world witnessed a disastrous famine...' (Tale 3); 'At a time, a terrible famine was raging all over Ani Idu' (9); 'A certain year, there was a great famine...' (35); '...all the animals... they were in a period of great famine' (50); 'That year, there was a very terrible famine whistling fio lo fio lo fio lo through the streets of Ani Idu' (53) Other tales which open with a state of famine include Tales 5, 23, 36, 62, 66, 74, 76 and 93.

2. Each version is preceded by the following information: name of the narrator and his 'status', the latter being designated by the letter 'E' ('expert narrator') or 'A' ('average narrator').

- (iv) Lack Liquidated: 'Tortoise gave Ada yams and meat... and even asked her to call any time she was hungry'.
- (v) Lack: 'Now all the animals sought to marry Anoli, Ada's daughter'.
- (vi) Attempt: '...Elephant, Leopard, Pig, Python, Bushcow...they all came, but Ada refused them all'.
- (vii) Fulfilment (of Cont): 'So Ada made good her promise to Tortoise'.
- (viii) Lack Liquidated: 'Tortoise, even in his old age, succeeded in marrying a very young girl'.

Tale 23 (by Obuzome; 'E')

- (i) Lack: 'It was during a famine and she was a pregnant woman...'
- (ii) Attempt: 'She begged Bushbuck, Pig, Duiker...all the animals fefefe ['without exception'] but none of them agreed to give her a pear'.
- (iii) Lack Liquidated: '...Tortoise threw her two pears...then a whole bunch of pears'.
- (iv) Lack: 'Several suitors now desired to marry Anoli and continually beseiged the house'.
- (v) Attempt: 'Bushbuck, Bushcow, Pig, Duiker...all were rejected'.
- (vi) Lack Liquidated: 'Thus Tortoise married Anoli, the beautiful one'.

Tale 71 (by Mgboyibo; 'A')

- (i) Lack: 'Both animals and human beings were suffering from the effects of the famine in Ani Idu that year'.
- (ii) Attempt: 'The woman asked several animals for food, but none of them gave her anything to eat'.
- (iii) Lack Liquidated: 'After pleading with Tortoise, she was given some yams and maize'.
- (iv) Lack: 'Now that her daughter had grown to womanhood, all the animals sought to marry the young girl'.
- (v) Attempt: 'Several animals came with music and dancing, but they did not succeed'.
- (vi) Lack Liquidated: '...Tortoise married the young girl whose mother he had helped'.

From the above examples, it is clear that the majority of tales involve a move from a state of disequilibrium or lack to one of equilibrium or liquidation of lack. The occurrence of an initial lack triggers off the entire action of the tale, compelling the hero (or other characters) to embark on a search. Thus the bulk of the narrative action is devoted to portraying a character's endeavours aimed at rectifying an unstable situation. Rarely is the goal achieved at the first instance; rather, a series of attempts is called for, more so if several characters are involved. But no matter how many attempts are made, only the last proves successful. In the examples, not only does the woman (Ada) appeal to a succession of animals, many of the latter also come on different occasions, seeking the hand of her daughter in marriage. In oral narrative, clearly, repetition is widely recognized as an important structural as well as stylistic device.

Some lacks may be 'simultaneous'<sup>1</sup> while others are sequential, as in Tales 5, 23 and 71. It would have been possible for the first move<sup>2</sup> Lack-Att.-LL to terminate the tale's action but this does not happen, as a new lack develops and the same move is indeed repeated; thus we have  $L_i$  and  $L_{ii}$ , as well as  $LL_i$  and  $LL_{ii}$ . A structurally complete Enuani tale can consist of a pair of motifemic opposites such as Lack and Lack Liquidated, but such minimal tales are far less common

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1. In Tale 51, for example, two lacks occur: in their attempt to remedy an anomalous situation, that of childlessness, a couple are sent searching for a dried-up pumpkin calabash by their medicine-man.
  2. See Propp's notion of a 'move': 'Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move. One tale may have several moves...' (MFT, p. 92).

than tales such as our examples above which feature a greater number of motifemes. The motifemes in Tales 5, 23, and 71 may be set out thus:

	Lack		Attempt		Contract	Lack Liquidated		Fulfilment (of Cont.)
Tale 5	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	"	(i)	(ii)	"
" 23	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	-	(i)	(ii)	-
" 71	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	-	(i)	(ii)	-

The unfolding of the tale's action obviously involves the occurrence of intervening motifemes and the commonest in Enuani L/LL tales is 'Attempt'. The summary above clearly shows that this motifeme occurs medially in all three tales.

#### 2.4.2 Pattern 2: Deprivation (Dep.)/Acquisition (Acq.) tales

The following examples illustrate the above-named pattern:

##### Example One

#### Tale 4 (by Okohai; 'E')

- (i) Deprivation: '...my tale encounters a little girl who had lost both her parents'.
- (ii) Encounter: 'As soon as the orphan girl arrived, they all set to maltreating her'.
- (iii) Amelioration: '...her dead father appeared to her in a dream, then gave her an udala<sup>1</sup> seed to plant'.
- (iv) Acquisition: '...thus she regained her parents' possessions and was asked to rule one part of the town'.

#### Tale 58 (by Ngo 'A')

- (i) Deprivation: '...an extremely beautiful girl whose father and mother had died'.
- (ii) Encounter: 'The girl's foster-parents treated their daughter very well, but often maltreated the orphan girl'.

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1. Udala 'African Star Apple, Chrysophyllum Africanum'.



- (iii) Amelioration: 'In her dream her father...gave her one udala seed and told her to plant it at a particular spot behind the house'.
- (iv) Acquisition: 'They kept their promise and the girl took all those possessions away, to live on her own'.

Tale 70 (by Chiazoo; 'E')

- (i) Deprivation: 'The second wife died, leaving her daughter motherless'.
- (ii) Encounter: 'She [the first wife] continued to starve, punish and overwork the motherless child'.
- (iii) Amelioration: '...the motherless child went into the bush, searched for, and found the udala seed'.
- (iv) Acquisition: 'People in the village gave her a lot of money and riches, thus she was able to build a beautiful, storeyed house'.

Example Two

Tale 22 (by Osubor; 'E')

- (i) Deprivation: 'Poorman's Son...this boy had no parents...'
- (ii) Task: 'On the first day, the Oba sent him on a shooting test'.
- (iii) Task Accomplished: 'At the first attempt, Poorman's Son hit the exact spot on the palm tree with his bow and arrow'.
- (iv) Task: 'Go to the stream and fetch me some water with this basket', the Oba told him.
- (v) Counter-task: 'Poorman's Son drew some patterns on the ground, saying to the Oba, "Please take these patterns in for me if it rains" '.
- (vi) Task: 'The Oba said, "Now, you are going to shave my hair..."'.<sup>1</sup> [ J
- (vii) Counter-task: 'Poorman's Son gave him a corn cob and asked him to extract the grains'.

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1. It is an offence punishable by death for anyone to shave the Oba's hair completely.

(viii) Acquisition: 'The ruling council declared Poorman's Son the king...the Oba was found guilty'.

Tale 37 (by Nwaobi; 'A')

- (i) Deprivation: 'The king had killed the boy's father... Nnemegegi took charge of bringing him up'.
- (ii) Task: 'He asked the boy to join in the shooting test; if he failed, he would be killed'.
- (iii) Task Accomplished: 'Nnemegegi gave him a charm and while other children missed, he succeeded in hitting the highest palm leaf'.
- (iv) Task: 'The Oba then asked the boy to shave his hair'.
- (v) Counter-task: 'When the Oba asked him to replace the hair, the boy asked him to stick the corn back on its cob'.
- (vi) Task: 'The Oba sent him to fetch water with a leaky basket'.
- (vii) Counter-task: 'Nnemegegi advised him and he made some patterns outside, asking the Oba to take them inside carefully'.
- (viii) Acquisition: 'Having disposed of the assignments, he was made the king of Ani Idu'.

As the foregoing examples indicate, Pattern 2 tales commonly depict the fortunes of a character who is in an apparently helpless situation at the beginning but attains a position of superiority at the conclusion of the tale. Deprivation, the usual forms of which are the banishment of the hero/or the death of his parents, is the functional equivalent of 'Lack' in Pattern 1 tales, in the sense that it also triggers off the action of the tale, preparing the way for an encounter between the hero-orphan and his adversary who perpetrates one villainous action or another against him. In general, the orphan is confronted by overwhelming hardships and strives to survive, or prove himself.

From Examples One and Two it is clear that the main character in Pattern 2 tales has two adversaries, either the king or foster-parents.<sup>1</sup> The former imposes a series of 'impossible' tasks which the hero however disposes of with even more knotty assignments. The motifemes 'Counter-task' and 'Amelioration' may be regarded as alternatives since they are highly essential to the orphan's success and indeed provoke (or at least precipitate) a reversal of fortunes. Thus the final motifeme, 'Acquisition', is concerned with some form of reward; money, riches or kingship (conversely, there is punishment, even death for the villain).

Clearly, the narrators in Example One employ essentially the same number of motifemes, a fact which also holds true for the narrators in Example Two. In other words, the basic pattern here may be summarized as follows:

Dep.—Encounter (or T.)—Amelioration (or Counter-task or TA)—Acquisition.

2.4.3 Pattern 3: Interdiction (Int.)/Violation (Vio.)/  
Consequence (Cons.) tales

Tale 79 (by Uzoka; 'A')

- (i) Interdiction: 'Cock's wife said to him, "henceforth you have to refrain from drinking..." '
- (ii) Violation: 'But Cock could not resist the temptation...one night he came home drunk and drenched...'
- (iii) Consequence: 'She left Cock at the foot of a tree, saying, "drinking will be your ruin" and Cock became homeless'.

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1. Cf. the role of his mentor, Nnemegedi. For further discussion of tale roles, see Chapter 3.

Tale 83 (by Kanebi; 'A')

- (i) Interdiction: 'Before they slept that night, she warned Cock to stop his drinking but Cock merely laughed...'
- (ii) Violation: 'When Cock's friend came and called him, they both went out and drank secretly'.
- (iii) Discovery: 'His wife accused him of drinking... but Cock cleverly denied it'.
- (iv) Violation: 'Cock drank secretly again...then one night, they brought him home senseless...'
- (v) Consequence: 'His wife took away the servants, the house...everything disappeared and the 'palace' turned into a bush again'.

(Aetiological conclusion) 'Because he disobeyed... since then, Cock cries koko - o - ko - o - o, looking for his wife'.

Tale 86 (by Nwambuonwo; 'E')

- (i) Interdiction: 'The (spirit) woman said to Cock, "I shall marry you, but you must give up your drinking" '.
- (ii) Violation: '...that night he (Cock) crept wele wele wele wele wele to his friend, Coucal, and then drank seven cupfuls'.
- (iii) Discovery: '...his wife said, "You have had some drink, I can prove it" '.
- (iv) Violation: '...again Cock noticed that his wife was not watching, he crept wele, served himself and drank, served himself and drank'.
- (v) Discovery: 'But Ekekeleke knew, because she is a 'mammy-water' ('mermaid, water-spirit').
- (vi) Consequence: 'She took all the servants away and with the house,disappeared then Cock became homeless once more...'

(Aetiological conclusion): 'Every morning Cock crows Ekekeleke - o - o'; he is searching for, and calling his wife Ekekeleke, even till the present day'.

Clearly Tales 79, 83 and 86 display a comparable structure, or more specifically motifemic sequence. Nwambuonwo and Kanebi incorporate an aetiological conclusion,

but this element is optional and by no means represents an additional motifeme in both tales. Perhaps the only difference lies in the repetition of the action of violation and discovery in Nwambuonwo's version. The same may be said concerning Tale 83 in which, however, the motifeme Discovery occurs only once. This hardly constitutes an omission by the narrator for the fact that 'they brought him [Cock] home senseless' implies some awareness on his wife's part that the injunction requiring him to refrain from drunkenness had been violated. A narrator sometimes leaves out steps in the story which can be readily filled in by his listeners.

In some tales (such as 48 and 56) the violation of an interdiction instantly attracts a consequence but, as Tales 83 and 86 above demonstrate, this is not always the case. Here, the act of violation does not immediately provoke disastrous consequences, as the violator is given a second opportunity to make amends. It is his incorrigibility, indeed characteristic failure to seize the opportunity that eventually brings him to ruin. In spite of the minor differences observed above, we can assert that with regard to the motifemes included, none of the tales is any more complex than the other. All three display a marked uniformity, incorporating the core and characteristic linear sequence of Pattern 3 tales (Int./Vio./Cons.), as is evident from the following summary:

Tale 79:	Int.	Vio.	—	—	—	Cons.	—
Tale 83:	Int.	Vio.	Disc.	Vio.	—	Cons.	(Aet. conclusion)
Tale 86:	Int.	Vio.	Disc.	Vio.	Disc.	Cons.	(Aet. conclusion)

2.4.4 Pattern 4: Motifemic sequence of Contract (Cont.)/  
Breach (of Cont.)/Result

The underlying pattern here is that the initial state of equilibrium (or 'friendship') eventually ceases, the cessation being provoked by some form of violative, treacherous act. Tales based on this pattern not only account for a high percentage of the Enuani repertoire, but are also the most popular.

Example One

Tale 35 (Ifeanyi Azonuche)

- (i) Contract: 'In order that he may lead them on their mission to the sky, each bird was required to hand over a feather to Tortoise'.
- (ii) Breach (of Cont.): 'By adopting the name 'All of you', Tortoise appropriated to himself all the food served the birds'.
- (iii) Result: 'The angry birds took their feathers back and while trying to land, Tortoise smashed his shell'.

(Aetiological conclusion): 'Thus the tortoise's body ceased to be smooth...it is now full of patches'.

Example Two

Tale 54 (O. Onichabo)

- (i) Contract: 'Tortoise and Dove were very good friends, so they agreed to cook each others meals...and say ko ko ko gbiom before eating (without stuttering)'.
- (ii) Breach (of Cont.): 'Tortoise ate all the food as Dove tried unsuccessfully to say ko ko ko gbiom' [Dove was a stammerer] .
- (iii) Result: 'Dove planned his revenge (asking his wife to prepare some delicious agbono soup and pounded yams)' .
- (iv) Contract: 'He took the food to the top of an anthill, proposing that they go up there in turns to eat'.

- (v) Breach (of Cont.): 'Dove flew up many times and ate, but Tortoise struggled unsuccessfully to scramble up the anthill'.
- (vi) Result: 'Thus Dove ate up the food and Tortoise went home, very angry'.

From the two examples above, it is immediately clear that we are here dealing with a body of narratives usually designated 'trickster tales'. It is not an exaggeration to state that anyone with the slightest acquaintance with African oral literature will know that such trickster (cf. 'animal') narratives are the best documented of African tales. Both examples also demonstrate that in Enuani tales the trickster role-slot (to borrow Jason's (1966.2) concept) is consistently filled by Tortoise. The narrator of Tale 54 indicates that Tortoise and Dove 'were very good friends', but for an Enuani audience, any mention of the former character automatically precludes the possibility of a genuine friendship in the tale. Tortoise is characteristically and utterly incapable of any true friendship, but most adept at feigning one. It is probably for this reason that most narrators do not consider a reference to the initial state of friendship obligatory. It will be apparent later that virtually every action of Tortoise negates the principles of true friendship as conceived by the Enuani.

The motifeme 'Result' may assume one of several forms, entailing, for example, a loss of face for the erstwhile overweening trickster, the termination of whatever degree of friendship may have existed between trickster and dupe, some bodily harm, even death, to the dupe. But by far the commonest form relates to the planning and execution of

retaliatory action by the aggrieved party. Having survived Tortoise's treacherous treatment in Tale 35, for example, the birds deplume their deceiver, who then comes hurtling down from the sky, inevitably suffering multiple dents. This element of revenge remains a constant, unless the outcome of the trickster's deceptive exercise proves fatal for the dupe, as in Tale 27.<sup>1</sup>

Example Three

Tale 46 (by Mrs Okwudiafo; 'A')

- (i) Lack: '...it [the famine] was so severe that the animals were dying everyday'.
- (ii) Contract: 'They decided to kill their mothers for food as they were old...'
- (iii) Fulfilment (of Cont.): 'The animals complied and one after the other, they killed and ate their mothers'.
- (iv) Breach (of Cont.): 'Unknown to the animals, Squirrel had taken his mother up into the sky'.
- (v) Discovery (of Breach of Cont.): 'Tortoise continued to spy on Squirrel until he discovered his secret'.
- (vi) <sup>Consequence</sup> Result: 'They forced her [Squirrel's mother] down and killed her like they had done to their own mothers'.

Tale 53 (by Nduka; 'E')

- (i) Lack: '...there was a very terrible famine whistling fio lo fio lo fio lo through the streets of Ani Idu'.
- (ii) Contract: 'All the animals decided to present their mothers to be killed and eaten'.

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1. Deceived and egged on by Tortoise, Elephant pulls himself to death in a farcical tug of war. Thus in contrast to some other tales in which the dupe survives, the possibility of planning a revenge is precluded in others.



- (iii) Fulfilment (of terms of Cont.): 'One after the other ...Leopard, Elephant...the animals presented their mothers to be eaten'.
- (iv) Breach (of Cont.): 'But Squirrel was playing tricks... he took his mother and hid her in the sky'.
- (v) Discovery (of Breach of Cont.): 'As soon as Tortoise discovered Squirrel's secret...' ('he went and informed the other animals').
- (vi) Result: '...the animals forced Squirrel's mother down and killed her'.

(Aetiological conclusion): '...because Tortoise was the last on the rope, he dashed himself to pieces...That is why, today, Tortoise's body is covered in patches'.

Tale 50 (by Mbuliche; 'E')

- (i) Lack: 'That year, Ani Idu witnessed a serious famine...'
- (ii) Contract: 'The animals decided to kill their mothers and thus prevent further starvation...'
- (iii) Fulfilment (of Cont.): 'Leopard was the first to present his mother and they ate her, then the other animals did the same'.
- (iv) Breach (of Cont.): 'One animal, Squirrel, did not; he took his mother up to the sky and went there to eat anytime he was hungry'.
- (v) Discovery: 'Tortoise trailed Squirrel every day and then revealed why the latter looked so healthy...'
- (vi) Result: 'All the animals went up the rope, dragged down Squirrel's mother and killed her'.

(Aetiological conclusion): 'The animals all fell on Tortoise, smashing him badly; that is why, up to the present day, the tortoise's body is full of dents'.

This tale (cf. the three versions) presents an interesting situation. As already seen, whatever lacks occur are usually liquidated at some point in the tale.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See, for example, Tales 5, 23, 59, 71.

But in Tales 46, 50 and 53 there occurs no conclusive liquidation of the lack; at best there is a partial liquidation, for the animals did not overcome the famine even after the drastic action of sacrificing their mothers. According to the narrator of Tale 46, for example, 'After a while all their mothers had been eaten. But the famine continued'. The narrator of Tale 53 relates that '... elephants are enormous in size, so the meat lasted the animals for three days'. In these examples the fulfilment of the contract represents only a partial liquidation of the lack (pLL).

This tale stands out as the only example in our corpus which defies the 'rule' already stated, namely that the role of trickster is played by Tortoise. Here, too, the role of dupe is filled, not by one character, but by the entire animal world. But although there is a new trickster here, Tortoise is a character rarely relegated to the background. By playing the key role in the betrayal and disgrace of Squirrel, Tortoise reaffirms the Enuani assessment of his unrelentingly mischievous presence in tales as the trickster par excellence: Mbekwu ako n'inu 'The tortoise is never absent from a tale'. For the Enuani audience, a trickster tale is thus synonymous with a contemplation of Tortoise<sup>1</sup> as he recklessly engages in his perpetual rascality and mischief-making. A detailed examination of Tales 46, 50 and 53 reveals how strikingly close the three performances are, for not only do they follow a common motifemic sequence, they indeed incorporate the same number of motifemes. It is therefore possible for

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1. For further discussion of this character, see Chapter 3.

us to represent the three tales thus:

Lack—Contract—Fulfilment (of Cont. or pLL)—Breach (of Cont.)—Discovery—Result<sup>1</sup>

In Enuani story-telling the didactic element is crucially important. And the very structure of the tale lends itself to the narrator's didactic intent. In all the structural groups shown, the final motifeme is regarded as clinching the tale, its importance lying in the opportunity provided for communicating one message or another not infrequently emphasized in everyday life. In Pattern 3 tales, the motifeme 'Consequence' implicitly emphasizes that disobedience invariably provokes disastrous results while in Pattern 2 tales, the motifeme 'Acquisition' advocates and extols such qualities as humility, hard work and perseverance. In the generality of tales, the action pattern consists of Tortoise being initially successful, only to be beaten, outwitted and disgraced eventually.<sup>2</sup> The trickster-outtricked element, expressed by the final motifeme 'Result', thus points to a condemnation of any attempt to acquire or achieve without hard work, or by devious means. The didactic importance, indeed potentiality of the concluding motifeme in Enuani tales will be further apparent in Chapter 6.

#### 2.4.5 'Miscellaneous' tales

The discussion has so far been concerned with four structural patterns found to recur in a large number of tales.

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1. The narrators of Tales 50 and 53, obviously, have incorporated the popular aetiological conclusion to this tale.
  2. Cf., for example, Tales 6 and 27 which do not conform to this pattern.

Understandably, there may well be an inconsiderable number of tales the inclusion of which in any of the four structural groups will be difficult to justify. Moreover, such tales do not warrant the setting up of a fifth group, employing as they do, much the same motifemes as the tales in our four groups. It seems however that to be able to account for all the tales in our corpus, we need to identify two more motifemes (Victory, Intervention)<sup>1</sup> as well as the pairs 'Departure'/'Return', 'Pursuit'/'Escape'.

As noted, the narrative action in the majority of tales takes place in Ani Idu. The audience presume this setting even if the narrator does not specifically refer to it. But for most tales in which the motifemes Departure and Return occur, the action soon shifts to another location such as the spirit world. The bulk of the action consists in a test of wits, a fight or some other kind of physical contest between the hero and one or more of the inhabitants of the strange world into which he has ventured. The following are examples of 'miscellaneous' tales in our corpus:

Tale 24 (Aniamaka)

- (i) Departure: 'At the break of day, they [the two boys] set out'.
- (ii) Deception: [Unknown to the smith], '...they took his son from where he lay and changed positions with him'.
- (iii) Result: 'He [the spirit smith] took his red-hot osuu fork and dug it vu-u-u-u into his son's head' [killing him].
- (iv) Pursuit: 'They made for the road pe pe pe pe pe pe pe, ...the spirit smith pursued the boys kwaka kwaka kwaka...'

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1. 'Intervention' often involves the descent of God in order to 'pass judgement', especially in tales in which 'encounter' brings fatal or rather disastrous consequences.

- (v) Escape: 'The boys got to the boundary bele! and immediately stepped into the human world'.
- (vi) Return: '...the boys returned home carrying the sun and the moon...'
- (vii) Acquisition: The king asked them 'to rule one section of the town'.
- (Aetiological conclusion): '...the sun went one way, the moon the other, that is day and night...'

Tale 17 (Mrs. A. Nwabunnu)

- (i) Contract: 'The animals [domestic, and those which lived in the forests] fixed the morning of the seventh day for a wrestling match'.
- (ii) Fulfilment (of Cont.): 'On that day everybody was there... they made a ring'.
- (iii) Encounter: 'One after the other, the domestic and 'forest' animals engaged themselves in a wrestling contest'.
- (iv) Victory: 'So, all the domestic animals were thrown, some badly injured by the 'forest' animals'.
- (v) Intervention: 'God descended and rebuked the Ojiso for permitting such a brutal display of force and ordered the forest animals back into the forests'.

Tale 1 (Okohai)

- (i) Contract: 'They said,...it is now time for us to go and clear the new farmlands...so they fixed a date'.
- (ii) Fulfilment (of Cont.): '...all the animals gathered gbim!...and immediately, they fell on the forest, clearing'.
- (iii) Breach (of Cont.): 'Ah! Leopard stormed out of the gathering, saying...'
- (iv) Encounter: 'So Leopard attacked the animals in succession...'
- (v) Victory: 'After a long fight, Dog hit Leopard on the ground gbam!...Leopard dropped dead'.
- (vi) Intervention: 'God above was seeing all that was happening and he...descended dii!'

(Aetiological conclusion); 'That was how God made Dog a domestic animal, left Leopard in the forests, and stopped the animals from farming together'.

## 2.5 Summary

Four structural patterns have been identified and described. From the examples in each group, it is clear that all the performers have employed essentially the same motifemic combinations in giving form to their tales. As the numerous examples above also demonstrate, Enuani tales are structurally simple, the great majority of them consisting of from three to six motifemes.<sup>1</sup> This lack of complexity may well have implications for the performance, evaluation or survival of the tales. An important conclusion to be drawn from our investigation in this chapter is that tales performed by experts do not have greater motifemic depth than those by average narrators. As will be shown later, Enuani audiences distinguish between good and bad narrators or rather, tale performances. The difference between a well-told and a poorly told tale does not lie in structure, as this chapter has demonstrated, but is to be found in other areas of the performance.

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1. Cf., for example, Cope (1978.193) who refers to Zulu tales as 'complex structures' and shows that 'The tale is a combination of sequences of which there may be about eight, comprising perhaps up to twenty functions'.

## CHAPTER 3

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

3.0 One of the questions which Dundes raises in his introduction to the 1968 edition of Morphology of the Folktale is whether Propp's method can be applied successfully to tales from other cultural regions of the world. Chapter 2, like some of Dundes' own studies, has demonstrated the possibility of such cross-cultural application. While the preceding chapter is devoted to a formal investigation of Enuani tales, the present chapter discusses some of the tales' dramatis personae.

#### 3.1 'Fixed' roles in Enuani tales

One of the central principles on which Propp's analysis rests, as already pointed out, is his observation that the names of characters are variable, as opposed to their actions (that is 'functions'), which are constant. In this regard, the validity of Propp's theoretical position is hardly open to question, but although 'a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages' (MFT, p. 20), we must observe too that in Enuani narrative tradition some tale roles are clearly 'reserved' for certain characters. Reserved, that is, in the sense that such characters are noted for, or associated with particular attributes which clearly distinguish them from all other characters in the tales. The discussion in this chapter is confined to such characters whose roles are, in a sense, 'fixed'.

In the majority of tales the role of villain, for

example, is commonly played by the Oba.<sup>1</sup> The prominence of this character in the tales is understandable considering, as already shown in Chapter 1, the Bini origins of the Enuani. What is perhaps surprising and thus worthy of some attention here is the depiction of him in the tales, where he is portrayed as wicked and unsympathetic (cf. pp. 52-3). In a substantial number of tales the Oba plays the rôle of villain and Poorman's Son that of hero. The fact that the confrontation is between the Oba and Poorman's Son is in itself interesting and the outcome of the tales even more so.

This juxtaposition of two figures from widely separated rungs of the social ladder illustrates, for example, that the very structure of oral tales (some other genres too) depends to a great extent on elements which demonstrate some form of oppositional relationship. As early as 1908 the Danish scholar, Axel Olrik, noted the widespread occurrence of the law of contrast (cf., the law of Two to a Scene) as one of his rules of literary composition. This principle of opposition obviously finds expression in an overwhelming number of tales in our corpus, especially in their characterization: poor versus rich (Tales 51, 55); the stupid versus the clever (27, 50, 61); the large against the small (6, 27); the loved and the hated (37, 51, 67); the black and the white (26); the human versus the spirit (8, 12, 24, 31, 44); the domestic versus the wild

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1 In a small number of tales, the role may be played by foster-parents.



(1, 17 and 41). In the last-mentioned tale, there are wrestling contests between similar-looking domestic and wild animals, pairings which are not only antithetical, but around which revolves the entire action of the tale.

The number seven also figures prominently in Enuani culture. It is commonly employed to convey the notion of the 'highest number possible in a situation' or 'the maximum'. (In most tales the Oba has seven wives, some characters journey for seven days while seven forest zones or seven rivers separate the human from the spirit world). However, in Enuani oral literature, as in other aspects of the culture, three is the most sacred number.<sup>1</sup> In divination, an integral part of traditional life, the dibia 'throws' his bunch of divining cowries or shells three times in the first instance, repeating the operation as often as required afterwards. The traditional Enuani dress is called ibe-ato (literally 'three pieces'); 'two days ago' is expressed by ta bu ato literally 'today is three', while the elder, before extracting his snuff from its container, instinctively strikes the little metal box three times.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Olrik emphasizes the law of three in his 'Epic laws of Folk Narrative', Dundes (1965 ed. pp. 131-141): 'Nothing distinguishes the great bulk of folk narrative from modern literature and from reality as much as does the number three. Such a ruthlessly rigid structuring of life stands apart from all else' (p. 133).

2 The magical significance of the number three is perhaps best illustrated by the popular saying Ife lue ato o todo 'When something gets to three, it 'threes' or 'sticks' there'. Three is the number at which everything 'clicks', that is, resolves itself or depends. In everyday speech it may be remarked of a person: O to or O todo (to is a verb derived from ato 'three', which is to say, 'He is stuck, or 'defeated' or 'finished').

Tales in which the Oba confronts Poorman's Son depict both characters as engaging in a kind of seesaw game, for while one rises at the end of the tale, the other slides down permanently. Quite often, the Oba's plans boomerang and he emerges a tragic character. On his part, Poorman's Son not only emerges victorious, but also attains a position of importance in society. This reversal of roles indicates an important principle in Enuani society, namely subscription to the idea of retributive judgement. This notion is emphasized by a great number of Enuani proverbs such as Onye emefiene o gha nwu 'One who has done no wrong does not die', and by several personal names such as Emenanjo ('Do no evil' or 'Do not sin'). The Oba comes off badly in his encounters with Poorman's Son on account of his wrongdoing. To the audience, the fate of such a villainous and unsympathetic character is not only inevitable but also well-deserved.

Such tales in which Poorman's Son, an apparently helpless figure, is able to achieve eminence points to another characteristic of Igbo society, namely its egalitarianism. Significantly, there is not a single tale in our corpus in which the Oba is succeeded by his son or heir. Instead, Poorman's Son who actually sets out as the underdog often takes over the throne; no mean achievement, considering his poor parentage. Olisa (1971, 16) remarks that 'the Igbo adult is more seriously concerned with the achieved leadership position, than with advantage of birth and ascribed leadership'. Any man who has achieved success may take a title (thus redistributing his wealth),

assuming a role in the governing council.

An examination of our corpus shows that in virtually all the tales, the wicked Oba suffers humiliation, deposition or decapitation (cf., Tales 6, 22, 39, 49). Clearly, the image of the king and, by extension, kingship which emerges from the tales is a highly unfavourable one. The portrayal of the Oba in Enuani tales is interesting, contrasting sharply with the present-day attitude of respect for the Obi or chief. This unsympathetic image of the Oba raises some questions. Does such portrayal point to the popular saying, Igbo enwe eze<sup>1</sup> 'The Igbo have no kings!', which has formed the subject of considerable discussion by Igbo scholars, or is it merely a reflection of the fact that the founders of the Enuani towns had fled from the powerful Benin kingdom of the 16th century? Did the originators of the tales introduce the character Oba, or did their descendants after the flight from Benin? It seems most unlikely that a people who had, or respected a monarchical form of government would compose tales in which the ruler is depicted in such a bad light. It would be interesting to find answers to these questions but such

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1 While the saying does not necessarily suggest that the institution of kingship was unknown to the Igbo, it should be pointed out that 'there was never any dominant authority uniting all Ibos into a political unit' (Olisa, 1971.16). The saying is concerned with emphasizing the essentially individualistic nature of Igbo life. Olisa, op. cit., notes that in its temperament, Igbo society is 'atomistic, competitive and egalitarian'. For other comments on the saying, Igbo enwe eze, see e.g., Chukwuma (1974.3), Isichei (1976. pp. 19ff) and Ifemesia (1979. pp. 40ff).

an exercise lies outside the scope of this thesis. Our concern is with showing that to Enuani audiences some tale characters are clearly recognizable, owing to the fact that they possess particular attributes which establish them as obvious choices to fill certain 'reserved' roles.

### 3.2 The role of Nnemege di

The role of helper, for example, is often played by Nnemege di<sup>1</sup> (literally, 'My old mother'), a character who, like the Oba, is drawn from everyday life. In the tales she is presented as aged, knowledgeable, skilled in witchcraft and magic. She frequently acts as foil to the high-handed Oba by assuming the role of mentor towards such characters as the motherless child or the childless mother (cf., Tales 60, 67, 73). Her role in the tales is an important one; by checking the excesses of the Oba or other figures similarly highly placed and thus prone to abuse of authority, she contributes immensely to the stability and continuity of the society by ensuring its moral health. In real life the name Nnemege di is used figuratively for an elderly woman with the image of the benevolent mother.<sup>2</sup> Her attributes in real life are also

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1. If a character is involved in a journey to the spirit world, he usually encounters Nwantakaofi ('Yaws-ridden-child') who then assumes the role of helper. However, if the character lacks humility or discretion, Nwantakaofi prescribes and ensures a tragic end for him. Cf., Talbot (1926.958): 'One of the most persistent characters is the Woman covered with Sores, who meets all travellers to the nether world, and helps them to success, or dooms them to failure, according to whether their goodness of heart is such as to pass her tests ...' Of the human characters discussed here, Nwantakaofi is the only one that does not exist in real life (at least in modern times). The major, if not the sole explanation for this lies in the fact that yaws has long been eradicated.
  2. There is often one (sometimes more than one) woman in a village who is generally known by this name.

reflected in the tales. In real life, however, she is not thought to engage in magic or witchcraft; rather, she displays a vast knowledge of herbs, constantly prescribing cures, particularly for ailments affecting women and children.

### 3.3 Animal roles

In the tales' choice of animal characters, an even greater fixity of roles and attributes is discernible. For an Enuani audience, the mere mention of Tortoise, for example, immediately conjures up images of incorrigible rascality, presumptuousness and deviousness, characteristics which are peculiarly associated with this character.

The next section explores some dimensions of Tortoise's 'fixed' role in Enuani tales, but first, we shall briefly consider some other animal characters with distinguishing attributes rarely transferred to other characters.

#### 3.3.1 The roles of Elephant and Leopard

In real life as well as in the tales, the elephant is conceived of as immensely powerful, presumably because of its enormous size. All the tales portray Elephant as the embodiment of prodigious strength and thus the premier candidate for tackling any situation which demands the use of strength (witness that he is the animals' automatic choice to counter a crucial challenge in Tale 27). In Tale 1 he is depicted as lumbering through the forests and in Tale 3, he roars gbu - u - u - u - u - u, in his deep, rumbling and awe-inspiring voice. But perhaps the most enduring testimony of Elephant's might is found in the appellation Enyi or anu nwe ofia 'Elephant' or 'the animal who owns the forests', exclusively applied to him. While

maintaining this popular conception of Elephant, however, the tales also depict him as an extremely stupid character. In view of Elephant's lack of intelligence, it is not surprising that he frequently falls prey to the wiles of smaller but brighter animals.<sup>1</sup>

While Elephant is reputedly the strongest animal, Leopard features as the most ferocious in the tales. In the words of an informant, Jebose, '... once Leopard appears, all the other animals simply vanish in fear'. Not only does Leopard strike terror into the other animals, he persistently and arrogantly emphasizes the fact that he is Eze anu or Eze ofia 'King of the animals' or 'King of the forests', an epithet not infrequently employed by Enuani narrators. To an Enuani audience, the first mention of Leopard provides sufficient clues as to the nature of the drama to be unfolded, namely a display of absolute ferocity, unprovoked aggression and destructive energies. While, as already seen, the Oba plays the role of villain in tales with human heroes, Leopard occupies this role in tales with animal heroes, ruling the forests with brute force and taking sadistic delight in annihilating the other animals. Interestingly, both villains enter into an alliance

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1 In Tale 50, for example, Tortoise brutally exposes the naivety and gullibility of this character. Certainly the theme of brains over brawn is one of the most prominent in African tales. Cf., Finnegan (1970.344) who speaks of 'small, wily, and tricky animals who cheat and outdo the larger and more powerful beasts'.

(Tale 6) for the sole purpose of eliminating Tortoise but, predictably, Tortoise outwits both enemies, then displays characteristic vindictiveness by severely punishing Leopard.

It is interesting to compare the distribution of roles, or more accurately the division of authority between Elephant and Leopard. One of them rules ~~peaceably~~ (cf., Tale 50), employing force only when necessary while the other lives and dominates by sheer brute force (cf., Tale 3), subjecting the animal world to constant intimidation, violence and threats. The question may be asked, Who is greater; Elephant, 'the owner of the forests' or Leopard, 'the king of the forests?'. A clear-cut answer seems impossible here; at best, a compromise may be reached by weighing evidence from two not unrelated sources, namely our corpus and the culture. In tales (cf., Tale 1) depicting a direct confrontation between Elephant and Leopard, the former is invariably subjected to a thorough beating by the violent Leopard. A popular Enuani proverb compares the two animals: Awolo gbue enyi, enyi ka awolo; awolo egbune enyi, enyi ka awolo '(Even) If the leopard kills the elephant, the elephant is greater than the leopard; if the leopard does not kill the elephant, the elephant is still greater'. One implication here is that Elephant's exercise of strength when this quality is called for is extolled while Leopard's wanton and constant use of force is deplored. For the Enuani, then, the question seems to be not so much that of strength or superiority as the use to which such qualities are put. From the two pieces of evidence, we can conclude that each animal scores a victory; Leopard wins a physical victory, while Elephant's victory is a moral one.

### 3.3.2 Other roles

Also occurring in Enuani tales are different kinds of birds such as the apia 'hornbill', udene 'vulture', agunkwo 'kite', egbe 'hawk', obu 'coucal', and okiri (or okili) 'common bulbul'. Although, in general, different birds do not tend to be associated with different roles in the stories, the role of Okiri must be mentioned. In everyday life this bird is associated with talkativeness<sup>1</sup> while in the tales he is appropriately entrusted with the dissemination of information. When an announcement is imminent in Tale 1, for instance, the animals are in no doubt which one of them possesses the most mellifluous voice: 'Okiri, you have a quite excellent voice. Your words always ring clearly in our ears. Go and sound the ekwe...announce to the animals that it is time for us to go and clear the new farmlands...'

### 3.3.3 The accuracy of choice of characters

Clearly all the characters discussed so far are distinguishable from the others by the fact that they are associated with particular attributes or roles in the tales. Such characters are not chosen at random, but rather, there exists a close correspondence between the characteristics of animals in real life and the personality traits of these animals as actors in stories. Such correspondence is indeed a tribute to the originators of the tales. Whether in their choice of Tortoise (to symbolize trickery), Elephant

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1. In everyday Enuani speech, a loquacious person may be referred to figuratively as okiri.



(enormous strength), Leopard (violence and unbridled ferocity), Okiri (news and its transmission), the Oba (arrogance and injustice) or Nnemegeidi (justice and succour), the composers of tales demonstrate their ability to observe accurately, not only nature around them, but also the characteristics of their fellow human beings.

### 3.4 The prominence in Enuani tales of Mbekwu (Tortoise)

Any discussion of tale characters would be incomplete, if not irrelevant, without adequate attention to the character Tortoise, the Enuani trickster figure. While such elements as ritual numbers and trickster figures may be regarded as universals of the narrative art, their precise nature is culturally specific, making necessary a study of their different manifestations in individual societies. The choice by a narrative tradition of a particular trickster figure would be dependent on such factors as the prevalent fauna of the area and the cultural significance<sup>1</sup> of the animal involved. Common African examples include Spider (Ashanti, Mende and some West African peoples), Yo (Fon), Ture (Azande), Tortoise (Edo, Igbo, Kalabari, Yoruba) and Hare (Akamba, as well as some other East African cultures). This section does not aim at a study of the trickster figure per se, as there exists a substantial amount of scholarly literature<sup>2</sup> on this

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1. Cf., e.g., Leonard (1906.317) who reports that among the Kalabari, the tortoise is conceived of as 'an object of veneration and a sacred emblem'.
  2. See, e.g. Radin (1958), Evans-Pritchard (1967), Horton (1967), Singer and Street (1972), Hewitt (1976) and Pelton (1980).

extraordinary character. Rather the section is confined to consideration of the appeal for Enuani audiences, of the trickster figure.

It is necessary to consider first some of the personality traits or kinds of behaviour for which the tortoise is noted in real life. Not only are these qualities in conformity with the tortoise's characteristics or portrayal in the tales, they also form the basis of this animal's appeal for the audiences. The tortoise is regarded as elusive and overly cautious, retiring and non-aggressive, slow-moving but nimble-witted, above all, calculating. The remarks of informed bearers of the culture emphasize some of these personality traits. A renowned narrator, Okohai, comments,

You know that you can see a lot more when you raise your eyes. But, you see, there are some people who never look up. They just stare like this [gazes at the floor]...yet they have taken in every detail of the room gbem. That is how the tortoise behaves...that shows its cleverness and cunning...it knows how to extricate itself. Once you remove the tortoise from its habitat and bring it home, it withdraws its limbs...(Tape 6B).

while another informant, Omesiete, gives a similar description of the behaviour of the tortoise:

When you are clearing the new farmlands...even when you are still at a distance it [the tortoise] has already seen you. As soon as you come to the spot where it is, it acts like a snail. You know that once you disturb a snail, it quickly withdraws its horns in self-defence. So the tortoise shrinks and puts its head into its shell.

Once all is clear, it puts out its neck ...  
once it perceives that people are near, it  
withdraws its head ... (Tape 6B)

It would seem that this 'tactical withdrawal' re-  
presents the kind of behaviour most characteristic of  
the tortoise, as yet another informant, Mbuliche, reports  
it:

Once you get the tortoise here ... if you look  
for its arms and legs ... you cannot find them  
again, for it draws them back. Then it remains  
very still and quiet. Even if you shake the  
tortoise vigorously, it simply remains quiet.  
But once you take your eyes away for even a  
second ... and then look for the tortoise again,  
you cannot find it ... it is gone! (Tape 17A)

In everyday life the tortoise is in great demand among  
medicine-men and their clients who sometimes go to great  
lengths to procure it.<sup>1</sup> Medicine-men require this animal  
for sacrifices and other ceremonial rites as well as for  
the preparation of powerful remedies<sup>2</sup> or charms. The  
comments of an informant, Jbose, are relevant here: 'All  
parts of the tortoise are useful in our culture ... for  
various purposes. Its shell is used for igba afa

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- 1 Such factors as urbanization and the rapid rise in population have greatly undermined the stability of habitats in Enuani country. This writer can recall about two decades ago when the tortoise could be considered a common sight in practically every ezi-obulu 'open, rectangular space in the middle of a house'. The same situation can hardly be reported in recent years.
  - 2 The precise nature of these is often shrouded in mystery. Naturally, information is meagre on such aspects which informants and medicine-men may regard as trade secrets. For example, Mbuliche, himself a renowned priest and medicine-man, politely declined to comment. Some informants did so with great reluctance. However, popular speculation points to 'preparations for inducing obliviousness', for example. (Notice the belief that once the

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'divination', for 'finding out things'. This relates to this animal's cleverness'. Okohai comments further:

The tortoise is used for offering sacrifices . thus, it is a useful animal. Now, with regard to ichopuha ife 'finding out; discovering things' ... they say that once the tortoise falls aba 'upside-down', all its cunning vanishes. Once you tumble this animal, all its cunning disappears. It struggles and struggles to get up but it cannot, because its arms and legs are no longer touching the ground. Once this animal is turned upside-down, it loses all its capacity for cunning. (Tape 6A)

Whether one is examining all the illustrations above as indexes to the tortoise's complex character, or contemplating this animal in its masked human form in the tales, one personality trait consistently emerges, namely that of the animal's exceptional cunning. Not only does this fundamental trait constitute the mainspring of Tortoise's actions, it is indeed responsible for his image in the tales, whether he is playing the role of the greedy master tactician (as in Tale 78), the scourge of the gullible (50), the 'benevolent' saviour (68) or that of the astute businessman (42).

### 3.5 Popularity of the Enuani trickster figure

Our corpus yields an overwhelming number of examples of Tortoise's stratagems to obtain desired ends. Such goals and tricks are wide-ranging; from the procurement of more

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tortoise is turned upside-down its resourcefulness is greatly impaired). The informant in fact emphasizes the Enuani proverb Mbekwu daa aba ilolo agwu a n'afo 'If the tortoise falls upside-down, it loses its capacity to think'.

food than he is entitled to (Tales 36, 47, 66), feigning injury in order to obtain exemption from communal duties (37, 78), exposing and punishing the weaknesses of particular opponents (50, 93), exploiting situations for financial gain (62, 91) to deriving satisfaction from the suffering of others and ravishing the king's youngest and extraordinarily beautiful wife (95).

The reaction of the audiences, coupled with an examination of our corpus clearly establishes Tortoise as the most popular figure in Enuani tales. (Also, he is certainly the most controversial). It is generally recognized that the trickster's freedom to circumvent the law and manipulate the norms is crucial to his appeal for any audience. It is said in fact that certain members of the audience recognize the trickster's motivations and anti-social qualities as the same ones which they as individuals endeavour to suppress. While the latter interpretation may apply to Enuani society, the argument here is that an over-emphasis on such 'envy' or the 'secret desire' of listeners to engage in 'acts which are forbidden by the rules of society'<sup>1</sup> tends to obscure other important facts about the trickster figure, in this case, Tortoise. In addition to Tortoise's qualities (such as cleverness) which recommend him to the audience, there also exists a dark side which the audience may not necessarily admire; both facets of his personality are important.

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1 Singer and Street (eds.), 1972.90). Cf., Evans-Pritchard's phrase, '... pointers to our own dark desires', cited by Singer and Street (eds.), op. cit., p. 90.

In a traditional society like the Enuani where the very stability of life significantly depends on such factors as the maintenance of friendly and familial ties, or a fair distribution of food and other resources, a character like Tortoise poses a threat. By disregarding the moral values which the people consider essential for the maintenance of a healthy social order, such a character undermines the fabric of society.

