Language in Africa 6(1), 2025, 79–104. doi: 10.37892/2686-8946-2025-6-1-79-104

CHUKWUDILE'S ONYE IJE: A POETIC EVALUATION OF IGBO IDEOLOGY ON MIGRATION

Ujubonu J. Okide
University of Lagos
ujuokide@yahoo.co.uk

Omon Merry Osiki
University of Lagos
oosiki@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract: In Igbo belief system, migration to other regions of the earth is seen as a way of life, hence the predisposition of the Igbo to migrate. Literary works on various aspects of Igbo belief system have been undertaken by researchers, but not much attention has been paid to scholarly works on the phenomenon of Igbo migration. Consequently, this study examines the concept of migration from the perspective of an Igbo poet with a view to exploring the ideology behind it. Louis de Bonals's Mirror Theory of the sociology of literature was used as guide. Chukwudile's poem "Onye Ije" in *Utara Nti* an anthology of Igbo poems by E M Emenanjo (1979) was purposively selected for the study. The result reveals that the Igbo sojourn for the purpose of economic advancement and development. A fundamental aspect of the experience is their willingness to adapt to the culture of their host communities; by becoming less of themselves and more like the hosts they are well positioned to mingle and relate with the host culture and eventually reap the benefits and resources in the host domain. It was also found that, due to their propensity for travels, they are easily misunderstood by outsiders as homeless vagrants. The poem reveals that, the essence of Igbo itinerary is to amass wealth and thereafter repatriate it home for the purpose of attracting the eulogy of the community. In addition, the poem reveals the belief shared among the Igbo that making positive sacrifices for wealth is integral to wealth management. It is for these reasons that the poet lauds the migrant, seeing them as people who deserve the acknowledgement and commendation of society. This study submits that other ethnic groups should imbibe the Igbo ideology of migration for the purpose of diversity and inclusion which the Nigerian society needs to achieve social and political advancement

Key words: Igbo, migration, written poem, Onye Ije Chukwudile

1. Introduction

Literature, as ideally conceived, is a mirror of the society and the life therein. According to scholars (Wellek & Warren 1949; Egudu 1985; Folorunso 1999; Ikwubuzo 2002; Jadhav & Hall 2014), the essence of literature is to imitate life, providing a holistic picture of the society, portraying its defined social norms across varying facets. In support, Vatsa (2016) opines that literature is an instrument that reflects the positives and negatives in every society, thus making it a social document of societal realities. As a genre of literature, poetry is a vital tool used by the literati or writers to depict their societies in diverse ways. According to Nwadike (2003: 72) poetry is a creative work characterized by artistic language, wonderfully structured, and filled with philosophical and emotional content. With respect to its poetic style, Beaty et al. (2002: 811) assert that "in poems, ideas and feelings are packed tightly into just a few lines… poems often show us the very process of putting feelings into a language that can be shared with others…". Regarding function, it is evident that poets do not function in a vacuum, but within the framework of issues in society. Thus, poets deploy their creative works to satirize and expose some societal ills (Nnyigide & Egenti 2013). While examining the nexus between the poet and society, Akporobaro (2008: 37) states that "the experience of the poet is very often a mirror of an aspect of the life and socio-conditions of the society in which the poem is written". Similarly, Ikwubuzo (2002: 176) opines that "a poet, a novelist or a playwright is not insensitive to the socio-political realities of his time. He is affected by them like any other member of his society". Beyond exposing or reflecting societal realities, Jenkwe (2007: 165) observes, that "… contemporary Nigerian poets have successfully played the role of participating actively in offering solutions to the socio-political and moral problems of the nation through their advocacy". This is to show that poets not only reveal issues but offer solutions and panacea towards ameliorating ills and problems besieging society, whether they are social, cultural or political.

Written African poetry is used to distinguish it from the oral version; ab initio, African literature is oral before the transition to the written epoch. In contrast with the oral form, which is mainly characterized by non-authorship and variation, written literature is denoted by a known author and is not subject to variation, over time. Another major difference between the two is that, while oral poetry is made up of traditional songs and chants which can be sung, written or modern Igbo poetry are not meant to be sung or performed and represent the creative views of the authors in one societal subject or another. Consequently, quite a few African poets have arisen such as Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Dennis Brutus, J. P Clark, Okot P'Bitek, Kwesi Brew, Kofi Awoonor, Lenrie Peters, etc. (Anglophone), Leopold Sedar Senghor, Birago Diop, David Diop, etc. (Francophone), Agostinho Neto, Antonio Jacinto, Vasco Cabral and Noemiade Gousa, etc. (Lusophone).