In his discussion of the prevalence in African societies of trickster tales or tales whose structural frames involve 'the making and breaking of friendship', Dundes (1971:180) comments: '... the folk tale structure provides an outlet for protest against the binding nature of interpersonal obligations of the kind imposed by formal or quasi-formal institutional friendship pacts'. But surely we must consider too that in several traditional African societies such as the Enuani, friendship, marriage, blood pacts and a variety of other contractual relationships are genuinely and frequently being entered into. Indeed, in several spheres of their daily life as well as through the tales, members of the community emphasize the desirability and durability of such binding relationships.

From our earlier examples, it is apparent that Tortoise, like trickster figures in several other narrative traditions, is a character who, though clever in the extreme and self-gloriously proclaiming his capacity to live by his wits, constantly overreaches himself. It is here necessary to consider some of these examples for the purpose of comparing the picture of Tortoise in the initial

stages of the tale and that which emerges at the end. Recalling and re-examining two examples, Tales 35 and 54 (pp.57-58), we may laugh, first, at Tortoise's cleverness (Tale 54) as he deals deceptively with Dove (and with what appears to him to be absolute, irreversible success). We may also be moved to laughter by Tortoise's ingenuity - his choice of the name 'All of You' - which enables him to stuff himself with food meant for his benefactors, the birds, while the latter starve and watch in their naivety (Tale 35).

But in both tales, as in several others, there is eventually a nullification of his initial success as the conclusion incorporates a serious message concerning the tale as a whole. Why does a character so vastly superior and clever so consistently underestimate or misjudge an opponent's capabilities? Why does Tortoise in Enuani tales almost never<sup>1</sup> emerge unscathed from an encounter? When people laugh in the concluding stages of the tale, is it the same kind of laughter as provoked by the earlier sections of the tale? Do members of the audience now laugh at Tortoise's cunning and cleverness or because this character has made a fool of himself? Does the end of the tale implicitly point to the reprehensibility of greed or other manifestations of an antisocial disposition?

By portraying Tortoise as a character whose plans often boomerang, or as being defeated (or at least, fooled) by a character like Dove who is not particularly renowned

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1 Cf., p.59.

for cleverness, the tale implicitly communicates its moral. For the Enuani audience, the significance and message of such tales is clear: Aspire to succeed by harnessing your resources properly (as in Pattern 3 tales), not by manipulating social norms, as Tortoise consistently does. This is certainly a culturally relevant message, especially in the face of changing values, the impact of Westernization and the passionate, sometimes ruthless quest for success and power. By frequently subjecting our preternaturally clever trickster to painful body-smashing experiences, the final stages of the tale implicitly remind listeners that while there may be nothing wrong with their admiration for Tortoise because he lives as an outlaw and is almost obsessed with disregarding every prescription laid down by society, it is essential that they themselves refrain from such asocial behaviour.

An examination of our corpus shows that the explanatory conclusion with the highest frequency of occurrence is the one concerning Tortoise's smashed shell. As already shown, the aetiological element does not in itself constitute a structural part of the tale, but by incorporating it the narrator is concerned with drawing his audience's attention to the disastrous consequences invariably provoked by defying the community's conventions, a practice in which the trickster particularly specializes. The nature of Tortoise's punishment can in fact be seen as implying a warning. The tale's aetiological conclusion states that the tortoise carries its broken shell even to the present day; it is thus a punishment which even the



passage of time has not obliterated. The permanence of the tortoise's punishment may be interpreted as a constant reminder not only to the tortoise, but also to any members of the society who may be guilty of such anti-social, Tortoise-like acts. The warning is that the penalty for persistently engaging in acts which potentially disrupt the equilibrium of their society may well be very severe.

Certainly, the end of the tale invites us to laugh (if we are so disposed), but we are now laughing at the unscrupulous Tortoise and his well-deserved failures. We are expected to see beyond his tricks and thus recognize a character to be regarded with caution, not necessarily to 'identify with the trickster who blatantly ignores these norms' (Dundes, 1971.180). That this important message is not lost on Enuani audiences (in spite of Tortoise's attraction) is clear from several informants' comments emphasizing the necessity of approaching the tortoise with caution. An elder comments:

It is clearly not a tribute for one to be referred to as an mbekwu 'tortoise'. God actually endowed mbekwu with intelligence, but it has been transformed into something crooked and undesirable. To be called an mbekwu is pregnant with meaning; by such reference, the speaker warns you thus, 'Beware of that man if you happen to have anything to do with him. Openwide your eyes. He is going to cheat you for he is far more cunning than you can ever hope to get.' (Tape 4B)

Another informant summarizes the situation thus:

... this character is used to represent certain

people in everyday life ... clever people who are also remarkably crafty. When such a person who acts like the akidi<sup>1</sup> approaches, you hear people around comment: 'Here he comes. Hm!, behold, it is an mbekwu that you now see!' (Tape 4A)

Further evidence that the audience do not necessarily identify with Tortoise the rule-breaker, may be found in the fact that although the latter always galls, even overwhelms Awolo or Agu (Leopard) and Enyi (Elephant),<sup>2</sup> the two last-mentioned are common family names. The family name Agu, has a variant form, Ogbuagu ('killer of leopards'). Agu is also used as a praise epithet for an obi (natural ruler, chief) as in the greeting Obi Agu ('Obi the leopard' or 'Obi, leopard'). On a symbolic level, this greeting attributes to the obi such qualities as martial prowess and absolute authority.<sup>3</sup> The leopard indeed commands similar qualities in its capacity as the king of the animals. But as the author of the first excerpt (p.84 ) explains, no one may be referred to openly as Mbekwu.

Such remarks may indeed be related to the earlier point that people admire Tortoise's mode of life as an outlaw. This character appeals to the audience because of the way he lives by his wits and breaks the rules of society but, at the same time people are quite content to

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1. Akidi is a little, reputedly extremely cunning insect. The term is thus used synonymously for a crafty, little man or a precociously cunning child. Either use involves an oblique reference to the great disparity between the physical size of the person and his unusually large stock of cunning ideas.
  2. As pointed out, the two most important animal characters in Enuani tales (that is, after Tortoise).
  3. Sometimes an obi is actually praised or greeted: Onwu egbu onye ubosi ndu agwu a 'The death that claims a man on the day he most desires to be alive', (in order to enjoy life).

see him overcome in the end. For the audience, Tortoise is a kind of romanticized hero, like Robin Hood. There are of course romantic legends about outlaws in Europe and America and their fascination is attested by the enormous number of films about them. While one audience may watch such outlaws shooting and looting on television and another may listen to the narrator's accounts of Tortoise's outrageous tricks, a sneaking admiration is commonly shared, and arises clearly from the character's freedom to engage in reckless, rule-breaking pursuits; which in real life the community certainly cannot condone.

In conclusion, then, the immediate and continuing popularity of Tortoise cannot be denied. At first glance, the audience's admiration seems indicative of an ambivalent attitude towards this irrepressibly irreverent character. But certainly, it is a sneaking admiration and members of the audience would not in real life wish themselves or in fact others to be so antisocial. It is for this reason that they delight in Tortoise's downfall at the end of the tale. To admire a character who lives by his wits is by no means to identify with, approve of, or envy him, and in real life people may in fact detest any 'human tortoises' who are certain to repeatedly revel in trampling on other members of the society.

## CHAPTER 4

### SONGS IN ENUANI TALES

4.0 In their analyses, Propp (1928) and Dundes (1964b) include no discussion of songs. Their concern, presumably, is with formal analysis of the tales. It may well be, too, that songs do not feature prominently in their Russian and North American Indian material. But since songs constitute an integral part of Enuani tales, a discussion of them becomes necessary here.

#### 4.1 Omission of songs in tale texts

We have already pointed out the generally unsatisfactory quality of several collections of African tales. One reason why a great number of such collections can justifiably be considered 'bare-boned, truncated texts'<sup>1</sup> lies in the collectors' failure to give sufficient attention to narrative texture. And perhaps the element of narrative texture most frequently disregarded is the songs. For some collectors, the means of recording sometimes prompted (perhaps inevitably) the omission of song texts. But even after some collectors have actually tape-recorded their tales, a perfunctory approach to the crucial task of transcription and translation often meant that the songs were either curtailed or, worse still, eliminated entirely. For collectors who overlook them, it is easy to argue that the songs are naive, boring or repetitive, but such argument wilfully disregards the importance<sup>2</sup> of songs in African tales. The omission of the

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1. Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (1980.36).

2. See e.g., Innes' (1965.54) comment on Mende tales: 'It probably would be no exaggeration to say that to many audiences the songs are more important than the narrative'.

songs indeed amounts to a distortion of the performance. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 5, a master story-teller is able to sustain his listeners' interest, even while exercising to the utmost, his freedom to repeat<sup>1</sup> the song.

#### 4.2 The prominence of songs in Enuani life and tales

Like those of numerous other African societies, Enuani tales are interspersed with songs, which are also associated with a variety of stylistic functions. An examination of our corpus immediately shows that virtually every Enuani tale features a song, sometimes more than one. The pervasiveness of songs in the tales reflects the prominence of songs and music-making in traditional Igbo society. In everyday life a rigid demarcation between speech and song is hardly possible, for members of the community sometimes abandon speech and spontaneously give vent to their feelings in song. Virtually every situation may be translated into or expressed in a song, while every occasion presents members of the community with an opportunity for the creation, re-creation and enjoyment of songs. One of Green's informants adequately illustrates the fact that songs are an integral part of Igbo life with a striking analogy: 'Our songs are our newspapers' (Green, 1948.841).

Clearly, in several African tale-telling traditions songs are of central importance, providing the audience with an opportunity for participating formally in the performance and thus enhancing their enjoyment of it.

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1. The songs indeed serve as one of the devices by which the narrator fleshes out or abbreviates a given tale. Azonuche, the narrator of Tale 36, declares in an aside: 'The animals encountered by Tortoise on his way home are so numerous that if I embark on naming them all [that is, attributing the song to each animal] , we shall not leave [ finish the tale] today'.

Such scholars as Innes (1965) and Olayemi (1968) have discussed various aspects of tale songs and while no useful purpose will be served by labouring some of the points made by such scholars, this section is concerned with showing that the songs do not only occur at climactic points and contribute to, or enliven the performance, but are even more noteworthy for sometimes carrying forward the action of the tale.

In Tale 33 the character Oji rejects every variety of uri dye, insisting on a particular kind procurable only from a river. On account of her intransigence, she is in danger of being held captive by the river spirits. Arriving at the river, her distraught mother offers a sacrifice and then appeals to her in a song to abandon her futile quest and return home:

Oji nwa m -o, puṭa - o, (twice)	Dele nde
(Oji, my daughter, come out - o),	
Nne i ji ewu aḥọ uri n'afia,	"
(Your mother is buying <u>uri</u> with a goat at the market),	
Nadi i ji ewu aḥọ uri n'afia,	"
(Your father is buying <u>uri</u> with a goat at the market),	
Na di i ji ọkwụkwụ aḥo uri n'afia,	"
(For your husband is buying <u>uri</u> with a chicken at the market),	
Onye adana uri na ọ bakwa ife.	"
(Even the person who does not apply <u>uri</u> can still be regarded).	
<u>A</u> - o - o - <u>iya</u> - o - o - o.	"

Not only does this version include 'information' not hitherto given by the narrative, the next version even further advances the tale's action, by reporting Oji's reply:

Nne ye - e - o, na ana - o - o - o, (twice)	Dele nde
(My mother, go back home - o - o),	
Yanwa adana uri wa go n'afia,	"
(I myself will not apply any <u>uri</u> bought from the market),	
Na ndi dalu uri wa dama oma - o,	"
(Those who use such <u>uri</u> , it is up to them)..etc etc.	

The movement of Tale 4 (cf. its variant, Tale 58) towards its resolution depends in large measure on the orphan's song, each version of which commands the magical udala to enter into a new stage of its development, as in the following examples:

- (i) Udala m pue, pue, pue, (twice) Nda  
(My udala, germinate, germinate, germinate),  
Na nwunye nna ya, gote udala n'afia, "  
(For my father's wife bought udala from the market...  
The world is to be enjoyed...  
It is tragic being an orphan.)
- (ii) Udala m soe, soe, soe, "  
(My udala, grow, grow, grow)...
- (iii) Udala m mia, mia, mia, "  
(My udala, bear fruit, bear fruit, bear fruit)...
- (iv) Udala m cha, cha, cha, "  
(My udala, ripen, ripen, ripen)...

In Tale 43 disaster strikes at the Ojiso's home while he is away on his farm. A little bird transmits the news of the disaster in a song which, although extremely short, effectively carries forward the narrative action:

Ojiso ife di n'unq ebibisie, (three times) Kpa nsala  
(Ojiso, everything at home is at sixes kpa nsala  
and sevens).

The song conveys fresh 'information' which indeed shapes the next stage of the narrative, for once the bird had expressed its message, the Ojiso dashed off home to ascertain the nature of the disaster. This example, like others, demonstrates that the majority of the songs in the corpus have considerable narrative content and are thus not comparable to the Mende domei song which, according to Cosentino (1982.108), 'forces the story to stand still'.

Sometimes no clear-cut distinction exists between the two aspects mentioned above, that is, the role of songs in carrying forward the action of the tale and their being associated with points in which some character is under

great stress. Indeed, while expressing a character's distress, some songs simultaneously propel the tale's action towards its conclusion. In the same tale (43) Ogini is tied to a tree and massaged thoroughly with agbala 'cow-itch' leaves and 'all manner of things that cause serious itching'. She is clearly in great distress, and thus compelled to summon at intervals her daughters Eshulunwa, Ejijenwa and Mmanunwa in order to release her from her captors, a plea which clearly carries forward the action of the tale and brings each of the daughters to the scene:

Eshulu nwa m, (1st version)	
Ejije nwa m, (2nd version)	
Mmany nwa m, (3rd version)	Boloma
Eshulu nwa m, (twice)	boloma boloma
(Eshulu, my daughter),	
Gbata ga-azo nne i,	"
(Hurry here and save your mother),	
Agbala aghogbue nne i - o,	"
(Cow-itch is tormenting your mother	
to death),	
Okọ ji akogbue nne i - o,	"
(Yam-itch is tormenting your mother	
to death).	

Also, while some lines in a song may have a high narrative content, some others may be seen as comments on the tale itself. The following song occurs in Tale 17:

Nwaelele - o, Nwaelele - o, (four times)	Awanze
Arise, it is the day for wrestling,	ma nze
Let us head for the Ojiso's palace,	"
Both domestic and wild animals...	"

In this tale, wild and domestic animals engage in a wrestling contest to determine which of the two groups has more strength. But none had foreseen the great cost in lives of the encounter and Cock, the horn blower, again bursts into song:



Okokoko, <u>okokoko!</u> Nwaelele,	Awanze
Something terrible has happened,	ma nze
Nwaelele, what a sight!,	"
Domestic animals, show your strength,"	"
Wild animals, show your heart.	"
O - Nwaelele - o.	"

In the lines 'Something terrible has happened'/'Nwaelele, what a sight!', Cock clearly contemplates the scene, commenting on the tale's action by expressing horror at the slaughtering and indiscriminate maiming of the domestic animals by their wild counterparts. The bloody defeat of the domestic animals is suggested by Cock's remarks enjoining the latter to 'show your strength' (which apparently they had previously not done or been allowed to do).

The prominence in the songs of lines which make some comment may be illustrated further by Tale 4 already cited. The line 'It is tragic being an orphan' (p.90) seems to epitomize Poorman's Son's life in this and other tales, a life marked by extreme hardship and the insensitivity of foster-parents. Sometimes the comment has a wider application, as attested by this line, for in real life also, an orphan can expect a no less difficult existence. The line, 'The world is to be enjoyed' (p.90) refers to the foster-parents' action of arrogating to themselves the right to enjoy life, to the exclusion of other people and implicitly makes the moral statement that such conception of life is mere delusion, an interpretation which is reaffirmed by the reversal of fortunes which occurs at the end of the tale. Similarly, the line 'Even the person who does not apply uri can still be regarded' can be seen as making a more general statement, namely that one does

not have to hanker after the rarest or most expensive commodities in order to be able to make an impression.

The song in Tale 10 seems to be concerned primarily with driving home the moral point of this tale:

Let everyone eschew envy and jealousy,	Envy and
	(twice)... jealousy
Envy and jealousy diminish a clan,	"
Envy and jealousy destroy a clan,	"
Eschew envy - o, eschew jealousy - o.	"

Driven by inordinate jealousy, a character in this tale attempts to harm another, but his plans miscarry utterly, provoking his own death, while his intended victim celebrates with the above song. By means of its overtly didactic tone, the song comments on the action of the tale, admonishing its hearers and underlining some of the dangers of iwe na onuma 'envy and jealousy'. The warning that jealousy diminishes and destroys a clan is particularly appropriate and likely to make an impact on the audience who, as part of their cultural education, are constantly reminded of the need for loyalty to the clan and its values.

#### 4.3 Enuani tale songs: form

In common with those of numerous other African societies, Enuani tale songs generally consist of two distinctive parts, the solo and the chorus. The solo line introduces the rhythm pattern of the song, which is then kept up and completed by the chorus. Structurally, one is incomplete without the other. Antiphonal singing is widely recognized as one of the fundamental characteristics of several African musical traditions. Each Enuani dance troupe, for example, boasts a cantor with proven voice and other musical qualities. In tale-telling this role is naturally taken by the narrator while the audience

automatically provide him with a chorus.

Tale performance obviously constitutes a group activity and nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the sung parts which, for their power and appeal depend in large measure on the interplay between leader and chorus. For the narrator, then, the ability to lead the song in a clear, strong voice is highly important. And since a considerable part of the tale's entertainment value derives from the overall quality of the cantor-chorus relationship, some narrators not infrequently demand an even higher degree of participation from an already active audience or reprimand a lethargic one. Also, some member of the audience invariably challenges the narrator who lacks the ability to deliver the song in an exhilarating manner.

The leader and chorus obviously have to be familiar with the text of the song which, in comparison with the spoken portions of the tale, is relatively fixed. The words of the chorus are more firmly fixed than those of the solo, for while the audience repeats the same words throughout the whole performance, the narrator may introduce such minor variations into the solo as are required by the narrative. For example, the following song occurs at three different points in Tale 26:

- (i) This woman, start picking mushrooms, (twice) Dede lima  
If you are not picking, go to udo, "  
So begin to pick now, pick now. "
- (ii) This woman, start cooking mushrooms, (twice) "  
If you are not cooking, go to udo, etc, etc "
- (iii) This girl, start eating mushrooms, (twice) "  
If you are not eating, go to udo, etc, etc "

In each of the opening lines the magic mushrooms issue a new instruction and this accounts for the change of the verb 'picking' in (i) to 'cooking' in (ii). In (iii), there is a slight shift in characters as the singing mushrooms direct their absurd orders, not to 'this woman', but to her daughter, 'this girl'. Like the words of the song which do not display extensive variations from one verse to another, and the structure of the verses which is a constant, the rhythm once established, is maintained throughout the performance.

We have shown in passing some of the minor variations which may occur in the solo as rendered by the generality of narrators. However, our concern in this thesis is with such individual variations as narrators may also introduce. The discussion here of the form of the song is particularly necessary as it anticipates Chapter 6, one of the most crucial of the thesis. In that chapter it will be shown that the call-and-response pattern forms the basis of one Enuani story-teller's creative endeavours, giving rise to the feature which most distinguishes his art from that of his peers. Whereas Enuani tale songs maintain a high degree of stability, the cantor or leader of a dance group has almost boundless freedom with regard to varying the words of the song. The capacity for improvisation is indeed one of the fundamental demands associated with this role.

In addition to the obvious division of labour between narrator and audience with regard to rendering their respective parts of the song, a further distinction on the basis of length is possible, for whereas the solo may

consist of several lines, the chorus in general does not exceed one line. There are also songs consisting of a line or two which may then be repeated by the narrator, but such songs constitute a negligible class.

4.4 Relationship between solo and chorus

An examination of the corpus showed that Enuani choruses may be divided into two main categories:

1. Type A chorus - consisting of a phrase, expression or sentence (in most cases) repeating the solo, or alluding to it.
2. Type B chorus - consisting of a string of nonsense<sup>1</sup> syllables not related to the solo.

4.4.1 Type A choruses

Below are some examples of A choruses.

Tale 15

Hawk, <u>iya</u> - o, Eagle, <u>iya</u> - o,	Hawk and Eagle
Hawk went to see her nest,	"
Hawk and Eagle confronted each other	"
etc, etc	"

Tale 48

Mother prepared for another town,	O Ujinegwe
Father prepared for another town,	"
When he talks, he talks into a scarf,	"
When he laughs, he laughs into a scarf,	"
O Ujinegwe, beautiful one, O Ujinegwe.	"

Tale 53 (cf. Tale 46)

Mother, send down the rope, (twice)	Send down the rope
Who is it? It is me, Squirrel, etc, etc	"

Tale 59

Father it is up to you, (twice)	It is up to you
I cleared the bush for father,	"
I planted the yams for father,	"
Just because I took a single yam,	"
Father set a trap for me,	"
Father, it is up to you.	"

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1. As will be argued later, 'nonsense' is a relative term.

In the foregoing examples, we have partial repetition as the chorus echoes a line (usually the first) of the solo. These examples may in fact be further designated as A<sup>1</sup>, for they contrast to some extent with another subclass, A<sup>2</sup>, examples of which are given below.

Tale 25

Palm wine tapper who taps in plenty,	Uwala may it be
Greet my mother, greet my father,	well with me
Do not greet Odu, Ona's brother,	"
Odu and Ona went to the stream,	"
Odu pushed Ona into the deep (etc,etc)	"

Tale 29

Father's bird, father's bird, where	Was I living at
are you going?(twice)	your place
I am going - o - o - o. (twice)	before?

Tale 63

He-Goat my husband, He-Goat my husband,	Let us see,
When you die, may you die at God's	let us see
frontage,	"
When you wake, may you wake at God's	"
frontage,	"
For suitors are scarce at God's frontage.	"

In contrast to the earlier examples which displayed partial repetition and where the relationship is immediately discernible, there seems at first glance, to be no relationship between solo and chorus in the above examples from Tales 25, 29 and 63. Only when one has grasped the narrative thread of the tale, or indeed listened to the whole tale, is the relationship made clear. In Tale 29 the chorus 'Was I living at your place before?' is clearly the little bird's reply to the question posed by its captors. The little bird's counter-question smacks of arrogance but this is hardly surprising since this character was then on the verge of regaining its freedom. 'Uwala, may it be well with me'

is a prayer addressed to the river by the main character, Ona, in danger of drowning at that point in the tale, while the choric line 'Let us see, let us see' in Tale 63 probably depicts the reaction of He-Goat's friends who were in the secret regarding his plan to set his two wives a test to determine which one of them loved him better.

#### 4.4.2 Type B choruses

Below are preliminary examples of B choruses:

##### Tale 23

Which animal is at the door?(twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Bushbuck at the door,	"
Away with you, Bushbuck!, (etc,etc)	"

##### Tale 26

Eke, my mother, I am forced to the	Tulu zai
spirit world, (twice)	"
They gave him a goat, he refused,	"
They gave him a chicken, he refused, etc,etc"	"

##### Tale 31

Tumobia, (twice)	Rugene
Where are you going? etc,etc (twice)	rugene rugene

##### Tale 43

This god - o - o, (twice)	Ndeli nde nde
I gave birth to a child - o,	"
The king killed her - o,...	"

##### Tale 43

Ojiso, everything at home is at sixes	Kpa nsala
and sevens, (four times)...	kpa nsala

##### Tale 94

Tortoise, take your money - o, (twice)	Aja kwu bene
Everything is available at the market,	"
The only thing not available is <u>elelengwo</u> .	"
'Nwangwo - o - <u>nwangwo selele!</u>	"

While the question of literal meanings does not arise in a consideration of Type A choruses, the situation is different in regard to B choruses which, as the above examples

indicate, are mainly nonsense syllables which are apparently not related to the solo.

#### 4.5 'Meaning' in Type B choruses

For our discussion in this section, the term 'nonsense' is an interesting one; its use is meant to reflect an assumption which is all too easily made, namely that such choruses as those here designated as Type B are meaningless. As the examples illustrate, such choruses are enjoyed solely for their 'sweet', musical quality. But while these choruses are employed more for their sound rather than their sense, further investigations of particular strings of syllables may well prove that not all the choruses can categorically be said to be devoid of meaning.

It can be observed that there occurs an element of repetition in some B choruses such as rugene rugene rugene, kpa nsala kpa nsala, a situation which may well be a basis for speaking of B<sup>2</sup> choruses. This approach has, however, not been adopted for the reason that the analysis here focusses on the 'reduplicated' syllables, rather than on others such as Tulu zai and Aja kwu bene which in fact constitute a much smaller class.

It is here argued that in any consideration of such choral phrases as Anunu daijo anunu daijo (Tales 8, 24), Gwogworigwo (24,31), Boloma boloma boloma/kpa nsala kpa nsala (43) and De myria myria de myria (68), the word 'meaning' must not be taken in a too literal sense. Rather, it is necessary to view the concept of 'meaning' from more than one standpoint. In other contexts, two



questions would normally be asked; first, What does this word denote (or mean)? and, second, What does the word connote (or suggest)? If we pursue the second question further in relation to the choruses, we discover that for any competent Enuani speaker, most B choruses invariably suggest a wide variety of ideas, actions and situations. Thus B choruses have 'meanings', even if not in the same explicit sense as A choruses. The above fact is frequently overlooked by commentators who assert that the choruses are meaningless. The discussion here explores the nature or meaning of 'meaning' in Type B choruses.

Leech (1974.pp.10-27) discusses seven types of meaning - conceptual, connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, collocative, thematic - and rightly points out that there exist problems of 'demarcation'. While it is not the intention here to treat Leech's seven categories of meaning in detail, it is necessary to underline a distinction which he makes: Leech subsumes five out of the last-named six under the term 'associative', contrasting this kind of meaning with the 'conceptual'.

According to Leech,

CONCEPTUAL MEANING (sometimes called 'denotative' or 'cognitive' meaning) is widely assumed to be the central factor in linguistic communication, and I think it can be shown to be integral to the essential functioning of language in a way that other types of meaning are not (which is not to say that conceptual meaning is always the most important element in an act of linguistic communication).pp. 10-11.

We have already seen that every Type A chorus has a literal, denotative or cognitive meaning or, in Leech's terminology, a conceptual meaning. The remainder of this section is concerned with demonstrating that most B choruses do have meaning of a kind, that is, associative

meaning (associative in the restricted sense of Leech's term 'reflected'). When questioned, several informants declared, quite naturally, that no meanings could be assigned to B choruses. But it is interesting that one narrator proceeded beyond this general claim and in fact analyzed the 'meaning' of the popular chorus Anunu daijo daijo anunu daijo. The narrator Okohai explained that the chorus daijo daijo urges the two boys (Tale 24) to display the qualities of boldness and quickness as they attempt to escape from the spirit world and the pursuing spirit monster, Otulabani, basing his interpretation on the common ideophone joi joi (or jo jo)<sup>1</sup> and the word nu 'struggle'. According to Okohai, the boys are being asked to struggle hard. Even if it is difficult to validate the narrator's 'reconstruction' or analysis of the chorus anunu daijo daijo..., the attempt is still noteworthy as demonstrating that to the Enuani speaker such nonsense syllables of which the choruses consist may communicate when associated with other words, ideas or images.

The following one-line song (cf. p. 142) which may be repeated any number of times occurs in Tale 6:

Mkpaakwukwo jeko ije                      Ani yeke yeke yeke  
(Bundle of leaves walking)

On the surface, a relationship between solo and chorus here seems far-fetched and in fact non-existent. Clearly,

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1. In everyday speech it may be said of a dynamic man; 'He acts joi joi!' that is, 'He acts boldly and quickly' (or 'intrepidly').



an Enuani audience, de muria muria de muria has an associative meaning and conveys the idea of a 'tasty, appetizing dish'. The relationship between chorus and solo in this tale is thus clarified: the chorus reinforces the plea of the townspeople to the Ojiso to kill the destructive cow and by this action provide them with a delicious meal. Indeed, our interpretation above of de muria muria de muria as 'an appetizing dish' may be supported by the Enuani slang word odenuria.<sup>1</sup>

The chorus kpa nsala kpa nsala (Tale 43) provides further illustration of the presence of meaning of a rather special kind in B choruses. While no mention occurs in this tale of nsala (see Williamson, p. 326) soup, another 'liquid' is involved. To the audience, kpa nsala kpa nsala suggests the action of oil streaming from the now melting Mmanunwa and 'scattering' in different directions before flooding the Oba's palace. The lexical item kpasa 'scatter' (cf. Williamson, p. 215) bears some resemblance to kpa nsala kpa nsala, and may in fact be cited to reinforce our interpretation here: the oil is 'scattered' not only within the palace but beyond it, as the little bird dips its wings in the pool and then flies off to the farm to inform the Ojiso of the disaster.

We have seen that a 'meaningless' chorus such as de muria muria de muria, which is interesting apparently only for its rhythmic or musical content, in fact employs words

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1. A friend may say to another, 'You should have seen the meal I had today...that is what I call odenuria!', in other words, 'It was an extremely delicious meal!'.

with conceptual meanings (apart from showing some affinity to the slang word odenuria). But while our corpus does not yield a single example of a chorus consisting of onomatopoeic words<sup>1</sup> found in everyday speech, some B choruses also reveal a subtle use (if not stringing together) of ideophones which occur in other contexts. In other words, such ideophones are well established items of Enuani vocabulary, used in everyday speech to describe specific actions or states of existence.

The following song occurs in Tales 24 and 31:

Otulabani,	Gwogworigwo
Being with one leg,	"
Being with one hand,	"
Otulabani.	"

While the connection here is not easily perceived, close examination shows that gwogworigwo is largely a repetition of the syllable gwo, which is also an ideophone for 'quick, sudden movement' (or 'landing'), in fact any violent action. Of a person, it may also be remarked, Omeke gwo gwo gwo (or gwoi gwoi) 'He/she is very rough', (that is, 'uncultured, destructive, noisy' or 'unrefined'). Here again the relationship between chorus and solo gradually emerges: while the latter introduces the character Otulabani and accentuates his extraordinary physique, the former adds to the picture by describing his manner of movement. This character is noted not only for his great speed of movement but also his destructive powers and is

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1. For example, awalaawala 'Peugeot cars' and kpokokpoko 'wooden shakers'.

therefore assigned the responsibility of apprehending and destroying any humans attempting an escape from the spirit world. Apart from Otulabani's lightning speed and violent disposition, the chorus gwogworigwo would also suggest to an Enuani audience the frighteningly clumsy manner in which this hideous-looking, one-legged monster manipulates his leg while giving chase.

While gwogworigwo consists at first sight of a string of nonsense syllables, some meaning is no doubt reflected into it from the ideophone gwo gwo, with which the audience are familiar. We have also suggested the reflection of meaning from other words in such other B choruses as yeke yeke yeke, de muria muria de muria and kpa nsala kpa nsala. Leech provides a good example of how reflected meaning may intrude 'through the sheer strength of emotive suggestion' in the area of sex, for example: 'Since their popularization in senses connected with the physiology of sex, it has become increasingly difficult to use terms like "intercourse", "ejaculation", and "erection" in 'innocent' senses without conjuring up their sexual associations' (p.19.).<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to common assertions concerning their 'meaninglessness', Type B choruses communicate without necessarily displaying conceptual meanings. While their musical value cannot be denied, and while they 'complete'

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1. The area of sex certainly constitutes a fertile ground for such 'contamination' of words which is common in everyday speech. Several Enuani jokes exist which focus on the 'innocent' word la 'to drink', the same verb which also denotes 'to have sex'.

the structure of the song, they are not introduced merely as 'fillers'. Rather, they have been skilfully chosen to fit the particular contexts in which they occur. They convey particular ideas by exploiting the resources of the language and by conjuring up images in the minds of the listeners.

Because each of the choruses has a 'meaning', the narrator cannot transpose or substitute one for the other at will. A man who is in haste, or is of heavy, powerful build is expected to walk gwoi gwoi (or gwo gwo), never yeke yeke yeke like the diminutive, powerless Tortoise tucked away in a bundle of thatching leaves. In considering such B choruses as yeke yeke yeke, de muria muria de muria, kpa nsala kpa nsala and gwogworigwo, we need to pay particular attention to the associations which they stimulate in the minds of the audience, be these associations with phonaesthetic words where the meaning is less sharply definable, or with other words like de 'drip' or ani 'earth, ground'. Emphasis should be, not on conceptual meaning but on another kind, namely phonaesthetic, reflected or associative meaning.

#### 4.6 Summary

In addition to demonstrating that some lines of the song advance the action of the tale while others may comment on it, we have shown that the relationship between the two parts of the song is not constant or 'fixed'. Even a glance at the two parts of the song makes apparent the relationship in some cases. In others there is a more tenuous semantic relationship between solo and chorus, and only a knowledge of the narrative plot, or further analysis of the choral phrase reveals the relationship.

We have shown too that A choruses are characterized by the presence in them of conceptual meanings, in contrast to Type B choruses, which have associative meanings. On the surface, B choruses are a string of nonsense syllables but some of them are often explorations of the possibilities of the language, and communicate by implication and association. Failure to examine such choruses more closely to discover how they are related to the solo, as well as an overemphasis on denotative meaning to the exclusion of other kinds of meanings, often leads to the assertion that B choruses are without meaning.



## CHAPTER 5

### TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST: THE CASE OF OKOHAI

5.0 From the preceding chapters it is clear that there are certain features (such as songs in tales) given by tradition and shared by all members of the community. The next two chapters attempt to show that there is scope for individual creativity in the way in which a performer exploits these features, a fact which has hitherto been insufficiently appreciated. As Finnegan (1970.387) correctly remarks, 'The question of the originality of the individual teller, whether in performance or composition, is one of the most neglected aspects of African oral narratives'.

#### 5.1 Earlier approaches to the study of oral literature

One prevalent attitude of nineteenth century evolutionist and 'folklore' studies is apparent, for example, in J.G. Frazer's assertion that 'folklore' is 'due to the collective action of the multitude and cannot be traced to the individual influence of great men' (1919. 1.vii). Implicit in such an observation is the assumption that narratives, for example, are simply a body of material transmitted from one generation to another in a fixed, perhaps word-perfect fashion, or that narrators maintained an absolute fidelity to tradition in all respects.

Various writers have echoed this earlier assumption which envisaged oral artists as passive transmitters of tradition. Thompson (1949, 1.408) states that '... the characteristic feature of the folktale is the fact that it

is handed down from one person to another and there is no virtue in originality' while Joyce (1920.ix) remarks that '... the story-teller never chose his own words - he always had the story by heart and recited the words from memory'. By implication such conservative view of tradition denied the importance of the individual narrator and, indeed, de-emphasized his creative capacity.

The reasons for the neglect in the past of the above question, that is, the place of individual originality in the process of transmission are perhaps not difficult to discover. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> the main interest of folklorists lay in comparative studies, involving the collection of tales from several different cultures. Early folklorists such as the adherents of the historical-geographical method<sup>1</sup> were concerned with identifying the similarities of plot and motif in tales from different parts of the world some of which are separated from one another by enormous geographical distances. Since comparative folklorists were interested mainly in plot (and motif) and the assumption was that any narrator would stick more or less faithfully to the plot outline, it did not matter very much whatever individual qualities any particular narrator brought to the task of narrating the

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1 Cf. the work of the structural-functional school which took an interest in the narratives only in so far as they reflected particular social structures being studied. Herskovits' (1961.455) remarks are pertinent in this respect: '... the study of narratives, like that of other humanistic aspects of African culture,... has been eclipsed by emphasis laid on the study of social institutions'.

story. Also, comparative folklorists were working with translations which, even if inaccurate, were usually sufficient for their purposes, namely comparisons of the 'same' plot from different places. Thus, the material or more accurately its manner of collection excluded the possibility of any literary analysis.

The dominant trends - evolutionist, historical-geographical, structural-functional - in the early study of oral literature have been discussed by such scholars as Finnegan (1970), Andrzejewski and Innes (1975) and Awoonor (1976). In her trail-blazing work, Finnegan (1970) deals at length with the attitudes nurtured by these schools, strongly criticizing the evolutionist approaches, for example, for propagating 'unfounded ideas about authorship and transmission' (p. 320). Finnegan herself has been attacked, for the most part rather unfairly,<sup>1</sup> by some folklorists and anthropologists (see, for example, Beidelman, 1972, Dorson, 1972) for her views. But certainly no scholar can be faulted for criticizing the common tendency of underestimating the importance of the individual narrator. There seems to be nothing 'misguided and confused' (Beidelman, p. 140) about advocating that oral literature be given much the same literary appreciation as written literature. Dorson (1972.10) accuses Finnegan

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1 This, of course, is not to dismiss all the criticisms. For example, Beidelman's point that in some of Finnegan's 'Limba material, '... the original texts are for the most part unpublished, ... contextual data and information on narrators are cursory at best...' (p. 143) seems valid. See also, Dorson, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Cf. Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (1980. pp. 40-43).

of 'grudgingly' using 'the terms "folklore" and "folktales"'. But in spite of criticisms levelled against Finnegan on the grounds referred to above, her use of 'oral literature' is plainly justifiable, considering that it is devoid of the unfortunate connotations of the term 'folklore'.<sup>1</sup> Again, Dorson remarks that 'The oral literature scholars, like the anthropologists, have no idea of how to identify and annotate a traditional tale' (p. 12), a rather surprising claim, whether seen as referring to Finnegan (1967), Mbiti (1966), Whiteley (1964) or oral literature scholars in general. Dorson continues: 'They [oral literature scholars] lack the expertise of the folklorists in assigning type and motif numbers to variant texts'. May it not be pointed out that oral literature scholars now generally recognize that the historical-geographical approach, with its attendant emphasis on the mobility or universality of tale-types, must no longer dominate tale scholarship?

While such an approach may have its value, it must be said that tale analysis has to transcend the confines of this method. This thesis is not concerned with a comparative study of tales but rather with the literary aspects of Enuani tale performance in its social context, with emphasis on the artists who transmit the tales (or the characteristic features of transmission) and the audiences who appreciate the performances. Needless to mention, such aspects lie well outside the purview of the

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1 Cf. Andrzejewski and Innes (1975. pp. 7-8; also, p. 50).

historical-geographical approach.

It is not necessary to dwell on the points already made by such scholars as Andrzejewski and Innes (1975) and Awoonor (1976) in their discussion of the work done by the earlier schools of oral literature study. But from some of the predominant views expressed in the past regarding oral literature (pp.108 ff), it is apparent that the approaches referred to here all have one thing in common: they typify the practice of early collectors of paying little or no regard to individual creativity.

## 5.2 Creativity and the nature of the given genre

The question of creativity is certainly one of crucial importance in the study of virtually every mode of artistic expression. This question assumes even greater significance if the study is concerned with a tradition-bound society. However, the possibility of creativity is entirely dependent on the nature of the given genre, for some genres such as proverbs and riddles display a high degree of fixity and admit of no variation. Such fixed-phrase forms are to be contrasted with a free-phrase genre like tales which plainly provide the performer with scope for the expression of individual creativity. Also, even in free-phrase forms, the degree of creative freedom possible may differ from society to society.

We have already pointed out the overemphasis in the past on the 'anonymous' quality of oral literature, that is, the element of transmission from generation to generation. Although in this, as in several African societies, tales are regarded as 'communal' property, they are

certainly not memorized or transmitted verbatim. It is difficult to envisage the absence of individual creativity in many African tale-telling traditions, for while the plots in some societies may be transmitted in an essentially unchanging form, the element of verbal expression differs extensively from one performance to another. Verbal variability is truly a fundamental feature of tale performance and in several African societies, it becomes immediately clear to the serious collector that a tale cannot be performed twice in exactly the same manner, even by the same narrator.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, any study which treats of creativity in oral literature generally or in the tale genre specifically is likely to make evident the fallacy underlying the assumptions disseminated in the past by evolutionist approaches. Individual creativity is certainly now receiving far greater attention than was previously the case, for the last two decades have witnessed a steady growth in studies devoted either partly or entirely to a consideration of the artist as a creative member of his society. In various forms of artistic expression the individual artist or, more accurately the intrinsic quality of his work is being accorded greater attention.<sup>2</sup> However, many more case

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1 Cf. Scheub (1969) who refers to every performance of the Xhosa ntsomi as 'a unique and evanescent phenomenon' (pp. 19-20).

2 See, for example, Biebuyck (1969), Scheub (1969), d'Azevedo (1973), Ben-Amos (1975), Dandatti (1975), Muhammad (1977), Azuonye (1979) and Cosentino (1982).

studies of African societies are still needed.

### 5.3 Creativity and the accomplished Enuani artist

As already pointed out, the artist, while drawing upon the inherited literary tradition of his society, has scope to express himself in an individual and creative manner. The Enuani narrator has no scope for creativity in regard to plot,<sup>1</sup> but by imaginatively exploiting the conventions of style at his command, he can bring new life and dimensions to the ancient plots for the aesthetic gratification of his audience. In discussing creativity in Enuani tales, therefore, it is to the artist's individual style that we must direct attention. And although several accomplished narrators were encountered, one has been singled out for detailed study for two main reasons; first, he is generally acclaimed as an outstanding performer in the inu tradition and, second, he stands out as the Enuani narrator with the most highly developed artistic technique.

The artist with whose work we are here concerned, then, is Udene Okohai, from whom a sizable body of narratives has been collected over a number of years for the purpose of this thesis. Now in his early forties, Okohai is a native of the Enuani town of Onicha-Ukwu where, even as a boy, he showed a keen interest in the story-telling tradition of the society. In his own words, 'wherever the

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1 Cf., for example, the Ohafia war song tradition in which every artist is expected to create new plots or 'stories on contemporary themes while preserving the inherited heroic ideals' (Azuonye, 1979.378).

elders were engaged in story-telling, I was there, listening, and invariably helping'.

Okohai is an artist whose degree of integration into the Enuani culture is very high. He has strong views not only on Enuani oral literature, but on the culture generally. In recent years his stories have become a regular feature of Igbo programmes on Radio Bendel, Benin. In addition, he is a well-known member of a dance and drama group sponsored by Bendel Arts Council which has recently performed overseas, aspects which Okohai regards as highlights of his artistic career. He lives in Benin, working as a civil servant in Bendel Arts Council.

The information above on Okohai shows that he is an educated man, clearly different from the usual idea of the illiterate performer in the oral mode. He has written no stories, but a short play<sup>1</sup> of his in Igbo has been broadcast on Radio Bendel. Although the generality of Enuani narrators have acquired some degree of literacy, Okohai is better educated than most and is familiar with English literature as well as with Igbo oral and written literature.<sup>2</sup> Clear evidence of Okohai's originality is discoverable in a number of areas, not least of which is

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1 See Tape 14. Okohai regards story-telling as a form of egwu 'play, drama'. Also, he has requested the present writer to furnish him in future with a tape-recording of all the tales collected from him in the course of writing this thesis, so that 'our tradition may not be lost' (Tape 4A).

2 Okohai has also frequently expressed his desire to receive some formal education, in Contemporary dance, even if by postal tuition.



the use of songs. A discussion of this artist's story-telling style may appropriately begin with a consideration of his use of songs, in view of the dominance of music in his performances. Particularly when he sings, Okohai accompanies himself on the xylophone, thus bringing an additional attraction to his work. The fact that Okohai's performances boast a musical accompaniment (the same cannot be said for the generality of Enuani narrators) not only indicates his bent for music, but also underscores the high level to which he has developed his art.

Okohai's partiality for songs informs and permeates his art and one of the features which most distinguishes his work from that of other narrators lies in the greater emphasis which he places on the musical component of his performance.<sup>1</sup> While some narrators may truncate their tales through an economical use of songs, every opportunity for singing during a performance is seized by Okohai.<sup>2</sup> Not only does he give prominence to the musical aspects as a means of concluding<sup>3</sup> performances, he also opens a large

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1 When Okohai sings, he not only demands that his listeners take up the chorus actively and clap their hands, but also requires some members of the audience to accompany him on any 'instruments' available, whether rattles, a matchet, a bottle or a drum. Sometimes, he interrupts a performance to correct an accompanist or tell him what to play.

2 The frequency with which Okohai incorporates songs in his performances may be illustrated by a comparison of his Tale 4 and its variant, Tale 58, by another narrator Ngozi. The song in this tale is rendered five times by the latter narrator while in Okohai's tale, the song occurs eight times.

3 Concluding Tale 3, for example, Okohai merrily informs his audience: 'Once more, here is Tortoise's song. Let us sing it again because Tortoise is quite a remarkable musician', while at the end of Tale 5, he announces: 'Now let us sing that song again, so you can respond  
contd...

number of his tales with either a song or one of his musical preludes. Thus Okohai differs from other Enuani narrators not only in the frequency of songs in his performances, but also in his innovative handling of songs, as will be shown in this chapter as well as in the next.

#### 5.4 Okohai's musical introductions

As indicated, Okohai rarely plunges into his narration; rather, his tales are preceded by a prelude<sup>1</sup> backed by musical accompaniment. He prefaces his performance of Tale 3 with the words: 'Son, hand me that musical instrument of mine... pass me that instrument. My friend, handle the agogo gong ; you, take charge of that drum'. Then he tunes his xylophone, playing and singing the lines:

Eo - eo - o - o - o - o  
Eo - eo - o - o - o enu m - o!  
(Eo - eo - o - o - my world - o!)  
Ewo mmu o! - o - o - o - o  
(Oh me o! - o - o - o - o)  
He - e - e - uwa ewo! - o  
(He - e - e - oh the world! - o)  
(Agu ndegene, agu nde - o, agu ndegene...)  
(Leopard, ndegene, leopard nde - o...)

His audience was in the dark as to the forthcoming tale. Only when the tune of Okohai's musical prelude was altered with his intoning the familiar chorus Agu ndegene did the audience know which tale to expect.

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contd...

to it'. The remarks indicate that Okohai's repeated renditions of the songs are concerned primarily with enhancing the audience's enjoyment, for at the point where these repeated performances occur, the tales are always well-finished products.

1 Tales 3, 5, 90, 91 and 92, for example, were introduced by means of musical preludes.

This gives some indication of the atmosphere of conjecture and unconcealed anticipation which preceded Okohai's actual performance of Tale 3. It seems quite reasonable to suppose that this anticipatory atmosphere was generated primarily by the fact that Okohai did not introduce his performance with the traditional formula, 'I present you with white clay'.<sup>1</sup> By means of his musical introductions, then, Okohai creates suspense and attempts to arrest the interest of his audience. A participatory audience is indispensable to a good performance, a fact which points to the necessity of establishing rapport early with the audience. Comparing Okohai's idiosyncratic mode of opening tales with the other narrators', one can posit that a song - one reinforced by an instrumental accompaniment at that - possesses a greater capacity for arousing the interest of the audience than a formulaic line rendered verbally.

The end of the example above is marked by Okohai's introduction of the line 'Agu ndegene, agu nde - o', with which the audience are familiar (it is the first line of the song in this tale). Before his narration of Tale 92, Okohai also prepares the ground, effectively instilling expectation by employing a musical prelude. Here, however, he does not include any lines with which the audience are familiar. Okohai plays a note on his xylophone as he

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1. While in some tales Okohai's musical prelude may be regarded as a functional equivalent of the opening formula, in others it precedes the opening formula and reinforces, rather than replaces it.

fashions the following prelude which foreshadows some remarkable episode in the forthcoming tale:<sup>1</sup>

Enu uwa eme m - o - o - o - o (twice)  
(The world has treated me badly...)  
Enu uwa eme m - o - o - o - o  
Ewo - o - o - o - o,  
Iyaa - o - ewo! anyi afuna onwo mbu - o,  
(Yes - o - oh! we have never seen this before),  
O - o - o - e - e - e - e  
Chi m e, na enu uwa eme m - o,  
Chi m e - e - e - e, na enu uwa eme m - o!  
(My chi, the world has treated me badly...)

This example exhibits, even better than the first, two linguistic features which characterize Okohai's musical introductions, namely the occurrence of exclamations and short phrases, separated by very long, drawn out vowel sounds. In fact, in some of the musical preludes, this concatenation of vowel sounds predominates.

Although in his performance of the traditional songs Okohai involves his audience very closely, he always performs his preludes alone. In the musical introduction to this tale, as in several others, he concentrates on his xylophone, apparently oblivious of his listeners.<sup>2</sup> Clearly

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1. Immediately after this musical prelude Okohai begins his narration, not with the traditional formula, but with the words: 'This lament I have just sung, saying "The world has treated me badly"... you will see later why I sang it... My tale encounters a certain man, his two wives, one of them evil, the other...' At a point in this tale, a much-maligned woman is vindicated while her malevolent co-wife is severely punished.
  2. Only at the conclusion of his solo introduction does Okohai signal to his accompanists to indicate a transition from his prelude to the actual delivery of this tale. His musicians promptly provide some accompaniment on drums as well as rattles, then Okohai launches into his tale. He is clearly not concerned with involving his audience in his musical introduction.

his concern is with setting the scene or evoking through his song and instrumental accompaniment, the picture of a grief-stricken woman, one of the dramatis personae in Tale 92. While performing this song, Okohai assumes a rather pensive mood which further reinforces the atmosphere of expectancy and the hint of a sorrowful tale.

From the discussion so far, it becomes clear that there is always a link between Okohai's prelude and the tale he is about to narrate; the prelude indicates the nature of the forthcoming tale. Tale 92 is a sad one and this is reflected in Okohai's song, especially the line 'The world has treated me badly' (p. 119). A link between prelude and story is also apparent in the line '... we have never seen this before' which refers to the catalogue of the co-wife's malicious acts the gravity of which actually shocked the townspeople. Therefore this line may well be considered as a reaction of the townspeople, presumably one of disbelief at the great lengths to which an unpopular woman could go to spite her co-wife who by her amiability has endeared herself to all. Tale 4 is another sad tale, except in the closing sections where the orphan girl triumphs, and Okohai attempts to convey this impression of a sad story in his four-line prelude:

Ewo- o - o - -, nne m - o!,  
(Oh!, ... my mother!),  
Ewo - o - o - o, nna m - o!  
(Oh!, ... my father!),  
O bu ka enu di - o?  
(Is this how life is - o?),  
Ewo!- o - o - o - o.  
(Oh! - o - o - o - o).

Here one finds further illustration of the prominence

of exclamations in Okohai's preludes. Like the two already given, this example shows his use of the prelude as a device for anticipating the action of the tale. In this respect, the third line, 'Is this how life is - o?' is perhaps the most important. In this line Okohai is no doubt making an allusion to the maltreatment to which the poor girl is continually subjected. It is highly probable that in her sufferings, the orphan girl continually remembers, even invokes her parents - nne m o 'my mother - o' and nna m o 'my father - o'.

Although other narrators sometimes employ songs as a means of introducing performances, their concern is clearly with providing an opportunity for the audience to rehearse a well-known song or learn an unfamiliar one. But whereas other narrators would sing the traditional text, Okohai sings only the first line of a well-known song, for example (p. 117), preceding it also, with four lines of his own composition. More importantly, he provides some musical accompaniment to enhance the appeal of his opening. Thus Okohai makes an impact on his audience at the outset, by means of his xylophone music. In his introduction to Tale 92, for example, the plaintive tune which he plays on the xylophone is complemented by the no less sorrowful lines of the song and thus an atmosphere of grief is effectively communicated. At a crucial point in this tale, one character is actually overwhelmed by grief.

#### 5.5 Okohai's use of 'personal' songs

We have seen how, unlike other narrators, Okohai precedes his performances with musical preludes. This

section will show that not only does he on occasion incorporate songs which are entirely his own composition at points where no songs occur in the tales as performed by other narrators, but he also introduces variations in subsequent renditions of such songs. Tale 5 provides the first example. Desperately in need of food, Ada is compelled to approach a number of animals successively. The first character to whom she appeals is Leopard and at this point Okohai incorporates a song of his own composition:

Leopard - e - ewo... Leopard - e,  
Ho! - o - ho! - o - Leopard eiya!, ewo mmu - o!<sup>1</sup>  
Leopard - e - e - e - e - e,  
Eghi ghi ghi ghi ghi - i  
Tears have filled my eyes.  
Leopard - e - e - e - e - e,  
If you have yams, give me - o,  
If you have some corn, give me - o,  
If you have some meat, give me - o - ewo!  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger ewo! - o,  
Ewo ! Leopard - o - o.

Okohai continues with his narration: 'In response, Leopard barked, "Who is that speaking? Who, I ask, is speaking?", because Leopard always speaks forcefully'. Immediately after these words, Okohai reverts to the song mode to depict Ada's response to Leopard's question:

It is me Ada, it is me Ada - ewo mmu - o!,  
If you have yams, give me - o - o,  
That I may eat - o - o - o,  
If you have some meat, give me - o - ewo!  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger, ewo! - o - Leopard,  
Ewo!, Leopard, my husband's good friend - o - o.

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1 Such exclamations as Ewo mmu! 'Oh me!', Ewo! 'Oh!', and a stringing together of vowel sounds such as 'Eo - o', 'O - o - o', 'Ee - e - e' which feature prominently in songs of Okohai's creation, are expressive of loss, grief, or helplessness. Cf. Okohai's use of such exclamations and vowel sounds in his musical preludes.

After an unexpected and almost disastrous outburst from Leopard, Ada resumes her futile efforts to secure some food. Okohai varies the words of his song as Ada addresses another animal, Elephant:

Elephant - e - e - e - ewo!  
Elephant-who-owns-the-forests,  
Ewo - e - ewo mmu - o - ewo - o!  
Elephant-who-owns-the-forests, ewo - o!  
Elephant, something terrible has happened to me,  
Something terrible has happened to me, ewo!- o,  
My good husband is gone!  
If you have yams, give me - o -, Elephant,  
If you have some corn, give me that I may eat,  
If you have some cocoyams, give me - o,  
If you have some meat, give me to eat - oh Elephant - o.  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger,  
Elephant-who-owns-the-forests, ewo - eiya! - ewo!  
Elephant, please take pity on me and give me to eat.

Elephant asks, 'Who is speaking?' and Okohai proceeds with his song:

It is me Ada - o - ei - ei - ei - ya, eiya - a,  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger,  
Please take pity on me - o, give us to eat - o - o,  
For the famine is killing us - o,  
The hunger is indeed killing us - o - o.

Again Ada's hopes are dashed as her expectation of succour from Elephant proves illusory. The response she receives from this character is as vicious and uncompromising as that which she had to endure at Leopard's hands. Ada decides to turn to Tortoise for help, while Okohai introduces further changes in his song:

Tortoise, son of Aniga, ewee! - e - e,  
Tortoise, son of Aniga, ewee!, ewo mmu!, I am lost!  
All you people, I am lost, ei - ei - ei,  
Hunger is killing me - e - e - e.  
My husband is dead; just see, I am pregnant.  
What shall I eat - o - ewo iya! - o,  
If you have some yams, give to me - o,  
If you have some corn, give me to eat - o,  
If you have some meat, give me to eat,  
If you have some yams, give me to eat, ewo mmu - o!  
I am greatly scared of the world!



There is good evidence from the corpus to show that this is a 'personal' song, that is, one composed by Okohai; it has certainly not been found in other recorded versions of this tale. Tales 5, 23 and 62 represent variant performances of an extremely popular Enuani tale, delivered here by Okohai (5); another male narrator, Obuzome (23);<sup>1</sup> and a female narrator, Adankwo (62). The fact that the song 'Tortoise, son of Aniga, ewee...!' is not found in Tales 23 and 62 is indicative of the generally distinctive and authoritative nature of Okohai's performances. The repeated renditions of this song, in fact its conspicuousness, further illustrates the centrality of song and music in his work.

It is unusual in Okohai's performances to come across any two renditions of the same song in which the words (number of lines, too) are exactly the same, a pervasive feature to which virtually every example of songs in this and in the next chapter will attest. In this example, Ada addresses Leopard in a twelve-line song while at the point where Ada encounters Elephant, Okohai increases the number of lines to fifteen. The same song has only eleven lines at the stage where Ada approaches Tortoise. Such lines as 'If you have some yams, give me - o'/'If you have some meat/corn, give me - o' which express Ada's entreaty remain unchanged in each version, but the lines 'Eghi ghi ghi ghi ghi - i'/'Tears have filled my eyes' occur only in the first version (p.122); 'Something

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1 See Appendix B for the tale and song texts of Tales 5 and 23.

terrible has happened to me, ewo'/'My good husband is gone' are only in the second version (p.123) and 'My husband is dead; just see, I am pregnant'/'I am greatly scared of the world' occur only in the last version (p. 123). The number of lines in the song which depicts Ada's response also varies. In response to Leopard's question, Ada delivers a seven-line song (p.122) but when she responds to Elephant's, Okohai changes the number of lines to six. The song depicting Ada's reply to Elephant is the only one in which the line 'If you have some meat...' does not occur, while in common with every other version (but one),<sup>1</sup> it contains the lines 'The child in the womb'/'And I are dying of hunger...'.  
'

The next two examples are drawn from Tales 91 and 92. In the former, Edi<sup>2</sup> is subjected to a thorough beating by the notoriously violent Leopard. Okohai, no doubt intent on presenting a vivid picture of Edi pleading with his aggressor, switches from the speech mode to deliver the underdog's imploring cries by means of a 'personal' song:

Agu - u - o - o - o - o - o - o - Agu!,  
(Leopard - o - o - o - o - o - o - Leopard!,)  
Agu - u - o - o - o - o - o - o - Agu!,  
(Leopard - o - o - o - o - o - o - Leopard!,)  
Ife m emene i gbayalu m - o, ewo mmu - o!,  
(In whatever manner I have wronged you, forgive me -  
o!,)  
Ife m emene i gbayalu m - o - Agu nwe ofia - o - o.  
(In whatever manner I have wronged you, forgive me  
- o, Leopard, who owns the forests - o - o).

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1 The version in which Ada addresses Tortoise; p.123.

2 African civet (Viverra civetta).

In consonance with his belligerent disposition, Leopard only responds to Edi's pleas with a renewed attack of extraordinary brutality and to save himself, Edi reiterates the earlier appeal to his assailant:

Agu - e - e - e - e - e - e - e - Agu!,  
Agu - e - e - e - e - e - e - e - Agu!,  
(Leopard - e - e - e - e - e - e - e - Leopard!,)  
Ife m emene i gbayalu m - o, Agu - o - o,  
(In whatever manner I have wronged you, forgive me -  
o Leopard - o - o,)  
Ife m emene i gbayalu m - o, Agu nwe ofia.  
(In whatever manner I have wronged you, forgive me -  
o Leopard who owns the forests.)

In Tale 92 a distressed woman makes a passionate plea for her son's life. Again Okohai attempts to express the great depth of her anguish, not in ordinary speech, but by means of another song of his own composition:

Chi m - e - e - e - e - e - e,  
Chi m - e - e - e - e - e - ewo! - o,  
(My chi - e - e - e - e - oh! - o,)  
Menye m ebele - o - iya, na chi ejie nu, ewo mmu - o!  
(Take pity on me - o, yes, for darkness has descended  
on me, oh me - o!)  
Ofu nwa di be aga ana nu - o,  
(The barren woman's only child is gone, you all,  
listen - o.)  
Ewo - ewo - ewo - wo - e - iya - o.  
(Oh - oh - oh - oh - yes - o).  
Ewo chi m - o - o - o - o - o!  
(Oh!, my chi - o - o - o - o - o!)

But this character's wailing comes to nothing, for her child is beheaded all the same.

The last example is provided by Tales 8 and 93, versions of the same tale delivered by Okohai on two different occasions. Tale 6 represents another version of this tale, recorded from the narrator Onuwa. But while Onuwa's tale, like Okohai's, features the traditional one-line song, 'Bundle of leaves that are walking' (see pp.101 and 142), Okohai's also includes another song,

composed by him. In this tale, Leopard devises successive plans to eliminate Tortoise, but on each occasion the latter outmanoeuvres him. To depict Tortoise celebrating one of his successes and scoffing at Leopard, Okohai introduces the following 'personal' song:<sup>1</sup>

	He who knew too much now knows nothing
He who knew too much now knows nothing (eight times)	"
The one who knew too much now knows nothing.	"
Now Leopard does not know, That' it was I who frightened him.	"
He who knew too much now knows nothing.	"
He who tries to cheat others cheats himself.	"
Whatever you do, you get the reward, The seed one sows, one reaps,	"
He who knew too much now knows nothing.	"

At a later stage of the narration (Tale 8) Okohai repeats the song, introducing several variations:

	He who knew too much...
He who knew too much now knows nothing	"
Oh!, Leopard now knows nothing, Leopard is now the fool.	"
He who attempts to kill others, Will only kill himself.	"
The seed that one sows in this world, The same does one reap.	"
A misfortune has befallen Leopard, He who knew too much now knows nothing.	"

Below is one of Okohai's two renditions in Tale 93 of the song:<sup>2</sup>

- 
- 1 Okohai sings the first line once, then signals to the audience to indicate that this line is also the chorus of his song. He then sings the line seven more times to establish the rhythm pattern of his song for the benefit of the audience.
  - 2 The second and 'final' rendition is discussed fully in the next chapter.

He who knew  
too much now  
knows nothing

He who knew too much now knows nothing  
- - - - - [xylophone music]                   "  
Oh!, Leopard now knows nothing - ha! - ha! (twice)   "  
He who knew too much now knows nothing - o - o,       "  
Leopard now knows nothing, I say.                   "  
Tortoise, son of Aniga, thank you,                   "  
Oh, expert at cunning, thank you.                   "  
Intelligence is such an asset ho! - o - o.           "  
Cunning is such an asset, you all - o - o,           "  
Leopard is ruined.                                   "  
He who knew too much now knows nothing.           "

While Enuani narrative tradition is emphatic with regard to the didactic element, it will be shown that, even more than other narrators, Okohai gives prominence to this aspect of the performance. In this 'personal' song he gives expression to what is certainly his favourite theme, namely that of retributive justice. The variations which he introduces in the different versions focus on this idea, summarized in the first version by such lines as 'He who tries to cheat others cheats himself'; 'Whatever you do, you get the reward' and 'The seed one sows, one reaps'. In the second version, it is expressed in slightly different terms, as in the lines, 'He who attempts to kill others'/'Will only kill himself' and 'The seed that one sows in this world...'. Although the equivalent of these lines does not occur in Tale 93, this version, like the two in Tale 8, opens with 'He who knew too much now knows nothing', a line which also emphasizes the notion of retribution. In Tale 93, Okohai slightly varies the line, so we have such lines as 'Oh!, Leopard now knows nothing - ha! - ha!'/ 'Leopard now knows nothing, I say' and 'He who knew too much now knows nothing - o - o'. A more

significant form of variation occurs in Tale 93, where Okohai shifts the focus, de-emphasizing the idea of retribution in favour of extolling intelligence and cunning.

#### 5.6 'Personal' songs at particular points

The final section addresses itself to the question of why Okohai switches to the song mode at certain points in the narrative at which other narrators would certainly use the speech mode. Okohai's approach contrasts with that of other narrators such as Onuwa, Obuzome and Adankwo who, as already noted, have recourse to the song mode only at those points at which songs traditionally occur in a particular tale. On account of their familiarity with the tales, it is possible for the audience to predict those points at which the narrator is likely to deliver a song. But in a performance by Okohai such prediction is impossible.

In Tale 5, Okohai, like Obuzome in Tale 23, includes the song 'Which animal is at the door?'. But at a certain point he considers it more effective to present Ada's petition in the song mode to highlight her misery and emphasize the gravity of her situation; thus the sympathy of the audience for this destitute character<sup>1</sup> would be further aroused. The fourth line of Okohai's song (p.122)

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1 Not only does Ada have the responsibility of maintaining her infant song single-handedly, she is pregnant again. Her situation is all the more pitiable as she is still overwhelmed by grief and shock at the sudden death of her husband. For Ada, with nobody to turn to for material support, life held nothing more than bleak prospects, especially as it was then the height of yet another disastrous famine in Ani Idu.

has the purpose of painting a vivid picture for the benefit of the audience. By creating the onomatopoeic line Eghi ghi ghi ghi ghi - i -, which imitates the sound of crying, Okohai attempts to evoke an image of the weeping Ada, a disconsolate and helpless woman bemoaning her lack of sustenance and material support. In point of fact, Okohai does not simply utter this line; his narration at that point is accompanied by a dramatization of the action. Repeatedly waving his head sideways, he wipes his eyes several times as if weeping. There is some indication here of the extensive range of Okohai's performing skills. His dramatic ability is delightfully complemented by his musical skill and Ada's pathetic circumstances are further underlined.

This example, like the other two from Tales 91 and 92, well illustrates Okohai's objective with regard to the creation of 'personal' songs; by abandoning ordinary speech in favour of song, he aims at heightening the emotional impact of his performance. The audience's conception of one character in serious trouble or of another pouring out his sorrows in a moving song reinforces the picture which the narrator attempts to paint. The audience can visualize Ada, this erstwhile exuberant character now weeping and overwhelmed by grief. The picture is invested with an even more sombre dimension by 'Ada's' remark, 'Tears have filled my eyes'. Not only can the audience see Ada in their mind's eye, they can simultaneously 'hear' her singing a doleful song several lines of which (for example, 'The child in the womb'/'And I are dying of hunger'/'...

something terrible has happened to me') epitomize her sense of utter isolation and helpless bewilderment.<sup>1</sup> Not only do these lines cumulatively underline Ada's sorrowful situation, they seem to be particularly appropriate for the song rather than the speech mode. Clearly, singing approaches the action of crying (in which Ada is now engaged) more than speaking does.

In the example from Tale 91 (p.125), Okohai strives to depict the anguish of Edi more effectively by preferring song to ordinary speech in expressing this character's pleas. The tone of Edi's song is one of helplessness, indeed surrender. Okohai's 'personal' song reflects the fact that in the presence of the 'king of the beasts', no animal can afford any attitude other than that of humility and surrender. Edi's utterance of the name Agu (Leopard) followed by a long vowel sound - [o] in the first song and [e] in the second (p.126) - suggests Leopard's stubbornness and insensitivity. In everyday Enuani life it is not uncommon to call people in this manner especially those who may be referred to metaphorically as 'deaf' ichi nti.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See, also, the parallel structure of the lines beginning 'If you have...' in several of the versions (pp.122-123). The structure suggests Ada's persistence, as she was indeed compelled to approach a succession of animals until one of them came to her aid.

2 Of a child, for example, it may be said, O chike nti or O chi nti shinne 'He is very deaf'. When engrossed in his play, or out of mischief or truancy, such a child exhibits the undesirable habit of not responding at once when summoned by parents. Bearing this in mind, then, a mother would add a long vowel sound after the child's name, calling, for example, 'Udene - o - o - o - o -ò!' (rather than 'Udene!'), as a way of emphasizing this child's stubbornness or 'deafness'.



As already pointed out, Okohai is concerned with portraying in as effective a manner as possible, a character in distress, in order to convey the predominant emotion - be it fear, frustration, pain or hatred - in a particular section of the narrative. To achieve such an objective the narrator has to employ striking images and in this respect Okohai shows also that he is a highly accomplished artist. In Tale 92 one discerns a combination of powerful images as in 'The barren woman's only child is gone' (p.126 ) and the descent of darkness ('Take pity on me... darkness has descended on me...'). In everyday Enuani speech it is obviously a misnomer to refer to any woman who has borne a child as aga 'barren woman', but it is most unlikely that while engrossed in the performance, an audience would pause to consider the 'appropriateness' of the word in this context. Also, it is no exaggeration to say that in this society the mere mention of the word aga instantly evokes pity for the 'unfortunate woman'. This character in Tale 92 is obviously not a barren woman, but Okohai has introduced the detail into his song for some effect. The strength of the line 'The barren woman's only child is gone...' lies in its potentiality for presenting a pathetic and sad picture of this character. To lose one of several children is a great enough loss, but to have an only child (on whom a parent has pinned all hope) beheaded represents a most tragic occurrence.

The image employed here by Okohai, therefore, poignantly conveys the woman's great loss and misfortune, in much the same manner as the line '... darkness has

descended on me...' epitomizes her abysmal despair. Darkness carries a variety of connotations, expressing in this instance, a state of utter hopelessness. For any woman who has been deprived of her son in such horrifying circumstances and who cherishes no hope of giving birth again, no tragedy could be more profound. It is clearly a traumatic experience and in everyday speech one is considered 'dead' or beyond hope if 'the sun sets' on one. By means of his striking images in the above song, Okohai not only effectively suggests the frustration and mental pain which this character has to live with, but also conveys her sense of emptiness and bitterness.

A final question is raised by Okohai's use of 'personal' songs. As pointed out in Chapter 4, songs are often associated with climactic points or points of high tension in the tale. As the examples from Tales 5 and 91 indicate, Okohai commonly incorporates his 'personal' songs at points in the narrative which are characterized by high tension. Both tales, for example, involve characters who have been subjected to great stress. Could Okohai's tales, then, be said to have more points of tension? Could it be argued that this narrator's greater use of songs tends to reduce their effectiveness as markers of points of tension or great stress?

It is of course possible for a tale to have not one, but several points where some character experiences immense stress. In Tale 43 (p. 91), for example, the distress of the mother is conveyed by a song. At another point her daughter finds herself in even greater distress

as she is subjected to a certainly extraordinary death (melting by fire); yet no song occurs at this point. Nor can it be said that tales without songs never portray or include characters under great stress. The life of Nwaerine, the main character in Tale 30, represents more or less a chapter of accidents which would almost certainly put severe physical and mental stress on any man, no matter how hardy. But in spite of the affliction and tension which is Nwaerine's lot, he never once cries out in song, like the orphan girl in Tale 4, the boy in danger of drowning (Tale 25), the abducted girl in Tale 26, the trapped boy in Tale 59, or indeed the tortured mother in Tale 43 already mentioned. Our two examples above (Tales 30 and 43), like several others in the corpus, demonstrate that not all such points depicting characters who are emotionally disturbed or in serious trouble actually incorporate songs.

Therefore, while being content to include songs at those points where they traditionally occur, a narrator may also judge other points to be as critical as the 'traditional' points, that is, to warrant a song. Olayemi (1968.26) is certainly right in describing some songs as 'poetic effusions at those points in the stories where the narrator feels the urge to rise to the higher planes of poetry because prose has ceased to be an adequate medium'. Here, the status of the narrator is an essential factor, for only an accomplished artist can 'feel the urge' in a sense, or indeed display the ability to translate this urge into a 'personal' song. The helpless, indeed solemn

cry of Edi in Tale 91 (p.126) is certain to fill an audience with sympathy for this character and thus give greater emotional intensity to that part of the performance. We have shown, too, that Okohai considered it more effective to put the words of the character Ada (Tale 5) at one stage in song. His boldness in this respect supports the major argument not only in this chapter but also in the next, namely that Okohai's reputation as an expert rests heavily on his innovative handling of song and music.

Without in any way 'adding to'<sup>1</sup> or altering the traditional plots (which of course is not allowed), Okohai stamps his originality on the tales, for while employing songs drawn from the traditional musical repertoire, like every other narrator,<sup>2</sup> he also exploits the traditional plots in an innovative manner, sometimes underlining particular sections by introducing new, 'personal' songs. Okohai's songs are not employed at random, but mainly to convey, as already seen, the reaction, in fact the 'exact words' of a character under great stress.

Even if every tale by Okohai contained a 'personal' song (which is not the case) the reaction of the audience would still be predictable, namely that of full, enthusiastic choral participation. In Tale 93 which contains the only 'personal' song with a chorus, even Okohai's repetition (eight times) of a line drew a highly animated response. And, if as indicated (pp.116-7), Okohai's

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1 See Chapter 8.

2 See for example, pp.121-125

repeated use of traditional songs with which the audience are already familiar elicits an enthusiastic response, the same must also hold true of his new, 'personal' songs. From the audience's reaction and Okohai's appropriate, economical use of his 'personal' songs, it is clear that his greater use of songs by no means devalues their power. Rather, and as some of the lines examined demonstrate, the songs are used effectively to reinforce, and indeed communicate to the audience in quite vivid terms, the pain or stress felt by a particular character in the tale.

## CHAPTER 6

### OKOHAI'S MODIFICATIONS OF TRADITIONAL SONGS

6.0 Unlike the narrative sections of the tale to which individual narrators bring variations with each performance, the songs maintain a high degree of stability. In their performances the vast majority of Enuani narrators repeat the traditional song texts. In sharp contrast, Okohai is never content with merely reproducing the texts, but reworks them considerably in ways which are described below.

#### 6.1 The introduction of extra lines (sung)

This section examines Okohai's technique of creating additional lines to accompany the traditional song texts. It will be recalled (p. 124) that Tales 5, 23 and 62 represent variant performances of the same tale, by Okohai, Obuzome and Adankwo, respectively. A comparison of the song texts in Tales 23 and 62 with that in Tale 5 serves as a pointer to Okohai's distinctive and original handling of the songs. A succession of suitors express their desire to marry Anoli but her mother, Ada, turns them away, determined to maintain her promise to Tortoise. At the point where Elephant is dismissed, for example, the narrator of Tale 23, Obuzome, renders the 'standard' text of the song:

Which animal is at the door? (twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Elephant at the door.	"
Away with you, Elephant!	"
When I begged for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
Did you give me <u>gologolo</u> ?	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli.	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise,	"
your husband.	"

The same song as rendered by Adankwo, the narrator of

Tale 62, is:

Which animal is at the door? (twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Elephant at the door.	"
Away with you, Elephant!	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
Did you give me <u>gologolo</u> ?	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli.	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli.	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise, your husband.	"

The version rendered by Okohai is:

Greetings to you, greetings to you,	Kpalanuma
Greetings to you, greetings to you,	"
Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home?	"
Which animal is at the door?	"
It is Elephant at the door.	"
Who do you want?	"
It is Anoli I am looking for,	"
Give her to me in marriage.	"
Away with you, Elephant!	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
Did you give me <u>gologolo</u> ?	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli.	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,...	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise, your husband.	"

The song in each case represents an exchange between suitor and potential mother-in-law and at the point marking the visit of the final and successful suitor, Tortoise, Obuzome and Adankwo again present the traditional text. In contrast, Okohai characteristically embellishes his rendition, as is evident from the texts:

'Standard' version by Obuzome and Adankwo

Which animal is at the door? (twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Tortoise at the door,	"
Tortoise, dear, come in.	"
When I asked you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
(Only) you gave me <u>gologolo</u> .	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli.	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,	"

He will marry Anoli. Kpalanuma  
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise,  
your husband. "

Okohai's embellished version

Greetings to you, greetings to you (twice) Kpalanuma  
Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home? " "  
Which animal is at the door? "  
It is me Tortoise at the door. "  
Who do you want to see? "  
Anoli is the one I want, "  
Please give Anoli to me in marriage. "  
Greetings to you, greetings to you, "  
Which people own this house? "  
Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home? "  
Tortoise dear, come in (twice), "  
When I asked you for gologolo, "  
(Only) you gave me gologolo. "  
Tortoise, if you can afford it, "  
You will marry Anoli. "  
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise,  
your husband. "

Even this single example gives some slight but useful indication of Okohai's creative handling of songs. In presenting the song One anu na-eme n'uzo? 'Which animal is at the door?', all three narrators are employing material with which the audience are familiar. Obuzome's and Adankwo's songs are identical while vis-à-vis these versions, Okohai's displays some differences. Firstly, although Okohai incorporates the same ten lines of which Obuzome's and Adankwo's version consists, he adds five extra lines. Clearly, such lines as 'Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home?'/ 'Who do you want to see?'/ 'Anoli is the one I want to see?'/ 'Please give Anoli to me in marriage' do not occur in the other narrators' version. Secondly, and more importantly, the other narrators begin in the traditional manner by incorporating the standard line shown above, whereas Okohai introduces his song differently, consistently employing the expression Do nu, do nu - o,



'Greetings to you, greetings to you'.

Okohai's skilful use of this line is noteworthy. It is highly appropriate with regard to the situation being depicted, namely that of a visitor arriving at his hosts'. Okohai's line reflects the Enuani social convention of announcing oneself at the door to ascertain if one's host is at home. Doorbells or similar electronic gadgetry are not commonly used in the society, so the visitor has to shout his greetings at the door. For any hosts, the statement 'Greetings to you, greetings to you' conveys the information that the person thus seeking to attract their attention is (likely to be) a friend. By improvising the line, 'Which people own this house?' which Tortoise now delivers, Okohai also echoes the above situation, namely that of a visitor seeking to establish rapport with his host.

The foregoing examples of Okohai's texts involve a combination of traditional and 'personal' lines. In the next example, Okohai departs from this pattern as this version contains none of the traditional lines found in the song as delivered by Obuzome and Adankwo. Also, it is worth mentioning that neither of these narrators includes a song beyond the point where Tortoise proves triumphant in securing the beautiful Anoli as wife. In contrast, Okohai incorporates another song to depict events following Tortoise's resounding victory. He continues with his tale:

... Ada said to Tortoise, '... so I now happily present Anoli to you as wife...'  
Tortoise could hardly believe his ears; he was

simply mad with joy. 'Me?', he asked himself, 'to marry such a young and delicately beautiful girl?' My friends,<sup>1</sup> Tortoise said, 'you have never before seen anything like the dance I am going to do now'. Soo! [exclamation, 'Indeed!']

Then he launches into the version below:

Greetings to you, greetings to you (twice)	Kpalanuma
Ada, thank you; Anoli, thank you,	"
Anoli is extremely beautiful,	"
Chineke [God], my gratitude to you,	"
My <u>chi</u> ['personal god'] has done very well,	"
I am the one married to Anoli.	"
Indeed, I am Tortoise, son of Aniga,	"
Oh, what a mission!	"
This is quite a mission	"
My mission is extremely successful.	"
What good luck, what good luck!	"
Tidi tidi tidi ti,	"
Tidin tididi tadan da dadida, <sup>2</sup>	"
Tadan danda da dida.	"

In the above example Okohai has composed new lines to fit the tune of the song in the tale.

Another piece of evidence may be presented to show that, unlike the generality of Enuani narrators, Okohai rarely renders a song in its standard, traditional form. In a popular tale (represented here as Tales 6 and 93), Tortoise characteristically outwits Leopard by concealing himself in a bundle of thatching leaves. Naturally any

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1. The expression Oyi mu! (Oyi m!) 'My friend!' (or its contracted form, Omu!), which occurs with considerable frequency in Okohai's work, does not seem to be used much by younger narrators. The only other narrators who use it are elders: Mbuliche, the narrator of Tales 30, 31, 78, 84; and Jideonwo, the narrator of Tales 10, 11, 13, 15, 16. The major impact of this expression is that it gives the narration a 'conversational' quality as Okohai addresses his listeners as 'friends', further enhancing the usually excellent rapport between him and his audiences.
  2. In improvising the last three lines, which are an onomatopoeic description of the sound of dancing, Okohai attempts to depict the successful suitor celebrating his somewhat unexpected good fortune by breaking into a dance.

movement Tortoise makes compels the leaves to 'walk', an extraordinary and inexplicable phenomenon which causes Tortoise's enemy, Leopard, to take to flight. Onuwa, the narrator of Tale 6, presents the standard one-line song, which may be prolonged:

Onuwa's 'standard' version (Tale 6)

Solo Bundle of leaves walking  
Chorus Ani ['Earth'], yeke yeke yeke<sup>1</sup>

Okohai's embellished version (Tale 93)

Bundle of leaves walking,	<u>Ani</u>	<u>yeke yeke yeke</u>	
Earth, yeke yeke yeke			"
Sky, yeke yeke yeke,			"
Water, yeke yeke yeke,			"
Sun, yeke yeke yeke.			"
Bundle of leaves walking,			"
Where are you going, Leopard?			"
May troubles confront you!			"
Just go back from there,			"
The road is not safe today,			"
Bundle of leaves walking.			"

The difference here is apparent, for whereas Onuwa renders the traditional one-line song in this tale, Okohai adds another seven lines.

A final example is provided of Okohai's incorporation of extra lines into the traditional song texts. An examination of his earlier versions of the song below which occurs in Tale 96 could well give the impression that in this tale, Okohai has not conformed to his principle of modification or addition of lines. His 'final' performance of this song, however, shows that the contrary is actually the case. At four different points in his

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1. The song represents Tortoise's words to frighten off Leopard. The chorus is an onomatopoeic description of the wobbly manner in which the bundle of leaves was 'walking' along the road.

narration, Okohai presents the standard text of the song:

Apia bird, <sup>1</sup> perch now (three times),	Perch now
May your head be dashed against a tree	
trunk,	"
May your eyes behold spirits,	"
Perch now- o, perch now - o.	"

Tale 36, a variant of Okohai's tale, performed by another narrator, Azonuche, clearly demonstrates that the above excerpt represents the standard text of this popular tale song. In Azonuche's tale the song is rendered verbatim. The only point of difference is quite insignificant; Azonuche sang the first line 'Apia bird, perch now' Apia, bee mbe twice, whereas Okohai sang it three times.

In his final rendition Okohai typically embroiders the song, altering it almost beyond recognition. In fact only three lines are common to this version and the preceding four already given in his performance. A comparison of the earlier versions with the final one shows how Okohai develops his songs by the creation of additional lines. The 'final' version is:

Apia bird, perch now, (five times)	Perch now
Perch a little further off,	"
Perch on the <u>oji</u> ' tree,	"
Perch on the cotton silk tree,	"
Perch on the pear tree,	"
Perch on the <u>okwo</u> tree,	"
Perch on the <u>oji-ogodo</u> tree,	"
Perch on the <u>azumoma</u> tree,	"
May your head be dashed against a tree	
trunk,	"
May your eyes behold spirits.	"
Hunger is about to kill you (twice)	"
Apia bird, perch now - o. (Tape 3A)	"

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1. Apia - 'Allied hornbill' (Lophoceros semifasciatus)



jewellery - ejije, achanu and aka - are not only highly valued particularly by women, but are also regarded as symbols of affluence.

It is conceivable that in her ecstatic state the main character can address such 'wild' wishes to a tree. A kola nut tree - even one with immense magical properties - remains the most improbable source of precious stones. Okohai's concern in improvising the last three lines seems to be with exploring the excited woman's subconscious, laying it bare to the audience as they contemplate her counting her chickens before they are hatched. It is also possible that Okohai is making a social comment or more specifically attempting to poke fun at the female members of his audience. Enuani men often remark that women are obsessed with the acquisition of these expensive items of jewellery and would persistently cajole, even pester, their husbands for help to buy them. There is, for instance, the popular joke about the woman who nearly starves herself and her family to death while she puts away all the proceeds from her numerous susu<sup>1</sup> contributions<sup>1</sup> in order to make even more extravagant purchases of aka, achanu and

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1. The susu (saving) society is a widespread phenomenon in Igboland. The societies are of great importance in the socio-economic life of many an Igbo community. Among the Enuani, for example, the groups are commonly referred to as 'meetings' miti or mitim, susu or uta. The last two terms similarly convey the notion of a 'meeting' (Cf. Green, 1947, pp. 32-48). Members meet at regular intervals (in the Igbo four-day market week) to hand in their subscriptions to the common fund set up for the benefit of all. The money in the fund 'matures' regularly, and is 'claimed' by members on a rotational basis. Members who run into financial exigencies may borrow money from the fund, often at a high interest rate. It is not uncommon to fix the interest rate at 100% per annum.

ejije. Unfortunately thieves break in, clearing all the money she had so diligently accumulated. Okohai's inclusion of these lines about jewellery in a context totally unconnected with diamonds or rubies may well remind the audience of this joke, appealing to their sense of recognition and thus increasing their enjoyment of the song, possibly of the performance as a whole.

Like the foregoing example, the next illustrates that Okohai sometimes marks the climax of the tale by introducing extra lines in which parallelism features prominently. In the same tale (92), a notorious woman hatches a series of abortive plots against her amiable co-wife. The latter soon has an opportunity for revenge and her demand<sup>1</sup> could well mean the beheading of the evil woman's child. In the first instance, Okohai renders the standard text of the song in this tale,

Oh, leave the <u>isama</u> alone,	Leave the <u>isama</u> - o
Leave the <u>isama</u> that my child	
may not die,	"
Oh, leave the <u>isama</u> alone.	"
I implore you, I beg you in the	
name of Olise,	"
Leave the <u>isama</u> that my child may	
not die.	"

but in his second rendition, he demonstrates further his frequent concern with handling the songs in an original manner, adding the following extra lines (to the version above):

I implore you in the name of Olise,	"
I implore you in the name of Ogwugwu,	"
I implore you in the name of Uhuchi,	"

---

1. The evil woman's child wears a special necklace to prevent him falling ill again. When her co-wife continues with her scheming, the amiable woman runs out of patience and demands her isama necklace. It is impossible to retrieve the isama without actually beheading the wearer; this is the unpleasant choice which now confronts the evil woman.





effectively underlines the fact that although one of the women has so far displayed her amiable and long-suffering disposition, it is unnatural, even impossible, for her to tolerate her co-wife's outrageous behaviour indefinitely.

Uhuchi and Ogwugwu are deities thought to possess immense powers and thus deserving of veneration. In olden times<sup>1</sup> a man seeking sanctuary at the shrine of either god was automatically left alone by his pursuers. In real life, to declare 'I implore you in the name of Uhuchi' (or Ogwugwu) almost certainly guarantees the granting of the declarant's request. Here again Okohai's new line echoes an everyday situation, for members of the audience themselves usually demand pardon from an opponent by declaring 'I beg you in the name of Uhuchi'. Okohai's mention of Uhuchi and Ogwugwu on account of the powers ascribed to these deities is comparable to his substitution in the next rendition, of 'Day', 'Night', 'Sun' and 'Moon' for 'Olise'.<sup>2</sup> Among the Enuani, Day, Sun, Moon and Night are also conceived of as forces which possess enormous mystical powers.

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- 1 In modern times the names of such gods as Uhuchi and Ogwugwu, or some dreaded masquerades are still used as a means of social control. The names of the two gods also figure in curses such as 'May Ogwugwu seize you!' or 'May Uhuchi strike you down!'
  - 2 Cf., Okohai's use of parallelism in Tale 93 (song text on p. 142); the words 'Sky', 'Water' and 'Sun' are introduced in place of 'Earth'. Cf., also, Tale 96; in his final rendition in this tale of the song 'Apia bird, perch now' (p. 143) Okohai adds such extra lines as 'Perch a little further off', 'Perch on the oji tree', 'Perch on the pear tree', 'Perch on the okwo tree' and 'Perch on the azumoma tree'. Here parallelism is used to emphasize the persistence and concern of the animals in their pleading with Apia to terminate his prolonged flight.

This juxtaposition of the name Olise [God] and the names of indigenous gods is interesting, for it is almost as if Okohai is implying a categorization of his audience into two groups: Christians and non-Christians. Okohai seems to include the names of the Enuani gods for the benefit of his non-Christian listeners, animists who, while recognizing the supremacy of Olise or Chukwu,<sup>1</sup> do not worship him primarily.

#### 6.2 The introduction of extra lines (spoken)

All the extra lines referred to up to this point were incorporated in the solo, that is to say, sung by Okohai, with the audience taking up the chorus. Like those of other narrators, Okohai's songs conform to the call-and-response pattern. But, as we are concerned with demonstrating here, Okohai is a highly original narrator, continually experimenting with, and exploiting his traditional materials, with a view to achieving a more satisfying performance. The remainder of this chapter investigates another aspect of Okohai's innovative use of extra lines.

While retaining the traditional call-and-response pattern, Okohai has introduced something new and exciting. With his audience maintaining the tempo of a song by rendering its chorus, he sometimes launches into the speech mode to deliver a considerable number of his solo lines

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1 Chukwu - chi and ukwu (literally, 'the big chi or god') refers to the Supreme or Almighty God. See, for instance, Achebe (1975.pp. 95ff).

whereas every other narrator traditionally renders all the solo lines in the song mode.

Okohai certainly realizes that his departure from the norm in this respect may well leave the chorus uncertain about their part in the performance and, accordingly, he gives the audience their cue, usually after inserting the first spoken line. Subsequently, his pause at the end of each spoken line serves as an indication of the point at which the audience are to respond with their choric line. In songs featuring this mixture of sung and spoken lines, Okohai presents a line or succession of lines in plain voice, then reverts to the song mode. As will be apparent from our examples, he does not seem to adhere to any pattern with regard to the number of spoken lines to be inserted before he returns to the song mode.

The 'mixed mode' - the juxtaposition of sung and extra, spoken lines - constitutes the most interesting feature of Okohai's artistic technique. The use of this device was not found in any other performances witnessed and has not been reported from elsewhere in West Africa, as far as the present writer knows.

### 6.3 'Mixed mode' songs: form

It is necessary at the outset to reiterate a distinction indicated in the foregoing section, namely that in contrast to Okohai's non-traditional, extra lines in the song mode considered earlier, the extra lines which form the subject of the discussion here are spoken. It is convenient at this point to present some examples of Okohai's device of punctuating his solos with spoken

lines. In Tale 5 Tortoise secures the beautiful Anoli as wife, a remarkable achievement, considering that a great number of bigger and more powerful animals had met with failure in the venture. To depict the jubilant husband celebrating his good fortune,<sup>1</sup> Okohai first renders the standard song, terminating with the line 'Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise, your husband', then follows with this special performance of the song:

Tanda dada - a - tanda dada da - o, (Sung)<sup>2</sup>.....  
(no audience response)  
Omu mbekwu ewe ike, we ukwu si ifene... (Spoken)  
(My friend, Tortoise positioned himself for dancing)  
Do nu, do nu - o, (Sung) Kpaalanuma  
(Greetings to you, greetings to you),  
Mbekwu ewe egwu si be kwei, (Spoken) "  
(Tortoise took the dance that way),  
Hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm, (Sung) "  
Omu, o we e si uso ni. (Spoken) "  
(My friend, he took it (the dance)  
this way).  
O we e si uso ni, (Spoken) "  
(He took it this way),  
Do nu, do nu - o, (Sung) "  
(Greetings to you, greetings to you),  
Omu, o fehume okiri okiri, (Spoken) "  
(My friend, he flew round and round),  
Lue be Ada no, omu gwojie egwu. (Spoken) "  
(Got to where Ada was, my friend,  
danced elegantly).  
Nwua Anoli, (Spoken) "  
(Grabbed at Anoli),  
Kwe kwe kwe kwe - o, (Sung) "  
Kwe kwe kwe kwe - o, ( " ) "  
Tidim tidi ti, ( " ) "  
Tidim ti - ti - ti - i. ( " ) "  
Omu, ife ni a<sup>k</sup>potua wu-u-u-m! (Spoken) "  
(My friend, this event shook <sup>3</sup>  
everywhere wu-u-u-m!)

- 
1. As already seen (p. 140), the other narrators did not include a song at this point.
  2. Notice that in the first two lines of the song, there was no audience response. Cf. p. 152.
  3. The expression wu-u-u-m! ideophonically portrays the stir caused by this momentous event: the diminutive Tortoise winning a wife (the most beautiful girl in the town, at that), where all other suitors had failed.

Anoli anodi be o no puha. (Spoken) Kpalanuma  
(Anoli emerged from where she was).  
Wua gbam! (Spoken) "  
(She jumped out gbam!)