However, a critical dimension of the work of these African poets is the medium in which they write, nearly all the renowned African poets such as the are those who write in the English medium. African poets who write in their indigenous languages are largely unknown. It has been suggested that writing novels, plays and poems in colonial languages such as English and French is a way of legitimizing colonialism by Africans. In addition, it is a way of establishing that Africans are yet to be free from colonial influences. This dilemma eventually led to the idea of decolonizing literature as mooted by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1990). In the view of Ngugi, by writing in the African language, the African writer breaks the cultural and aesthetic alienation and ambivalence inherent in the use of a colonial language as an instrument for fighting colonialism and its consequences and enables the writer to reach the African masses directly (Azuonye 2010). Having decried the use of English as a medium of creative expression, Ngugi had commenced writing in his native Gikuyu, as well as in Swahili, the language of wider communication in East Africa. Incidentally, despite the beauty and the imperative of writing in African languages, the task has been perceived as a herculean undertaking; this is for

reasons connected to difficulties in reaching an international audience using a limited indigenous language and the fact that writing in a language such as Igbo and later translating to English defeats the purpose since Igbo remains passive. As a way out, Chinweizu et al. (1980) prescribe African-based languages such as pidgin, Creole, and the simple English of secondary school leavers for the purpose of capturing the flavor of African life by African writers.

The consequence of this linguistic dilemma in literature is the emergence of three mediums of language adopted by African writers, according to Nkoro (2015). First is literature in English medium such as 'Things Fall Apart' by Chinua Achebe; the second is translated literature from African languages such as Ngugi's *Caitaanimutharaba-Ini* [Devil on the cross] (1980); Soyinka's English translation of Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode ninu igbo irunmole* as 'The Forest of a Thousand Demons'; Ibemesi's Igbo translation of Kafka's works as *Soro Okwu M... Na akuko Ndi Ozo* [Follow my words and other stories]. The third category are literature in indigenous Nigerian languages such as Nwana's *Omenuko* [Igbo name: The person who enjoys during famine]. Aside the translated work cited above, Ngugi has gone on to write mainly in his native Gikuyu and occasionally in the East African lingua franca, Swahili. For him, writing in African language helps the writer to break the cultural and aesthetic alienation inherent in the use of a colonial language as an instrument for fighting colonialism and its consequences, as well as enabling the writer to reach the masses directly. This is demonstrated by the remarkable success of Ngugi's *Ngaahikandeenda* [I will marry when I want] (1977), a play co-authored with Ngugi wa Mirii, which was performed to extraordinarily enthusiastic audience acclaim in several Kenyan villages (Azuonye 2010).

According to Azuonye (2010: 1), "one of the major directions into which African creative energies are being channeled by the ongoing movements for the decolonization of African literatures…is the rediscovery and use of African languages as mediums for mainstream literary expression". Although African poets who write in their indigenous languages are not renowned, there are quite a few of them

across ethnolinguistic groups in Africa. In the Nigerian context, some renowned writers such as Achebe and Clarke have made attempts to write poetry in their indigenous languages. Aside them, there are notable poets in the Yoruba milieu such as Solomon Babalola, Tade Ipadeola, Joseph Odunjo, Olatubosun Oladapo, etc. In the Igbo milieu, such poets include the following: Obienyem, Nzeako, Ajaegbu, Emenike, etc. The present study is focused on Igbo poetry written in Igbo language; it is aimed at evaluating the Igbo traditional ideology of migration, the purpose, the experience and the expected outcome.