From a comparison of the 'final' version above with other versions of this song already presented (pp.137ff ) it is clear that the line 'Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise, your husband' traditionally terminates this song and, not surprisingly, the audience's choric response, Kpalanuma, stopped at that point. But although Okohai received no response to his improvised line 'Tanda dada - a tanda dada - o', he immediately plunged into the next, 'My friend, Tortoise positioned himself for dancing'. The audience were clearly unprepared for this spoken and somewhat 'odd' line, and their reaction (largely one of silence) reflected their uncertainty, indeed lack of comprehension, in regard to Okohai's modus operandi here. Noticing the audience's discontinuation of the chorus, Okohai prompted them by singing, almost breathlessly,<sup>1</sup> Kpalanuma, after his utterance 'My friend, Tortoise positioned himself for dancing'. Members of the audience immediately took their cue, and their delight at Okohai's innovative injection of spoken lines into the solo was demonstrated by the renewed vigour and enthusiasm with which they then delivered the line Kpalanuma. Further comparison of the 'final' version above with the other versions

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1. Obviously, the concern of the artist here is with reintroducing the audience to their part, with minimum delay. It is important to achieve this without breaking the flow of the song, that is, the rhythm already established.

cited will show that Okohai has added over eleven lines to the traditional solo.

Clearly, Okohai differs from other narrators in that virtually all his performances are concluded by means of a 'final' version of the song which differs substantially from earlier versions, both in terms of the number of lines and the stepping up of the musical accompaniment. This constant use of a 'final' version further demonstrates that, more than other narrators, Okohai places special emphasis on the use of song and music. Okohai's 'final' versions provide him with further opportunity for demonstrating the range of his narrative technique, as his manner of concluding performances invariably involves a commingling of musical, narrative and dramatic elements. Such amplification of the musical aspects of his art considerably animates the audience, helping to give the conclusion of Okohai's performances its usual vigorous quality.

Especially when Okohai presents his 'dance scenes', the musical component of his performance is accentuated. He often urges his accompanists to play their instruments louder, and in one case he exhorts: 'Clap your hands, children' (p. 156). In Okohai's 'final' versions particularly, the choral, musical and narrative aspects of the performance augment one another, further heightening their individual impact.

As in the foregoing example from Tale 5, Okohai's 'final' version of the song in Tale 1 is also characterized

by the juxtaposition of sung and spoken lines.<sup>1</sup> Okohai incorporates the song at eight different points in his narration and all eight versions are almost identical.<sup>2</sup> In the 'final' (ninth), version, he embellishes the song considerably, achieving a much longer version by adding extra lines in the speech mode:

	Bia ene alu - o	
	Come and witness an	
Nkite, bia ene alu -o, (Sung)	outrage - o	
(Dog, come and witness		
an outrage - o),		
Mq̄bada, bia ene alu - o, (Sung)	"	
(Duiker, come and witness an		
outrage - o),		
Oka anyi kwu n'ugbo, (Sung)	"	
(The maize we planted on the		
farm),		
Awolo anwuanu a tasia. (Sung)	"	
(Leopard has consumed it all).		
Noofu ka ife si ari nu, (Spoken)	"	
(That indeed is how things happen),		
Onye eme, o lo na wa afu-na a. (Spoken)"		
(One does something evil, thinking		
nobody is watching).		
Ife onye me ya eme e. (Spoken)	"	
(What one does (to others) they		
also do to one).		
Bei ka oka anyi sizi -o?(Spoken)	"	
(What has become of our maize?),		

"

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1. In this tale Leopard plunders the animals' farm; his action is impudent in the extreme, considering his earlier refusal to co-operate with the animals in the task of clearing the new farmlands. Confronted by the animals who demand an end to his marauding trips to the farm, Leopard characteristically subjects them to a reign of terror. A great number of the aggrieved animals are pounded to death, but Dog eventually calls a halt to the aggressor's strong-arm tactics; this almost self-effacing character actually overwhelms the powerful Leopard.

2. Throughout his narration, Okohai had presented the 'standard' version comprising the following lines: 'Bushcow, come and witness an outrage - o'/'Duiker, come and witness an outrage - o'/'The maize that we planted on the farm'/'Leopard has consumed it all'/'The yams that we planted on the farm'/'Leopard has eaten it all'/'The sugar-cane we planted on the farm'/'Leopard has chewed it all'/'O-h-o... come and witness an outrage'.

Bia ene alu - o  
 Come and witness an  
 outrage - o  
 Awolo anwuanu a tasia - o (Sung) "  
 (Leopard has consumed it all - 'o)  
 Ji anyi gbu n'ugbo, (Sung) "  
 (The yam we planted on the farm),  
 Awolo anwuanu a ri sie. (Sung) "  
 (Leopard has consumed it all).  
 Ofu onye aya-emegbu mmadu ncha. (Spoken) "  
 (An individual cannot cheat everybody).  
 Ofu onye aya-egbu uwa ncha nu. (Spoken) "  
 (An individual cannot kill the whole  
 world, indeed).  
 Awolo asi na ya nwe ume, (Spoken) "  
 (Leopard claims that he has great strength)  
 Nkite aba ju nu. (Sung) "  
 (But Dog refuses indeed).  
 O-h-o... bia ene alu - o. (Sung) "  
 (O-h-o... come and witness an outrage).

Tale 92 provides the next example. One of the songs in this tale consists of one line, repeated any number of times and followed by a second line, repeated any number of times. This is the traditional text which Okohai presents at the point where the maligned co-wife ( see p. 146) is about to get her revenge:

The first to offend does a little thing	Does a little
(eight times)	thing
Revenge brings no quarrel (four times)	"
The first to offend does a little thing	"
(four times).	

This version may be compared with the 'final' version which is not only remarkably longer, but also typically features the mixed mode:

	Me nke nta
	- o Does a
	little "
O bulu uzo me me nke nta,	thing
(The first (to offend) does a little	
thing) <sup>1</sup>	
O bulu uzo me me nke nta,	"
(Sung)	

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1 O bulu uzo me me nke nta (literally, 'He who does first does a little thing'). This proverb corresponds roughly to 'having the last laugh' or the saying 'He laughs best that laughs last'.



	Me nke nta - o	
	Does a little	
O bulu uzo me me nke nta,	(Sung)	thing
O bulu uzo me me nke nta.	( " )	
Omu, ndi ani eteme egwu,	(Spoken)	"
(My friend, the townspeople took to dancing),		
Okpoho nwe abuma abu nu,	( " )	"
(Indeed the woman began to sing),		
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o.	(Sung)	"
(The first to offend does a little thing - o).		
Ikpoho umu ada abuma abu,	(Spoken)	"
(The women began to sing),		
Itu okwelegwe ekweme abu,	( " )	"
(The <u>okwelegwe</u> age group responded to the song),		
Mmadu ncha ekweme abu,	(Spoken)	"
(Everybody began to respond to the song),		
Si yabu okpoho,	( " )	"
(Saying to the very woman),		
Na ezi-okwu ka o bu nu,	( " )	"
(It is very true indeed),		
Na iy <sup>u</sup> bu uzo me nu,	( " )	"
(You were actually the first to offend),		
Onu ite nke nkiti.	( " )	"
(Just because the neck of a broken pot),		
Ka wa wetie oji, ya ka i si gbue oji	( " )	"
(Was put around the kola nut tree, you cut down an entire tree)		
O ba lue nwe nke i,	( " )	"
(Now that it is your turn),		
I ba rioma nwa Chukwu na enu uwa	( " )	"
eme i,		
(You begin pleading to God, saying that people have treated you wrongly), <sup>2</sup>		
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o,	(Sung)	"
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o,	( " )	"
(The first to offend does a little thing - o).		
(Akwonu aka... umundu)	(Spoken)	"
(Clap your hands, children) <sup>1</sup>		
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o - iya - o,	(Sung)	"
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o - iya - o,	( " )	"
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o - iya - o,	( " )	"
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o - iya - o,	( " )	"
(The first... little thing - yes - o).		
Me m megwai aya-ese okwu - o,	( " )	"

1 The word 'children' is not to be taken literally. It simply represents a manner of speech chosen here by Okohai to assert, jocularly, his seniority over even some adult members of his audience.

2 One more line : Enu uwa ya me i (Spoken)  
(Yes, let people treat you wrongly).

	Me nka nta
	- o Does a
Me m megwai aya-ese okwu - o,	(Sung) little thing
Me m megwai aya-ese okwu - o.	( " ) " "
(Revenge brings no quarrel (that is, 'Revenge is justified').	
O bulu uzo me me nke nta - o - o - o	
(twice).	( " ) " "

Tale 94 provides our fourth example. Okocha, the main character in this tale, comes to a tragic end, over-reaching himself by violating a contract requiring him to provide for his concubine. At three different points in his narrative Okohai incorporates the traditional four-line song:

Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e,	Iyo - o - yo
Okocha kwelu nkwa na o me-ne e - o,	"
(Okocha made a promise he never kept),	"
Ya kwulu okwu na o kwuhe-ne e,	"
(He said something without meaning it),	"
Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e.	"

In the concluding sections of the tale, Okocha's concubine takes her revenge and at this point Okohai embellishes the song by the interpolation of spoken lines:

Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e,	(Sung)	Iyo - o - yo
Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e,	( " )	"
Unu afu-na ife me na ikpazu nu?	(Spoken)	"
(Do you not see what happened at last?),		
A si m na ya bu uzo cho okwu.	( " )	"
(I say he was the first to ask for trouble).		
Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e,	(Sung)	"
Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e,	( " )	"
I fu-na ka o si je n'ikpazu nu?	(Spoken)	"
(Do you not see what eventually became of him?),		
Okocha kwelu nkwa na o me-ne e - o,	(Sung)	"
(Okocha made a promise ne never kept),		
Ya kwulu okwu na o kwuhe-ne e,	(Sung)	"
(He said something without meaning it),		
Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e,	(Sung)	"
Onye bu uzo me ibe e,	(Spoken)	"
(The first to offend his fellow man),		

Ya si wa megwai ya nu. (Spoken) Iyo - o - yo  
 (Has asked to be hurt).  
 Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e, (Sung) "  
 Okocha - e - Okocha - e - a - e. ( " ) "

Okohai generally restricts his use of the mixed mode to traditional songs and in this respect, our fifth and final example (from Tale 93) constitutes an exception. It is the only 'personal' song in which he employs the mixed mode, and also the only example in the corpus of a 'personal' song which has a chorus. Before inserting his first spoken line, Okohai sings the first line of the solo (which also constitutes the chorus) six times, presumably to establish the rhythm of the solo-and-response pattern. Not only does he render the solo as well as the chorus on this occasion, he simultaneously signals to the audience to take up the chorus. Having thus established the rhythm, Okohai inserts the spoken line 'My friend, Tortoise took the dance this way', while the audience maintain the chorus throughout his performance of the song:

		O maika amazina <sup>1</sup> He who knew too much...
O maika amazina - (six times)	(Sung)	nothing
(He who knew too much now knows nothing),		
Ewo!, o maika amazina - e - e.	( " )	"
(Oh!, he who knew too much... nothing).		
Omu, mbekwu ewe egwu si be ni,	(Spoken)	"
(My friend, Tortoise took the dance this way),		
Umu a ewe e si be ni,	( " )	"
(His children took it this way),		

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1 O maika amazina (Enuani proverb; literally 'The one who knew too much does not know now'), stresses the 'trickster-tricked' theme. The highly conceited Leopard is outwitted by Tortoise, a much smaller and less powerful animal. The idea that the latter outmanoeuvres Leopard forms the basis of Okohai's 'personal' song in Tale 93.

		O maika amazina He who knew too much...
Omu, wa ete e, wa edede we. (My friend, they danced, they embraced one another).	(Spoken)	nothing
Umu anumanu ezue nke pitim - m - m. (All the animals turned up <u>pitim</u> ( <u>en masse</u> ))	( " )	"
Omu, wa ekwewe abu so e, (My friend, they accompanied him, singing),	( " )	"
O maika amazina - o,	(Sung)	"
O maika amazina - o,	( " )	"
À si m na: o maika amazina nu - o (I say that he who knew too much now knows nothing indeed).	(Spoken)	"
Piti piti piti pi	(Sung)	"
Ti - ti - ti - i - i,	( " )	"
Tikin tikin tikin ti.	( " )	"
Ewo Awolo amaizia o, (Oh, Leopard now knows nothing),	( " )	"
I funa, onye meke iha, o me onwe e? (Do you not see that when you harm others too often, you also harm yourself?).	(Spoken)	"
I funa na Awolo amaizia? (Do you not see; Leopard now knows nothing?).	( " )	"
Ife onye ma anya a, ya na-egbue - o (The clever one gets caught in an 'easy' situation).	( " )	"
O maika amazina nu - o. (Indeed he who knew too much now knows nothing).	(Sung)	"
Ewo, Awolo amaizina - o (twice) (Oh, Leopard now knows nothing).	( " )	"

From our five examples it is clear that Okohai's 'final' renditions, especially those couched in the song-cum-speech mode are often more elaborate than versions of the 'same' song which occur earlier in the performance. In the 'final' version in Tale 94, for example, Okohai adds five spoken lines to the four lines of the standard text, and by also repeating some of the traditional lines, he achieves a fourteen-line version (p.157). An earlier version of the song created by Okohai in Tale 93 has ten

lines whereas the final version (pp.158-9) runs to nineteen lines. In an earlier version, he repeats the standard two-line song in Tale 92 several times while, in contrast, the final version (pp.155/6) has no fewer than twenty-eight lines. When the texts of these earlier and 'final' versions are placed side by side, it is readily seen that a substantial number of lines in the latter versions do not appear in the former. It is noteworthy too that no earlier versions, indeed, traditional songs in our corpus consist of as many as twenty-eight lines.

#### 6.4 Speech mode lines: function

We have been concerned so far with the form of Okohai's mixed mode songs. Before proceeding to a consideration of the functions of the interpolated, spoken lines, however, it is necessary to consider some comment made by Okohai himself. Questioned on his use of the mixed mode, he emphasized his concern with producing enjoyable performances:

Some of the people who come to listen to my tales say they like them on account of the akpa okwu 'fat words'<sup>1</sup> which I include. But they all say they enjoy my songs... they make people happy... So in this way [by means of the mixed mode] I 'beautify' the songs ka m si edokwama a, making them exciting and interesting. (Tape 12).

Here Okohai has given a typical answer, drawn from what seems to be a communal repertoire of responses. When Enuani narrators are questioned on their use of a

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1. Akpa okwu 'fat words' refers to the exaggerated personal details with which the Enuani narrator strives to spice his narration and thus render it more interesting. This subject is discussed fully in Chapter 9.

particular narrative convention, they invariably cite their desire to entertain as their chief objective: ime ka o soa uso 'to make it (the tale) interesting'. Narrators can give an overall opinion on a performance without being able to analyze it in any detail.<sup>1</sup> (Admittedly, it is the researcher's, not the narrator's, responsibility to dissect a given artistic device). And even in written literature there would be poor literary criticism or no literary criticism at all if an author's explication concerning his use, or non-use, of a particular stylistic device were accepted as the last word on the subject. As Leech (1969: 60) points out, for example, '... a poet is usually shy of explaining "what he meant" when he wrote a given poem'. This raises the whole question of intentionality and unintentionality in literary or artistic composition, the consideration of which however lies outside the scope of our discussion here.

Rather, we are concerned with probing beyond Okohai's answer which obviously does not shed much light on his use of the mixed mode. While the device is particularly illustrative of Okohai's originality, it also raises the crucial question of why the speech mode should be used at all in place of the expected song mode. The song mode is usually regarded as giving an extra dimension to a text, raising it beyond the resources of ordinary speech. In presenting the points of high tension in his tale, that is, in seeking to heighten the emotional impact of the

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1 Chapter 9 examines what sort of literary criticism exists.

narration, an accomplished story-teller is likely to abandon the speech mode and rise to the level of song.<sup>1</sup>

Because Okohai seems to violate this principle, doing the exact opposite in his 'final' versions of songs, it is possible to argue, on the face of it, that the use of spoken solo lines detracts from the force of the performance, that is, lowers its emotional impact. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with demonstrating that the contrary is actually the case and that Okohai's speech mode lines are, instead, particularly effective, and enhance the performance. Some preliminary questions present themselves: Does the mixed mode serve any other purpose than that of entertainment? If so, what purposes? If, as Okohai has explained, entertainment constitutes its primary objective, by what other means does the mixed mode achieve this purpose?

As already indicated, a comparison of the 'final' versions and the other versions by which they are preceded in the performance reveals the presence in the former versions, of additional, non-traditional lines - all of which are in the speech mode. The ideophonic lines Tidim tidi ti / Tidim ti - ti - ti - i (p. 157) and Piti piti pi / Ti - ti - ti - i - i / Tikin tikin tikin ti (p.159 ) constitute the only examples of extra lines which violate

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1 A performer of Okohai's status is certainly aware of the potentialities of the song mode. It has already been shown (pp. 121ff) that Okohai displays this awareness, improvising songs at some points at which he considers the resources of ordinary speech inadequate, that is, at points at which no songs occur in the tale as performed by other narrators.

this pattern,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, although they are 'personal' lines, they were actually sung, not spoken. A plausible explanation for this would seem to be that in these instances Okohai's concern is with conveying the sound of singing and music which, it stands to reason, may be more appropriately presented in the song mode. It is also possible that Okohai is employing the ideophonic lines here as 'fillers', in the same manner as a traditional poet sometimes introduces formulas to allow himself time to think of his next lines in the process of narrative composition.

Apparent in several aspects of Okohai's work is the overwhelming importance which he attaches to the didactic potentiality of tales. Next to his creative use of song and music, this frequent attention to the didactic element is perhaps the feature which most distinguishes his performances from those of other Enuani story-tellers. As the next chapter will also demonstrate, the concern with didacticism permeates Okohai's performances. It is argued here that Okohai considers the incorporation of spoken solo lines a useful device for emphasizing the moral of the tale. Before this argument is pursued further, however, it is necessary to place the mixed mode within a wider context by providing some theoretical discussion to illuminate Okohai's use of the device.

#### 6.4.1 'Foregrounding' and the Russian Formalist school

We have already mentioned the dominance of the

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1 See, also, the two lines Kwe kwe kwe kwe - o (p.151) improvised by Okohai to describe the excited Tortoise 'grabbing' at his new wife, Anoli.



historical-geographical approach in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century and examined, too, the work of Propp, a member of the Russian Formalist school which brought together such scholars as Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Boris Eikhenbaum, and Yuri Tynyanov. It is not the intention here to go into a detailed consideration<sup>1</sup> of the tenets of this school, but it is necessary to note their rejection of the historical-geographical approach, in favour of a formal study of literature. More importantly, their efforts were geared towards the elevation of the field of literary study, that is, to making literature an independent discipline, rather than, as was then the case, an appendage and by-product of such subjects as history, philosophy, anthropology, ethnology and sociology.

Russian Formalism insisted on the literariness of literature; literature was defined in terms of those properties which set it apart from other materials and modes of discourse, written or verbal. Jakobson (1921), the best known spokesman of the Russian Formalist school in the West, declares that literariness ('literaturnost') or 'that which makes a certain work into a literary work' constitutes the overriding object of the study of literature while, in the words of Eikhenbaum (1965.102), the

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1. For further information on such aspects as the history, theoretical viewpoints and contributions to literary theory of the Formalist school, see Erlich (1955), Lemon and Reis (eds., 1965), Scholes (1974), Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (1977), Jefferson and Robey (eds., 1982).

foremost Formalist concern 'is not how to study literature but what the subject matter of literary study actually is'. Central to the idea of literature being constituted or defined by those features which distinguish it from other material is Shklovsky's concept of 'defamiliarization', 'making strange' or 'making new' (ostranenie); which contrasts with automatization, in other words, a distinction is drawn between what we as individuals have become accustomed to in everyday life and the artist's distortion of such familiar material for some novel, aesthetic effect. The contribution of the Russian Formalists lay most in poetry and prose narratives<sup>1</sup> and their concern with the literary characteristics of a text meant that great emphasis was placed on poetic language (this is in fact reflected in Opojaz; the full title of the Leningrad branch, 'The Society for the Study of Poetic Language'). Shklovsky, for example, emphasizes the 'making strange', 'oblique', 'tortuous', 'difficult' of everyday language by poetry.<sup>2</sup>

Although political events brought about the end of Russian Formalism in 1930, its ideas were substantially taken up, and also developed by the Prague Linguistic Circle. Robey (1982.43) points out '... the Formalists' influence has owed a great deal to the shape that the

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1. Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (1977.17) note the Formalists' attention to 'the way in which the various episodes of a story are connected', that is, their concern with distinguishing 'the main constructive factors in a literary work'. A distinction was drawn between the events of the narrative and the way in which they were constructed. Cf. for example, the Formalists' concept of fabula (described by Shklovsky (1921.297) as 'the description of the events'), used in contradistinction to that of sjuzet, 'plot, narrative structure'.
  2. See Jefferson and Robey (eds.), 1982, pp. 19-20 for some of Shklovsky's illustrations to define the notion of ostranenie 'making strange'

Prague School gave to their theory...'.<sup>1</sup>

While, as already seen, the notion of 'defamiliarization' (especially in language) figured prominently in Russian Formalist thought, Jan Mukařovský (1891-1975), the major spokesman of the Prague School, advanced the theory of aktualisace, translated by Paul Garvin (1964) as 'foregrounding'. Mukařovský has expressed a variety of theoretical ideas - structural, linguistic, aesthetic - in his numerous writings,<sup>1</sup> but our concern here is with foregrounding, defined by him in the following terms:

Foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is the deautomatization of an act; the more an act is automatized, the less it is consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded, the more completely conscious does it become. Objectively speaking: automatization schematizes an event; <sup>2</sup> foregrounding means the violation of the scheme.

Another Prague scholar, Bohuslav Havránek (196 .10) defines the principle of foregrounding thus: '... we mean the use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention and is perceived as uncommon, as deprived of automatization, as deautomatized,...'.

For Mukařovský, the poet must of necessity deviate from the norm, or more specifically the standard use of language as perceived by his society. The possibilities and importance of foregrounding are apparent from Mukařovský's assertion that without such 'intentional distortion' of the standard language, in other words, 'the intentional violation of the norm of the standard',

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1 See, for example, Mukařovský (1964), (1970) and (1977).

2 Mukařovský (1964.43).

there would be no poetry. Mukařovský's phrase, 'norm of the standard' is very crucial, one may add, to the concept of foregrounding and recurs frequently in his article, 'Standard language and poetic language' (trans. Garvin, 1964).

Wellek and Warren (1949.242) rightly point out the element of novelty which is indeed a by-product of 'defamiliarization', a term which, as already seen, ranks highly in Formalist literary theory. But then Wellek and Warren go on to assert that, according to Mukařovský, there is no aesthetic norm 'for it is the essence of the aesthetic norm to be broken' (p. 242). But clearly, Mukařovský emphasizes that a work of art achieves its effect largely due to the artist's deliberate distortion or 'systematic violation' of the norm.

Mukařovský also makes the point that

The more the norm of the standard is stabilized in a given language, the more varied can be its violation, and therefore the more possibilities for poetry in that language. And on the other hand, the weaker the awareness of this norm, the fewer possibilities of violation, and hence the fewer possibilities for poetry. (1964.42).

However, no matter how stabilized the norms are in Enuani society (in other words, the narrators' awareness of the norms), it will be argued later that only a handful of accomplished narrators such as Okohai give some thought to, or deliberately and explicitly engage in, such violation which Mukařovský regards as 'the very essence of poetry'. This by no means contradicts the initial thesis that even while sticking faithfully to the traditional plot, Enuani narrators have scope for creativity in the area of

style.

The technique of foregrounding (a term used by Mukařovský and other linguists of the Czech school) is widely recognized as occupying a prominent place in the process of artistic communication and composition. Moser (1974), for example, is devoted to a Malian bard's use of the device and one chapter of this work treats of 'phonological foregrounding',<sup>1</sup> exploring the defamiliarizing<sup>iz</sup> potentiality of such poetic devices as alliteration, assonance, repetition and rhyme. The foregrounding of phonic elements is of course an integral part of several poetic traditions, Malian, Russian, Czech, Enuani or English. Shklovsky (1965.19) points out the prominence in Leo Jakubinsky's poetry of 'hard-to-pronounce conglomerations of similar sounds'.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the mellifluous quality of such lines as 'And the sails did sigh like sedge;' and 'The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,/The furrow followed free;'<sup>3</sup> cannot be lost on a reader.

Mukařovský (1964) is certainly right in pointing out that foregrounding is also common in standard (as opposed to poetic) language, noting that in the former, however, '... it is always subordinate to communication: its purpose is to attract the reader's (listener's) attention

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1. Cf. his 'conceptual foregrounding' which the artist employs to make '... the listener aware of a word or passage for the sake of its meaning...' (p. 11).
  2. Jefferson and Robey (eds., 1982.30).
  3. From *S.T. Coleridge's* 'The rime of the Ancient Mariner' (lines 319, 103 and 104 respectively).

more closely to the subject matter expressed by the foregrounded means of expression' (p. 43).

In addition to standard language, we may also mention such other areas as journalistic writing, persuasive, or political speech. This extract, for example,

... we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender,...<sup>1</sup>

consists largely of foregrounded material. It in fact compares with the oral artist's 'repetitive' style (the style of the narrator Mbuliche (pp.17ff) may be recalled here). But although the passage may strike one as repetitive, it reveals the presence of a speaker consciously and deliberately endeavouring to underline his message. Even this short excerpt from a speech reveals the prominence of such features as repetition, parallelism and listing, devices by means of which virtually every phrase is made to provoke special notice. The heightened use of the entire syntactic unit 'we shall fight', coupled with the continued substitution or 'shifting' of locations ('on the seas, on the beaches, on the landing grounds, in the fields, in the hills, in France') effectively communicates the message of a 'total war' or of 'fighting to a finish'.

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1 From Winston Churchill's speech, delivered in the House of Commons, June 4, 1940.

6.5 Use of speech mode lines as a 'foregrounding' device

This section attempts to show the applicability of the foregoing theoretical discussion to our Enuani material. For this purpose, some of the questions already posed (p. 162) are reiterated, albeit in a slightly different form: If, as is the contention here, Okohai's overriding concern is with giving prominence to the moral thrust of the tale, could not this objective be achieved without recourse to the interpolation of spoken lines in the solo? Why does Okohai not as a rule incorporate his statement of the moral in the narrative passages of the tale, in the manner of every other narrator?

In this regard, Okohai's concern with 'making strange' some of his materials is apparent. By employing the speech mode for lines where the song mode would be expected, Okohai is foregrounding those lines. Thus the use of speech in a song is a defamiliarizing technique and a deliberate deviation from 'the norm of the standard'. Clearly, the artist cannot exercise his creative capacity in vacuo; a background must be presumed and the background against which Okohai introduces his innovation is the song. Okohai violates the norm not only by wrenching his statement of the moral from the narrative parts of the tale and transferring it to the song, but also by bringing within the compass of a single song, two modes of vocalization normally perceived as operating in an 'unmixed' capacity. While tales certainly 'switch unconcernedly from speech to song and vice versa' (Whiteley (1964.2)), each mode of vocalization is employed independently and in a 'sustained'

manner, that is to say, there exist clear-cut demarcations, denoting points in the tale where one mode traditionally terminates, or is superseded, and the tale changes to the other. It is for this reason that the other narrators do not employ both modes concurrently, as Okohai has been shown to in his mixed mode songs.

By means of the speech mode inside the song, Okohai foregrounds and makes strange the statement of the moral, thus making the audience especially aware of it. It must be remembered that the audience have become familiar with these tales through hearing them frequently. It is reasonable to assert that, in consequence, the audience's awareness of the moral lessons may be somewhat dulled. Wellek and Warren (1949.235) are certainly correct in declaring that 'the totally familiar and repetitive pattern is boring...' Plainly, the expert narrator grasps this fact; it is useless for the run-of-the-mill story-teller to attempt grasping it, hindered as he is by lack of the creative capacity to break away from the habitual, that is, deviate deliberately from the norm, an imaginative exercise to which the accomplished performer is accustomed.

Every Enuani narrator is aware of the great importance attached to the statement of the moral. Even when, as is often the case, the moral point of the tale is obvious and commonplace, the narrator is customarily expected to state it in explicit terms at the conclusion of the performance. Influenced by, and highly conscious of, the traditional emphasis on the moral implication of the tale, Okohai has clearly displayed his status as an accomplished



artist, creating a device for presenting this important aspect of the tale in a refreshingly new manner. It is his 'making strange' of the moral that gives it a novel, fresh impact. Okohai's mixture of the song and speech modes invariably generates an enthusiastic response and such response, certainly, is attributable to the newness and uncommonness of the device. In virtually every form of artistic communication the elements of freshness and novelty are central to the overall effectiveness of a work. In everyday life, a joke loses its capacity for amusement unless the teller effectively introduces into it some element of 'freshness'. As Wellek and Warren point out, 'Our response to trite, stock language is a "stock response", either action along familiar grooves or boredom. We 'realize' the words and what they symbolize only when they are freshly and startlingly put together' (p. 242).

That oratory occupies a lofty position in the hierarchy of Igbo verbal arts has long been recognized.<sup>1</sup> And in Enuani oratory, one of the elements to which the audiences respond strongly is the speaker's use of proverbs, truisms or observations on life. Indeed one of the foremost criteria by which a speaker may be judged is the extent to which he is able to employ these ingredients. With observations concerning retributive justice such as those noted already, Okohai is clearly seeking to include reflections on ethical standards which appeal to his

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1 See, for e.g., Green (1948.841), Achebe (1964*d.viii*) and Finnegan (1970.23).

listeners.

It may be argued that Okohai's inclusion in his songs of proverbial expressions, that is, lines which he did not compose himself (or which he has adapted) such as '... when you harm others too often, you also harm yourself'/'The clever one gets caught in an 'easy' situation' (p.159 ) or 'What one does (to others) they also do to one' (p.154 ) detracts from his merit as an innovative narrator. Such argument is irrelevant, for what matters is Okohai's communicative objective, namely to impress the moral of the tale on the audience. Even more important is the fact that the lines, which are all spoken, achieve this effect by 'sticking out' of their background, the song.

Because some of the lines are common in everyday speech, there is a tendency for them to lose their appeal. But because they 'incongruously' and surprisingly crop up, in, and rub shoulders with, (as well as contrast with) the sung lines, they compel our attention far more than would normally be the case in ordinary conversation. In the different examples Okohai skilfully demands that we contemplate such lines. It may be countered that a 'live' audience has neither the time nor the energy to engage in reflections or weigh the import of the lines, but this is not necessarily the case. As already pointed out, Shklovsky, for example, speaks of art as a phenomenon which makes 'the stone stony' and further points out that '... the device of art is the device of making things strange and the device of the impeded form, which enlarges the difficulty and the length of the perception...' (1965 .15).

The above passage will be none the worse if we substitute 'contemplation' for Shklovsky's ('length of the') 'perception'. While Okohai's 'odd' speech mode lines may enlarge 'the difficulty of perception', they are at the same time set apart; thus they provoke special notice and the curiosity of the listeners.

As already seen, Okohai applies the mixed mode device exclusively (with one exception) to traditional songs, rather than to songs of his own creation. The reason for Okohai's preference here seems clear enough: whereas traditional songs are 'made strange' by the interpolation of spoken lines, songs of his own composition are new, a fact which for him precludes the necessity of 'making them strange'.

Havránek, Mukařovský, Jakobson and other scholars of the pre-war Prague School focussed on defamiliarization and foregrounding in the area of language and, as is argued here, Okohai's speaking of lines within a song is a means of foregrounding them. In this manner, the lines clearly contribute to the total effectiveness of the song, indeed of the performance. There does not occur in Okohai's performances, any 'organized violence committed on ordinary speech' (Erich 1955.219) nor does the distortion of 'the linguistic components of the work' (Mukařovský 1964.42) by any means constitute an essential feature of his art. Okohai's foregrounding does not consist in the use, for example, of unusual collocations, nor does he engage in any semantic deviations. For this reason, we can call attention to an interesting difference

by contrasting the Formalists' and Prague School's concentration on text with our concern here with performance, or more specifically mode of vocalization. It is even more interesting that while such features as assonance and end-rime which are associated with Western verse, or metaphor and simile which are found in different literary modes of discourse in virtually every society may be described as 'established', Okohai's manner of 'making strange' is 'personal' and unique to him. By emphasizing through 'making strange', a familiar, indeed 'common' aspect of the performance, Okohai consciously and deliberately distorts, as Mukařovský would say, 'the norm of the standard' which obtains in his society. As indicated, too, the impact of Okohai's deliberate deviation from the norm lies in its novelty. But as Wellek and Warren correctly point out, 'Men's pleasure in a literary work is compounded of the sense of novelty and the sense of recognition' (p. 235). For the Enuani audiences who always enjoy Okohai's performances, both elements - the new and the old - are present in the mixed mode.

#### 6.5.1 Speech mode lines: content

This section examines some of the spoken lines with a view to establishing their overall functions in Okohai's work, in other words, to support the argument that Okohai employs the speech mode inside the song to give special emphasis to the moral of the tale. An examination of the song texts reveals that the defamiliarized lines usually comprise statements of the moral, or general truths based on the action in a given tale. The opening line of the

'personal' song 'He who knew too much...' occurs three times in an earlier version while Okohai opens his 'final' version (p.158 ) by singing this line six times. More importantly, he introduces such lines as 'I say that he who knew too much<sup>^</sup>indeed' and 'Do you not see; Leopard now knows nothing?'. Although these lines are variations of the line sung six times previously, they are now put in the speech mode, in order to emphasize the notion of nemesis. Okohai's combination of sung and spoken lines goes well with the increased musical accompaniment as Tortoise celebrates the disastrous end to which the unscrupulous Leopard has come, while the repetition further underlines the reality of retributive justice, an idea central to the plot of Tale 93.

The notion that retribution invariably catches up with the evil, the aggressive, the dishonest or malevolent, while the kind, the brave, the patient or tolerant are certain to reap some reward is the moral most favoured by Okohai; it is a message enunciated by a high proportion of his spoken lines.<sup>1</sup> An examination of the mixed mode song (p.157 ) from Tale 94 shows that such lines as 'Do you not see what happened at last?'/ 'Do you not see what eventually became of him?' - all of which are in the speech mode - variously propound this theme, while alluding to the character Okocha's tragic end, provoked by his continued deception of his concubine. While the moral

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1. Even in tales in which Okohai does not employ the mixed mode, this moral is still a constant. Cf. the conclusion of Tales 5 and 95, for instance.

that Okocha is solely responsible for his own doom may be implicit in the tale, Okohai the teacher draws the attention of his listeners to this fact by means of the last two speech mode lines 'The first to offend his fellow man' /'Has asked to be hurt' which he introduces into this song. And while not explicitly expressing this pervasive theme, the line 'I say he was the first to ask for trouble' can also be interpreted as pointing to the inescapability of Okocha's fate.

Further-evidence that Okohai's incorporation of spoken lines is governed by his concern with indicating the moral thrust of his tale is found in Tale 93. The speech mode lines 'Do you not see; when you harm others too often, you also harm yourself?'/ 'The clever one gets caught in an "easy" situation'<sup>1</sup> (p. 159) echo a situation in this tale, namely Leopard's persistent plans to eliminate Tortoise which eventually miscarry, indeed unexpectedly provoke Leopard's death. Okohai's spoken line '... when you harm others too often, you also harm yourself', like several others, is an observation on life and is comparable to two already seen; 'The first to offend his fellow man' / 'Has asked to be hurt', as well as another, 'What one

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1 Ife onye ma anya a, ya na-egbu e (literally, 'That which one knows (or has mastered) extremely well kills one') expresses the idea of overreaching oneself, in other words, that a compulsive wrongdoer is eventually exposed, disgraced or killed, in spite of his initial success. Leopard sets a series of traps (for Tortoise) with, in his own estimation, some measure of success. But soon, Leopard's luck runs out, for in an apparently easy situation, Tortoise gets the better of him.

does (to others) they also do to one'. All four lines show that, at first glance, some of the observations seem to be highly paradoxical, but the outcome of the tales clearly demonstrates the validity of the assertions expressed by Okohai's spoken lines.

Again, all but two of the lines in the speech mode (song on p.155 ) are observations on life. As in the other tales, Okohai introduces 'relevant' observations, that is to say, they are based on striking incidents in the particular tale. The lines 'An individual cannot cheat everybody'/'An individual cannot cheat the whole world' involve a reference to Leopard's extraordinary attempt to subjugate all the other animals. The reign of terror unleashed on the animals by Leopard is unremitting and in fact seems destined to continue indefinitely, as the animals are attacked and killed in rapid succession. But as Okohai comments, 'An individual cannot kill the whole world', for although Leopard has for so long 'cheated the whole world', he is eventually but unexpectedly overwhelmed by Dog, hitherto presumed by the other animals to be of a non-aggressive disposition. The line 'One does something evil, thinking nobody is watching' is also an allusion to Leopard's delusion that the other animals can neither discover his thieving trips to their farm, nor mount an attack of any consequence. The style of the lines here is straightforward, their truth immediately plain, and thus they contrast with some of Okohai's other spoken lines, which, as already seen, appear to be paradoxical.

In the song in Tale 92, Okohai creates the following lines: 'You were actually the first to offend'/'Now that it is your turn'/'You begin pleading... people have treated you wrongly' (p.156 ) which leave the audience in no doubt about his reaction to the evil co-wife's pleas. In the last-mentioned line particularly, Okohai assumes the role of judge, condemning the woman and indeed reaffirming the 'sentence' already implicit in the narrative action. One interesting feature of Okohai's art which will be considered in the next chapter is the way in which he subtly 'enforces' his opinions on the audience. By means of some of his comments he manipulates and moulds the audience's reaction to some remarkable event in the tale.

We have so far attempted to show that the spoken solo lines are incorporated for the purpose of reflecting and commenting on the tale, and, more importantly, for emphasizing its moral. All the lines referred to here further attest Okohai's predilection for stressing the notion of retributive justice in his conclusions. It is almost as if he is preoccupied with 'teaching', by means of his speech mode lines, that 'the soul that sinneth shall die'. Prominent among the lines which echo this biblical theme are 'What one does (to others) they also do to one' (p. 154 ), 'The first to offend his fellow man'/'Has asked to be hurt' (p.157/8) and '... when you harm others too often, you also harm yourself' (p. 159).

Further support for the argument that the speech mode lines are employed to drive home the message may be found in the fact that Okohai has recourse to the speaking



of lines within a song only in the concluding stages of the tale, the point at which narrators are expected to underline the moral. Thus while other narrators incorporate a moral at this point, Okohai also introduces a new dimension, employing sung and spoken solo lines in conjunction with music and dance to comment on the tale and emphasize its moral. Concluding Tale 94, Okohai in fact incorporates the following moral: 'Do you see now... that a man who attempts to cheat others eventually cheats himself? Did Okocha know that his concubine had consulted a medicine-man?... in the end Okocha was caught out and made to pay for his sins'. But even after pointing the moral here like other narrators, Okohai does not terminate the performance at this point. Rather, he launches into the final version of the song (p. 158), introducing several additional lines designed also to underscore the moral of the tale.

#### 6.5.2 Song as recapitulation

Considerable attention has been given to Okohai's use of foregrounding for the obvious reason that it constitutes the heart of the mixed mode or, more specifically the spoken lines within the song. In response to the literary tradition of his society, Okohai conceives of every tale as potentially establishing some permanent truth of human existence, which he then attempts to transmit via the speaking of lines within a song. It can be shown that in addition to this primary function of the spoken lines, there is a second, even if less authoritative, one.

A feature of Okohai's work which is also pertinent to

an analysis of the mixed mode is his conclusion of nearly every performance with a recapitulation of the tale. The recapitulation may occur either in the 'final' version of the song, in the form of lines added in the speech mode by Okohai, or in the narrative itself. We are here considering only summaries in the final version of songs. The following lines can be seen as summarizing the entire narrative action in Tale 92: 'You were actually the first to offend'/'Just because the neck of a broken pot'/'Was put around the kola nut tree'/'You cut down an entire tree'/'Now that it is your turn'/'You begin pleading...'/ 'Yes, let people treat you wrongly' (p.156). It is noteworthy that Okohai utters these seven lines without an intervening sung line.

Such summaries in the 'final' version of a song commonly take the form of a 'celebration' to mark the triumph of a character. While handling the traditional plots with great fidelity, Okohai often manipulates the end of the tale by creating an extra scene to depict a character celebrating the outcome of the tale. The narrators of Tales 23 and 62 (p.140), for example, terminate their tales precisely at the point where Tortoise wins himself a bride. In contrast Okohai skilfully introduces the line 'Tortoise said, "You have never before seen anything like the dance I am going to do now!"' and then proceeds, in a mixture of the song and speech modes, to present a picture of the jubilant Tortoise dancing. Thus Okohai carries the action of the tale a step further than does either Obuzome or Adankwo.

Not only does Okohai depict the action of dancing

at the end of a tale when a character, especially the underdog, succeeds in resolving a difficult conundrum, triumphs or is vindicated, he also seems to 'celebrate' with the victorious character by sometimes breaking into a dance while performing the final version of a song. By presenting an account of the celebration and dancing, Okohai's lines in the speech mode carry forward the action of the tale in a sense. In the final version of the song in Tale 5 Okohai improvises the following lines which are concerned with describing the celebration and dance scene: 'My friends, Tortoise positioned himself for dancing'/'Tortoise danced this way'/'My friends, he flew round and round'/'Got to where Ada was, danced elegantly'/'Grabbed at Anoli' (p. 151). The final version of the song has eighteen lines, eight of which are sung and ten spoken.

Similar use of spoken solo lines to describe the 'extra' dance scene is also evident in Tale 92. Okohai focusses on the triumphant co-wife's dance by introducing such spoken lines as '... the townspeople took to dancing'/'Indeed the woman began to sing'/'The women began tossing'/'The okwelegwe age group responded to the song'/'Everybody began to respond to the song'/'Saying to the woman...' (p.156 ). The final version (p. 158) in Tale 93 also depicts a dance as Tortoise and his children celebrate the victory over Leopard. By improvising such lines in the speech mode as '... Tortoise took the dance this way'/'His children took it this way'/'They danced and embraced one another'/'All the animals turned up pitim'/'My friends, they accompanied him, singing', Okohai is clearly concerned

with describing the action in the 'extra' scene.

In conclusion, we have seen that, rather than lower the emotional impact of the performance (a possible counter-argument against speaking lines within a song), Okohai's spoken lines effectively perform the important function of making the moral of the tale particularly prominent. What has been said here regarding the inapplicability of any argument which considers the use of spoken lines within a song as lowering the impact of the performance also holds true for the summaries. It is emphasized that, like the various lines examined in the previous section, those cited here are also a foregrounded means of achieving a particular purpose (in the latter case, the recapitulation of the tale). Clearly, summaries are not noted for their emotional quality, nor are they normally associated with points of high tension in the tale. Whether the lines referred to in this section are concerned with summarizing the tale, or with describing specifically the action in Okohai's extra scene, they are all introduced at a point where the narrator is necessarily concerned with the resolution, not the climax of the tale. At such points, Okohai has well and truly gone past those points which may demand that he make an emotional impact on the audience.

## CHAPTER 7

### OKOHAI'S COMMENTS FROM THE 'OUTSIDE'

7.0 While the last two chapters have demonstrated Okohai's creative and unique handling of songs, this chapter considers another feature of his narrative technique which further distinguishes him from other Enuani narrators. Okohai should not be seen simply and solely as a storyteller, for his work displays a fascinating multifacetedness. In his story-telling we perceive the presence of a humorist, a poet and dramatist, a dancer and musician, a teacher and 'observer'.

#### 7.0.1 Narrative point of view

Certainly one of the most important questions in literary study is that of the relation of the artist to his work. In connection with the novel, Lubbock (1921:251) comments: 'The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of the point of view - the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story'. Tale performance may be considered as constituted by three major factors:

(A)

The narrator

(B)

The tale

(C)

The audience

In (B) we are dealing with a body of verbal materials which each member of the community exploits and organizes in an

individual manner. Implied in the representation above is a progression from one box to the next. More importantly, the question may be broached, By what means, or more specifically point of view does (A) endeavour to transmit (B) to (C)? To rephrase the question, Through whose words or 'eyes' are the various incidents and episodes of which the tale consists conveyed to the audience?

In some narrative traditions<sup>1</sup> it is not uncommon for the narrator to employ the first-person point of view, thus purporting to have witnessed, indeed participated in the events being recounted, perhaps in the capacity of a central character. Such recourse to the first person seems to be an exception rather than the rule, as the use of the third-person narrative viewpoint is certainly more widely encountered. For the purpose of our discussion here, the general question of the position taken by the story-teller vis-à-vis his story raises such subsidiary questions as Is the teller relating the tale in the first or in the third person, or from an 'omniscient' point of view? Is he detached from the action or does he 'participate'<sup>2</sup> in it (even though we are dealing with fictional narratives)? What is his attitude to the failings, triumphs, temperaments and personalities of the characters in the tale; is it one of approval, condemnation, sympathy, neutrality or detachment? Is the story-teller's attitude

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1 See, for example, Lindfors (ed.), 1977.137) and Cosentino (1982.pp 41 and 99). Cf., Finnegan (1967.95) who reports of a narrator that frequently referred 'to the way in which he himself was an eye-witness to the events he described, ...'

2 The word is used in a slightly different sense from the earlier use above; here it is to suggest some degree of 'involvement' in the events being described.

ascertainable only from his explicit comments? This chapter attempts to provide answers to such questions as the above by discussing some of the comments made by Okohai from time to time on the narrative. However, it is necessary to show first that a comment may be made in any one of three different forms: question, laughter, exclamation.

### 7.1 Okohai's questions

Sometimes, questions are an integral part of the narrative, occurring, for example, in dialogue. We are not concerned with such questions which in a sense belong to the dramatis personae and cannot be attributed to the individual narrators. Rather, we are here considering another category of questions, extraneous to the tale, and introduced by Okohai at various points. The generality of Enuani narrators do not have recourse to questions as a stylistic device per se.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, Okohai employs questions in a distinctive manner and, as argued here, for a specific artistic purpose, namely that of commenting on the tale. Okohai's interjection of comments couched in the interrogatory form is comparable to the use of annotation in the written medium, a means by which the author attempts either to facilitate the reader's task, or to

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1 Note, however that on introducing some cultural or historical detail (even such details as are clearly well-known), Okohai, like other narrators, tends to ask 'Do you know this or that ...?'. It is conventional for the audience to answer unanimously Mba! 'No!'. Such questions are asked not so that the narrator can know the answer, but so that he can answer them himself.

present his own objective analysis of a situation to the reader.