2. Empirical review of igbo written poetry

Several scholars (Nnyigide & Egenti 2013; Nnyigide 2014; Agwuna 2017; Akpu et al. 2017; Oraegbunam 2023) have carried out research in Igbo poetry based on the Igbo language medium. Nnyigide & Egenti (2013) examine some contemporary Igbo poems that address contemporary issues bordering on African unity, identity and development in general and Nigeria in particular, for the purpose of determining the extent to which the poets have addressed them. The poems selected are: *Afrịka Enwerela onwe ya* [Africa is liberated] by Nnamdi Olebara in *Akpa Uche* [Bag of Thought] edited by R.M. Ekechukwu, *Naijirịabụ Enyi Mba* [Nigeria is a great nation] by Goddy Onyekaonwu in *Uche bu Afa* [The Mind is divination], *Naijirịa* [Nigeria] by Nkechinyere Okediadi in *Ije Uwa* [Journey of life], *Naịjirịa* [Nigeria] by Inno Nwadike in *EchicheMiri Emi* [Deep thoughts] and *Ụkọ n'Uju* [Scarcity in the midst of plenty] by Nolue Emenanjo in *ỤtaraNti* [Food for the ears] (1979). It was found that the selected poems really addressed contemporary issues in Africa such as unity, identity and development by satirizing, some prevalent issues such as insecurity, bribery and corruption, poor leadership, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, mismanagement of resources, lack of basic amenities, etc. Besides, the poets used their poetic works to rekindle African consciousness, beliefs, identity, ethics, etc. among Africans.

Nnyigide (2014) examines some modern Igbo philosophical and satirical poems in *Uche Bu Afa* [The mind is divination] (*Obodo m* [My country], *Osisi nwere Uji* [The tree with branches], *Ọhia Ero* [Forest of mushrooms]), and in *Akpa Uche* [Bag of thought] (*Akwụkwọ ọrụ ego* [Certificate of work], *Ụgbọ* [Ship/Boat] and *Ọ dịnọọ ka m bụrụ nnụnụ* [How I wish I were a bird]) respectively for the purpose of exposing some meanings and poetic elements that are embedded in them. In the philosophical poems such as *Obodo m* [My country], the poet condemns some negative attitudes like pride, negligence, arrogance, excessiveness, etc that are usually exhibited by some Nigerian leaders today. For instance, some leaders in the country are too proud and extravagant as they waste public funds on their personal projects that are not beneficial to the poor masses. The major problem in the country today as pointed out by the poet is that some leaders have neglected the basic needs of the masses that require urgent attention. In the satirical poems such as *Osisi nwere uji* [The tree with branches], the poet satirizes some negative attitudes of human beings, revealing that the physical attributes of an individual do not give the real picture of that individual, due to hypocrisy. This is because of, physically, people appear to be good, holy, neat, smart, kind, lovely, gentle, etc. but within them, seen in close observation is a different negative personality. Generally, Nnnyigide observes that some poets employ satire in the poetic works to ridicule some societal ills, with the intension of correcting them.

Agwuna (2017) examined the sufferings, obstacles, challenges, despair as the masses struggle to survive with the harsh economy in Nigeria as revealed in two selected Igbo poems of Okediadi, and Onuoha. These two poems were *Obodo Onicha* [City of Onitsha] and *Achomoru* [Job-hunting]. The study identifies that people in the country are suffering hard to put food on their tables. There are also evidences of poverty, hunger, starvation, lawlessness and insecurity written all over the faces of the embittered people. In the poem *Obodo Onicha* [City of Onitsha] the poet criticizes the lawlessness and robbery activities in Onitsha, a major commercial hub in Southeast Nigeria.

The poet vividly exposes the ills and vices going on in Onitsha to convey his message across to the reader. In the poem *Achomoru* [Job-hunting], the poet criticizes the inability of the government to provide jobs for the teeming youths in Nigeria. This scarcity of job is connected to crimes as people look for alternative means of obtaining money for survival, such as violence, war, rape, robbery, terrorism, wanton destruction of lives and property, examination malpractice, stealing, abduction, prostitution and thuggery, kidnapping, drug trafficking. While condemning the scourge, the poet calls on all stakeholders in the country to arise and stop the trend of unemployment, ravaging the society.

Akpu et al. (2017) examine two ways through which Igbo poets manifest or exhibit their ingenuity in the manipulation of language for aesthetic effect by the analysis of three poems as follows: *N'ịchụ nta vootu* [The hunt for votes] by Okafor; *Ugomma* [Igbo name: Beautiful eagle] by Madubuike and *Akwa m na-ebere Princess Alexandria Auditorium* [Lamentation for Princess Alexandria Auditorium] by Chimezie. The authors found two ways used by the poets which are exploiting the established possibilities in the language and by creating new ways of communication. Through phonological and lexical cohesion, and rhythm, the poets create with elements already in the language. Through lexical, phonological and grammatical deviation, as well as neologisms, the poets attempt to establish new means of communication. By virtue of these devices, the poets made their works unique.

Oraegbunam (2023) investigates written Igbo poetry, with a view to examining how modern Igbo poets portray the menace of corruption in Nigeria and their views about Nigerian leaders. Five poems written by four Igbo poets; two male and two females constitute the data for this study, as follows: The selected poems are Nolue Emenanjo's *Uko n'uju* [Scarcity in plenty] in *Utara Nti* (1979)*;* IwuI kwubuzo's two poems *Oria anyi* [Our ailment] and *Dibia Adugburuja* [Fake medicine man], in *Omenka* [The Artist]; Nkechi Kediadi's *Naijiria* [Nigeria] in *Ije Uwa* [Journey of life] and H. Oleru's *Ochichi* [Leadership] in *Akonuche* [The Conscience]. Findings show that corruption in Nigeria

has grown worse from the time the Igbo poets began mirroring it to 2015. The image of Nigerian leaders held up by modern Igbo poets in their works is that of corrupt and insincere elite group that cares less about the people they claim to lead.

Evidently, Igbo scholars have undertaken research in Igbo poetry covering quite a few poets and works of poetry. However, there are so many Igbo poets whose works are yet to receive critical attention by researchers. The present study attempts to fill this gap by examining the work of an obscure Igbo poet known as Chukwudile whose work appeared in Emenanjo's collection of poems titled *Ụtara Ntị* [Food for the ears].

3. Theoretical framework

This study is premised on the MIRROR IMAGE THEORY which is a component of the sociology of literature. The major proponent of this approach, Louis de Bonald (1754–1840) posit that, just like the natural mirror, every people's literature reflects the society of the writer. In other words, through the examination of any nation's literature, it is possible to gauge the identity of that nation. The Mirror approach is a theoretical approach, which emphasizes that there is a strong connection between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created. At the background of the theory is the fact that no writer is alien to his society and the immediate world around them; hence the theory is used to demonstrate that the existence of a literary work is determined by the social situations around the writer since no creative piece of art is removed from the morals, attitudes, and values of its society. Evidently, the relationship between literature and society is as strong as that between Siamese twins. Through creative use of language writers mirror their society for one reason or another. On this Mirror Approach, Ògunṣínà (2006: 10) avers that "…from the point of view of the mirror image approach, events and situations in a work of art are not just figments of the writer's imagination; they have direct relationship to specific historical periods in a society…" He further

submits that in this approach, the themes of discourse are interpreted in relation to the social realities of the society of the writer and that the stylistic devices employed by the writer have social implications.

Thus, writers of all literary genres, prose, drama and poetry are concerned with all the social, cultural and political lives of the society in which they live and function. It is easy for writers to mirror their society in their works because they are an integral part of their world. As they cannot operate in a vacuum, their society becomes the canvas that forms the background of their literary escapades. This theory is germane to this study because it relates the poetic work to the society that serves as the mirror which shows a major feature of the Igbo society, which is migration. Through the art form, the poet mirrors the average Igbo and his tendency to leave their shores for another region for economic gains. Guided by this theory, the study will show the motivations for migration among the Igbo as seen by a poet who is also a native Igbo and who is knowledgeable of the Igbo culture.

4. Methodology

Igbo written literature transcend the three genres of prose, drama and poetry, and they cover various themes in the society. Out of the lot, poetry was selected for the purpose of looking at a poet's estimation of a major feature of Igbo socio-cultural experience. Consequently, Nolue Emenanjo's collection of Igbo poetry *Akpa Uche* [Bag of thought] was selected. The collection has a total of seven poets such as E.N. Emenanjo, A.B. Chukwuezi, E.C.Chukwudile, I. Madubuike, J.C.Maduekwe, J.C. Obienyem and N.B. Obodo, and forty-seven poems of unequal distribution. Out of the seven poets, E. C. Chukwudile was purposively selected based on obscurity, as he is one of the poets whose works is yet to receive as much attention of researchers as the others. In the collection, Chukwudile contributed a total of six poems mainly based on gender. However, the poem *Onye Ije* [The migrant] was purposively selected due to its theme that aligns with the purpose of the study's inquiry. Only one poem was selected for this study because,

the text is found sufficient to extract adequate data for analysis. Secondly, since the study is not a comparative one, there is no compelling reason to include another text.