At the initial stages of his Tale 4, Okohai depicts the suffering and inhuman treatment to which the main character, an orphan girl, is continually subjected. Not only did her foster-parents take delight in beating her often,

... she was burdened with all manner of domestic work, labouring from morning till night. Even at night she was denied sleep ... After defecating, her foster-parents cleaned up on the poor girl's head or knees. They even grudged her the appalling food she ate; they devoured the best meat and threw bones on the floor for her to eat.

After this attempt to paint a poignant picture of the poor girl's plight, Okohai asks reflectively: 'Have you ever before seen such gross misfortune?', before proceeding with his narration. By means of his question Okohai not only reinforces his portrayal, but also highlights in an economical way the foster-parents' remarkable callousness which alone can account for their treating a mere child in such an abominable fashion. It is interesting and certainly not coincidental that immediately after his question, Okohai introduces a pause; it is a pregnant pause meant to allow the audience time enough to consider the question.

Tale 5 provides the next example of Okohai stepping out of his narrative role by means of questions on the part of the tale just delivered. Depicting Leopard's evil plan to procure food during a severe famine, Okohai relates that this character had expended considerable time and energy digging a trench which, if ingeniously covered with foliage,



constituted a potential grave for any unwary animals that may approach the spot. Leopard says to himself enthusiastically: 'Now I shall hide within a reasonable distance. Before any animal who is trapped struggles free, I shall pounce on the unfortunate one and make myself a delicious meal'. Pausing, and looking at the audience, Okohai then addresses them: 'My friends, do you see for yourselves what Leopard can do ... his machinations?'. Leopard's single-handed attempt to eliminate all other animals is a grave matter and Okohai adequately emphasizes this fact with his question. Although the audience are familiar with Leopard's high-handedness and violent disposition, the question is designed to prompt a particular reaction or attitude, namely that of a forthright condemnation of Leopard's action as inexcusable.

In Tale 94 Okohai describes the character Okocha's tricks to obtain sexual favours from his concubine and then addresses the audience: 'Do you know that all Okocha wanted was to sleep with her? Do you know that as soon as he succeeded, he absconded?' that is, without fulfilling his financial obligations to her. By means of the questions Okohai directs the audience's attention to Okocha's dominant character trait - dishonesty - which indeed proves his undoing in the end.

As already seen, Okohai commonly concludes his performances by offering a recapitulation or 'summary' at the end of the tale. Even after appending the closing formula, he sometimes returns to the tale, commenting on it in a quite elaborate manner, making prominent use of

questions in his summaries. Although Tale 95 was presented on the radio, without a 'live' audience, Okohai's synopsis was typically elaborate, featuring, too, a succession of three questions: 'Elelengwo ... do you know what is elelengwo? ... that is a penis. Have you ever heard that a penis can be purchased from the market place ...?'. Okohai's question implies a reference to the credulity and vanity of the Oba's beautiful wife who succumbs to Tortoise's flattery, allowing herself to be tricked into accepting the impossible assignment of purchasing a penis from the market. The third question, 'Do you now see Tortoise's clever ways?', draws attention to Tortoise's intellectual superiority over the Oba's wife and points to the moral that physical beauty may well belie a lack of mental alertness.

In Tale 93 Okohai paints the picture of a scheming co-wife and gives a catalogue of her villainous plans, all of which however came to no avail. Then he directs a remark to his listeners: 'My people, if one has done no wrong, can enemies ever prevail against one?', a question which, like several others, is concerned with making explicit a general truth which is implicit in the immediately preceding portion of the narrative.

In his synopsis of Tale 4 Okohai introduces a series of questions at the point where the orphan girl emerges triumphant. Emphasizing the role played in this victory by the orphan girl's humility, Okohai addresses his audience: 'My friends, if she (the girl) had proved recalcitrant, or been inclined to use force, could she have acquired such

amazing material wealth?'. Almost immediately Okohai asks further: 'What became of the girl's foster-parents? Were they not expelled from the town? Were they allowed to remain?'. Okohai's interrogatory comments here further demonstrate the highly didactic quality of his performance, a feature stressed in Chapter 6. The questions extol such qualities as restraint, perseverance and patience, attributes which contributed in great measure to the orphan girl's success. After his remarks Okohai in fact provides excellent advice for parents and guardians on the importance of fairplay, commenting in a more explicit manner: 'That is to say, if you are charged with bringing up another's child, treat the child fairly'.

At the end of Tale 5 Okohai addresses a succession of questions to his audience: 'Do you not see that when Ada was dying of hunger, only Tortoise gave her something to eat? Do you see how Tortoise, even in his old age, succeeded in marrying a very young girl? Now, did Ada give Elephant (who wanted to trample her to death) a wife simply because he had enormous material wealth?'.

Our examples so far indicate that Okohai's questions are not intended to elicit answers from the audience. Rather, they are rhetorical questions used, as in Enuani oratory, to heighten the listeners' awareness of some point being made. For Okohai, the interjection of questions in propria persona is a useful device for emphasizing a situation which is strange, grievous, or extraordinary..

## 7.2 Okohai's laughs

We have seen that Okohai's questions have the general

function of drawing attention to, and commenting on, certain parts of the narrative. As already indicated, laughter is another of the forms which Okohai's comments take.

In Tale 2 the relationship between Okoh and Isitua, two prominent figures in the community, deteriorates considerably, making a violent clash imminent, a situation which causes great apprehension in the neighbourhood.

In Okohai's words, Ife ni alulua 'This 'news' or 'situation' stirred the entire population'. Immediately after these words, Okohai utters a short laugh which could well suggest to the audience: 'Now we will just have to wait and see!'. This example illustrates Okohai's use of laughter for creating suspense or raising the audience's expectation of even more remarkable incidents to follow. His laugh at this point suggests to the audience: 'What happened next in this story, I tell you, is indeed extraordinary!'.  
In this respect, Okohai's laughs are comparable to his musical preludes in that both create suspense and heighten interest in what is to follow. These two facets of Okohai's narrative technique suggest his effective use of the element of suspense. In both printed literature and in orally transmitted literature, obviously, a competent story-teller can manipulate the element of suspense to good effect. The importance of suspense is reflected, for example in Forster's (1927:47) remark that a story, 'qua story ... can only have one merit: that of making the audience want to know what happens next... conversely it can have only one fault; that of making the audience not want to know what happens next'. Doubtless considering

suspense a crucial criterion, Forster regards Walter Scott as a fine story-teller: 'He could tell a story, He had the primitive power of keeping the reader in suspense and playing on his curiosity' (p. 53 ).

Like songs which tend to occur at climactic points, Okohai's laughs also serve to mark certain critical points in a tale. At the start of the fight in Tale 2, twenty of Okoh's supporters have their heads slashed by Isitoa's overly enthusiastic men. Having presented this section of the plot, Okohai utters one of his laughs. By means of the laugh, he comments on this part of the plot, indicating that this impulsive action of Isitoa's men is bound to provoke the retributive fury of Okoh and his supporters. The laugh in fact anticipates the next stage of the tale in which, according to Okohai, 'Okoh, with one lightning stroke of his machet, angrily slashed the heads of a hundred opponents!'. Okohai might have included an explicit comment such as 'You have seen Isitoa's men display such extreme recklessness; now you will see how they face the music'. His laugh conveys the above 'information' to the audience but, more importantly, does so in a highly economical manner.

In Tale 1 Leopard terrorizes the animals and ravages their farm, a brazen display of arrogance which, coming soon after Leopard's refusal to assist the animals in maintaining the farm, incenses Dog who now confronts the aggressor. Okohai continues: "Awolo eme kwuu!, Nkite eme kwuu! ... Nkite ahia Awolo, Awolo aza a 'Leopard barked kwuu!., Dog barked kwuu! ... Dog called Leopard,

Leopard answered him', then he introduces a dry, shallow laugh at this critical point.

Certainly, this example, like the preceding two from Tale 2, raises the listeners' expectation of the next stage of the tale, for in no time, both enemies are locked in combat. Okohai's laugh at this point is best described as ominous, as it foreshadows the tale's outcome; Dog thrashes Leopard relentlessly until the latter drops dead. More importantly, the laugh not only conveys Okohai's attitude of disapproval of Leopard's strong-arm tactics which had so far proved highly effective against the helpless animals, but also comments implicitly that in spite of Leopard's initial and apparently unending success, he was now going to meet his match in Dog. At the outset, it seemed a 'David and Goliath' contest, but the tables are turned and Dog gives Leopard a sound drubbing.

### 7.3 Okohai's exclamations

The point made earlier that questions may occur as part of the narrative also holds true for exclamations, but of course we are here concerned with Okohai's exclamations which are uttered in propria persona and are expressive of his attitude to particular episodes in the tale. From an examination of the corpus, it is clear that Okohai incorporates exclamations particularly at those points at which he steps into a higher narrative gear. Like other skilled narrators, he attempts to match the style of delivery with the nature of events being depicted, adopting, for example, a louder, faster, even vehement,

style of delivery for violent scenes.<sup>1</sup>

In the following example (Tale 1) Okohai alters the tempo of his narration, greatly accelerating his rate of utterance to reflect the hectic pace of the action being depicted:

They settled down to serious fighting, I tell you - tearing at each other with their claws. The ground was filled with blood. Leopard ... tried to push and lift Dog, but Dog stood his ground. Dog descended on Leopard kpogidi gidi gidi gidi, pushed Leopard this way, dragged Leopard that way, sent him crashing to the ground kpim!, attempting frantically to tear his throat to pieces. But Leopard sprang away from him cham!. Soo!<sup>2</sup>

The exclamation Soo! not only effectively concludes this vivid and dramatic description,<sup>3</sup> but also implies something about what is to happen later in the narrative.

At a later stage, in fact, both animals are engaged in an even more ferocious fight.

This exclamation, like several others by Okohai, achieves its effect by being expressed with a strong voice. In this context, Soo! may be translated as, 'This is amazing!' or 'What an extraordinary fight!'. Thus Okohai not only economically comments on the unrelentingly furious pace of the fight, but also underscores the agility of

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1. Cf., Mbiti (1966.12).

2. Soo! corresponds roughly to 'Indeed'. Cf., Williamson (1972.472): 'Soo!: exclamation adding emphasis'.

3. Note the predominance of ideophones to reinforce the atmosphere of a very fierce fight.

both fighters. The fierceness with which Dog counters the attack doubtless comes as a bombshell to Leopard, for not only are both animals ill-matched, no animal<sup>1</sup> has ever been known to overpower 'the king of the forests'. At different points in the narrative Okohai depicts both animals engaged in fierce battle, but this is the only portrayal which features an exclamation. Introduced, then, at this particular portrayal which witnesses Dog gradually gaining an upper hand in the fight, Okohai's exclamation seems to carry an implicit warning that past records are certainly not always a dependable guide to the outcome of present struggles. By implication, Okohai seems to praise Dog's courage, for initially this character stood no chance. But as the outcome of the encounter clearly demonstrates, Dog's gentle disposition merely belies a fierce, fighting spirit.

Since exclamations are uttered at critical points, they leave the audience in no doubt about the gravity of a situation. In the initial stages of Tale 5 Okohai presents the picture of a happy, hardworking, housewife. Soon, however, the picture alters drastically when, all of a sudden, Ada loses her husband and good companion; a situation which, especially for a pregnant woman, amounts to a tragedy. Having depicted Leopard's refusal to give Ada some food, and indeed the former's unprovoked attack

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1 Except, of course, Tortoise in a few tales. But any success in this direction is attributable not so much to Tortoise's physical strength as to the exercising of his great powers of cunning.



on Ada, Okohai utters an interesting combination of the interjection Aaaaa!, a rhetorical question Uwa nke e bu ki? 'What is this life all about?' and (after a pause) another exclamation Ewo! 'Oh!', to comment on this act of ingratitude by Leopard who had frequently been invited to partake of meals in Ada's home when her husband was alive. Okohai might have commented explicitly 'Such ingratitude is incomprehensible to me', but this attitude is epitomized by the exclamations. Okohai's exclamations and question here further present an oblique comment on Ada's pitiable circumstances, underlining the graphic contrast to her life in the early stages of the tale.

Okohai opens Tale 3 by depicting a devastating famine sweeping through the animal world:

... one year a great famine seized the animal world. Elephant, Bushbuck, Tiger, ... animals that walk on all fours, those that live in burrows, even those that fly and those that live in water ... No food whatever was to be seen anywhere. [pause, then] Ewee!<sup>1</sup> In no time they discovered Elephant's carcass ... in no time they found Bushbuck, dead. The hunger was simply wiping out everybody ... [pause, then] Aa aa!

The exclamations Ewee! and Aa aa! are comments on the desperateness of the situation, expressing Okohai's sympathy for the animals on whom the famine was slowly but surely inflicting a harsh loss of numbers.

#### 7.4 Questions, laughs and exclamations: a synthesis

We have so far shown that Okohai's questions, laughs

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1 The expression Ewee! is used to express bafflement; here it may be translated as 'What a problem!'.

and exclamations have much in common, serving not only to create suspense or heighten the audience's expectation, but also to underscore critical moments or violent action in the tale. But the most important function which justifies these devices lies in their use by Okohai to comment on parts of the narrative, and this aspect deserves further consideration.

Like other Enuani narrators, Okohai presents his tales from the third-person point of view. But while other narrators may include explicit comments on the tale's action, we have seen Okohai's unique use of questions, laughs and exclamations at those points where he momentarily relinquishes his role as narrator, stepping into that of commentator. Brooks and Warren (1943) refer to the third-person point of view as characterized by 'the unidentified author speaking impersonally' (p. 147), pointing out too that variations are possible within this point of view. Clearly one such variation is found in the 'omniscient' point of view. And although Okohai does not 'undertake to present the working of the mind of [...] the characters' (Brooks and Warren, p. 659), his method lies somewhere between the third-person and the 'omniscient' points of view. In other words, in Okohai's work, as in that of other narrators, we can hear the 'traditional voice' depicting the events, but, in addition, Okohai introduces his own 'voice' from the outside for our benefit, observing and reflecting upon the narrative by the devices shown above. Even without the 'I', Okohai not only 'participates' in the tale's action but, as will be

illustrated further, also aims at carrying the audience with him in this aspect.

By means of the various examples we have shown the 'presence' of Okohai in his tales, the observer-narrator emphasizing, summarizing and analyzing particular episodes of the tale, 'confiding' in the audience and thus moulding their response. As Tillotson (1959) points out, 'Nowadays, the author who confides in his readers is referred to as the "intrusive" author - at least he is regarded as intrusive in novels;' (pp. 11-2). It may be pointed out, however, that every writer can be seen, to a greater or lesser extent, to intrude in his work. But what is interesting is the manner of Okohai's comments; they are by no means intrusive, considering their terse quality. Even when explicit comments are involved, this quality of succinctness is also preserved. It may in fact be argued that such exclamations as Soo! and Ewo! achieve their effect partly by standing in sharp contrast to the narrative (and naturally, longer) passages, and, more importantly, by being used as Okohai does, to clinch some of the descriptions in the former. The contrast is even more prominent if we compare Okohai's short laughs to the immediately preceding narrative portion of the tale. Perhaps the best way to sum up Okohai's 'presence' in his tales is by a reference to Booth's comments (1961.170) on Chaucer's selection of some of his materials in Troilus and Criseyde: 'He never lets us forget his presence, yet his presence cannot be said to detract from the tale he tells'.

The most important point to emerge from our examples in the last three sections (it is indeed the thread which unites the use of questions, exclamations and laughs) is that by incorporating comments which are expressive of his own attitude to particular sections of the narrative, Okohai gives a lead to his listeners in how they ought to feel. Like the writer of fiction, he is 'tacitly inviting the intelligent reader to see more in the book than he does' (Tillotson, p. 21). In everyday life, there is nothing uncommon about digging a trench, but to engage in an elaborate trench-digging exercise simply for the purpose of butchering a great number of one's species (even friends), as Leopard attempts in Tale 3, is extraordinary. It is this unusual, atrocious and bizarre aspect of the event that the narrator-observer Okohai 'invites' his audience to 'see', by addressing them 'My friends, do you see for yourselves what Leopard can do ...?' (p.188).

When, after presenting us with a sad picture of Ada, a character then certain to face hard times as yet another severe famine was 'whistling through' Ani Idu, Okohai utters the exclamation Ewo!, his attitude to Ada is unequivocal. The interjection is intended to communicate to the audience his sympathy for this character caught in difficult circumstances, while Aaaa! is similarly meant to 'involve' the audience, compelling them to take sides with Ada (as Okohai has done) by feeling a sense of outrage at Leopard's evident act of betrayal.

Having already listened to these plots several times

the audience are aware, for example, of the tales' conventional depiction of orphans as deprived, unfortunate characters. But in Tale 4 Okohai brings the orphan girl's plight nearer to his audience, evoking a sad picture of her and confronting them with the remark 'Have you ever before seen such gross misfortune?' (p.187), obviously to enlist their sympathetic involvement in the girl's predicament. In Tale 2 Okohai's laugh is similarly intended to make his audience take sides with him, that is, to condemn the action of Isitua's men as impulsive and to hold them accountable for its repercussions.

Examples can be multiplied in our corpus, of Okohai exercising the 'power of the writer [the narrator] to bounce the reader into accepting what he says' (Forster 1921.75) by means of his questions, laughs and exclamations, but we shall examine two more, which most demonstrate Okohai's 'involvement' in, and enjoyment, of, the tale's action. At the point where the fighters Dog and Leopard (Tale 1) come face to face with each other for the first time, Okohai utters one of his laughs (p.193). Firstly, the suggestion or implied comment here is 'What a meeting! The 'king', bully and fighter, challenged by the underdog!'. Secondly and, as already pointed out, this laughter creates suspense. But more importantly, there is also the implied comment from the observer-narrator to his listeners 'Two unmatched opponents? I am sure you will enjoy the next scene as much as I will enjoy depicting it!'. .

In Okohai's portrayal of this 'fight scene' in Tale 1, we have already noted his accelerated narrative pace as

well as his use of a louder voice. Not only are both features clearly indicative of his 'involvement' in the fight, they also point to the usually dramatic quality of Okohai's performances. Even more contributory to the dramatic effect here is his use of gestures: kpogidi gidi gidi is accompanied by a vigorous shaking of the head, and an equally forceful upward and downward movement of the arms, as in boxing. To depict Leopard 'springing away cham!' (p.194), Okohai jumped up from his low chair, before concluding the description with the exclamation Soo! which, apart from commenting on the fury of the fight, denotes support for the underdog, now gaining the upper hand. From this portrayal it is clear that Okohai is not only enjoying the fight but, more importantly, demonstrating his enjoyment of it.

Our final example is from Tale 3. It is interesting that Okohai utters both exclamations Ewee! and Aa aa! (p.196) with his face registering concern. He also adopts a grave, earnest tone while this effective tone of voice and the impact of the exclamations is further heightened by his dramatic use of pause. The pauses preceding the exclamations convey the impression that Okohai is contemplating the grave situation before picking up the narrative again. Judging from the profound 'involvement' and apparent concern typified by the serious countenance with which Okohai uttered both exclamations, members of the audience might well conclude that he experienced, or was personally affected by this great famine which he depicts as decimating the animal world. The gravity of Okohai's

tone here emphasizes the seriousness of the famine and further reinforces his sympathy and 'concern' for the suffering animals.

As a narrator, Okohai is not 'detached', rather he is thoroughly interested and, and more importantly, constantly in the tale. Only a 'concerned' narrator could have summarized the orphan girl's plight, demanding that his listeners reflect upon it, by putting before them the question 'Have you ever before seen such gross misfortune?'. Not only does Okohai enter into the tale by expressing his attitude (questions, laughs, exclamations) as a guide to his listeners' reaction, he also demonstrates his enjoyment of the performance. Although we are not concerned here with Okohai's use of songs and humour, his demonstration of his enjoyment is also apparent in such other areas. In the latter, for example, it is his own laughter at his unexpurgated and brazenly salacious portrayals which seem to serve as a cue to the audience. The examples of questions, laughs and exclamations analyzed in this chapter indeed reveal an outstanding characteristic of Okohai as a story-teller, namely that of being totally involved in his narrative act. It is doubtless a measure of his expertise that even while performing a tale he too can enjoy it as much as the audience. Although, obviously, other narrators also derive enjoyment from their work, none can better demonstrate their enjoyment or 'concern', that is, enter more fully and effectively into the spirit of their narration than Okohai. His performances are characterized by a confident showmanship

matched by an undisguised enthusiasm for his work and delight in it. By his exercise of a highly developed narrative technique, Okohai gives performances which are deeply satisfying to himself and also highly enjoyable to his audiences. His use of questions, laughs and exclamations compels the audience to 'participate' in the action of the tale and this certainly enhances the performance as a whole.



## CHAPTER 8

### EVALUATION I

8.0 Whether in a literate or nonliterate society, a flourishing tradition of artistic expression presupposes some form of evaluation. In the study of African oral literature, however, evaluation does not seem to have received much scholarly attention. An attempt to investigate the literary tastes of a traditional society must of necessity be based on comments and opinions from members of the society to whom the performers address their work. Although there exists no highly developed oral literary criticism in Enuani society, a substantial body of critical comments was elicited during fieldwork by the present writer. This chapter and the next one are concerned with the examination of such data. It is appropriate to open the discussion here by considering the stability of the tale plots, a question which has a strong bearing on evaluation in this society.

#### 8.1 Stability of plots in Enuani tales

Obviously, the degree of variability of plot varies from society to society. Noss (1970.43) cites 'personalization' as one of the devices which the Gbaya tale employs:

The tale is personalized for the audience by addressing its various members, but also by presenting the plot with characters and places that are familiar to them ... Thus one tale is given a universal setting, while the second with the same theme is given a domestic context.

According to Cosentino (1982), Mende performers sometimes assume a role within their narrative; only the expert performers, however, have a partiality for this 'brazen intrusion of self into the surface of their creations'.<sup>1</sup> On the sequence of episodes in Thonga tales, Junod remarks that two narrators rarely follow the same order and that the 'tricks of the Hare are sometimes attributed to the Small Toad'.<sup>2</sup>

In comparison with those of some other West African peoples, Enuani tales display far less variability, as none of the above-named features, for example, obtains in this narrative tradition. Finnegan (1967.92) mentions 'stories which have a modern setting', one of which is actually 'set in England'. In contrast to the Limba narrator, the Enuani cannot handle this part of the tale with a comparable degree of freedom for, as already shown, every inu is set in Ani Idu. As part of the Enuani literary conventions, the narrator, having mentioned this setting, must introduce the dramatis personae before proceeding to the action of the tale. Also, the relatively fixed quality of Enuani tale songs contrasts with the almost boundless freedom of the Mende performer in regard to his use of song texts (Cosentino, p. 41).

All informants were categorical on the degree of variability permitted in the tales. According to an

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1 Cosentino (1982.41). Cf., Finnegan (1967.101).

2 Waterman and Bascom, quoted in Maria Leach (ed.), 1949, 1, p. 20.

elder, Osubor,

Once the story is generally known and you miss a point, they [the audience] will say to you, 'It is not like that ... it is like this'. This is done in order not to 'spoil' the tradition of the group ... because if you tell your son a story which your father did not tell you, you have added. When your son wants to tell it, he also adds ... you see, the story becomes adulterated. That is why people challenge you when you tell a story ... by saying 'it is not like that, but like this' ... so that tradition can be carried forward. (Tape 6B)

[emphasis mine]

Osubor's comments provide us with the first indication that the Enuani regard themselves as the inheritors of a venerable tradition. Although we have seen in Chapter 2 that Enuani tales do not manifest any significant structural differences even when performed by narrators with varying degrees of skill, further examples are here provided to illustrate the Enuani concern with preserving the traditional quality of the tales. Appendix C gives, in extenso, performances of the same tale by three different narrators.<sup>1</sup>

The action in this tale may be summarized as follows:

- (A). Woman has four daughters ...
- (B). They all leave home when they get married ...
- (C). None of them cares whether their mother is dead or alive ...
- (D). Mother sets out to visit the daughters one after the other, wearing a disguise ...
- (E). Each daughter turns her back on the beggarly-looking woman, offering one excuse or another ...

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1 Tale 34 (Ngozi), Tale 80 (Omesiete) and Tale 85 (Nwambuonwo).

- (F). Only one of the girls welcomes her mother, attending to her immediate needs ...
- (G). In the end, all the haughty children are rebuked; punishment and reward are meted out accordingly ...
- (H). Aetiological conclusion ...

An examination of the texts shows that all three versions are very close to each other with regard to the plot, but there are a few differences in details. In naming the girls, the three narrators follow no particular order, but Omesiete and Nwambuonwo specifically refer to Stomach as the youngest child. The latter narrator also includes a fifth daughter, Eye. Being more accomplished than the other two narrators, it is not unlikely that Nwambuonwo felt sufficiently assured to introduce another important 'part of the body'. Also, only Nwambuonwo assigns a name to the mother in this tale.<sup>1</sup> In (D) the last two versions remark on the importance attached to a decent burial, while Tales 34 and 80 compare the appearance of the miserable mother to that of a madman. All three versions terminate aetiologically, purporting to account for why 'up to this day, ... all parts of our body labour for Stomach'.

Another example is drawn from Tales 46 and 53, versions of the same tale by two different narrators. The plots in the two versions (Appendix B) do not reveal any substantial differences; both present the major incidents of the tale, following, also, a common narrative sequence.

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1 Nneka ('Mother is supreme') is a particularly appropriate name, 'created' by Nwambuonwo for it underscores one of the themes in this story, namely the importance of mothers.

In both versions, the major characters are constant; the role of trickster is played by Squirrel who attempts to deceive the animals by hiding his mother in the sky, while Tortoise, characteristically, exposes him. In both versions, Squirrel's mother is eventually killed by the hungry animals. Also, both Adamma and Nduka incorporate the song in this tale. Unlike Tale 46, Tale 53 includes an aetiological conclusion, but this fact by no means affects the traditional plot.

It is evident that in terms of the plot - episodes, dramatis personae, motifs - Tales 46 and 53 manifest a high degree of stability while the same is true also of Tales 34, 80 and 85. The small degree of variability is consonant with the remarks of all the informants, who repeatedly placed emphasis on 'carrying forward' the tales. In the light of several informants' comments, it is necessary to examine more closely the Enuani concept of 'tradition' and to pursue one question further, namely How traditional is the Enuani tale tradition? The implications which the emphasis on tradition has for evaluation will also be elucidated. Discussion of these aspects however must be postponed to a later section, as it is necessary first to deal with the related question of whether Enuani narrators compose new tales.

## 8.2 The creation of new tales

As already indicated, a high degree of fidelity to the traditional plots is demanded of every Enuani narrator. Like Osubor (p.206), Okohai articulates the traditional view: 'All our tales were coined by our 'poets'

[actual word] and ndi oka-ilolo 'thinkers' of the olden days. We do not create new stories. I tell my stories the way they should be told ... the traditional way'. Another expert narrator, Ezeagbo, states categorically:

There are no new tales. The only people who can say they have new tales are you literate, Western people unu bu ndi oyibo. You pick up a book and read; after reading it, you start explaining the story to us in the Igbo language ... You can call that a new story. But as far as inu 'tales' are concerned, there are no new ones. They are all inherited from tradition .... (Tape 6A)

Mbuliche, a well-known narrator, elder, and priest of the Ohizisa shrine, also expresses his strict adherence to the 'traditional way' of performing, referring to ka ndi mu anyi si nu yabu inu 'the way our ancestors told the tales'. This narrator was emphasizing the traditional nature of Enuani tales when a member of the audience argued that he could invent a completely new story. The elder frowned at the suggestion, decrying this 'abomination' alu<sup>1</sup> of the 'younger generation' ndi enu kita. Although the young man began by attempting to string together a number of episodes from several stories, the experiment failed to produce a coherent tale. It is worth pointing out, however, that the man's untypical claim, followed by his ill-fated attempt to make up a new story is consonant with his personality and desire to be 'different' and opposed to the general view.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Cf., the entry in Williamson's dictionary (1972:36) for alu: 'abomination; hurtful, obnoxious thing; taboo'.

2 On more than one occasion, he deliberately took opposite views against members of the audience but eventually confessed that he was wrong. The young man had the reputation of being a clown and was also known to drink heavily.

It is interesting that even though Mbuliche and Ezeagbo have entirely different backgrounds in terms of social standing, occupation, and place of origin, Ezeagbo's unu bu ndi oyibo 'you Western literates' or 'modern people' appears to echo Mbuliche's ndi enu kita 'people of these modern times'. The three narrators' comments cited here are not only consistent with, but also further underline, the general tradition-bound attitudes of this society to its tales.

It is worth pointing out, however, that the emphasis on tradition reflects mainly the attitude of the conventional story-telling sessions (in which any one may participate, regardless of age or sex) and may not necessarily be valid for other less common instances of story-telling involving people of the same age or sex, for example. Indeed, the audience in such relatively uncommon story-telling sessions may take delight in dispensing with conventions. A gathering comprising only boys, even adults of the same age group entertaining one another with tales, may pay relatively little heed to tradition, certainly less than they would in a typical story-telling session. In evaluating performances, too, such a gathering is likely to show considerable disregard for tradition, indeed take delight in seeing how far they can go, or in creating new tales as a means of defying tradition.

In several cultures<sup>1</sup> there is a great deal of re-combining of themes, creation and re-creation of tales,

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1 See, e.g., Mbiti (1966.3), Ben-Amos (1977.21) and Cosentino (1982.43).

from the communal stock of motifs, episodes, and character types. Certainly, one cannot deny that it is possible for an Enuani narrator to create a 'new' story by stringing together, rearranging or embellishing some of the common, traditional episodes or in fact by presenting other narrative materials which are clearly un-Enuani. It may well happen, too, that having acquainted himself with a story from a non-traditional source (a story-book, television or radio, another language, for instance), a man offers to tell it to some of his friends on occasions other than the conventional tale sessions.

One question presents itself rather forcefully: even if in such less common story-telling gatherings a man makes up a new story, or introduces one which he has derived from a non-traditional source, to what extent will the tale be accepted or, rather, 'assimilated'? This is an exceedingly difficult question to which the scholar could hope to give an answer only after several years of collecting, but on the evidence at present available, it seems unlikely that such a 'new' tale would be admitted into the Enuani canon, and become an Enuani inu. In this connection, Ezeagbo's comments acquire greater significance as this commentator indicates the sense in which tales may be regarded as 'new' and, more importantly, distinguishes between such tales and the traditional inu. His distinction implies the absence of new stories (in the typical story-telling sessions, one may add), for while recognizing that there may be 'new' tales, it also asserts that such tales cannot be called inu since, 'as far as inu are



concerned, there are no new ones' (p. 209). Although at one stage or another each tale is new to some member of the audience (in the sense that it is the first time he has heard it), no tale in our corpus was altogether new to the majority of listeners. Certainly it would be rash to suggest that the nucleus of the commoner tales is a meagre one or that the corpus is exactly the same from one town to another. In general, however, several tales not only tend to be well-known from one village or town to the next, but also display a high degree of stability with regard to plot.

On the face of it, the discussion so far and the commentators' views appear to lend support to earlier 'evolutionist' misconceptions which, as indicated, stressed the 'traditional', communal quality of the tales and conversely de-emphasized the creative role of individual narrators. Indeed, it can be argued that the absence of new stories, coupled with the apparent fixity of the plots, cannot but engender, even precipitate, a moribund tradition. But in the last three chapters we have seen that individual narrators such as Okohai can display their creative capabilities within the framework of the traditional style. The Enuani narrator endeavours to gratify his audience by making innovative and effective use of his traditional material, rather than by the creation of new stories. In this respect, he is by no means unique, for as Scheub (1969:92) comments on the Xhosa ntsomi, 'Originality takes other forms. Skill is found not in creating new plots, but rather it is to be found in

performances which give these old plots new meanings, forms and life'.

### 8.3 Enuani emphasis on 'the traditional manner'

For the purpose of this thesis, testimonies and opinions were recorded from a large cross section of the community - accomplished story-tellers, respected chiefs, elders and connoisseurs, ordinary members of the society - during story-telling sessions, interviews and conversations. The collection of such indigenous viewpoints does not, obviously, serve as an end in itself. Rather, the perspectives of various commentators have to be evaluated and integrated with the insights gained by the analyst as a result of direct observations, if we are not to misjudge the fluidity or 'fixity' of Enuani tales.

The core of Enuani oral literary criticism lies in the insistence on 'tradition', that is, the concern with performing the tales in 'the traditional manner'. Before discussing informants' comments further, it must be pointed out that they do not distinguish between plot and style in tale performance. The argument here is that our commentators' remarks can only be valid with regard to the what, not the how of tale performance, that is, to the plots, not to style. It is interesting to relate not only our interpretation above of the commentators' dictum, 'the traditional manner', but also our analysis in general at this point to some of Albert Lord's findings in his important work, The Singer of Tales (SOT, 1960). We can in fact compare the comments of Enuani narrators such as Nwambunwo who reckons that he adheres strictly to

'the manner in which the tales have been performed from time immemorial' (p. 235) and those recorded by Lord, although clearly the views of Lord's Yugoslav informants are expressed in more explicit terms. His informant Đemo Zogić asserts that in presenting a song heard an hour previously he 'would give every word and not make a mistake on a single one ...' (SOT, p. 27). Needless to mention, it would take a well-nigh superhuman feat of memory to reproduce in an exact manner, or 'word for word, and line for line' without 'a single mistake' (SOT, p. 27), an epic or long poem which one has heard just once. Were Zogić to work frequently at his song for twenty years and thus 'perfect' it, it is still open to question whether this element of frequent performance is likely to lead to an increased fixity (or even increased fluidity) of the words. But whether Zogić can sing the same song 'word for word' after twenty years or not, it is more noteworthy that his viewpoint is echoed by another informant, Sulejman, who swears 'by Allah' that he 'would sing it just as I heard it' (SOT, p. 27). Inaccurate as Sulejman's remarks may be, he certainly cannot be accused of uttering a falsehood or of swearing in vain.

Lord's comment, 'to him (Sulejman) "word for word and line for line" are simply an emphatic way of saying "like"' (SOT, p. 28) is applicable to Enuani commentators, who repeatedly recommend 'the traditional manner'. It is clear that all the comments reported here - whether from Nwambuonwo and other Enuani narrators or from Zogić and his Yugoslav peers - can be considered as a mode of

emphasis, rather than as being literally true. The notion of word-for-word fidelity does not apply in the case of Enuani tales or Yugoslav epic.

While it has been shown that Lord's remarks hold true also of Enuani narrators, one essential difference between the two art forms (the epic and the inu) must be noted, namely that the epic is predominantly sung, in contrast to the tale, a mixed genre in which occur both sung and non-sung parts. For Lord, this distinction is obviously unnecessary, but in our case, it casts further light on Enuani commentators' views already shown.

On the face of it, the recurrent expression, 'the traditional manner', suggests that Enuani tales are fixed in both plot and style. But on the contrary, it actually means that the narrator must reproduce the sung parts faithfully (cf., the narrators Obuzome and Adankwo who sing a fixed song text; Chapter 6), but that, provided he adheres to the plot, he is at liberty to re-create the tale in his words and, more importantly, to add 'personal' details. As will be demonstrated, it is particularly in the use of details that Enuani narrators express their individual creativity, in other words, most differ from one another. Thus, various features of modern life, and a multitude of 'non-traditional', even anachronistic, details continually find their way into the stories.<sup>1</sup>

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1. In Tale 30, for example, the Oba has a fleet of lorries (a reflection of his affluence), while in Tale 16 the wayward bride, Chikichiki, is furiously driven off by her disguised suitor who visits the human world in a curious-looking and rickety motor car.

By incorporating such new elements into the traditional plots, the narrators bring the stories nearer to their listeners, underlining the continuing or contemporary relevance of the tales, rather than stressing their age-old nature. In regard to the Enuani narrators' and audiences' conception of, and emphasis on, tradition, it may be said that,

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.<sup>1</sup>

Not only does tale performance constitute a link between present and past events, in the words of an informant, 'our ancestors' and 'those of us alive today' (p.230), the same plots are certain to be transmitted 'exactly' to the future generations.

To return to the distinction of the sung and non-sung parts of tales, it is interesting that even while proclaiming a strict adherence to 'the traditional manner', that is performing fixed song texts, the experts variously exercise their poetic licence, demonstrating their innovative ability in the area of songs. We have already seen how Okohai not only creates his own songs on occasion, but also reworks the traditional song texts in a number of ways. Mention may here be made too of a striking demonstration of creativity in Tale 85 (Appendix C), for example, by another champion of 'the traditional manner', Chief

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1. T.S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', 1935 (opening lines).

Nwambuonwo. After performing this tale, accordingly presenting its sung and non-sung portions (cf., Tales 34 and 80), Nwambuonwo launches into a 'summary', in fact, a second performance, which, interestingly, is sung throughout, with the audience maintaining the chorus, Ndo nwa m 'Greetings, my daughter'. The impact of this conscious deviation is further heightened by his playing some of his lines on his akpele horn.

While the use of a musical accompaniment is a matter of style, rather than plot, this aspect of the performance constitutes, significantly, the single factor which most distinguishes Enuani experts from ordinary story-tellers. In the case of Onuwa and Chief Mbuliche, for example, the musical accompaniment takes the form of a matchet or, sometimes, a bottle, being struck by a member of the audience. In the words of Mbuliche, he needs an okwu nma 'he who strikes the matchet' 'to render my performances more enjoyable'. His remarks recall those of Okohai on his use of the mixed mode (p.160) while both narrators seem to echo I.A. Richard's (1924.26) assertion that the artist does not consider himself first as a communicator, but as one engaged in fashioning a product which 'is beautiful in itself, or satisfying to him personally, ... '

We have shown so far that by the phrase 'the traditional manner' or 'tradition', the commentators stress the need for every narrator to be highly conscious of his role as a preserver of tradition, faithfully transmitting the traditional plots by including such elements as the well-known episodes, and in their proper sequence,

the songs, the dramatis personae associated with particular tales, and in their recognized roles. But what their emphasis tends to obscure is the fact that conformity in this regard does not rule out individual creativity in other aspects of the performance.

Clearly, even highly practised narrators do not consider themselves at liberty to tamper with the traditional plot,<sup>1</sup> but like every one else, conceive of their role as that of 'carrying it forward'. All the narrators' unequivocal comments on the subject of the power of tradition point to one important characteristic of Enuani society: its great regard for, and insistence on, tradition. This is the central theme of most sections in this chapter; indeed, it cannot but be prominent in a chapter dealing with evaluation in Enuani society. Tradition is of course important in other aspects of Enuani life besides that of narrative performance. In general, Enuani society is highly tradition-oriented, as is shown in the following section.

#### 8.4 The impact of tradition in Enuani society

The concern with the preservation of tradition in tale-telling is matched by an adherence to 'tradition' in everyday speech. In a literate tradition a judicious use

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1 Cf., this strict adherence by even the experts to the role of preserver of tradition with Finnegan's (1967.101) remarks concerning the Limba narrator: 'A thoughtful narrator may himself stress his own contribution [to a story] ... Very occasionally an experienced storyteller will even, on some occasions, claim that he himself was responsible for some story as a whole ...'

of foreign expressions may sometimes be indicative of a speaker's erudition. By contrast, it is generally considered unacceptable (and coming from a highly educated person, even pretentious and arrogant) to interlard one's speech with foreign or, more specifically English words and phrases. People are made fun of and 'corrected' for speaking Ingli-Igbo 'English-Igbo, fractured Igbo' or for using too many non-Igbo words.<sup>1</sup>

The Enuani adherence to tradition may be even better illustrated by a discussion regarding the use of two items which in Igbo life are of paramount importance: palm wine and kola nuts.<sup>2</sup> In Enuani society, everyone is expected to adhere rigidly to the social etiquette concerning the presentation and consumption of these two commodities. Convention demands that the dispenser of the palm wine hold the calabash in his left hand and the drinking cup in his right. The first cupful must be handed to the eldest man present and after his ntusi 'blessing, pouring libation', the contents of the cup must be drained by the one who has provided the palm wine. The second cupful is then drunk by the eldest man. Only after these important

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1. Considering the prominent place of English in modern Nigeria and the general, enthusiastic quest for Western education, the great emphasis on 'tradition' in everyday speech appears inconsistent, if not out of place. But by their attitude, members of the community seem to stress that a clear line must be drawn between tradition and the desire for 'modernity' in certain aspects. Some English words have however become fully assimilated and are now used in everyday speech as if they were originally Enuani. Common examples include moto 'motor car, motor vehicle'; fadaa 'Reverend Father'; maili 'mile'; dokito or dokita 'doctor', basikul or basikolo 'bicycle'; atumakasa 'antimacassar'.
  2. Much has been written on this aspect of Igbo life. For

contd.



preliminaries may members of the group be served, and this is carried out strictly on the basis of age.

It is also imperative to taste the wine before offering it to a visitor joining the gathering at a later stage. These manners constitute an essential component of every boy's first lessons in social behaviour and must be grasped early as any errors are viewed seriously. Of an adult it is often remarked, O bue nha! 'He has incurred a fine!'<sup>1</sup> and this fine - either one calabash or more of palm wine, or the cash equivalent - must be paid immediately. Whether in the sharing of palm wine, kola nuts, or meat, the principle of seniority takes precedence and is rigidly adhered to. A man may be reported for ihache 'choosing before' a senior and a fine is imposed if it is established that he has knowingly and intentionally violated this principle which lies at the centre of Igbo social life.

This concern with the principle of seniority further finds expression, for example, in the great emphasis placed on the observance of correct forms of etiquette in regard to modes of address. It is considered a mark of ill-breeding and lack of education to address an elder or a superior by his/her personal name alone; it must be preceded by one of several terms indicative of respect,

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contd.

the importance of these elements in Igbo culture, see, for instance, Basden (1938), Carnochan (1963), Uchendu (1965), and Umeasiegbu (1969).

1 Cf., Umeasiegbu, op. cit., p. 4: 'The last glass of wine is handed to the host. If the server makes a mistake about this, he is ordered to buy a gallon of wine as his punishment'.

the most common of which are Diokpa X 'Elder X', Baba Y 'Father Y', and Nne anyi Z 'Our mother Z'.

Marriage is another area of Enuani life in which tradition is very important. Parents assiduously endeavour to inculcate in their children a highly conservative view of marriage, sometimes with great success. Not only do parents and elders stress the social implications of taking a wife from a quite different cultural milieu, they also engage in exhaustive enquiries to ascertain that the prospective bride is of good breeding and the reputation of her lineage beyond reproach.<sup>1</sup> The young men are no less tradition-bound than their elders, for even after considerable exposure to modern Western-oriented ideas pertaining to love and marriage, most sophisticated, widely travelled Enuani invariably embrace and perpetuate the rather parochial view of marriage prevalent in their society.

#### 8.5 Other evaluative criteria

We have already drawn a distinction between style and plot, and seen too that the expression 'tradition' or 'the traditional manner' applies to the latter, rather than to the former. This section discusses those features most desired in the style of performance by examining some of the other notions frequently expressed by commentators. The most important of these is mbetie 'adding to'

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1 For example, it is taboo to marry a girl who is not freeborn. For some discussion of the ohu (osu) institution, see Carnochan (1963), Uchendu (1965) and Basden (1938).

or its equivalent itinye nnu n'inu ... ka o soa uso 'to add salt to a tale ... to make it 'sweet', that is 'interesting' or ka o na anya 'to make it beautiful'; onu oma 'a good voice' and ubene 'stylishness'.

Mbetie has a wide range of meaning and may variously be rendered as 'adding to, magnifying, embellishing', even 'overnarrating'. Okohai comments,

If I like the story you are telling ... even before you finish ... I already know how I am going to begin, embroider and end that tale. I add other things to make it 'sweet'. Because I always want to make people happy, I add other things to make the tale entertaining (Tape 4A).

while another commentator, Akaeze, remarks:

If somebody decides to tell a particular story ... he must tell it the way it is told ... if he omits anything, we say to him, 'You have forgotten something'. But there is a way in which he can add to it. If, for example, he is telling a story in which one of the characters is a girl. So, what he is going to add ... is he begins praising and describing the girl and outlining her beautiful features. But at that point other narrators may simply mention the girl's name without praising her or describing her great beauty. That is how to add. But if our narrator forgets anything, people listening will remind him. So the only mbetie he can engage in is to make the tale more interesting by bringing in various other details (Tape 16B).

Of all the remarks by commentators on this question, Akaeze's are the most illuminating, giving some indication that mbetie is a situationally-bound term. A narrator can add details but is not allowed to make any substantial change to the plot, or to the dramatis personae. A member of the audience, Ijeh, concurs with Akaeze:

I go with him ... when you have heard a tale, you must tell it that way. But in some respects, as he has just said about a beautiful girl ... you can then say something like akwalakata nwa agboo 'What an akwalakata girl!'. Or if it is a hunter going out to hunt ... you may begin by describing his mode of dress, his different tools ... maybe this was not in the plot originally ... [emphasis mine] now you begin to describe how he stalked his animal and cocked his gun. That is what our people refer to as itinye nnu 'adding salt'. But in the first place you have to tell the story as we know it. (Tape 16B)

Considering that in terms of the traditional plot the Enuani narrator cannot regard himself at liberty to 'add' or invent, it is not surprising that Omesiete is questioned (p.236 ) for 'adding' to his tale by substituting the name of a well-known character for another known not to belong to the particular tale. Mbetie in the sense of unacceptable additions, to, or deviations from, the plot is usually prompted by such factors as incompetence and lapses of memory. In contrast, an accomplished narrator consciously strives after amusing details and by means of such 'adding', delights his audience.

The phrase itinye nnu 'to add salt' used by Ijeh above and the noun mbetie 'adding to' used by Akaeze, are both frequently employed to express admiration for a performance. In the phrase 'to add salt to a tale', 'salt' metaphorically represents the tale's delightful

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1 Ideophonic description of an extremely beautiful girl; akwalakata accentuates the girl's imposing personality as well as her gorgeous dress.

flavour which arises in great measure from the variety of 'new', personal details which narrators bring to the traditional plot. It is hardly an exaggeration to state that the 'salt' becomes the essence of story-telling, for a tale devoid of 'salt' is no more than a lifeless description of a timeless, hackneyed plot. 'Adding' - salt, colour, details - to the basic plot of a tale is expected of every narrator, to a greater or lesser extent.

From the numerous examples in the corpus, it is possible to distinguish two kinds of 'personal' detail; some give verisimilitude to the description, whereas others add humorous touches, often of an exaggerated kind. Tale 40 (Appendix E) provides a good example. The opening section of the tale may be summarized thus: 'The Oba invites all and sundry to a meeting', an event which, obviously, every narrator would present in an idiosyncratic manner. Otakpo, for example, not only relates that the town-crier proceeded to make an announcement, but describes too the sound of the town-crier's gong, gbom gbom gbom gbom! The detail about the town-crier making an announcement conveys a highly probable situation in the context of everyday life. Otakpo also ideophonically describes the girls' water-pots crashing to the ground: fru-u-u-u-u-u... gbo!-;fru-u-u-u-u-u ... gbom!; or fru-u-u-u-u-u ... gbe!

The details here which give verisimilitude to Otakpo's description may be contrasted with others below, which are humorous. In Jideonwo's Tale 13, a woman is kicked violently, so much so that the force of the blow propelled

and landed her in the human world (that is, she reached the human world without crossing the customary seven rivers or traversing the seven regions thought to separate the human and spirit worlds). To celebrate his success in securing a wife, Tortoise turns up in borrowed clothes: a set of gorgeous, voluminous and overflowing ibe-ato.<sup>1</sup> To conclude this absurd picture of a diminutive character, puffed up and dancing vigorously in borrowed, oversized robes, the narrator adds: 'You can imagine Tortoise struggling to keep his balance under the weight of his ibe-ato, in order not to be swept away by the wind' (Tale 5).

In Nduka's Tale 53, 'the yams in Ani Idu during the famine that year looked so emaciated like those of the Igbo people immediately after the [Nigerian] civil war'. In Okohai's Tale 2, 'Isitoa, with a stroke of his matchet cut down five hundred of his opponents', while in Mbuliche's Tale 31, a potsherd was sent 'flying through the air for a distance of two miles'.

We are not concerned here with the various ingredients of humour, but it may be mentioned that the humorous effect in the above examples derives from such features as hyperbole, contrast, incongruity or the narrators' incapsulation of 'the incredible within the believable' (Cosentino 1982.96). Clearly, Otakpo and the other

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1. Traditional Enuani dress; white, handwoven and consisting of three pieces, as the name indicates. (Ibe-ato, literally, 'three pieces').

narrators have 'added' details which, in the words of the commentator, Ijeh, were 'not in the plot originally' (p. 223).

Another phrase which recurred frequently is njo onu 'a poor voice'. Reflecting on his performance, Nwambüonwo expresses this notion in the following terms:

When I tell a story ... it is quite possible that the person who first told me the story has a poor voice. In retelling the story, I endeavour to make my voice better; thus my story becomes more interesting than the other person's. That is the difference between the two tales ... because you may find a narrator who tells a story not in the way it should be told. Other people then challenge such a narrator because his voice is not good. (Tape 12B)

Each time Jideonwo, the narrator of Tale 13, sang, his friend, Nnabuogo, greeted him with a teasing remark: 'I have already asked you to stop singing ... at your age, the voice no longer 'travels'. Commenting on what aspect of Ezeagbo's performance made the most impact, Ijeh cited, among other facets, '... secondly, ... the song he includes, his voice and how it "travels"' (Tape 16A).

It is clear, then, that in story-telling and in singing particularly, much importance is attached to the quality of the performer's voice. An essential requirement is that the narrator's voice should 'travel'. This umbrella term refers not only to the singer's fluency and clarity of diction but also to his ability to project his voice. If the narrator does not sing clearly so that every word is understood, if his voice is hoarse or does

not carry sufficiently, some member of the audience invariably complains Onu e adi aga ofuma 'His voice does not travel well'.

In evaluative usage, onu 'voice' denotes not only voice quality but the performance as a whole and, for this reason, the expression O nweke mma onu 'He has such a good voice' or Onu amaka a mma 'His voice is extremely good' is used to denote a pleasing performance. Mma onu 'a good voice' also finds an antithetical term in njo onu 'a poor voice', as a poor performance often elicits the verdict: Onu e ajoka njo 'His voice is very poor'. Considering that onu means literally, 'voice', it is interesting that in both instances the reference is to the satisfactory or unsatisfactory nature of the performance, rather than to the quality of the narrator's singing.

Several informants made reference to emume 'behaviour manner, action' and ubene 'showmanship, demonstrativeness, flamboyant movement' to convey the idea of histrionics or theatricality. One critic based his favourable impression of Tale 83, among other features, on Ezeagbo's effective use of gestures:

... you see, too, before he sang ... he stood up and made some ubene<sup>1</sup> pertaining to his song. When he displays such action, he makes you feel happy. But when some narrators sing, they seem rooted to the spot and do not move at all; you only hear their voice. But this one ... his whole body tells you how interested he is in what he is narrating ... that is, from the way he demonstrates (Tape 23A)

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1 In this context, ubene may be translated as 'gesture' or 'stylish movement'.



Having listened to a tale, Enuani listeners may judge it to be 'good' o maka or 'interesting' o soka, but apart from getting such overall impression of a performance they are hard put to it to say exactly why they enjoyed it. It is in fact almost impossible to determine all the criteria which make a good tale, as such criteria may vary from one performance to another or from one audience to another. Andrzejewski and Innes (1975.49) cite, for example, 'one complicating factor', that is, 'the generation gap' in Africa, and observe that it is not easy to ascertain from members of a given community the basis for considering 'one telling of a tale as better than another, or one narrator as more skilled than another'. A tale judged to be 'good' does not necessarily boast all the qualities on which the commentators usually base their judgement. But from a substantial body of commentators' opinions recorded, three criteria were seen to recur with the highest frequency: entertainment, teaching, and conformity to tradition.

(i) Entertainment: Nkeadi, a critic particularly familiar with Okohai's work,<sup>1</sup> lays emphasis on his use of gestures and music:

... if you see how Okohai flings his arms and feet, telling you how it happened, it would appear as if the events depicted took place in his presence ... he shows you clearly as if the incident actually happened ... and since you were not there when it happened, it appears as if you are now seeing it happen ... Also, the way he plays his musical instrument ...

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1 By virtue of his job, Mr. Philip Nkeadi comes in contact regularly with Okohai, whose tales he has recorded over a period of time for broadcasting on the radio. Tales 95 and 96 were recorded by him and transcribed from a Radio Bendel tape.

In general, the way he enlivens his performance (ka o si etinye e ndu literally, 'the way he puts life into it'), suggesting that the event actually took place ... so the tale no longer appears simply as a story ... it appears as if it is happening in your presence. (Tape 4A)

Clearly, Nkeadi and Ezeagbo ( p. 227) are making the same point. In general, entertainment is achieved by means of such features of style as the use of gestures, dramatic pauses, song and music, striking ideophones and other nuances of everyday speech and, of course, 'personal' details (cf., the notion of 'adding to').

(ii) Teaching:

While a great number of informants stressed the importance of entertainment, several others ascribed their sense of the excellence of a performance to its instructive quality. A 'good' tale is expected to communicate some general moral and to contribute to man's welfare by enlightening him about life or deepening his understanding of it. The importance attached to the didactic element in tales is best illustrated by the fact that the narrator is expected to conclude by incorporating an explicit moral comment. If the tale-teller omits this element, a listener invariably inquires if the tale has some general truth to communicate.<sup>1</sup> Such apparently innocuous questions have critical undertones.

Besides this concern with the inculcation of moral

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1 The statement of the moral is conceived as an integral part of the tale. Even when the moral to be drawn is obvious, the audience expect the narrator to indicate it. Such queries were presented at the end of Ngozi's Tale 60, Onyeka's Tale 89, Omesiete's Tale 97, for instance.

norms, tales are also considered an effective medium for the transmission of a wide range of knowledge or factual information. Commenting on Odogwu's Tale 70, an elder refers to this narrator's performances as 'excellent teaching' ezigbo nkwuzi (Tape 7A), emphasizing 'their ability to teach, not just things about today's world, but also events which took place in our ancestors' times oge ndi enu gboo'. Another informant, Chiazor, points out that 'through these tales we are told how ndi mu anyi 'our ancestors' (Tale 16A) lived and died. Their experiences and their tales are worth recounting, since they have a lot to teach those of us alive today'. It is interesting that these passages, from two different commentators, include reference to 'our ancestors' ndi mu anyi and 'the times in which they lived' oge ndi enu gboo.

(iii) Conformity to tradition:

Clearly, Enuani narrators regard themselves as the inheritors and transmitters of a venerable tradition. No other aspects provoked more discussions among the audiences than the question of performing the tales in 'the traditional manner'.

## CHAPTER 9

### EVALUATION II

9.0 In his definition of literature, Hockett (1958:554) places emphasis on the element of evaluation: '...a body of materials which members of <sup>the</sup>society agree on evaluating positively and which they insist shall be repeated from time to time in <sup>an</sup>essentially unchanged form. These discourses constitute the literature of that society'. By examining some indigenous literary views, this chapter and the previous one are clearly concerned with showing how the Enuani themselves conceive of their literature.

Hockett's definition is of particular relevance as it recognizes the importance of evaluation by members of a given society. Although the definition is couched in general terms (based no doubt on the assumption of the universality of the phenomenon called literature), the expression '...they insist shall be repeated in an essentially unchanged form' seems to echo the Enuani insistence on performing the tales in 'the traditional manner'. In addition to such comments and explicit evaluation which not only point to those features which are most desired in tale performance, but have also been considered in Chapter 8, there is also implicit evaluation, involving an attempt to 'improve' idokwama a poorly told tale, or portions of it.

#### 9.1 Evaluation as an integral part of the performance

The oral artist is in face-to-face contact with his audience, potential critics who also evaluate his performance. The actualization of the tale involves two simultaneous processes - the communicative and the

evaluative - and thus constitutes a corporate creative activity carried out by performer and audience. In this, as in several African societies, members of the audience sometimes break in on a performance with their questions, comments and criticisms. Among the Yoruba, one ijala chanter's performance is listened to critically by other chanter-critics and experts. If a listener or critic judges that 'the performer has committed a grave textual error at a particular point, the critic cuts in', correcting the performer with such a formula as 'You have told a lie; you are hawking loaves of lies' (Babalola 1964.61). Likewise among the Enuani, most frequent are comments on the narrator's handling of the plot, such as 'You were wrong at that point', 'That is not how to tell the story' or 'No, that is not what happened next in the story'.<sup>1</sup> Such remarks not only reaffirm that the tales are distinguishable from ordinary speech by the fact that they have a definite form, but also indicate that having embarked on a particular tale, an Enuani narrator assumes responsibility to his listeners whose expectation is that he will render the tale in an acceptable and recognizable form. Such remarks make necessary a brief discussion of the concept of 'the story'.

In the written medium, a story is fixed in a form which is maintained even in reproduction, thus giving rise to the notion of exact, verbal transmission. But while a printed text is reproduced exactly, an oral tale is re-created at every performance. We cannot think in terms of one

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1. A Tiv narrator may be shouted down with a similar remark, for example, '...You've got the story wrong...' (Keil, 1979.57). Cf. Scheub (1969.39).

invariable correct version<sup>1</sup> as each version is unique and different from any other. Whether any particular version is to be regarded as an acceptable version of 'the story' is determined by the audience. It is precisely for this reason that the carriers of a culture voice such comments as those cited above which insist that the story-teller is not 'going on...in the right way'.<sup>2</sup> The criteria for making this judgement, that is, deciding whether a performance is an acceptable instance of any particular tale, are complex and outside the scope of this thesis.<sup>3</sup> It may be mentioned that the criteria seem to vary, or at any rate their application, as audiences sometimes apply different criteria to versions by experts and by average narrators respectively.

The tradition-bound behaviour of members of this society is also maintained in evaluation, as shown, for example, in the insistence on 'correctness' of plot. Since, in this, as in several other societies, there is no formal apprenticeship in the art of tale performance, the activity of evaluation is important for the training of good narrators for it is through such criticisms that Enuani narrators are helped towards the acquisition of an acceptable narrative technique and a repertoire of approved plots. And in a society where tales admit of little or no variation, a proper grasp of the narrative plot - including, for example, the correct names of the dramatis personae

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1. Lord and Finnegan respectively point out the fallacy inherent in the search for the 'original version' (SOT, p. 102) of a song or 'the authentic and correct version' (Finnegan 1970.10) of a tale.

2. Ketner (1976.198).

3. See, for example, Ketner (1976) who discusses in some detail how such judgements of identity are made.

and the proper sequence of the episodes - becomes a sine qua non for an acceptable performance.

The remainder of this section is devoted to providing evidence from performances to further demonstrate the Enuani insistence on 'tradition' or the 'traditional manner'. Unlike a literary product preserved in print, a tale cannot survive if it is not 'used' or performed. Although, as Andrzejewski and Innes (1975.48) quite rightly observe, '...evaluation is implicit in the very survival of tales etc;...', it is argued here that, more than anything else, this Enuani insistence on 'accurate' transmission of the plots, in the manner of 'old-style religious fundamentalists, who want their literal Noah's Ark, three hundred cubits long, their literal Methuselah, 969 years old...' <sup>1</sup> is responsible for the high degree of stability associated with Enuani tale plots.

That such rather prescriptive evaluative activity plays the leading part in enhancing the stability of the plot supports, indeed validates, the claim made at the end of Chapter 2, namely that Enuani tales do not differ structurally according to the narrator's artistic status or ability. In so far as the emphasis on tradition is primarily directed to plot, it is perhaps not difficult to see why all narrators conform in this respect. By being consciously, if not unduly concerned with 'telling the stories as our ancestors showed us' (see below), Enuani narrators clearly demonstrate that 'no poet...has his complete meaning alone' <sup>2</sup> and, more importantly, are able to produce performances which in all probability their listeners will judge acceptable.

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1. Legman (1964.255)  
2. Eliot (1932.15)

A narrator's omission of a well-known episode or detail, or his substitution of an extraneous one, almost invariably provokes some comment from the audience who are familiar with most of the narratives' plots. Regarding such interruptions, Nwambuonwo comments:

I present my tales in the traditional manner...the manner in which the tales have been performed from time immemorial oge gboo na ededede. If I include something extrinsic to the plot, those with whom I learnt the tale will say to me, 'No, it is not like that...you have added something...it is foreign and not supposed to be there. In other words, we are telling the stories as our ancestors showed us, so that nobody can challenge us saying, 'No, it is not what they told us'. (Tape 21A).

Nwambuonwo's remarks are in conformity with those of the other narrators reported earlier, creating the impression also that the art of the Enuani story-teller consists primarily in faithfully repeating the work of his predecessors. What his remarks (especially the interesting phrase 'as our ancestors showed us') amount to is a reiteration of the Enuani emphasis on awareness of, and regard for, the plot core ordered by tradition or, in Lord's words, 'the stable skeleton of narrative' (SOT, p. 99).

The freedom to offer evaluative comments is not the prerogative of any one class or group but, in this, as in numerous other African cultures, the opinions of the elders carry most weight. Not only are the elders arbiters of performance, they also consider it their duty to 'instruct' youthful or unpractised narrators. The narration of Tale 36, for example, witnessed a long interruption at one point, where Baba Okwechime, the clan head and oldest man in Ogbeakwu village of Idumuje-Uno, promptly stepped in once he considered that a young woman, Ifeanyi, had omitted a significant detail. He then took over the narration for the next few lines:



No, Diver plucked some of his feathers and placed them at the top of the palm tree, then took Tortoise to another palm tree, saying, 'you eat here while I feed on the other side'. Each time Tortoise looked round, he sighted Diver's feathers and had no cause to panic, believing that he still had company. But Diver had since flown home... Diver had vanished!...I have cut in here to guide you in the course of your story...so you can now continue.

Baba Okwechime directed his criticism at Ifeanyi's knowledge of the plot and his comments received the confirmation of other listeners. At the resumption of her tale, Ifeanyi incorporated the elder's criticism.

Rather than interrupt the narrator, some critics reserve their comments until the conclusion of the performance. After Omesiete's conclusion of two performances (Tales 79 and 80), a member of the audience criticized his knowledge of the plot in the former tale as well as his handling of the song in the latter. With regard to the song, the critic pointed out that the narrator should have said 'Stomach, my daughter - e...', because that is how a mother would normally address her daughter', then sings the song accordingly, beginning 'Stomach, my daughter - e...' (rather than 'Stomach her daughter - e', as Omesiete did).

According to Omesiete, God had sent two messages through Dove and Tortoise concerning the power of death over man. The critic corrected thus:

There was a point at which he (Omesiete) went astray ...that was when he reported that after creating Man, God had sent those two animals...At no time did God send those two animals. He had dispatched Dog to tell the world that when a man dies, he can still return to the earth...My point is that the second messenger was not sent by God...Tortoise only overheard the message when God was giving it to Dog ...Tortoise overtook him and went on to deliver the message to Man, saying...So the point where he

deviated was...God did not send the two animals  
...Secondly, it was not Dove who went; it was  
Dog that was sent...(Tape 18B).

It may be observed here that the critic's comments are addressed to the audience rather than the narrator, but this is not always the case. Social etiquette, however, demands that juniors do not bluntly or, more importantly, directly charge an elder with committing an error.

The critic's comments received the sanction of the audience, showing the extent to which both criticisms were justified. Clearly such a mistaken substitution (whether by Omesiete or another narrator) was certain to be challenged, involving as it did, a mention of one of the characters (cf. Chapter 3) to whom certain well-defined roles and distinctive personality traits are often attributed.<sup>1</sup>

## 9.2 Retelling a tale as a form of evaluation

We have already seen how critical comment may be expressed during or after a performance, but there is another way in which a listener's dissatisfaction with a performance may express itself; at the end of a performance, he may retell the story as he thinks it should have been told. Of such retelling, Nwambuonwo states: 'If you tell a story the way it is not told, somebody who knows the story is bound to tell you it is not like that...he may now retell it...then it becomes clear that he understands it better than you do.' (Tape 12B).

Articulating his overall assessment of various performances, a recognized artist, Otakpo, remarked: O luzi-kwe unu ebetie e nu 'You should also "add to" it', that is,

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1. Cf. Bynum (1978:295) who shows that in the oral narrative traditions of some African and Balkan societies, the names of characters similarly constitute a stable element of the tale.

'You should also be concerned with embellishing it' ('your story'). Even sharper criticism was reserved for Osadebe (Tale 40) whose performance Otakpo judged to be unsatisfactory. To lend weight to his criticism, Otakpo undertook to retell the tale and a comparison of the two versions (Tales 40 and 41 respectively)<sup>1</sup> is given in the next section.

### 9.3 Tales 40 and 41 and Otakpo's criticism

Both narrators begin by depicting a period of severe famine in Ani Idu. In the initial stages of the tale, however, there occurs one difference, namely the disparity in the number of <sup>the</sup> Oba's daughters, and this is perhaps the most important single factor which determines the narrative course and complexity of each performance. According to Osadebe (Tale 40) the Oba had four daughters, while in Otakpo's version seven daughters are introduced. To the audience, it seemed quite clear which of the renditions was more acceptable in this respect.<sup>2</sup> It seems probable that Osadebe forgot the names of the Oba's seven daughters and settled for stating the only two which he could recall.

The core of Otakpo's evaluative comment lies in its implicit criticism of Osadebe's inability to 'add to', that is, incorporate in his tale sufficient 'personal' details. The analysis here therefore attempts to demonstrate that one characteristic fundamentally distinguishes

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1. See Appendix E.

2. Before Otakpo commenced his retelling, a member of the audience addressed Osadebe: 'The Oba had seven children ...but you mentioned only Kwudi and Mirimma' (see Tape 13A). It has also been noted that the number seven figures prominently in Enuani tales; a fact which lends support to the relevant section of Otakpo's tale. Tales in which the number seven occurs include 8, 31, 46, 57, 61, 70, 72 and 86.

the two versions, namely Otakpo's use of greater detail, which makes his rendition fuller and richer, thus helping towards a more enjoyable performance. To show the extent to which Otakpo's criticism is justified, it is necessary to cite some of the details which he incorporates in his version.

Whereas Osadebe's version opens by merely stating that 'One day the king ordered the village gong to be sounded, inviting everyone to a meeting;' Otakpo's version brings the particular event alive and nearer to the listeners. This is achieved by the effective use of direct speech ('...the Oba has asked me to announce to you ...whoever wants any of them as a wife should...'). Even more force is given to the description here by the fact that Otakpo presents the sound of the gong. Clearly Otakpo's fuller description creates a whole fictional world far more effectively than Osadebe's version does, as the next example also attests.

Even though both versions report the words of the suitors as they endeavour to unravel the mystery confronting them, Otakpo introduces further dialogue between Tortoise and his wife. Anibo's remarks to her husband are interesting, for by declaring 'There you go again, talk, talk, talk...when there is rain...You cannot even provide a decent shelter...when people invite you...you never turn up...', she implicitly underlines Tortoise's rascally, defaulting and thoughtless nature. This sarcastic reference to Tortoise's character is not lost on the audience, who respond by laughing.

Similarly, Osadebe gives a quite exiguous account of

Tortoise's attempts to discover the girls' names. At one point he merely states that Tortoise hid himself at the approach of the girls and that '...the other girls began to call out loud Kwudi - o, Kwudi!...'. It is in this section of the plot that the disparity in the two narrators' use of details becomes most apparent. In contrast to Osadebe's efforts shown above, Otakpo not only furnishes the audience with the remarkable names of all the seven potential brides, but also provides a vivid and elaborate description of the various stratagems contrived by Tortoise to secure the names. Tortoise asks his wife to prepare some thick and slippery agbono soup,<sup>1</sup> adding that 'he needed it for some purpose'. To Enuani audiences, details pertaining to food and eating are often amusing, and this particular one about agbono soup actually provoked laughter.

According to Otakpo, each time Tortoise secured one of the girls' names, 'He wrote it down'. As might be expected, this detail tickled the audience who are aware that Tortoise is illiterate. Even more humorous is Otakpo's indication that this intriguing character occasionally said, too, to his wife 'You know I did not go to school [that is, 'I can neither read nor write'] , So please write down for me the name which I got today'. Since the inception of various adult literacy programmes in the community, people commonly make fun of their friends who are still 'uneducated', while any 'uneducated' person generally prefers to conceal his illiteracy. The force of this detail, therefore, lies not only in its anachronistic implications, but even more

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1. Agbono 'Irvingia gabonensis'. See, also, Williamson (1972.13): 'native mango whose stone is used in soup'.

importantly, in the 'preposterousness' and inconceivability of Tortoise's confession.

No less interesting are Tortoise's sneering remarks about the girls' names. Speaking irreverently of the king, he mocks: 'How wise our Oba is indeed! See how meaningful the names he gives to his children are...!' Having discovered the name Munonyedi (literally, 'Who is with me?' or 'on my side?'), Tortoise sneers: 'I shall tell them today that I am with them'. Similarly, Tortoise makes fun of the name Onyejeoba (literally, 'Has any human being ever been to the Oba's or king's (by extension, God's) abode?'). He comments jocularly: 'Today, I will tell them that I have been to the Oba's already!'. The various remarks which Otakpo attributes to Tortoise as this irreverent character ridicules the Oba for giving each of his children a unique name constantly drew laughter from the audience.

Like Otakpo, Osadebe presents the scene in which Tortoise conceals himself behind the Oba's door, but again his portrayal is bare and sketchy:

...when everybody was still asleep, Tortoise crept wem wem wem to the Oba's house and hid behind the door...Tortoise went to the Oba's house the next day, even while everybody was still sleeping. Again he concealed himself behind the door and waited patiently...until the fourth girl's name was mentioned.

This is clearly a straightforward, if not perfunctory, reporting of the event. In contrast, Otakpo carefully prepares the audience for Tortoise's secret and crucial visit to the Oba's house, by depicting this character addressing the apparently irrelevant but certainly plausible valedictory words to his wife: 'Well, I have now gone six times and returned safely each time. If on the seventh, I come to any harm or do not return, then take care of

our children'. This excerpt is an interesting illustration par excellence of the possibilities of 'personal' details, for Otakpo's detail here enables his listeners to participate emotionally in the experience of the tale.

Judging from the silence which prevailed at this point (contrasted with the loud laughter and general excitement which characterized various points in the narration), Otakpo's detail effectively created an atmosphere of anxious suspense, raising the audience's expectation of the next event in the story. To the audience, Tortoise's words unquestionably have an ominous ring which is further reinforced by reference to the number seven. The audience are aware that Tortoise rarely fails to wriggle out of situations, no matter how desperate. To hear him for once express such deep doubts about his personal safety, then, would convey a sense of premonition.

In the closing sections of the tale, Osadebe merely states that 'Now it was the appointed day. People made elaborate preparations...when the Oba asked the suitors, they came forward. The first of them got the name right and the news spread everywhere'. Whereas Osadebe gives a summary account of the event, Otakpo gradually sets the scene by describing what happens before this momentous occasion: the suitors are first summoned and they grudgingly pay Tortoise's exorbitant fees. Again, Otakpo achieves verisimilitude, making the town-crier proclaim the Oba's order by sounding his gong ko ko ko ko! (not gbom gbom gbom!,

as on the first occasion)<sup>1</sup> and actually reproducing the 'exact' words of the king.

Otakpo relates that having received payment from the first suitor, Tortoise and his wife count the money and put it away under a mortar. The money-under-the-mortar detail is particularly interesting, achieving its intended effect through incongruity, as people do not usually seek to secure their valuables by concealing them under a mortar.<sup>2</sup> The description here is even more striking for another reason, namely that it seems to echo an Enuani anecdote<sup>3</sup> involving the rascally Tortoise. Although the anecdote is a popular one, the use of this detail could well have stimulated the imagination of the audience, jogging their memory, before causing them to laugh heartily.

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1. There does not seem to be any significance in the change of ideophones. Perhaps the only suggestion is that gongs of different sizes were used on both occasions. A smaller gong would sound Ko ko ko ko, while a larger one with greater resonance may 'boom' Gbom gbom gbom.
  2. The Enuani mortar is carved out of very hard wood. One implication here, therefore, is that Tortoise and his wife seem to compare this vital and traditional culinary equipment to a strong-room in a modern bank; an implicit analogy that renders the detail even more interesting.
  3. Some abubu 'mashed yam' was hidden under a mortar and the door of the house painstakingly secured. When it became apparent an intruder had gained entry into the house, Tortoise, the prime suspect, is questioned: 'Whose fingerprints are these which we find on the door?'. Without much thought regarding the implication of his words, Tortoise gave his reply immediately: 'I must tell you this; "I did not touch the abubu under the mortar. I swear it!'. The obvious point of the anecdote is that the culprit is none other than Tortoise (for how else did he know that some abubu was hidden under the mortar, had he not stolen into the house?).



Otakpo concludes his retelling of Tale 40 with another interesting detail. Having acquired great riches by exploiting the suitors, Tortoise becomes the proud owner of a house and, more importantly, a seven-storeyed house, 'the like of which had never been seen in the town before'. Apart from the anachronistic undertones of this detail, it is also amusing to imagine Tortoise, a distinctively diminutive character, living alone in such commodious accommodation (although he is known to have a wife in the tale).

Clearly, Osadebe's version does not boast such elaborate use of details which continually animate Otakpo's plot, much to the delight of his audience. The traditional plot has ordained for every narrator standard incidents such as Tortoise's visit to the girls' home and his concealment behind the door, depicted by both Osadebe and Otakpo. But, as in virtually every other field of artistic endeavour, there are degrees of skill and thus mastery of the 'raw materials', traditional elements which the artist or story-teller approaches in as individual and original a manner as his skill allows.

Considerable attention has been given to a comparison of Tales 40 and 41 to underscore the importance of 'personal' details in Enuani story-telling and to show in which way they can enhance a performance. A good number of the illustrative quotations from Tale 40 reveal that Osadebe's episodes are extremely brief and undeveloped, and that the performance rarely rises above mere description of the plot outline. Considering that listeners have heard most of the traditional plots on numberless occasions and are

thoroughly familiar with them, the narrator who gives little more than an outline of the plot certainly cannot delight his audience. Otakpo's criticism seems to emphasize this, underlining, too, the primary importance of inventing humorous, supportive details and thus infusing new life into these ancient tales.

That concern with the importance of amusing details in enhancing the audience's enjoyment constitutes the heart of Otakpo's criticism is clearly borne out by the fact that he intersperses his retelling of Tale 40 with plausibilities and improbabilities as well as exaggerated, humorous, even anachronistic details which continually provoked laughter from the audience, rather than being queried. Clearly one of the distinctive traits of all oral tales is the presence in their plots, of an admixture of verisimilitude and fantasy.

The implications of Otakpo's exhortative remark may be summarized thus: 'You must regard your plot as representing no more than a skeleton. More importantly, the responsibility for adding flesh to this skeleton, or transforming it into an entertaining story and thus a highly satisfying performance is entirely yours'. The audience's response to Otakpo's tale underscores the exhilarating and authoritative manner in which he delivered his performance. More importantly, the extent to which he reflects his criticism of Osadebe's tale or, in other words, fleshed the 'skeleton' with interesting and striking details, has been shown. As the discussion in the foregoing section on the importance of 'personal' details demonstrates,



Tortoise's repeated theiving trips to the market and the eventual capture of the culprit by the simulated human figure), but others occur only in the second. Examples include Tortoise's encounter with Lizard and the ruse he employed to strike dumb the indiscreet Lizard, the incident involving Tortoise and the more cautious Monkey, as well as the former's farcical guitar-playing.<sup>1</sup> Even more glaringly absent from Awuno's tale is the song which Nwabuzo incorporates and with which the audience are familiar. It is reasonable to suppose that Awuno could recall neither the song nor the other well-known episodes mentioned above. To substantiate his evaluation, Nwabuzo punctuated his retelling with comments on where Awuno had been right, or had omitted an important episode.

Otakpo's criticism, it will be recalled, focussed on Osadebe's inadequate use of details. The critics of Tale 75 are primarily concerned with Awuno's omission of certain widely known episodes of the plot. In effect, Otakpo and the two commentators here are making the same point. A comparison may be made between the story-teller and the builder from the point of view of their common concern with producing structures. It is certainly a prerequisite to have smaller structures (episodes) of different sizes, while a narrator who is able to recall and order those which fit into a particular tale creates further opportunity for the incorporation of a variety of 'personal' details which

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1. To these may be added the implicit aetiological conclusion which 'explains' why lizards continually nod their heads, a conclusion with which the audience are quite familiar (a little boy kept whispering in the background to his friend: 'Lizards used to talk before, you know!').

render the performance more satisfying.<sup>1</sup>

As noted, Awuno's tale is devoid of several episodes which aroused the interest of the audience in Nwabuzo's retelling. In (F), Nwabuzo's inclusion of the scene in which Lizard apprehends the culprit enabled this narrator to create some details which delighted his audience. Tortoise addresses Lizard: 'We shall eat together as a sign of our friendship. First you will feed me, then I will feed you' and later, 'Go on! Swallow!...you saw how I overcame the pain...Go on! Swallow! That is friendship! Swallow!'. At this point the audience were highly amused. It is indeed difficult for any audience conversant with Tortoise's treacherous disposition to miss the essentially comical, even ironic nature of the situation being depicted, namely Tortoise putting on an act, pretending to be greatly concerned over the safety of his 'friend' while in fact scheming to eliminate his friend by causing him to choke. Nor would the hypocrisy of the words 'That is friendship!' be lost on an audience.

The humour of the situation is enhanced by the fact that Lizard was naive, indeed an utterly weak-minded fool, for not only did he bring ruin on himself by accepting a 'bribe' instead of carrying out his duty, he suspected no foul play and even had the credulity to consider Tortoise a friend. In rendering this, as well as the ancillary detail concerning Lizard's continual nodding, for example, Nwabuzo augments his verbal presentation by making effective use of his histrionic ability, continually calling forth

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1. Cf. p238. Otakpo's ability to recall the seven names of the Oba's daughters, for example, provides him with an opportunity to incorporate a variety of supportive, amusing details concerning the stratagems devised by Tortoise, clearly lacking in Osadebe's version of the tale.

laughter from his listeners.

#### 9.5 Summary

The discussion in the last two sections underscores a major argument which runs through not only this chapter, but also the latter half of Chapter 8, namely that although the skilled Enuani narrator does not create new plots, he breathes new life into the traditional ones through an imaginative use of 'personal' details. By incorporating a variety of such details, he in fact renders the traditional plots 'new' and more exciting to his audiences. It is further argued that the use of details (especially the humorous) constitutes an area of the performance in which virtually every Enuani narrator is creative. Whereas there is a handful of narrators like Okohai, Mbuliche or Nwambuonwo, whose creativity is in a far more obvious vein, the generality of performers continually create different humorous details in their handling of the traditional plots. In fact, in the audience's expectation of such 'personal' or extraneous details, we discover one of the major reasons for the continued interest in plots which have been performed, in the commentator Nwambuonwo's words, 'from time immemorial' (p.235).

A plot may have been repeated again and again, but by means of personal details, the audience is made, in the words of Wellek and Warren (1949.242), to 'see new things in it each time'. We have seen how an accomplished narrator obviously concerned with heightening the audience's sense of enjoyment may take a tale - or a bare description of the plot outline - by an average narrator and transform it, by 'adding' and 'salting', into an effective, robust and

elaborate performance. Skilled narrators such as Otakpo and Okohai endeavour to re-create the plots anew with every performance, presenting their listeners with 'new levels of meanings, new patterns of association...' (Wellek and Warren, pp. 242-243). Artists doubtless differ in the range of their capabilities, but it is incumbent upon the Enuani narrator to exploit the opportunity provided by certain episodes of a tale to embellish the traditional plot by the creation of new, interesting details. The foregoing discussion, especially the comparison of Tales 40/41 and Tales 75/76 not only shows that in Enuani storytelling, the copious and effective use of 'personal' details is a major factor in determining the overall aesthetic appeal of a performance, but also reveals one area in which the expert differs from the average narrator.

CONCLUSION

The emphasis throughout this thesis has been on certain literary aspects of Enuani oral narrative. To demonstrate the main thesis, namely that while maintaining the tradition, the accomplished Enuani narrator displays his creative capabilities, we have drawn a distinction between the matter and manner of presentation, in other words, plot and style. It is an important distinction which has special relevance for any study of tale performance in this society.

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, clear evidence has been presented to show that the competent Enuani narrator rarely sacrifices originality for tradition. These chapters have provided some illustration of the wide range of skills which Okohai has in his repertoire for producing effective performances. Okohai's creation of new songs and modifications of the traditional ones, his use of musical preludes for reinforcing the traditional opening formula or his presentation of detached comments by means of questions, laughs and exclamations all underscore his concern with originality (in regard to style, not plot).

Chapter 6 has illustrated Okohai's use of, and more importantly, departure from, the songs, an element which clearly occupies an important place in African tales. Certainly, it is in Okohai's use of the mixed mode that his ability to manipulate effectively the literary conventions of his society is most apparent. While employing 'common' songs drawn from the Enuani narrative tradition, Okohai displays his stature as a masterly performer, breathing



new life into his materials. His success in 'teaching' and entertainment - two aspects with which Enuani storytellers primarily associate their performances - derives in large measure from the impact of the mixed mode, the feature which of course most distinguishes his style from that of his peers.

In the final two chapters which attempt to elucidate how the Enuani evaluate their oral literature, we have seen that special emphasis is placed on the question of the extent to which the tale recognizes the 'traditional manner' or attempts to maintain the link between 'the ancestors and the present'. This thesis has shown that such concern with, and demand for, fidelity to the past is by no means at variance with the fact that individual narrators (such as Mbuliche and Nwambuonwo) variously exercise their poetic licence while performing the primeval plots and drawing upon the stylistic canons of their society. Such practised performers engage not just in 'minute oversteppings of the traditional framework' (Hrdličková 1976.172) but, sometimes, as demonstrated by Okohai's mixed mode, in elaborately executed deviations from the norm of the standard. Clearly, the two roles which the Enuani narrator conceives of himself as fulfilling - that of conserver of tradition and that of creative artist - are not necessarily antithetical or mutually exclusive.

Uzu mmo aba si wa baha, ba nye we oji, nye we  
mmanya, si wa nodi ani, bia je kpo ibe we, si wa na wa  
enwe ndi obia. Ndi obia nwa o gwazi' wa na  
wa nwe, yabu na wa enwe ife oriri, na ife  
oriri ada - o.

## APPENDICES

Appendices A - E give the texts of only a handful of tales, but the tapes on which the one hundred tales in our corpus are recorded have been deposited at the National Sound Archive (29, Exhibition Road, London SW7), and may be consulted there.

APPENDIX A: Two tale texts (with translation) illustrating the features of the oral style discussed in Chapter 1 (cf.p.16-21).

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### TALE 24

#### Ka anyi si nwete ogbolomazu, ife na anyaanwu

Inu m ejegide ti-i-i-i-i-i, ba nwulụ ụzụ mmọ, ba nwulụ ụzụ mmadu. Oyaa, ife eti ka o si eti nọ, maka o nwe be o tilu ndi be anyi si akpọ a kokoriyako - ọ bu na ọkpa ga-anwu a - o nwe oge o ji bu na i bia ehu nwaamiri na uchichi, o ti enu o ti ani, ọ di ka efifie.

Umaka nabi aba puha be wa si egwu onwa, ha!, ofu asi 'Oko ha! ife eti onwo?'. Na onwo ni bu ife etilue nke wa aka si je ani mmọ je agba mgba, na wa gbasia mgba befu ni ka wa na ụzụ mmọ fu. Ofuabọ a aba si a. Eee, na eziokwu ka i kwu, na wa ga-eje yabụ ije ka onwa a eji na. Di m e, chi efocha aba wa chipu, ba jeme mmọ, ba genegbe jegide ti-i-i-i-i, lue ilo ndi mmọ. Ndi be anyi ji e ekwu okwu na ukwu je mmọ adigh elu unọ.

O luzie ka wa lu, ụzụ mmọ no ihu ụzụ a. I ma ife ndi be anyi akpọ eko? Ya bu...wa ji afu ọkwu, nke efu wa ememe.. bellows, ehe,eko. Ụzụ mmọ no be nwe. Ọ kpuna ife to. Ibe anyi nwa si mmadu bia aba...ofu eme ofuabọ a anya, si a na ife efuni wa chọha na ya bu ife efu dianyi a eme. Nke efu ụzụ mmọ ji fu ndi mmadu afo ejupuhe e ka nni, ọ si na ife oriri, na ife oriri *abia* - o. <sup>^^</sup> A bawa kpozi ibe anyi ni, ba neme we - o, nye we nkwu rie - o, nyesie we ife kwesi ka wa rie, wa erijue afo.

O luzie oge chi ji, chi ejihi wa ji jekọ-anaba, wa ba si wa bia ka wa je gosi wa be wa jekọ-alahu. Wa ba si wa na ọ ri mma bu ndi si mmadu bia - ọ, ba chipu - o. Nwa ụzụ mmọ nwa na mmadu nabi ni jeko-alahu. Ụzụ mmọ aba kpolu ofu akwa ri iche yime nwa a, kpozie akwa bu ofu udi nwa yime mmadu nabi ni si mmadu bia, ba gbamanyezie we ute, a ba wa dine. Oyaa, o luzie ife rika ime odiinabi, ụzụ mmọ ekpo eko e pu ihu idigwu e,

bu osuu tie okwu, fua eko, ya bu mkpa. O ba chaa ka udala, o chazia nke udala, chi ejiene. Oge o ji puzie bu uzu mmo, o mana na oge o ji wee e we dine nke nwe na ndi ni nu anya O chipuzi, nwa a nwa alahu, aba wa wepuhe nwa a na be o dine, wee e dinetie be ndi mmadu no, weli nwa mmadu, ya bu wa echangie position. Uzu mmo amaina. Akwa nwa o yimei nwa a, ya ka ndi kwai yi kpoizi, ba buluzi nwa a tie be wa nwa dinei. Nke fu ni o buzi ime ochichi, oyaa, osuu achana.

Uzu mmo apuhafuni daa osuu wei, we hado nwa a isi anu vu-u-u-u-u! O si a 'Baba, baba, baba, emene, emene, na mmu do, baba, emene na mmu do, baba, emene na mmu do!'. O si a kpuchie onu na ukwu je mmo aya-elu mmadu. Nwata a anu enu nu ani, o si a iyu me shai, na o gwuana, na ukwu je mmo aya-elu mmadu. Ibe anyi, mmadu nabi nwa si mmadu bia, oyaa, be ncha emezi buu, uzu mmo apua je akpo izu si na ife nwe eme - o, na oge elume unu puha ka wa je abo anu wa.

Oyaa, nke ni (o mu amu) fu uzu mmo muvuzi o ji je akpo izu, mmadu nabi ni enishi, si be fu ni wa si nishi jeme ihu uzu a kori anya-anwu o kputoi, baa uzo pe pe pe pe pe pe pe pe pe. Oyaa, wa afuzina a, o gbatee we, ga elu oke mmo na mmadu, maka o nwe ofu di ukele n'ime we acha oke anya, o ba si ofuabu a ka wa mehume ka wa mai na wa anaa, ba kwua, kulom kulom kulom!:

Uzu mmo gbulu onwe e,	Anunu daijo daijo anunu daijo
O si na ya gbu Ijo,	"
Ijo nwa Ogbuokwe ana - o.	"

Aa!, ife nwe o kwui emetu ndi mmo. N'oke be nwe o si kwu ife nwe, o nwe ofu diochi n'enu nkwu, ya bu ndi mmo nwa. Wa agbateene, oge o ji kwusi ifefu ni, o kwusizia ifefu ni, di enyi efu ni ezida. Ka o jizi ezida nkefu ni, o chuma a, kwaka kwaka kwaka!

Otulabani,	Gwogworigwo
Onye na ofu ukwu,	"
Onye na ofu aka.	"

Kwafu kwafu kwafu!, kika o gbazi? Ibe anyi ni abateene.

Oyaa, nke efu ni edohukwe daa ifene kwu, kotom kotom kotom!

Uzu mmo gbulu onwe e,	Anunu daijo daijo anunu daijo
O si na ya gbu Ijo,	"
Ijo nwa Ogbuokwe ana - o.	"

Aa!, Otulabani asi, 'Uya bu onwo, hm!'.

Onye na ofu ukwu,	Gwogworigwo
Onye na ofu aka,	"
Otulabani (ekpo nabi)	"

Gwogo gwogo gwogo!, kika o gbazi? Ibe anyi ni oke mmo na mmadu belee!, o kelene we tuba ilo mmadu, yabu oke mmo na mmadu.

Aha!, Otulabani aba si wa unu gba enu gba ani, iwu bu na ya adami anu unu. Yaka o si we mbo noo kochaa wa anu kololo!, ba si a na be unu ayi lune ya amana uso unu - o. Ya bu ogbolomazu ni, ugbogodo nwe ri azu mmaḍu - ka okenye ka okpoho - o nwene onye o rina a ya. Yaka m si si ka m talu unu - o. Nnua - o!

Oge umuaka a buhezi anyaanwu nagidezi lue mmaḍu, aba wa bulu e jeme be eze chi obodo. O ba si wa 'Unu me ife wa afunene onye meini', ya bu na wa ewehe anwu na ife. Yaka o sizi kewazia obodo abua, ba si wa chima ofu iberibe ka ya nwa chi ofu isi. O kewazi a abua, ife aba si ofu uso, anyaanwu esi ofu uso, ya bu uchichi na efifie - yaka o ji bu oge ife lue o tie, oge anwu lue o mua, yaka m si si ka m talu unu - o. Nnua - o!

The origin of the vertebral column, the moon and the sun

Narrator: Diokpa Aniamaka  
Age: 46 years  
Occupation: Farmer  
Town: Onicha-Ugbo

My story proceeds ti-i-i-i-i-i, encounters the spirit smith and the human smith. My friend, the moon was shining, just as it is shining now. When it shines in this manner, it is what our people call kokoriyako. If you happen to come out at night to pass water, just before 'the cock catches the moon',<sup>1</sup> you can see it shining very brightly, just like daylight.

Two children were in the village moonlight play. One said to the other, 'Ha!, my friend, how extremely brightly the moon shines today! The time just seems right for a journey to the land of the spirits for a wrestling exercise. After wrestling there, we can call on the spirit smith'. The other said he was right and suggested that they make the trip before the moon wanes. At the break of day they set out. Really, they went ti-i-i-i-i, and got to the village square of the spirits. Our people say that 'Any human foot which steps into the spirit world never returns home again'.

When the boys got there, the spirit smith was in his forge. 'Do you know what our people call eko?'. The smith was working with his bellows. On one side could be seen the things he had forged. One of the boys looked at the other with 'the tail of his eye',<sup>2</sup> and said to him, 'Do you see that object which the smith is making? That is what we came here for'.

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1. 'When the moon begins to wane'.  
2. 'Gave him a furtive look'.

As soon as the spirit smith saw human beings around, his stomach became filled, as if with food.<sup>1</sup> He said to himself, 'Some meat has arrived'. He invited the boys in, gave them kola nuts, wine, and a seat. He then went out to call his friends, saying to them that some visitors had arrived. What he meant by talking of 'visitors' was that they now had something to eat - food had fallen from somewhere. So they called the two boys and began to entertain them in earnest. They gave them enough drinks 'to eat'. They were entertained with various other items and they were completely filled.

At night, they were shown where to sleep. They were to sleep on a mat with the son of the spirit smith. The spirit smith gave the two boys the same kind of clothes to wear, different from those he gave to his own son. At midnight, the smith went to his forge and put his osuu fork into the fire. Then it grew red-hot, 'ripened' like the udala fruit. When the spirit smith went into the forge, he did not know that the two boys were awake. As soon as he left, they took his son from where he lay, and changed positions with him. The spirit smith did not know, nor did he know that the boys had taken his son's clothes and changed them with theirs. Since it was very dark, the extremely hot osuu fork was glowing.

When the spirit smith returned he quickly took his red-hot osuu and dug it vu-u-u-u! into his son's head! The boy cried, 'Father, father, father, do not, do not! Its me, father, do not, its me! Father, do not, its me!' His father shouted back, 'Shut up your mouth! Any foot that goes into the spirit land never returns to the land of the humans!' The poor boy struggled frantically, and as much as he could, but was told to be quiet, for having come to the spirit world, he could not hope to go home alive. Those our two friends from the land of the human beings did not move. The spirit smith then went outside, saying to his mates, 'It has happened. The time has arrived. Come now let us go and cut up the meat'.

My friend, as soon as [laughs] he left, the two boys stood up, went up stealthily, and unhung the moon and sun which the smith had forged and kept. They made for the road pe,pe,pe, pe,pe,pe,pe. They ran and ran. When they were about to reach the boundary of the land of spirits and that of human

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1. Manner of saying, 'He was very happy'.

beings - one of the boys - more clever, always daring, and taking risks, said to the other, 'Let us make some sound to tell them we are on our way'. He beat their gong and sang:

Spirit smith killed himself, (twice) Anunu daijo daijo  
He said he killed Ijo, anunu daijo  
Ijo, son of Ogbuokwe is gone! "

Aa! the gong which he beat roused the spirits. At the boundary of the two lands where they sounded the gong, there was a spirit palm-wine tapper. As soon as he heard the song, he rushed down from the palm tree and began to pursue the boys, kwaka, kwaka, kwaka!

Otulabani, Gwogworigwo  
Being with one leg, "  
Being with one hand. "

'Kwafu, kwafu, kwafu', he ran, but what could he do? Those our friends had run very far.

My friends, the daring and clever boy turned and sounded his gong again, kotom kotom!

Spirit smith killed himself Anunu daijo daijo  
.....song repeated..... anunu daijo

'Aa!' Otulabani said to himself, 'This is a disgrace', and ran as fast as his leg could carry him:

Otulabani, Gwogworigwo  
...etc etc... "

He ran, gwogo, gwogo, gwogo, but what could he do? Our friends soon got to the boundary belee! and immediately stepped into the human world.

Aha! Otulabani said to them 'No matter how hard you run I must have a taste of your meat!'. So he stretched himself and with his nails gave them a deep long scratch down their backs kololo!, saying, 'You can now run wherever you wish but I already know what you taste like'. So that is the vertebral column, this hole behind our body; whether man or woman, there is nobody who does not have it. So after telling it [my story] , I decided to come home<sup>1</sup>. Welcome!

When the boys returned home carrying the sun and the moon, they took them to the house of the king who ruled the town. He told them, 'You have done what we have seen nobody else do - bringing us the sun and the moon'. So he divided

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1. Narrator seems to make what to him is an unsatisfactory ending. Immediately he takes up the tale again, appending a final explanation with regards to the origin of the sun and the moon.

the town into two, asking them to rule one section, while he ruled the other. After this division the sun went one way, the moon, the other; that is day and night. That is why when it is time for the moon, it shines, and when it is the sun's time, it shines. So I said I should tell this to you. Welcome - o!

TALE 31

...Mmo isi asaa je agba mgba. O nwe nwata okolobia agba mgba shi nne, ya na wu je agba mgba - ya ka wa akpo Tumobia. Ya na mmo isi asaa wui je agba mgba. O nwene onye anwudoe ni n'uwa.

Yaka o si lue ofu ubosi... Before o kwusi na ya jeko mmo agba mgba, ka ife hadome gbe gbe gbe, o nwene ife nyi a alo n'aka. O gbue ugbo, o nwene onye ya na a gbuha ugbo. O luzie ugbo, gwubei ji ofu ubosi, maka na ji o gwupuhe, o nwene onye nwe ike inwe e ni n'uwa, o nwene onye nwe ike, ji emenye rio n'uwa.

O gwupuheziesi ofu ji, gwuziesi ofu ji, doizisi a noo, nodi be nwe o si dopuha ji ene ilo mmo. O ba nodi be nwe o si dopuha ji nwe, wezi anya tie e, be o si dopuha ji, ene ilo mmo, ene ndi fie ogbo mgba, agba mgba. O bia nebe, nebe, ba si 'Mgba nke o bu na o nwene onye eche ye ni, o nwene onye ya na a wui agba, yabu nke ni wa fie ogbo mgba, ya afuna, na ya jeko mmo jeko agba mgba'.

Yaka o si da ji nwe bui ozigbo ozigbo, shia nwunye e, si a ngwa ngwa, iyu bu ite tie okwu. O ba buhe ofu okwute butie ite nwe, si a kpotie e okwu ka o yee, si a kpotie e okwu ngwa ngwa ka o yee, ka ya rie ka ya fu uzo je agba mgba. O ba bu okwute butie ite ba bu sime. O kwadome lue, o shia nwunye e ma o ghene, nwunye e ewe ukoti du okwute. O me koi koi koi. O si a na o ghene. O si a ya o di mma, ya kpatie okwu. O ba kwadome, o kwadomesie, wusia ahu, memesie ogwu, we ogwu fie isi e na ndi ni, memesie ba banye uno oha, mehume mgbirigba, mgbirigba asi a 'mba', na i yika akwadomesi.

O si si 'iya', o wuma kwa, o wuma ogwu, wukata ogwu, shia nwunye e, si a nwunye e, si a ma o ghene? Nwunye e ewe ukoti du okwute, o me koi koi. O si a na o ghene. O si a kpatie e okwu. O ba kwadomesie, jeme si a hoda ite nwe.



O we ukoti we du okwute, okwute eme koi. O we aka tie ime ite nwe, papuha okwute, da okwute bui bu no. Banye uno oha a, banye ime ite ri uno oha, o banyefu ime ite nwe ozigbo ozigbo, o sizi ite nwe puha, ebunu ukwu yi ri a ukwu. O sizi ime ite nwe puha - ebunu ukwu arina a ka o banyeko ime ite. O si a ngwa na ije lo.

Yaka o si chipu, ba si ma onye jeko-egbunye ye ekpele. O ba si Nwulo na iyu ma egbu ekpele. Nwulo bu onye mazi egbu ekpele. Nwulo aba so e, o si a na ije lo. Nwulo aba wee ekpele shiko a, Tumobia, o si a 'ee ee ee', o si a na ya lo. Onye lo ozo? O si a na o nwene onye o bu iyu na a. Nwulo wezie ekpele tie onu o hi a:

Tumobia, (ekpo nabi)	Rugene rugene rugene
I jeko ebee?	"
I jeko mmo?	"
Egbuwe i te - o,	"
Jikeme - o.	"

Tumobia efecha, fecha, nwuafu nke nwe ozigbo ozigbo, nwu a fu ozigbo ozigbo, da a fu wei, we fia akwute kpui!, ubulu a agbasisa! ndi mmadu: Ewo mmu!...Ki bu onwo? . O si ma onye lo? Na o nwene onye o bu, na ka uru ha, na o nwene onye jeko echeye ni. Tumobia aba nwudo we mmadu asaa, we wee ju okwute nwe. O we onye fia okwute, ubulu a efesisa, ofu anwuhu. O ba nwudoe wee mmadu asaa. Yaka wa si si na onwo ekwene we jeko-eme. Yaka wa si bulu isi mmo asaa. Yaka wa puhai, nee ye, nee ye be o donai gwunya! ndi mmadu: Ewo! Ogedengbe! . Wa aba si a ya bia na o onwe ofu onye bia mgba, na o nwene onye nwudo e ni, na o tigbusie we mmadu, iyu bia. Isi mmo asaa asi mana mmadu lo, wa asi a ee. Ka o ba zu ye nwudo? Okwu nwuko na ibebe ni, nkpomkpo risi onwo ni, opia wa ri onwo bu isi, egbe we ri onwo bu isi, ife o buna o ji anu ogwu risi a icha iche. Ahu a ncha, ndi abuba risi, ndi ogwu risi. O ba jena, o ba jena, o ba jena.

Tumobia asi wa yabu na o nwezine, wa asi a chei na o nwe onye jenaini jeko anwudo e ni. O si wa si a bia. Yaka isi mmo asaa puhai, Tumobia ene e, Tumobia ajuso. Tumobia eneme e, neme e. Tumobia efecha si onwo. Tumobia, o si a, nne e asi a ngwa na ije lo, na i nwudoene e, na i gbuko e egbuko. Tumobia efecha, fecha, fecha, dohue okwute, kpelehue okwute, dome e ofuma, si a ngwa. Nwulo ahi Tumobia ohihi ohihi. Nwulo ewe ekpele tie onu:

Tumobia, (ekpo nabi)  
I jeko ebee?  
I jeko mgba?  
Egbuewe i te - o,  
Jikeme - o.

Rugene rugene rugene  
"  
"  
"  
"

Isi mmo asaa efifipuhe. Tumobia anochime e. Tumobia adodo onwo bu ofu ibebe isi. Tumobia ado a do a, do a, Tumobia adopuha ofu. Tumobia ewe ofu fia okwute. O fodu isi isii. Tumobia eso e, o dodo onwo bu isi. Agbabei we, gbabei, o sekapuha ofu, o we e fia okwute, o fodu isi ise. Tumobia eso e, emebe we, mebe we, o fodu ofu isi. Isi mmo asaa agbama, ya na Tumobia. A gbama wa, gbabei, gbabei, ofu isi nwe yi fodu, Tumobia ahapu a n'okwute gbai!.

Tumobia anwudo e fu ozigbo ozigbo, nwudo e fu ozigbo ozigbo tukwasi okwute nwe, Tumobia asi Nwulo, 'Ije lo, o lue!'. Nwa nabi apua. Ije yi lo. Ije yi lo. Aba wa nama. Aba wa gbama n'uzo. A gbabeizi we n'uzo, udomizi, nee Otulabani be Otulabani chuna Tumobia.

Otulabani,  
Onye na ofu ukwu,  
Onye na ofu aka.

Gwogworigwo  
"  
"

Otulabani elue be o no bu Tumobia, Tumobia eme mkpulu akwu. O cho Tumobia o fuzina a. O si o buna ya te fu a nwa, daa mkpulu akwu nwa wei, o bu na ye te fu a nwa, ma a mkpulu akwu ni, magbu e. Daa mkpulu akwu nwa wei, ma a, mkpulu akwu aga maili nabi. Ekpele ekwue na be nwe. O si ma o rikwa. Otulabani ewe kai:

Otulabani,  
Onye na ofu ukwu,  
Onye na ofu aka.

Ka o ji eje ekpo nabi o lue be Tumobia no. Tumobia eme mkpirikpi osisi, mee ofu mbulu n'ani no. O daa mbulu nwa wei, o si ewo, o bu na ya fu a nwa we mbulu ni ma a. 'Ewo', ma mbulu nwa tie be o gai, anu vim!, mbulu aga maili nabi. Tumobia agbama, Nwulo ashi a. Yaka wa gbagide ti-i-i-i puhazi uzo, okwu aduma, nee okwu aduni n'uzo. Okwu aduma n'uzo. Okwu akai ka be ha, be wa ga nako, okwu atai. Tumobia aba nee duu, si na ike agwu. Tumobia efeifu si uso azu, nodi be nwe jompua okwu nwa, ya enu viam!, ya na azu nwai zai! Nwulo ewedenuafu isi ozigbo, okwu adugbue Nwulo.

E - o - o - o, ewo, Nwulo, o ka nwufu... Ya bu na wa agha eghi okwu wa afuna Nwulo n'ime... Tumobia aba nadua. E - o - o

e - o - o...Otulabani zia? Nei, iwu bu na o sogide e  
ti - i - i - i - i Otulabani kpofe okwu, kpofe okwu, wukwa  
na azu kwai sogide Tumobia ti-i-i-i-i. Tumobia eluziefu uno  
shia nne e si a 'Mepu ye uzo, mepu ye uzo, mepuye uzo'. O  
ba wefu aka tie, nke nwe o jifu mepu uzo bu nne e, o wefu aka  
tie e azu, anu kokolo!, ya bu azu ni fu. ndi mmadu amuma.

Tumobia, the able one

Narrator: Chief Mbuliche  
Age: c. 70 years  
Occupation: Diviner, farmer  
Town: Idumuje-Uno

The seven-headed spirit went wrestling.<sup>1</sup> There was a  
young man who wrestled very well, the two of them went  
wrestling with each other. It is he that they call Tumobia  
- he and the seven-headed spirit went wrestling with each  
other. There was no one who could throw him - Tumobia, there  
was no one who could throw him in the whole world.

So one day he said he was going to the spirits to wrestle  
- he was going wrestling. So one day - before he had said  
that he was going to the spirits to wrestle, everything gbe  
gbe gbe [absolutely everything] - there was nothing he did  
not do supremely well. As for farming, there was no one to  
match him in farming. When he reached his farm one day, he  
began to dig yams - because the yams he digs up, there is no  
one who can have such yams in the world, there is no one for  
whom yams grow like that in the world.

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1. Witness the absence of the opening formula. Mbuliche was  
in the middle of an interview, then he launched into his  
tale. (Preceding comments: 'Our people have thousands  
of tales, like the one which emphasizes that 'You cannot  
make friends for a child'... like the one about Tumobia  
who went to wrestle in the spirit world...').

He dug up a yam, dug up a yam, pulled it up like this, and there, where he pulled out the yam, he saw the village square of the spirits. There, where he pulled out the yam, he looked again into the hole where he had pulled out the yam and saw the spirits' village square, and spirits who had marked out a wrestling ring and were wrestling. He went on looking and looking, and said, 'In any wrestling there is no one to challenge me, there is no one I will wrestle with, and yet there is this one where they have made a wrestling ring which I did not see! I am going wrestling with the spirits'.

So he quickly took the yam home, called his wife and said to her, 'Hurry up and bring the pot and put it on the fire'. He brought a stone, put it into the pot and said, 'Feed the fire so that the stone may get cooked'. He said, 'Hurry up and make up the fire so that it may get cooked, hurry up and make up the fire, so that I may eat the stone and feel fit, so as to go and wrestle'. He put the stone into the pot to cook it. When he had prepared himself, he called his wife and asked her whether it was cooked. His wife poked the stone with a skewer and it sounded koi koi koi, and she told him it was not cooked. He said, 'Very well, make up the fire'. He went on preparing himself, and when he had finished he had a bath; he made medicine, took the medicine and rubbed his head, all over this part;<sup>1</sup> when he had finished doing this he went into his shrine and shook the bell. The bell told him, 'No, you have not yet finished preparing yourself'.

He said, 'Very well', and went on bathing. He bathed and bathed in medicine for a long time, and called his wife and asked her whether it was not cooked. His wife poked it with a skewer and it sounded koi koi. She said, 'It is not'. He said, 'Make up the fire'. He finished preparing himself and started off, and said to her, 'Take down the pot'. She poked the stone with a skewer, and the stone sounded koi. He put his hand into the pot, lifted out the stone and immediately took it and swallowed it. He went into the shrine, went into the pot in the shrine. No sooner had he gone into the pot

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1. Narrator gesticulates, rubbing both palms over his head and face.

than he came out with his wrestling shorts already round his waist - when he came out of the pot. The wrestling shorts were not there when he entered the pot. He quickly told her it was time to go.

So he left. He said, 'Who will blow the akpele horn for me?'. He said, 'Monitor Lizard, you know how to blow the akpele horn'. Monitor Lizard was the one who knew how to blow the horn. Monitor Lizard went with him. He said, 'It is time to go'. Monitor Lizard took the horn and went on calling him 'Tumobia!'. He replied, 'Ee, ee, ee, ee'. He said, 'I am the one, who else is there?'. He said, 'There is no one to equal you'. Monitor Lizard put the horn to his mouth, and called him,

Tumobia, (twice)	Rugene rugene rugene
Where are you going?	"
Are you going to the spirits?	"
They will surely kill you o!	"
Do your utmost!	"

They left; he said, 'It is time to be going'. He said there was no one who would kill him, he would return. They went on. So they continued going until they entered the spirits' village square. He put Monitor Lizard in a disused well that was nearby. Monitor Lizard hid there in the disused well. Monitor Lizard put the horn to his mouth. Monitor Lizard began to call Tumobia. He blew his horn. All the people who were wrestling looked for the one who was blowing the horn, but could not see him. Monitor Lizard was in the disused well in one corner of it, blowing his horn. So when they had wrestled for a long time, Tumobia suddenly shot into the wrestling ring. At once someone came out and said, 'This little boy, he has come to where we are wrestling, but he is from the land of the humans!', he said, 'Tumobia, let us wrestle!'. Tumobia leapt about from here to here, from here to here, he leapt about from here to here, he suddenly cried, 'Haa!', vomited up the stone, vomited the stone, the stone which he had swallowed earlier and said, 'The challenger - the one who throws the other should hit him on the stone! Monitor Lizard called Tumobia:

Tumobia, (twice)	Rugene rugene rugene
Where are you going? .etc...	"

Tumobia pranced about, quickly caught him, quickly caught him and at once took him and struck him on the stone, kpuu!

['Ewo mmu! What a sight!' - audience stirred] His brains flew in all directions. He said, 'Who is the next?. There is no one at all, as many as you are, there is no one at all who will challenge me!'. Tumobia threw seven of them, and hit them on the stone. Whenever he took anyone and struck him on the stone, his brains flew in all direction and he died. [audience stirred] He threw seven of them. So they said that this was too much for them. So they went to get the seven-headed spirit. So when they arrived, there he was, sitting down with his ugly bulk, gwunya ['Ewo!, Ogedengbe!'<sup>1</sup> - comments from the audience]. They said to him, 'Come, there is someone who has come to wrestle and nobody can throw him, he has killed us all, come!'. The seven-headed spirit asked if he was a human. They said, 'Yes'. Then - 'Is he big enough for me to throw?'. Fire was burning in the head on this side, odds and ends were in this end, there was even a matchet in his head, there was even a gun in this head, there was everything used for fighting in the different heads. All over his body there were feathers and thorns. On he came, on he came, on he came.

Tumobia said, 'Does this mean there is no one else?'. They said, 'Wait, there is somebody coming who will throw you'. He said, 'Tell him to come'. So the seven-headed spirit arrived. Tumobia looked at him. Tumobia was frightened. Tumobia went on staring at him. Tumobia pranced about this way. Tumobia - she said to him, his mother said to him, 'Come on, it is time to wrestle, you have thrown him already, you will kill him'. Tumobia pranced, pranced and pranced about, moved the stone, rolled the stone round, placed it well, and said, 'Come on!'. Monitor Lizard called Tumobia again and again. Monitor Lizard put the horn to his mouth:

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1. Popular ideophonic expression for describing massive size or weight. Notice the 'heavy' plosive sounds [d] and [gb] .

Tumobia, (twice)	Rugene rugene rugene
Where are you going?	"
Are you going wrestling?	"
They will surely kill you -o!	"
Do your utmost!	"

The seven-headed spirit lumbered out. Tumobia went closer. Tumobia held this head, on one side. Tumobia pulled, pulled, pulled, Tumobia pulled it off. Tumobia struck that one on the stone. There were six heads left. Tumobia pursued him and held this head fast. They wrestled and wrestled for a long time, and he tore off that one and struck it on the stone. There were five heads left. Tumobia pursued the spirit, they wrestled and wrestled, then one head was left. The seven-headed spirit settled down to wrestling, he and Tumobia. They went on wrestling, on and on and on, there was that one head left. Tumobia let it go on the stone, gbai!.

As soon as Tumobia had thrown him, as soon as he had thrown him, and put him on the stone, Tumobia said to Monitor Lizard, 'It is time to go - that is enough!'. The two of them left - it was just time to go, it was just time to go. They started off. They started to run along the path, they ran and ran along the path, and suddenly saw Otulabani, where Otulabani was chasing Tumobia.

Otulabani,	Gwogworigwo
The one with one leg,	"
The one with one hand.	"

Otulabani came to where Tumobia was. Tumobia made himself into a palm kernel. Otulabani looked for Tumobia but could not see him; he said, 'If I could only see him -' and he seized hold of the palm kernel, 'If I could only see him and throw this kernel at him and kill him -' and he seized hold of the kernel and threw it, and the kernel flew two miles. The horn sounded in that place. He said, 'Is he there now?'. Otulabani hopped on again. [...Song repeated: Otulabani... Gwogworigwo...]. Before he had taken two steps, he came to where Tumobia was. Tumobia made himself into a piece of wood, a missile here on the ground. He seized hold of that missile and said, 'Ewo!, if I could only see him and hit him with this missile - Ewo!' and he threw the missile to where he had gone, it went vim! The missile went two miles. Tumobia started to run, and Monitor Lizard called him. So they ran

until they covered part of the way, and a fire started burning - look at the fire burning on the path. A fire started burning on the path. The fire spread everywhere, it spread to the place where they were making for. Tumobia gazed dumbfoundedly and said, 'What a pity!'. Tumobia sped backwards, and jumped from there, jumped over the fire, viam! and landed on the other side, zai!. Monitor Lizard quickly put his head down, and the fire burnt him to death. [Audience stirred: several comments, including 'Oh, oh, Monitor Lizard, he should not have died!']. That is why, they never make a fire without seeing a monitor lizard in it. Thus Tumobia succeeded in getting home. ['Eo - eo - eo!': more comments from members of the audience as they express their sympathy for the unfortunate Monitor Lizard.] One member queried: 'What then did Otulabani do?', then Mbuliche concluded his tale thus: Look, in fact he followed him, until Otulabani jumped over the fire to the other side. He followed Tumobia for a long time. As soon as Tumobia reached home he called to his mother, 'Open the door for me, open the door for me, open the door for me!'. She just got her hand to the door. As soon as she opened the door - the mother - he just got his hand to his back, it went kokolo!. That is the reason for the human vertebral column. [More remarks from the audience] .



APPENDIX B: Translations of some tale texts referred to in thesis

TALE 5

What one sows, one reaps

Narrator: U. Okohai  
Age: 42 years  
Occupation: Civil Servant  
Town: Onicha-Ukwu (lives and works in Benin)

My friends, I present you with white clay. [Audience: When you make medicine, may it be effective]. My story goes ti-i-i-i-i and encounters Tortoise. Tortoise, who is never absent in an inu is here again! My story also encounters a beautiful and industrious woman, Ada. Her husband was equally hardworking, and they both lived happily. Unfortunately, during one of Ada's pregnancies, her good husband died.

'Ewo!', she lamented, 'I'm now going to suffer. Who is going to look after me? And the child in the womb?'. In those ancient times, animals and human beings used to do things in common, speak and understand the same language, attend meetings and take vital decisions together. Since it was a time of famine, Ada went to Leopard, who had been very friendly with her husband, to ask for food. She called:

Leopard - e - ewo!...Leopard - e,  
Ho! -o -ho! - o - Leopard eiya!, ewo mmu - o!  
Leopard - e - e - e - e - e,  
Eghi ghi ghi ghi ghi - i  
Tears have filled my eyes.  
Leopard - e - e - e - e - e,  
If you have yams, give me - o,  
If you have some corn, give me - o,  
If you have some meat, give me - o - ewo!  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger ewo! - o,  
Ewo! Leopard - o - o.

Leopard barked, 'Who is that speaking? Who, I ask, is speaking?', because Leopard always speaks forcefully. Ada mentioned her name and sang again:

It is me Ada, it is me Ada - ewo mmu - o!,  
If you have yams, give me - o - o,  
That I may eat - o - o - o,  
If you have some meat, give me - o - ewo!  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger, ewo! - o - Leopard,  
Ewo!, Leopard, my husband's good friend - o - o.

Leopard was very angry, for he was hungry. He threatened to eat Ada, and dashed after her, barking woi woi woi! Ada was only saved because when Leopard leapt to grab her, he was caught in a fire; he would have torn Ada to pieces, as well as the child in

her womb! ['Ewo mmu!': the audience, stirred, make various comments, and laugh]. Aaaaa! What is this life all about? Ewo!. When Ada's husband was alive, Leopard used to come eating and drinking at their home. After this incident involving Leopard, Ada left for the home of Elephant, a good friend of her late husband.

Elephant - e - e - e - ewo!  
Elephant-who-owns-the-forests,  
Ewo - e - ewo mmu - o - ewo - o!  
Elephant-who-owns-the-forests, ewo - o!  
Elephant, something terrible has happened to me,  
Something terrible has happened to me, ewo - o!  
My good husband is gone!  
If you have yams, give me - o - Elephant,  
If you have some corn, give me that I may eat,  
If you have some cocoyams, give me - o,  
If you have some meat, give me to eat - oh Elephant - o.  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger,  
Elephant-who-owns-the-forests, ewo - eiya! - ewo!  
Elephant, please take pity on me and give me to eat.

'The owner of the forests'replied, 'Who is that talking?'

It is me Ada - o - ei - ei - ei - ya, eiya - a,  
The child in the womb,  
And I are dying of hunger.  
Please take pity on me - o, give us to eat - o - o,  
For the famine is killing us - o,  
The hunger is indeed killing us - o - o.

Elephant flared up, 'Is that why you have come to disturb my early morning sleep? May idigwu juju break your head! You just wait for me there! May troubles besiege you!'. My friends, Elephant rushed off, and with his tusks, lifted Ada off the ground. Ada was only saved because she ran for shelter under a nearby tree. In his fury, Elephant uprooted all the trees, hoping that they would fall on Ada and thus provide food for him. Ada was so frightened and surprised. Ada ran and ran.

Elephant pursued her, barking and trumpeting angrily. He said to Ada, 'Imagine you coming to provoke me when hunger is already tormenting me!'. Ada was indeed amazed, wondering the countless number of times Elephant had been a welcome visitor at her home.

So Ada went to all the animals one after the other but they refused to help her. For a week she wandered from animal to animal; then, she reasoned that Tortoise would not be so unkind. So off she went, with tears soaking her breast. All along, Tortoise knew what was happening to Ada. He asked, 'What is the matter?'. Ada wept:

Tortoise, son of Aniga, ewee! l e - e,  
Tortoise, son of Aniga, ewee!, ewo mmu!, I am lost!  
All you people, I am lost, ei - ei - ei,  
Hunger is killing me - e - e - e.  
My husband is dead; just see, I am pregnant.  
What shall I eat - o - ewo iya! - o,  
If you have some yams, give to me - o,  
If you have some corn, give me to eat - o,  
If you have some meat, give me to eat,  
If you have some yams, give me to eat, ewo mmu - o!  
I am greatly scared of the world!

She continued to weep. Tortoise asked her to calm down. You all know that Tortoise is the master of all tricks. He asked Ada again what the matter was. She told of how she had gone to Leopard and Elephant in search of food, but instead nearly got death; of how all the animals proved so unkind. She poured out all her sorrows.

Tortoise stared du-u-u-u at her. As old as he was, Tortoise had no money to take a wife. He asked Ada the sex of the child she was holding. On learning that it was a boy, Tortoise reasoned and said, 'I do hope the one in your womb is going to be a girl', 'So I hope too', replied Ada. Tortoise then made a bargain - to give Ada all the food she needed in return for the unborn baby as his wife. Ada, surprised, replied 'Aa! to talk of marrying a child, even before it is born?'. Tortoise feigned anger, saying 'That is why I hate dealing with you women. Here am I trying to give you food, and you begin to ask me silly questions!'. Ada had no alternative but to accept Tortoise's terms, and pledge her unborn baby. Tortoise asked her to swear by the sun. Out of sheer hunger, she swore. She was asked to swear by God. She did the same.

Tortoise gave Ada yams and meat and other foods, and even asked her to come back any time she was hungry. Where did Tortoise get yams from? He went to Elephant's farm and dug up some yams. Then he went and stole some meat from Leopard's meat store. Ada went away and promised herself never to forget in her life, this act of kindness by Tortoise.

'It is true that I have sworn', she said, 'but whether or not, Tortoise has saved my life and that of the child in the womb. If in his old age Tortoise wants to marry my daughter, it is up to him'.

Ada's pregnancy was already at an advanced stage. In no time, she gave birth to a baby girl. How time flies! In sixteen years Anoli (for that was the name of Ada's daughter) had grown into a very beautiful girl with an attractive



Greetings to you, greetings to you, (twice)	Kpalanuma
Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home?	"
Which animal is at the door?	"
It is Leopard at the door,	"
Who do you want?	"
I want Anoli for a wife,	"
Away with you, Leopard!	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> , etc etc...	"

Ada promptly rebuked Leopard. 'Away with you,beast! Have you forgotten how you pounced on me and wanted to eat both me and my unborn baby? If you had had your way then, whom would you have married now?'. My friend, come and see how the other animals laughed at the disgraced Leopard. After he had gone home, I tell you, many other animals came. Now, came Elephant. He was escorted by many distinguished persons. They came, carrying yams, bags of money, beads, achanu, ejije, aka, palm wine and a variety of comestibles. Above all, their music and dancing was loud. Elephant thought that his material wealth was going to sway Ada. On getting there, he sang:

Greetings to you, greetings to you, (twice)	Kpalanuma
Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home?	"
Which animal is at the door?	"
It is Elephant at the door.	"
Who do you want?...etc etc	"

(This version has been given on p.138 ).

As soon as he finished, Ada told him 'You must be mad! Do you not remember how you chased me, trumpeting furiously and felling all the trees in the forest, in your efforts to kill me? If you had eaten me with the baby then, whom would you marry? Now, you bring all your wealth to win me over'. And so saying, she dismissed Elephant. He left in shame and in a hurry. He was so ashamed to carry back any of the things he had brought. Everything was stored in Ada's back yard; her meat and food store overflowed. Ada said 'Serves him right. Good indeed! What one sows, one reaps'. So Elephant, Leopard, Pig, Python, Bushcow and the rest, they all came, but Ada refused them all.

Meanwhile, Tortoise had heard what happened to all the animals, Elephant, Leopard, Bushbuck - he borrowed an ibe-ato dress so as to look personable, then he set out. The ibe-ato was so big that it was difficult for Tortoise to walk. You can imagine Tortoise struggling to keep his balance under the weight of his ibe-ato, in order not to be swept away by the wind. As he struggled to keep his clothes, people jeered at him, saying, 'This one, who will ever give him a wife?'. He was accompanied by his children. My friend, when Tortoise arrived, the song flew from his lips:

Greetings to you, greetings to you, (twice)	Kpalanuma
Is Ada at home, is Anoli at home?	"
Which animal is at the door?	"
It is me Tortoise at the door	"
Who do you want?	"
It is Anoli I am looking for.	"
Please give Anoli to me in marriage.	"
Greetings to you, greetings to you, (twice)	"
Tortoise dear, come in, (twice)	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
You gave me gologolo,	"
If you can afford it,	"
You will marry Anoli,	"
If you cannot afford it,	"
You will marry Anoli,	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise,	"
your husband, (twice)	"
Greetings to you, greetings to you, (three times)	"
Which animal is at the door?	"
It is Tortoise at the door,	"
Tortoise dear, come in...etc etc etc	"
...Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise,	"
your husband	"
Tanda dada - a - a -tanda dada da - o,	

[ Song continues. For the remainder of this version, see the mixed mode song on pp. 151-152]

My friend, the news shook everywhere wu - u - u - u. Ada emerged gbam!, and said to Tortoise, 'I made you a promise because when I was desperate for food, you fed me. This is the day of reckoning, so I now happily present Anoli to you as wife. Anoli, here is your husband!'. So Ada made good her promise to Tortoise. The news spread everywhere, 'wum - m!'. Tortoise could hardly believe his ears, he was simply mad with joy. 'Me?', he asked himself, 'to marry such a young and delicately beautiful girl?'. My friend; Tortoise said, 'You have never before seen anything like the dance I am going to do now. Indeed!':

Greetings to you, greetings to you, (twice)	Kpalanuma
Ada, thank you; Anoli, thank you, etc etc	"
[... this version has been given in full on p.141]	

My friend, Tortoise 'grabbed' at Anoli and there were loud cheers from the spectators. Ada concluded, 'There is nothing more to be said. Tortoise, there is your wife!'. So Tortoise took his wife away. That is the story I thought I should tell you, because our people say that whatever you do to people, will be done to you, you reap what you sow. Do you not see that when Ada was dying of hunger, only Tortoise gave her something to eat? Do you see how Tortoise, even in his old age, succeeded in marrying a very young girl? Now, did Ada give Elephant (who wanted to trample her) a wife because he had enormous material wealth? So, it is good, if you see a person suffering - whether

he asks you or not - help him, do not maltreat him. Also, when you have anything, do not brag with it. Tortoise has reaped what he has sown. That is why I decided to tell you this story. [Audience reply, 'Well done! Welcome - o!'] . So, may it be well with you. Here is Tortoise's song, let us sing it again, because Tortoise is quite a remarkable musician.<sup>1</sup>

[Musical accompaniment stepped up in this version] .

Greetings to you, greetings to you (four times)	Kpalanuma
Which animal is at the door?	"
My <u>chi</u> has done extremely well,	"
I am the one married to Anoli (four times)	"
Anoli, thank you,	"
Ada has done extremely well,	"
My <u>chi</u> , thank you.	"
My <u>chi</u> has done extremely well,	"
I am the one married to Anoli,	"
Greetings to you, greetings to you, (four times)	"
<u>Dededé tanda da dadida</u> , (three times)	"
Greetings to you, greetings to you,	"
My <u>chi</u> has done very well,	"
Anoli, thank you,	"
God, thank you,	"
Greetings to you, greetings to you - o - o.	"

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1. Cf. Tale 23. Note Okohai's creative and more elaborate use of songs. See Chapters 5 and 6.

TALE 23

Why we should be kind to pregnant women

Narrator: Okolie Obuzome  
Age: c. 50 years  
Occupation: Farmer  
Town: Idumuje-Uno

I present you with white clay. [Audience: When you make medicine, may it be effective] My fantastic tale goes vulu lu lu.<sup>1</sup> It encounters the animals, it encounters a certain woman. It was during a famine and she was a pregnant woman. On her way to the stream she saw many animals under the pear tree; they were gathering pears. The pears on the tree had ripened, ripened in great numbers. You all know how a pregnant woman hungers after almost everything. Really the pear sent her mouth watering - she desired it badly.

The first person she met there was Bushbuck. She begged him to throw down a pear for her. 'Pear?', he replied, 'is that the stream you set out for? Instead of going to the stream, you come here talking of pears. Be off!'. He did not give her a pear. She looked up, saw Pig, and said to him, 'Please Pig, I am dying of hunger. You see too that I am pregnant. Please, just throw one pear down for me to eat'. Pig replied that he had no time for that, and that the pear did not belong to him either. She begged Antelope, Antelope refused. So she begged Bushbuck, Pig, Duiker and all the animals fefefe, but none of them agreed to give her a pear.

Only Tortoise was left. You know that of all the animals in the forest, Tortoise is the smallest. She asked Tortoise for a pear and he said, 'O, woman, now that you are pregnant, I am aware that you feel like eating everything'. And so saying, Tortoise threw her two pears. As soon as they fell to the ground, the woman threw them into her mouth and ate them hurriedly. She was about to go on her way when Tortoise asked her to wait. He cut a whole bunch of pears and threw it down for the woman. She put this in her basket and left for the stream.

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1. Ideophone suggesting great speed of movement.



All the animals who were plucking the pears took home their portions. They all ate their pears and after three days no pears were left. Within three market weeks, the pregnant woman was delivered of a baby girl. She began to bring up her daughter, called Anoli. Man, I tell you, you should have seen her! Eyes that have looked upon her once will never look at the bush!<sup>1</sup> - she was truly beautiful, extremely fair-complexioned. And so they all lived on. Soon, her breasts began to sprout, soon, she was a woman. It has happened! She was so beautiful that her parents were no longer allowed to sleep; several suitors now desired to marry Anoli and continually besieged the house. As things always happen in an unexpected manner, the first suitor to visit there was Bushbuck. He knocked kpoi kpoi at the door. 'Who is that?', asked the woman. Bushbuck answered. She asked, 'Bushbuck?', and burst out laughing. She called:

Which animal is at the door?(twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Bushbuck at the door,	"
Away with you Bushbuck!,	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
Did you give me <u>gologolo</u> ?	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet	"
Tortoise, your husband.	"

Ha! Bushbuck was sent away. The next day, Pig came, believing in his strength and treading gwodo gwodo, gwodo gwodo. At the door he knocked dim dim dim dim dim. 'Who is it?', the woman asked. On hearing Pig's voice, she burst out laughing again, and sang:

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1. Anya ne e ni adigh-ene ofia! Popular and humorous Enuani portrayal of a remarkably beautiful girl. The humour here is provided by the suggestion that eyes that have looked upon such stunning beauty could not bear to look upon such ugliness (the bush is regarded as a symbol of ugliness or unpleasantness).

Which animal is at the door?(twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Pig at the door,	"
Away with you, Pig!	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
Did you give me <u>gologolo</u> ?	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise, your husband.	"

Pig felt insulted; nevertheless he had to go back. The next animal to go was Okwuzu. My friend, you know that Okwuzu is extremely handsome - on that day, his body simply shone. He knocked kem kem kem. When he mentioned his name, the woman began to sing:

Which animal is at the door?(twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Okwuzu at the door ... etc etc	"
.....SONG.....	

Hm! Okwuzu jumped out and went home. After him came many other animals, one after the other. All of them - they came kokoko zam ['in their entirety'] - Bushbuck, Bushcow, Pig, Duiker, Elephant, Ubido, but they were all rejected by Anoli.

When they had all gone fefefe ['completely'] Tortoise said, 'Well let me go and try too'. He jumped off kpulu, kpulu, kpulu and got there in no time, quickly! When he announced himself, the woman laughed and called him:

Which animal is at the door?(twice)	Kpalanuma
It is Tortoise at the door,	"
Tortoise, dear, come in,	"
When I begged you for <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
(Only) you gave me <u>gologolo</u> ,	"
If Tortoise can afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
If Tortoise cannot afford it,	"
He will marry Anoli,	"
Anoli, my daughter, come and meet Tortoise, your husband.	"

Ha! Tortoise jumped inside. She spread a cloth for him and he sat down. She brought him kola nuts and he ate. She offered him tobacco and the full entertainment to which a guest is entitled. When her husband came back, she told him, 'My daughter's husband came today, you know'. He asked who it is and she told him, insisting that no matter what happened, only Tortoise would marry Anoli. She reminded him of the great kindness shown her during her pregnancy and also promised that even if Tortoise had no

money for the marriage she would help him borrow some.

Her husband replied, 'Good indeed. Since you remember it, I'm satisfied'. On the next day, Tortoise dressed gorgeously, got there and knocked kpoi kpoi kpoi. Even before he said anything, she knew his voice. She called him:

Which animal is at the door?(twice) Kpalanuma  
It is Tortoise at the door etc etc "  
.....SONG.....

Ah! Tortoise went in. He was welcomed and entertained properly as on the first occasion. Before Tortoise left the girl's father addressed him, 'What the mother of the girl you come for has told me, I will not override, only you did her a favour she requested during pregnancy, without you it's possible the pregnancy might not have gone well. In that case we should not have had this daughter. So, you can come in two days time.

At home, he informed his relatives - the animals - that he had got a wife. They asked who his wife was. He replied, 'That beautiful, fair-complexioned girl you see; her father says I'm going to marry her!' They all asked, 'You mean the one at whose home we were all rejected?'. He said, 'Yes'. Bushcow looked at him ko-o-o-o<sup>1</sup>, said he would have trampled him to death had there not been some people around. He begged him not to, or else he would not be able to marry the girl he had won. He asked all the animals to accompany him to his future in-laws. On the appointed day, they trooped out and went kiti kiti kiti until they reached their in-laws'. As soon as they knocked, the woman said she wanted to tell the animals that everything Tortoise had told them was true. So she sang:

Which animal is at the door?(twice)  
.....SONG.....

Ha! all the animals were surprised that of them all Tortoise had been chosen. Their in-laws entertained them fully, but the animals' faces now looked sita<sup>2</sup> for they were not really happy accompanying Tortoise on his successful mission.

- 
1. Ideophonic expression; 'disapprovingly'.
  2. That is, 'expressive of disappointment'.

They had no alternative but to help him count the money for their in-laws; a date was fixed for the marriage, and as Anoli did not want to wait any longer, she was soon escorted to her husband's home. Thus Tortoise married Anoli, the beautiful one.

That is why, up till this day, any reasonable young man who sees a pregnant woman, gives to her whatever she asks for. If you do this and she gives birth to a girl, you will not be turned back if you go seeking a wife there. Even if she does not give birth to a girl, some kind of friendship with the family is initiated. Having gone this far, I decided to return. Welcome.....

TALE 46<sup>1</sup>

Narrator: Mrs Adamma Okwudiafo  
 Age: 29 years  
 Occupation: Housewife  
 Town: Asaba

I present you with white clay. [Audience: When you make medicine, may it be effective.] My tale goes ti-i-i-i-i-i-i and encounters the animals, including Tortoise. They were all living together. Then famine set in. It was so severe that the animals were dying every day. They summoned a meeting to know what should be done to remedy the situation. They decided to kill their mothers for food as they were old and not of much use.

All the animals complied and one after the other, they killed and ate their mothers. After a while all their mothers had been eaten. But the famine continued. The animals were very hungry again. No matter how hard they searched for food, they found none. But not so Squirrel. Unknown to the other animals, Squirrel had taken his mother up into the sky. Anytime he was hungry, he went up to a spot and sang:

Mother, send down the rope, (twice)	Send down the rope
Who is it? It is me Squirrel,	"
Squirrel who spreads his wings across	"
the sky,	"
Mother, send down the rope.	"

And anytime he finished singing, his mother sent down the rope from the sky. Then he ate as much food as he wanted and went down the rope again to join the other animals who by now were extremely hungry. Things continued in this manner, both for Squirrel and the other animals. One day, Tortoise said to him, 'Our dear friend, where do you have this secret store of food that you eat to make you look so well-fed? Are not all we other animals dying of hunger every day?'. Squirrel agreed that they were all suffering from the devastating famine - himself included. But Tortoise knew that this was not the case. 'He thinks he is more clever than I am. We shall see!', he said.

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1. Cf. Tale 53, by another narrator.

He began to spy on Squirrel. He always trailed Squirrel without the latter knowing it. You all know that Tortoise is very clever; he continued to spy on Squirrel until he discovered his secret. One day, Squirrel sneaked away again and, on getting to the spot, sang:

Mother, send down the rope, (twice) Send down the rope  
Who is it? It is me Squirrel " "  
Squirrel who spreads his wings across the sky, " "  
Mother, send down the rope. "

The rope descended and Squirrel went up. Tortoise, who had been watching everything said, 'Oh - Oh - I see! So our dear Squirrel did not kill his mother? Oh! very good! Now, I know'. Squirrel finished eating and joined the other animals. When nobody was watching, Tortoise sneaked off to the spot. He sang:

Mother, send down the rope, (twice) Send down the rope  
Who is it? It is me Squirrel, " "  
Squirrel who spreads his wings across the sky, " "  
Mother, send down the rope. "

He sang it so badly that Squirrel's mother said, 'No, it cannot be my son'. So she did not send down the rope. Tortoise went home quietly, saying, to himself, 'Okay, before I do this four times, I shall know where I stand'. Another day he trailed Squirrel, hid himself and listened very carefully. Squirrel went up and ate as usual. By now, Tortoise had mastered the song well. On the third day, he went and sang:

.....SONG REPEATED.....

He got all the words and sang like Squirrel himself.

The rope came down and Tortoise went up. Just before he got to the sky, Squirrel appeared on the scene and shouted to his mother to cut the rope. She did so promptly and Tortoise fell down, smashing himself to pieces. Squirrel picked together the pieces and went up to his mother. They cooked and ate Tortoise, saying, 'That one is gone'.<sup>1</sup>

But after a short while, all the animals knew the truth about Squirrel's mother. They forced her down and killed her like they had done to their own mothers - so the animals lived on. So, my story stops going, while I return. Audience: Welcome! .

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1. That is, 'We have now taken our revenge'.

TALE 53

Why Tortoise's body is full of patches

Narrator: Diokpa Nduka  
Age: c. 58 years  
Occupation: Farmer .  
Town: Ogwashi-Uku

I present you with white clay. [Audience: When you make medicine, may it be effective.] My tale goes ti-i-i-i-i-i and encounters Squirrel, his mother, as well as other animals. That year, there was a very terrible famine whistling fio lo fio lo fio lo through the streets of Ani Idu, to the extent that some people's buttocks shrivelled up<sup>1</sup> and looked gho gho gho. It was like the famine that took place in 1971. After some time, the animals found practically nothing to eat. The yams in Ani Idu during the famine that year looked as emaciated as those of the Igbo people immediately after the [Nigerian] civil war. All the animals decided to present their mothers to be killed and eaten. Leopard said, 'I will be the first to present my mother. Why not? I am not going to die of hunger when my old and useless mother is still here. Why shouldn't all the old mothers die that we younger ones may live?'

Leopard seized his mother, the animals killed and ate her. Two days later, Elephant presented his own mother. You know that elephants are enormous in size, so the meat lasted the animals for three days. One after the other, both the small and large animals - from Leopard to Elephant to Striped Rat - presented their mothers to be eaten. So the animals went on like this. They did not know that Squirrel was playing tricks, for while other animals were eating theirs, he took his mother and hid her up in the sky. Squirrel never ate any meat that he was given, he simply stored it all in the storage basket hung over the fire. Two days before it came to Squirrel's turn to present his mother, the animals sent him a message to remind him of the date. Squirrel said to them, 'My own mother? You must all be joking! You want to eat my mother! When you were all eating yours, did I eat with you? If you want the meat you gave to me, you can have it

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1. Popular comical way of describing the severity of a famine.

all back intact'. He hung down the basket and handed it to the animals. He told them that his mother had died long ago.

Squirrel jumped out, leaving the messengers. All the animals began to look for where Squirrel must have hidden his mother. They ransacked the house and combed the neighbourhood, but it was all in vain. Tortoise said to them, 'Just leave it all to me. Before I do my homework for one market week, I will discover and tell you where this fool has hidden his mother'. So Tortoise began to spy on Squirrel. Wherever Squirrel went, he followed him secretly. Anytime Squirrel wanted to see his mother, he sang,

Mother, send down the rope,(twice)	Send down the rope
Who is it? It is me Squirrel,	"
Squirrel who spreads his wings across	"
the sky,	"
Mother, send down the rope.	"

Since Squirrel's mother knew his voice, she always sent down the rope for him to come up to the sky.

One day when Squirrel went and sang, he did not know that Tortoise was listening near his house. The latter said to himself, 'I've got it now! I would never have suspected that this was Squirrel's ruse'. As soon as Tortoise discovered Squirrel's secret, he went and informed the other animals. He also told them that he knew the song which Squirrel always sang before climbing the rope. He then gave them a date on which the animals would go to kill Squirrel's mother.

On that day, Squirrel did not know that all the animals were waiting for him to leave for the farm. As soon as he left, all the animals assembled and Tortoise began to teach them the song. Leopard tried to sing it, but sang very badly, so Squirrel's mother said, 'This cannot be my son's voice'. Therefore, she did not send down the rope. Then Cow sang, but with no better results. So Tortoise sang,

Mother, send down the rope,(twice)	Send down the rope
Who is it? It is me Squirrel,	"
Squirrel who spreads his wings across	"
the sky,	"
Mother, send down the rope.	"



Squirrel's mother said, 'Sure, this is my son's voice'. So she sent down the rope and all the animals began to clamber up the rope. Just as they were about to touch the sky, Squirrel returned from the farm. As Squirrel's mother was pulling up the rope, she was asking herself, 'Can my son be so heavy?'. Squirrel immediately dashed to the spot and sang;

Mother cut the rope, (twice)      Cut the rope  
The animals have come quite close!    "

His mother seized a knife immediately and began to cut kpikiri kpikiri kpikiri. She succeeded and all the animals started to fall to the ground kpikitim kpikitim kpikitim! Because Tortoise was the last on the rope, he dashed himself to pieces - more than all the other animals who were at the top. That is why today,<sup>1</sup> Tortoise's body is covered in patches. After this, the animals forced Squirrel's mother down and killed her. At this point, I decided to stop and return. Welcome!

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1. Diokpa Nduka, unlike the narrator of Tale 46, has incorporated an aetiological conclusion.

APPENDIX C: Comparison of texts: Tales 34/80/85

TALE 34

Narrator: Miss Ngozi Aniamaka  
Age: 17 years  
Occupation: Student (final year  
Teacher's College,  
Issele-Uku)  
Town: Idumuje-Uno

(A)

My tale encounters a certain woman. She had four children, all of them female. One of them was called Foot; another, Hand. The other two were Stomach and Head.

TALE 80

Narrator: Mr. Okolie Omesiete  
Age: 50 years  
Occupation: Government worker  
Town: Idumuje-Ugboko

I present you with white clay. [Audience: 'when you make medicine may it be effective']. My tale proceeds ti-i-i-i-i and encounters a certain woman and her husband. After some years of married life, they had a child whom they called Head. Next, came another girl; they called her Hand. Their third child was also a girl, called Foot. And so was the fourth, Stomach.

TALE 85

Narrator: Chief Okolie Nnambuonwo  
Age: 65 years  
Occupation: Farmer-cum-herbalist  
Town: Idumuje-Uno

The one I am going to tell now is <sup>woman.</sup> of a who had many children. She often wondered whether they would, on her death, accord her a fitting burial. She decided to set the children a test. Do you want me to tell it? [Audience respond lustily; 'Yes!']

I greet you and present you with white clay. [Audience: 'When you make medicine may it be effective']. This woman was called Nneka, her husband, Nnaka. After being happily married for some time, Nneka gave birth to a girl. She called her Foot, saying to herself, 'I'm able to manage only because of my feet'. Next, she gave birth to a girl, and named

(A contd.)

TALE 34

TALE 80

TALE 85

her Hand, saying, 'It is because of my hands that I'm able to live'. In no time, she was pregnant again and she gave birth to another girl, whom she called Head, saying, 'My head does all my carrying for me'. Her next daughter, she called Eye, saying, 'It's because of her that I can see'. When she gave birth again, she was disappointed. 'So it is a girl again?', she asked. This one she named Stomach. In spite of Nneka's wish to have more children, she never became pregnant again - Stomach was her last child.

(B)

When the children got married and left home,

All four girls were extremely beautiful. In no time, one notable married Head and she left her parents to live with her husband. In no time only the youngest daughter, Stomach, was unmarried. This woman began to grieve as all her children were going away and so no longer able to look after her. Soon, Stomach also got married, and left.

As each of the girls attained a marriageable age, she left home for her husband's.

(C) TALE 34

none of them ever came to see their mother. One day, she said to herself, 'What kind of misfortune is this? Four children and none of them remembers me!'

TALE 80

The poor woman began to suffer, while her daughters lived in luxury with their husbands. This woman was there, for two, three, four, five, six, seven, years; not one of her children wrote or visited her. She was really suffering, with nobody to ask her what her troubles were.

One day she said, 'I can see it now. It is when you are still alive that you know those who will give you a decent burial'. She decided to find out which of her daughters would bury her in the style that a mother should be buried, in case she died anytime.

(D)

She rubbed all over her body with white clay and charcoal, and dressed zigi zigi, like a madman. In this haggard state, she set out to visit her children. She set out saying, 'Well, let me go and find out why they no longer care about me'.

TALE 85

Nneka now lived all alone, as if she never had any children. For about ten years, none of her daughters bothered to ask after her. She wept, saying, 'So if I happen to die, none of them will come?'

So she rubbed ogiri that smelt puu on her foot. Then she tied it like a sore, using a stinking rag the sight of which would certainly nauseate you. Dressed in tattered clothes and carrying a walking-stick, she set out. 'Let me go and tell them that this chronic sore is making my

She dressed up in her ragged working clothes and applied <sup>the</sup> sap of the omasika tree to her foot. It was dripping like a very bad sore. She decided to go to

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1. Omasika: tree, the sap of which has a reddish, blood-like colour.

(E)

When she arrived at Foot's home, her daughter came to the door and asked her what the matter was. She replied that she was just on a visit. But Foot said, 'In this dirty condition, I'm afraid I cannot let you stay. If I do, my husband on his return, will chase me out'. Her mother said she did not want to come between her and her husband. She left, then proceeded to Hand's house.

Hand was surprised to see her mother, and asked, 'Mother, what is wrong with your arm and foot?'. In the end she did not let her mother in, saying exactly what Foot had said. The poor woman moved on.

Head first, because 'a parent's first child is the same age as the parent'. She carried a dirty-looking calabash, like a madman.

When she arrived, her daughter, Head, came out. On seeing yer mother in this ragged state, she begged her, 'Please go, I shall come to see you tomorrow. My husband will be angry with me if I let you in, the way you are looking. Please, go'. The poor woman left and headed for Hand's home. Heavy iron gates barred the entrance. When Hand saw her, she said, 'Oh, mother, is that you? Were you not so dirty-looking I would have asked you in. But, if I let you in now, you could soil our chairs'. She gave her mother a piece of biscuit and promised to see her the following day. She headed for Foot's home. When she came out, Foot cleaned her mother's face, but begged her to go back home as she

life a misery - to see how they would react on my death', she said.

She arrived at Foot's home. On seeing her mother, Foot said, 'Mother, please do not step in, that sore smells badly. My husband will reprimand me if you come in here. I shall definitely come to see you tomorrow'. Having been turned away by Foot, Nneka made for Hand's home. On seeing her mother, Hand said, 'Dear mother, if you come in here with this festering sore, my husband's carpet will be soiled. He will be very displeased with me. Tomorrow morning, I shall come to see you'. Nneka went off to see Head, but she was not treated any better. Then she hoped that Eye would receive her better. But Eye only said to her, 'Mother, I am very sorry to see you suffering because of this bad sore.

(E Contd.)

TALE 34

She got to Head's home, and the reply was the same. Then she headed for Stomach's home.

(F)

Stomach came out and exclaimed,

'Mother, is it you? What happened?!' She asked her mother to come inside, she put some water on the fire and gave her a good bath. She cooked some food and gave it to her mother. She took her mother to the backyard so she could dress her sores. When she took off the bandages she found nothing, then she asked her mother for an explanation. The latter told her not to bother.

Stomach dug into her box and fetched her mother very fine clothes. She informed the neighbours of her mother's visit and they all came to greet her.

TALE 80

would visit her the next day. The poor woman headed for Stomach's home. She checked her dress and sore to make sure they both looked horrible.

But as soon as Stomach heard her mother's voice, she rushed out from her bath, for it is said that 'A child never refuses a mother's call'. Immediately, she swept her mother off her feet, carried her to her bath and bathed her thoroughly. She did everything to see her mother looking fresh again and the latter realized the truth of the saying, 'A group of monkeys cannot all be overtaken by sleep at the same time'. She heaved a sigh, saying, 'This shows that blood is not water'.

TALE 85

But I'm afraid I can't let you in. The first thing I shall do tomorrow morning is to come and see you'.

On her way home, Nneka said, 'I might as well call on my youngest child, Stomach'. Stomach instantly embraced her mother, took her in and dashed off to the farm. She said to her husband, 'My dear mother has just arrived. She has a very bad sore. Do you realize that since I got married to you, I have not gone to see her - you never let me'. They both went home immediately to welcome Nneka. They made her feel comfortable. Stomach then said to her mother, 'I've now boiled some water; come along, so I can treat your sore'. 'No, my daughter', she replied, 'If you touch this sore now, I might just drop dead. Leave it until tomorrow morning'. When her mother was leaving,



(G contd.) TALE 34

When Foot finishes her walking, Greetings,  
my daughter

When Arm finishes her struggling, "  
They must give everything to you, "  
Stomach, my daughter - e.

TALE 80

They must give everything to you, Greetings,  
Stomach, her daughter - e. my daughter

With this song, she rebuked each of her  
haughty daughters.

But more and more blessings were showered  
on Stomach.

TALE 85

at her fit-looking mother, was told,  
'Just sit down'. Next came Head and  
Nneka also asked her to sit down.

Finally Eye arrived. 'Today', she told  
them, 'I shall reward you all

accordingly'. One after the other, she  
rebuked Foot, Eye, Head and Hand for  
abandoning her, but commended the

youngest of her children, Stomach. 'What

I tell you now is that you all,

henceforth, shall live only for one  
purpose, namely to serve Stomach',

Nneka said to them. She further told

them, 'Head, all that you carry will be  
for Stomach; Eye, anything you see

belongs to Stomach; Hand and Foot, all  
your struggles will be only to please  
Stomach'.

(H)

That is why, even today, Foot wanders  
in all her labours, only to feed  
Stomach. For Head and Hand, they  
struggle very hard but in the end

So you can see that up to this very day,  
Head is busy all day, carrying things for  
Stomach. Hand also works from morning  
till night; the same goes for Foot. They

And so it came about that if you are in  
employment, even from the day you earn  
your first salary, you spend it to buy  
food to send to Stomach. This is



(H contd.)

TALE 34

give everything to Stomach. So my story goes, while I return.

Audience: Welcome - o!

TALE 80

do that simply for one reason - to ensure the welfare of Stomach. Of all parts of our body, the stomach is the one that has everything for itself. The stomach clearly owns all other parts of the body. From that point, I decided to return.

Welcome - o!

TALE 85

because Nneka had told her children, 'In all you do, you must now serve Stomach', and had said to Stomach, 'Anytime you are hungry, just tell them and they will send the food'.

[Nwambuonwo then concludes by plunging into an interesting summary, rendered in song. This part of the performance is given on p. 292].

TALE 85: Song text

(1)	"	(2)
Yabu obodo nnua nu - o (So, townspeople, welcome)	Ndo nwa m (Greetings, my daughter)	O jeme be Isi (She left for Head's home)
Nnua nu - o, nnua nu - o (Welcome to you, welcome to you)	"	Ndo nwa m (Greetings, my daughter)
Onye bu onye izizi- o? (Who was the first person?)	"	O lue onumu uzọ - o (She got to the door)
Yabu Nneka - o (She was called Nneka)	"	Isi asi a nama (Head asked her to go back)
Ya mu Ukwu - o (She gave birth to Foot)	"	Na echi ya abia (That she would come tomorrow)
Ya mu Aka - o (She gave birth to Hand)	"	O jeme be Anya - o (She left for Eye's home)
Ya mu Anya - o (She gave birth to Eye)	"	Anya asi a nama (Eye asked her to go back)
Ya mu Isi - o (She gave birth to Head)	"	Na echi ya abia (That she would come tomorrow)
Ya mu Afọ - o (She gave birth to Stomach)	"	O jeme be Afọ (She left for Stomach's home)
O lue ofu oge - o (Once upon a time)	"	O shia Afọ - o (She called Stomach)
Nwancha enwei di (They all took husbands)	"	Na ntụ abagbue ye - o (Saying she was dying from a bad sore)
Wa aya-afu nne we (They no longer cared for their mother)	"	Afọ aba kwama (Stomach began to cry)
O lue ofu oge - o (Once upon a time)	"	Afọ ebulu di e (Stomach went off to her husband)
Nneka ebunie (Nneka set out)	"	Abia wa naha nne e (They welcomed her mother)
O jeme be Ukwu (She headed for Foot's home)	"	Ọ bia nye e nni (She gave her some food)
O ba shia Ukwu (Then she called Foot)	"	Ọ bia rie (And so she ate)
Na ntụ abagbue ye (Saying she was dying from a bad sore)	"	Ọ bia shia nne e (Then she called her mother)
Ukwu asi a nama (Foot asked her to go back home)	"	Ki ya cha i ntụ - o (That she may treat her sore)
Na echi ya abia (That she would come tomorrow)	"	Nne e abia ju (Her mother refused)
Ọ bia nama (So she went back)	"	Na echi ka i bia ** (You should come tomorrow)
O jeme be Aka (She went to Hand's home)	"	Ka i fu uzo fu umunne i (So as to meet your sisters)
O lue onumu uzọ (She got to the door)	"	Ọ bia nama (Then she left)
Ọ ba shia Aka - o (So she called Hand)	"	Chi efozie echi (At dawn, the next day)
Na ntụ abagbue ye - o (Saying she was dying from a bad sore)	"	Onye bu uzọ je - o (Who was the first to arrive)
Aka asi a nama (Hand asked her to go back home)	"	
Na echi ya abia (That she would come tomorrow)	"	

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\*\* At this point, the narrator played the tune of the song on his akpele horn.

(3)		(4)	
Ọ bu Afọ - o	Ndo nwa m	Ka ummune i bia	Ndo nwa m
(It was Stomach)	(Greetings,	(Until your	(Greetings,
Ọ bu mmiri	my daughter)	sisters arrive)	my daughter)
(She carried some water)	"	Onye ọzọ ba?	"
Ọ bu nni - o	"	(Who else then?)	"
(She carried some food)	"	Ọ bụlụ Anya	"
Ọ bia baha unọ	"	(It was Eye)	"
(So she got to the house)	"	Anya ofuuzo - o	"
Ọ keke nne e	"	(Eye that sees everything)	"
(She greeted her mother)	"	Anya afu ya ife - o	"
Yazianwa bụ ntụ - o?	"	(She complained that she	"
(Where is the sore, then?)	"	was suffering)	"
Ọ si a nọdị anị - o	"	Ya ji efe nne ye	"
(She asked her to sit down)	"	(Trying to serve her mother)	"
Ka umunne i bia	"	Ọ si a nọdị anị - o	"
(Until your sisters arrive)	"	(She asked her to sit down)	"
Onye biazikwa - o?	"	Ka umunne i bia	"
(Who else came in?)	"	(Until your sisters arrive)	"
Ọ bụlụ Ụkwu	"	Ọ ba shia Afọ	"
(It was Foot)	"	(Then she called Stomach)	"
Ọ ba shia nne e	"	Afọ nwa m - o	"
(She called her mother)	"	(Stomach, my daughter)	"
Yazianwa bu ntu - o?	"	Ka m bia be i - o	"
(Where is the sore, then?)	"	(When I came to your house)	"
Ọ si a nọdị anị - o	"	Iyu fu m anya	"
(She asked her to sit down)	"	(You showed me love)	"
Ka ummune i bia	"	Si taani jeme - o	"
(Until your sisters arrive)	"	(From today, onwards)	"
Onye ọzọzi?	"	Ukwu maka ejee - o	"
(Who else?)	"	(No matter how much Foot	"
Ọ bụlụ Aka	"	walks)	"
(It was Hand)	"	Aka maka alu - o	"
Ka o jenai - o	"	(No matter how hard Hand	"
(When she was coming)	"	struggles)	"
Ọ si na ọlụ egbue ye - o	"	Isi maka ebue - o	"
(She said she was dying of	"	(No matter how much Head	"
overwork)	"	carries)	"
Ọ bia si a ndo	"	Anya maka afu - o	"
(She (Nneka) sympathised	"	(No matter how much Eye sees)	"
with her)	"	Wa feme i - o	"
Iyu nọdị anị - o	"	(They must serve you)	"
(You sit down)	"	Wa je ugbo-ukwu e	"
Ka umunne i bia - o	"	(Whether they go to the	"
Until your sisters arrive)	"	far-away farm)	"
Onye ọzọ ba?	"	Wa je ndida - o	"
(Who else then?)	"	(Whether they go to the	"
Ọ bụlụ Isi	"	lowlands)	"
(It was Head)	"	Wa je enugwu - o	"
Isi abia - o	"	(Whether they go to the	"
(Head arrived)	"	highlands)	"
Ọ si na ibu egbue ye - o	"	Wa lụ n'anị - o	"
(She complained she had too	"	(Whether they work on the	"
much burden)	"	land)	"
Ya ji efe nne ye	"	Onye lusia nta, lua imo	"
(Serving her mother)	"	(Whatever each of them	"
Ọ si a nodi anị - o	"	accomplishes)	"
(She asked her to sit down)	"	Ọ bụ na ọ baha unọ - o	"
		(Once she returns home)	"
		Ya feme Afọ - o	"
		(Let her continue to serve Stomach)	"
		Nnua nụ - o	"
		(Welcome to you all)	"
		Ndo nwa m m.m.m m m m	"
		(Greetings, my daughter.	)

APPENDIX D: Comparison of texts; Tales 75/76

TALE 75

Narrator: Jude Awuno  
Age: 14 years  
Occupation: Primary school pupil  
Town: Issele-Uku

(A)

I present you with white clay, [Audience reply...]  
All of a sudden my tale encounters Tortoise and Rabbit. The former begged the latter to help him make a tunnel. The tunnel was to run from Tortoise's home to the market place. Then Rabbit made the tunnel to the market place as requested.

(B)

Then Tortoise seized a gong with a sonorous note; he also took along a big, strong stick. He went into the tunnel, then beat his gong gbam gbam! All people at the market, you had better run for dear life! Some terrible

TALE 76

Narrator: Mr. Nwabuzo  
Age: 59 years  
Occupation: Farmer (formerly Catholic church teacher)  
Town: Issele-Uku

His [narrator of Tale 75] opening of the tale is right; Tortoise went to his friend, Rabbit, with a request. There was once a famine and scarcely any food for the animals. Tortoise sat thinking what to do. Then he decided he had to steal some food from the Oba's market. He begged Rabbit to make a burrow, running from his house to the market, at the exact spot where the omu chief had her stall. (You should now listen carefully and judge if he is telling the story the way the first narrator did).<sup>1</sup>

When the market was in full swing, Tortoise seized his drum which he had made from cat's skin. On reaching the omu's spot, he beat his drum:

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1. Remark interjected by the head of the household, addressed to members of the audience.

disaster is approaching. I do not know exactly what it is. As for me, you can see that I'm already fleeing!

(C)

Hm!, all the people in the market took to their heels. Tortoise went into the market place and began to gorge himself on all the food available. Also, he threw some of the food to his children who caught and transported the loot through the underground route.

(D)

Another day, Tortoise struck his gong gbum gbum gbum: 'People at the market! You had better flee now, for I see some great danger approaching! As for me, I am fleeing already!' Again, Tortoise appeared and made away with all the food in the market place.

The Ojiso's market, (twice) Kpuluma  
If it disperses, "  
If it does not disperse, "  
The Ojiso's market. "

People fled gidi gidi gidi in different directions. Tortoise then emerged and grabbed everything - yams, maize, cassava, garri, all - carried them back to his house through the tunnel. All the people who had come to the market that day went home empty-handed.

The following day the market was full again. Tortoise came exactly to the spot where the omu chief had her stall, and beat his drum:

The Ojiso's market, (twice) Kpuluma  
If it disperses, "  
If it does not disperse, "  
The Ojiso's market. "

As on the previous occasion, people fled in all directions while Tortoise emerged and seized all their wares.

TALE 75

(E)

When Tortoise had carried out his operation three times, the market women vowed to get to the bottom of the mystery. They complained to the Oba that they were baffled about some evil force which always came to frighten them away from the market.

(F)

The Oba asked them to fashion a human dummy, simulating especially, a pair of human eyes. The image was then to be covered all over with a starchy solution.

TALE 76

Puzzled by this strange event which now commonly occurred at the market, the omu went to the Oba and complained, 'I do not know what exactly is disturbing our market. It always comes drumming and asking the market to break up, and indeed, the market breaks up. After that, all our wares simply disappear. It must be a powerful spirit'.

The Oba summoned Lizard and instructed him to keep vigil at the market place. Lizard climbed the obada tree under which was the omu's stall. The next time Tortoise dispersed the market with his music and set to carrying away all the goods, Lizard exclaimed, 'En - he - e: Tortoise, so it is you causing this havoc?!' Tortoise beckoned him, speaking in a low tone, 'Come, come, my friend, I shall give you some'. You know of course that it was a time of great famine. So Lizard and Tortoise moved all the food through the underground passage. Tortoise said, 'Both of us will feast on all the food, but first, let us eat some abubu 'mashed yam' [gesture stirs the audience] . Tortoise prepared two balls of abubu and stuffed them up with bones; this one belonged to Lizard. The

other two balls consisted entirely of yams; these were for Tortoise.

Tortoise said, 'We shall eat together as a sign of our friendship. First, you will feed me, then I will feed you'. Lizard took a piece of the food to feed Tortoise. The latter shook his head and hesitated, before finally swallowing. He did this many times, then it was his turn to feed Lizard.

Lizard's abubu was full of bones. When Tortoise fed Lizard, the bones hurt and Lizard shook his head in discomfort. 'Go on! Swallow!', said Tortoise, 'you saw how I overcame the pain when I ate mine. Go on swallow. That is friendship. Swallow!'

[laughter from the audience] . Lizard struggled hard to swallow, but the bone had anchored itself in his throat. It refused to go further down or to come off. Tortoise took another piece and persuaded his friend, 'Go on, swallow it. Go on!' By then Lizard was already choking.

Then Tortoise asked him, 'Lizard, what did you witness at the market place?'. He could not speak. 'What did you see?', came the question again. Lizard could only nod his head. Ah! Tortoise

(F contd.)

chased him away with a broom; 'Leave my house!' Lizard left and went to the Ojiso's house. 'Yes, how did it all go?', they asked him. But all Lizard could do was nod. 'What happened there? How did it go?', they all asked again. The answer was the same, silence and a nodding of the head. Ojiso ordered Lizard away and they pushed him out of the house.

'This must be true. A powerful spirit indeed! Now it has caused Lizard to go dumb. What are we going to do?', the Ojiso wondered.

He sent for the village philosopher who came up with a plan - the moulding of a human image covered in wax, to be positioned under the obada tree in the market place. 'No, I am sorry!'; [narrator corrects himself].

Next, Monkey was sent to keep vigil. As soon as Tortoise began to carry food away again, Monkey exclaimed, 'So, Tortoise, you are the culprit! En - he!' Tortoise begged him, speaking in a low tone, 'Come, come, my friend, let us share everything'. But Monkey refused. He just rushed off. However, he did not return to the Ojiso to report what he saw.



(G)

Tortoise came another day and announced, Gbom! gbom! gbom!, 'people at the market, you had better flee now, you can see that I am already fleeing. I cannot decipher what great danger exactly is coming'. All the people took to their heels. Then Tortoise began to clear away all their wares as before, carrying everything into the tunnel. When he got to the moulded image, he saw that it was 'staring' at him menacingly. It just stared and stared, unmoving and unafraid. Tortoise poured a spoonful of ground pepper into its eyes, yet the object just stared, it did not even blink its eyes.

'Do you see these strong hands of mine? asked Tortoise, 'I am now going to strike you with them'. Tortoise struck the image hard with his right hand, but his hand simply stuck. 'Do you see this left hand of mine?', he asked the dummy. 'I am now going to strike you a telling blow with it'. He struck at the object again, but his left

They put the village thinker's plan into operation. When next Tortoise had dispersed the market, he faced the image: 'Fool!', What are you standing there for? Are you not going to flee? You want to know what happens at this market? Then, you just wait, I am going to give you a good slap', Tortoise threatened the lifeless image in human form. He struck it; his left arm stuck in the wax. ('You see the previous narrator got it right at that point'). 'What! You dare hold my arm? Do you know at all with whom you are dealing?', Tortoise bragged. He struck with his right arm and it also got caught in the wax. 'What! you just wait for the power of my kicks', he continued. But when he kicked, both his feet became trapped. Tortoise butted and shoved, but his head and frame were also caught. And so he kept hanging there.

(G contd.)

hand became trapped as well. 'Now, I am compelled to kick you', Tortoise said. He kicked hard; his feet became trapped too. 'You see my mouth, so useful for cutting meat and for eating everything, you see my teeth as well'. He bit the object on the nose, but his mouth and teeth also got caught. He butted the dummy again but this time, his head got trapped as well.

(H)

When the market women returned, they saw Tortoise hanging there. They exclaimed, 'Tortoise, son of Aniga!, so you are the one responsible for all our troubles?! Little did we know that it was you tormenting us so'. They prepared to punish Tortoise and set down two bowls - one filled with hot water, the other with cold.

Tortoise was still trapped by the starchy and sticky solution on the dummy. They pulled and pulled at Tortoise. When they extricated him, they threw him into hot water. But he said, 'Being in hot water

In the morning he was seized and brought before the Oba. He denied being the culprit and said, 'Before you do me any harm if you so wish, I am going to play you some music'. He produced a small guitar and began to play tim tim tim tim. In no time the string of the guitar broke. 'Oh!', he exclaimed, 'you see for yourselves that my guitar has broken down, just when I wanted most to entertain you with an interesting story. I will definitely tell you who does this havoc at the market'. He told the Oba he needed a replacement for the broken string. Asked what string he needed, he said it was made of a monkey's vein - the particular vein which runs from the animal's head to

TALE 75

(H contd.)

gives me such great pleasure, but I dread cold water, it simply kills me'. Then they put him in the basin of cold water. At that point, my tale decides to return. Welcome!

TALE 76

its tail. Tortoise knew that in no time Monkey would return and report to the Oba what he had seen.

Ojiso asked his messengers to look for a monkey so Tortoise can tell them the cause of the disturbance at the market place. As soon as Monkey heard of this, he took to the forests. Tortoise said, 'Without that string I can neither play, nor explain to you this mystery'. He then asked for his freedom pending until the string would be ready. But the omu refused, saying, 'That statue was made to trap the culprit. What were you doing near the image to be trapped by it? I put it to you that you are the culprit!' They threw Tortoise into boiling water, he said he enjoyed it; they put him in cold water. In the end they threw Tortoise into the forest for the iwu uchu cleansing ceremony. Since then Tortoise has been used in this manner in front of the egbo tree which you can find at the entrance to any compound. Thus his shell is always hung round the egbo tree. From that point I decided to return. Welcome!

APPENDIX E: TALES 40/41

TALE 40: Tortoise and the Suitors

Narrator: Onyema Osadebe

Age: 31 years

Occupation: Farmer

Town: Asaba

I present you with white clay. [ Audience: 'When you make medicine, may it be effective'.] It happened one year, the Ojiso had four children, all of them girls. One day, the king ordered the village gong to be sounded, inviting everyone to a meeting. All Ani Idu flocked there - men, women, the old and the young. When the Oba entered, they all stood up until he was seated. He then told them why he had called them - all his daughters were now grown up and ready to take husbands. The Oba then promised to give them all as wives to any suitors who could reveal the girls' names. All the eligible men in Ani Idu were excited by the news.

Each went home nursing the hope of marrying one of the king's daughters. The suitors - then the suitors began to go secretly and frequently behind the Ojiso's house, hoping in this way to overhear the names of the girls. This continued; they did this for a very long time but all their efforts were in vain.

The date the Ojiso set the suitors was fast approaching, but they still did not know how to discover the names of his daughters. All the men summoned a meeting and one of them reasoned, 'There is only one person in Ani Idu clever enough to solve this mystery. Now we have all tried and failed. The only person who can succeed is Tortoise'. Some argued that Tortoise should be entrusted with the task of discovering the names, but others who disliked Tortoise refused, saying, 'We are simply going to play into the villain's hands. You all know the extent of his cunning and bragging'. After much arguing, however, it was agreed that Tortoise's help should be sought in their bid to marry the Oba's daughters; they were all very beautiful. The suitors invited Tortoise to the meeting so that he might be

apprised of their intentions. He promised to help them. 'Just trust me, we are all friends', he said to them. When he got home, he sat down to think. He did not know what to do to secure the four names. He sat down, just thinking, and smoking his ukoko pipe.

The next day, his wife Anibo prepared nini-ola,<sup>1</sup> which he ate hurriedly. Then he dashed off to hide somewhere on the girls' path to the stream. That day the Oba's daughters did not come to the stream early enough, so Tortoise was very disappointed. Just as he decided to go home, he heard the sound of feet approaching. Listen...listen. He 'brought his ears to the ground'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the Oba's daughters were approaching. He said, 'I had better hide myself now and listen'. When the girls finished filling their water-pots, they decided to swim as they usually did.

Then, they were swimming happily, splashing water about. When they got ready to go home the eldest daughter was still swimming. So the other girls began to call out loud, 'Kwudi - o, Kwudi! are you not going home today? Let us go home'. Tortoise was happy. He said, 'This one is truly beautiful, I will marry her myself'. In the end all the girls left; no further names were mentioned.

Before the cock crowed the next morning, Tortoise was already on his way to the stream. He was saying to himself, 'At least I have now got a beautiful wife. The Oba will be surprised how I found out her name'. The next day, again, they fetched water, then mentioned a second name. Tortoise smiled, still hiding at a convenient spot in the bush.

Every day Tortoise went to the stream, he did this to discover the remaining names. But every day he had no luck as the girls did not call their names. Every day Tortoise left home, only to return to it disappointed. One day he said, 'Me? To fail, of all people! Am I not Tortoise, son of Aniga? I must do something else'.

Then when everybody was still asleep, Tortoise crept

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1. Breakfast; from the previous night's fufu meal.

2. 'He listened carefully!'

wem wem wem to the Oba's house and hid behind the door. In the morning, the girls came one after another to greet their father. But he noticed that one of them had not come to greet him. The Oba then asked the other girls, 'Where is your youngest sister?'. They went to their room, calling, 'Mirimma! Mirimma!' When they started calling their sister's name Tortoise heard and smiled. 'I knew it, I said it. I knew I'd secure one more name today', he continued saying to himself. He was already thinking of how to charge the suitors exorbitantly, even though he had promised to help them. ['Tortoise, the cunning one!'; interjected remark by member of the audience].

Since his trick was successful, Tortoise decided that he was going to play it again. Tortoise went to the Oba's house the next day, even while everyone was still sleeping. Again he concealed himself behind the door and waited patiently. Nothing seemed to happen, but Tortoise was hoping that one of the girls might mention the remaining name. He was there, hiding, he waited until the fourth girl's name was mentioned. He heaved a sigh and said to himself, 'Is that not all?'. Then quietly, Tortoise began to crawl out of his hiding place. Then he left and headed for the path the Oba's wives always took anytime they wanted 'to go to the back of the house'.<sup>1</sup> From there, Tortoise went home that day, extremely happy.

Now, he was nearly ready to face the suitors. 'I shall tell them', he said, 'that I am Tortoise, son of Aniga and that there is none wiser than me in Ani Idu'. The following day he told the..... [Interruption as a member of the audience attempts to quieten two little boys who are quarrelling]. So Tortoise got home. On the following day, he told the suitors that he had now got all the names. One after the other they hoped to persuade Tortoise to reveal at least one of the names. Every day they begged Tortoise to reveal the names. Each of the

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1. Ije azu uno 'to go to the back of the house', that is 'to go to the toilet'. The toilet (latrine) is usually situated some short distance from the main house.

suitors was anxious to learn at least one of the names. But Tortoise was very proud and refused to tell them. In the end he still refused to tell anybody Kwudi's name, because he wanted that one for himself - she was the most beautiful of the Oba's children. The other three suitors to whom he gave the names were very happy and they went home dancing and rejoicing. It is a great honour to be married to an Oba's child.

Now, it was the appointed day. People made elaborate preparations, for on such occasions there was always food, good music and dancing in the Oba's palace. Then when the Oba asked the suitors, they came forward. The first of them got the name right and the news spread everywhere. People did not believe the Oba would give away his daughter without accepting some money, but he did. One after the other, the other suitors came forward and said the names. As each man got a name right, he took the girl as his wife. They were all happy. Only one name was left and only one person knew that name - Tortoise himself; when all the others suitors failed, they called Tortoise who was already boasting, 'Nobody else knows the name. Only Tortoise. I am the greatest, I am the most clever of you all. Now I am going to marry the Oba's most beautiful daughter!'. People laughed at him wondering how the Oba would give his daughter as a wife to this ugly and diminutive animal, where very handsome and wealthy suitors had failed. But Tortoise mentioned the name. A loud roar rent the air, people could not believe that Tortoise was right. Oba knew it however, and since the king cannot go back on his words, Tortoise got his prize and married the Oba's daughter. That was how Tortoise got a wife again. So, at this point in my story, I decided to return. Welcome!

TALE 41

The Oba who gave his seven daughters in marriage

Narrator: Diokpa A Otakpo  
Age: c. 60 years  
Occupation: Farmer  
Town: Asaba

I present you with white clay. [Audience: 'When you make medicine, may it be effective'.] My tale goes ti-i-i-i-i-i and encounters a certain Oba in Ani Idu, who had many children. All of them were girls. The girls grew and continued to mature until they attained the age for marriage. The Oba sent out an announcement that he wanted his daughters to get married.

Early in the morning, the town-crier took his gong, and went to spread the message; 'Gbom gbom gbom gbom!', Ani Idu! The Oba has asked me to announce to you that his daughters are now ripe for marriage! Whoever wants any of them as a wife should get ready!' The next morning everybody flocked to the Oba's palace. Then came the young men of the village who wished to marry the Oba's daughters, dressed in their best clothes for the occasion. Those who farmed said, 'The Oba wants yams', while those who tapped palm wine, produced very sweet wine, hoping that after drinking their best wine, the Oba would give away his daughters to them.

When the Oba appeared at the meeting, everybody stood until he sat on his throne. Then the Iyase stood up and addressed the Oba, 'We have all heard the announcement made yesterday. But many more people are gathered here today because the announcement did not specify the conditions which the suitors would have to meet!' The Oba then spoke, 'You see I have seven daughters, and I have given them various names. Your task, then, is to discover their seven names. Any day you know their seven names come back to me and tell me. That day I shall give each man the bride whose name he gets right!' All Ani Idu answered, 'Oba, your words are very good, your words are very good', and they left.



When they got home everybody started thinking. Whenever the Oba's daughters went out, the suitors sent spies after them, but the girls never one day mentioned their names. The suitors tried and tried, but they could not find out the names. A year passed. They did all they could but did not know the names. They concluded, 'There is nothing else we can do, since we have tried. Only Tortoise can devise ways of discovering the girls' names',

The Oba's daughters had a stream where only they went to bathe. The Oba announced that no other person could go to the stream - it was reserved for his daughters. One day the girls were returning from the stream after having their bath. Tortoise said to himself, 'I know what I am going to do. I know I have no house, no money either. But from this business I am going to make money with which to build myself a house!' One day he made this known to his wife Anibo, but she merely said, 'There you go again, talk, talk, talk. When there is rain it falls on us, when it shines we are left under it. You cannot even provide a decent shelter from the elements. When people invite you to join the communal house-building scheme, you never turn up. Who do you think is going to help you build your own house?'. Tortoise asked Anibo not to be worried by that fact, 'Am I not Tortoise, after all?', he asked.

Tortoise went out and hid in a bush near the girls' stream. When the girls finished bathing, they said nothing. This happened on the first, second, third and fourth days. Tortoise said, 'What?! Okay, since these girls won't talk, I shall make them to! He planned to plant stumps on their path home and was sure that if they hit their toes against the stump and their calabashes fell and broke, they would have a row during which names would be mentioned.

That night, he crept away to plant the seven stumps on the girls' path. As usual they came to have their bath. Then they drew water. Early in the morning Anibo warmed the left-overs of yesterday's food for her husband to eat, but Tortoise said he had a job in hand and would eat nothing until he had finished it.

He quickly left to hide himself near the seven stumps he had positioned for the girls to trip over. The girls were returning home again, when unexpectedly, the first tripped over the obstacle. And her gourd rolled off fu-u-u-u-u-u-u gbo!, to the ground. One of the girls shouted, 'Oh! Kwudi has broken her water-pot!' Tortoise noted the first girl's name. After that, the girls became more careful on their way home. On getting home, Tortoise noted the first girl's name. He also decided that seven obstacles were too many, next time he would plant only one.

The next day, Tortoise set out to plant a big stone on the girls' way. He later decided against this, saying the girls would be more careful since a similar object had brought one of them down before. He dug a big hole on the slopes through which the girls would pass. Then he covered it with leaves. In no time, one of the girls stepped on the leaves. Immediately, her water-pot rolled off fru-u-u-u-u-u-u, and was smashed gboo! One of the girls cried, 'Oh!, Kewaa has broken her pot!' Tortoise said to himself, 'Alright the first one is called Kwudi, the second, Kewaa'. Whenever the girls saw any leaves on their way, they avoided stepping on them - until they got home. At home Tortoise asked his wife, Anibo to write down the two names. He thought of what to do next. He asked his wife to prepare some thick and slippery agbono soup, saying that he needed it for some purpose.

Again, the girls came and finished having their bath. As they were bathing, Tortoise went up and poured the slippery soup on their route, and covered it up. The girls were coming and coming. In no time, one of them stepped on the spot, slipped, lost her balance, and broke her pot. Here, the sisters exclaimed, 'Kokoko-kokoko, Munonyedi<sup>1</sup>, has broken her pot. Tortoise said to himself, 'I will tell them today that 'I am with them'. He said to Anibo, 'You know I did not go to school, so please

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1. Literally, 'Who is with me? Who is on my side?'

write down for me the name which I got today -  
Munonyedi - write it down!'

Tortoise wondered what he would do next to get more names. He decided to put a peg on each side of the road and tie a string across the road to entangle one of the girl's feet and make her fall. The girls were on their way home the next day. They were busy chatting and so they took their hands off their pots. Since they were not paying attention, one of the girls got caught by the string and though she tried to stop it, her pot rolled off fru-u-u-u-u-u-u-u gbe! and crashed to the ground. Her sisters wondered, 'What is actually happening to us? First, Kwudi broke her water-pot, next it was Kewaa, then Munonyedi, and now it is Akwudo'. Tortoise took note of the name, then sneered, 'How wise our Oba is indeed! See how meaningful the names he gives to his children are - Kwudi, Kewaa, Munonyedi - I will tell this one that she is not Akwudo!<sup>1</sup> He went home very happy and asked his wife to add the new name to her list.

The following day he sat thinking hard what to do next. He did not know what to do next; all the tricks he knew were about finished. After thinking hard, he said, 'Well, let me proceed; on my way I will stumble on a fresh trick to catch these girls today'. He brought out his pipe and began smoking. As he was smoking, he remembered. 'Anibo!', he called his wife. He instructed her to fetch and sew his old shirt in such a way to make it have a pocket. When this was done, he filled the pocket with sand and it looked like the head of a snake. He attached a string which, if he drew, would frighten the girls into thinking that a snake was coming. He hid himself and as soon as the girls finished their bath and were on their way, Tortoise gave a little pull and the 'snake-head' moved. The girls yelled, 'Here comes a snake - o! Here comes a snake - o!' and fled. In the

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1.Literally, 'peaceful riches'.

confusion, one of them lost her balance, and her pot fell, fru-u-u-u-u-u-u-u gbim! They wondered again, 'What is really happening to us? Every day one of us breaks her pot. Today, it is Onyejeoba'.<sup>1</sup> Tortoise noted the name, sneering, 'Today I will tell them that I have been to the Oba's already!'. [More laughter].

By now all the suitors had started making trips to Tortoise's house. He addressed them, 'Let me tell you, I am much wiser than you all. I already have five names - just two left. Whether you are a farmer or a palm-wine tapper, you had better go and start looking for money. For any name I give you, you will have to pay a lot of money'. And now, all the suitors doubled their efforts to make plenty more money.

Tortoise kept wondering what trick he could play next. Then he went to his friend, Crocodile. 'These girls', he began, 'come here to bathe every day, yet they have never made you any presents. Do you know you are the lord of this stream? I know what you like to eat and I shall give it to you - anything. But when next they're bathing, emerge, and they will flee, and in their panic mention one name'. Crocodile said he trusted Tortoise and would do just that. The girls were still swimming, when from nowhere Crocodile appeared, moving towards them! 'Here comes Crocodile! Here comes Crocodile!' they screamed. Six of the girls managed to come out and they started shouting, 'Yayaa! Yayaa! Yayaa!', to alert their sister still in the water. She also swam out, while Crocodile turned back. Tortoise wrote down the name. [Laughter].

At home, he wondered, 'What trick can I devise for the seventh one? All the tricks I know I have already played!' He thought for long and finally went to the medicine-man, who consulted his oracle in order to advise Tortoise. Tortoise was to go for a particular leaf, which placed near any of the first girls would have no effect, but once near the seventh, would make her lose her way. Tortoise was then to go to the back of their mother's door and hide. When the girls came back without the seventh, their mother would ask where she was and mention

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1. See p. 241

her name. He thanked the medicine-man and left.

Before he left for this last attempt, Tortoise addressed his wife, 'Well, I have now gone six times and returned safely each time. If on the seventh I come to any harm, or do not return, then take care of our children'. Then he went to hide behind the door in the Oba's house. All six girls on their way home touched the leaf kept by Tortoise freely, but as soon as the seventh was touched by the leaf, she began going round and round in a circle. She went up and down - having lost her way. All the others were so busy chatting that they did not notice any of them was missing. At home, their mother opened the door to welcome them and asked, 'Now where is Mirimma?'. Tortoise took note. Just as they went to tell the Oba that Mirimma was missing, she appeared at the door. Tortoise crept out of his hiding-place.

He immediately went to beat his gong, asking all the suitors to come with loads of money, as he now had all seven names. Before the cock crowed the next day, all the suitors were trooping in. Tortoise asked who wanted to marry the first daughter. All hands shot up. When told the price - twelve bags of money - they said it was too much. 'Was it not the Oba himself who ruled that the bride price in this town should be as little as possible?', they asked. Tortoise replied, 'Well, it is up to you. If you don't like my price, then you can leave off!' One of the very wealthy farmers produced the required amount. Tortoise called his wife to count the money. After counting, they put the money under the mortar and disclosed the name - Mirimma! The suitor and his company left for home - happy and rejoicing.

Tortoise announced, 'Yes, who wants the second? Come on then, quickly! Who wants the next name? Yes? Hurry up, then! [Narrator gesticulates].<sup>1</sup> A suitor came forward. Tortoise said further, 'I noticed that there was not much competition for the first name, so I am lowering the price for this one. I won't ask for twelve

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1. Each time Tortoise 'sold' a name, the narrator made a fast, exaggerated, circular, beckoning movement with his outstretched hand to accompany his description of Tortoise saying to the suitors: 'Come on then, quickly! Who wants the next name?! Yes?! Hurry up then!'

bags again, just give me ten'. A suitor paid up. Tortoise and his wife counted and put away the money, they supplied the name - Yayaa. 'Yes!', continued Tortoise, 'who wants the third? Give me seven!' [more gestures] Nobody came forward, so Tortoise asked for six bags. Another suitor paid up and was given the name - Akwudo. This continued until all the seven names were paid for.

A day to the appointed date, the Oba sent out his town-crier. 'Ko ko ko ko!', he sounded his gong, 'The Oba has asked me to announce that tomorrow is the suitors' date. Let them come and tell me the names of my daughters and take them away as wives. Gari, yam, cassava - they cost a lot these days, and these girls have been eating a lot!' The suitors, dressed as best they could, appeared amidst the sound of music and drums. When asked, the first suitor mentioned the name - Mirimma. The audience roared and cheered as the suitor went home with his prize. The music grew louder. One after the other, the suitors guessed the names correctly, and, the Oba gave away all seven girls.

Tortoise said to his wife, 'See what I told you? I told you not to be angry, but to be patient with me, for we would surely make enough money to build ourselves a decent house. Do you not see that everything around us now is nothing but money?'. They both began building the house. Tortoise built a magnificent seven-storeyed house, the like of which had never been seen in the town before. Then he lived in that very beautiful house. From that day, Anibo, Tortoise's wife, quickly did anything her husband asked her to do, because he was now an extremely wealthy man. So that was how Tortoise came to build and own a house. So our people say that, 'Only the patient man does what?' [Audience completes the proverb for him: 'Eats the ukpo fish']<sup>1</sup> So my story has gone so far and now has to return. Welcome - o! Welcome - o!

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1. Proverb emphasizing the importance of patience. The ukpo is a very delicious but bony fish. The eater has to spend a considerable amount of time, first picking the bones.

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