5. Data analysis

In this section, the data will be presented and analyzed using the Mirror Theory as guide. The poem *Onye Ije* [The migrant] by Chukwudile will be presented stanza by stanza and analyzed accordingly. The poem is made up of nine stanzas of equal length; there are four lines in each stanza. In the first stanza, the poet introduces the subject matter:

Onye ije na-eje
Ọ dị ka o nweghi be
Onye ghara mba jee mba
O rie ihe ọ na-asọ

'When a sojourner is going
It seems they have no place
If one leaves a land to go to another land
They will eat what they forbid'

In this opening stanza, the poet leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that he is addressing the issue of migration. The phrase *Onye ije* 'sojourner' in Igbo is used to denote the migrant; the use of the continuous tense *na-eje* 'is going' suggests that the sojourner is always on the move, and never stationary.

In the second line which serves as the defining clause the poet highlights peoples' interpretation or perception of the sojourner, *O di ka o nweghi be* 'it seems they have no place'. In the eyes of the stranger, or other peoples with which the sojourner makes contact, they are seen as baseless and homeless wanderers or fugitives. The sojourner is an object of curiosity and wonder among other people because they cannot conceive of one leaving the comfort of their native and aboriginal abode to wander to other places, where they are mere settlers and will be accorded second class citizen status.

In the last two lines of the first stanza, the poet presents one of the side effects of migration; *Onye ghara mba jee mba / O rie ihe ọ na-asọ* 'If one leaves a land to go to another land/ they will eat what they forbid'. This effect is one of the challenges of migration that confronts the sojourner. Due to differences in culture and way of life, when one moves to another land, they encounter a different culture alien to them, and they are expected to acculturate. The idea of acculturation is to consciously identify, adapt and adopt part or all the culture of the host community. Although the clause *O rieihe o na-aso* 'they will eat what they forbid' seems to be particular on food, the verb *rie* 'eat' is symbolic of all the host community culture that the sojourner imbibes, such as language, fashion, etc. The things imbibed by the sojourner may be things that used to be abominable or taboos to them, but in a strange land where the sojourner has little or no option, they are expected to adapt. The adjustment is keeping with the maxim, when in Rome, do as the Romans, and this is one of the sacrifices made by the sojourner in a strange land where they have no rights. In some cases. Sojourners assimilate, by fully adopting the culture of the host community at the expense of their own culture, but in most cases, integration is the outcome, where the sojourner adopts aspects of the host culture while simultaneously retaining their own.

In the second stanza, the poet presents the *raison d'être* underlying the sojourn to a strange land, as follows

Awọ anaghị agba ọsọ
Ma o nweghi ihe ọ hụrụ
Ihe ọkụkọ ma mmiri achọ
Ọ dị ya oke mkpa

'Toad does not run
When it did not see anything
What a fowl seeks under the rain
It is very important to it'

Two Igbo proverbs were used to project the underlying factors. One, *Awo anaghi agba oso ma o nweghiihe o huru* 'Toad does not

run, when it did not see anything'. To the Igbo, nothing happens for its sake; there is a reason behind every incidence. This proverb is akin to another Igbo maxim which states that *Ihe nwuru anwu, ihe gburu ya* 'That which dies, there is something that killed it'. Thus, the proverb talking about a toad on the run and a fowl running in the rain are used to reminisce the sojourner; just as the toad and the fowl are not running for nothing, the sojourner did not leave their homeland for nothing.

In the case of the toad and fowl, there are two contrasting factors behind their running; either they are running away from danger, such as other animals or environmental conditions after their lives, or they are attracted by conditions more favourable to them than their erstwhile abode. In the case of the sojourner, these factors represent push factors such as unfavorable social, economic or political conditions driving them away, or better conditions elsewhere pulling them away from their heritage domain. In sum, the sojourner is seen as an explorer, and they are in the new place to explore and exploit the resources in that area for their own interest. This is why, like the fowl running in the rain, the sojourner does not mind adverse conditions in their quest; what is uppermost in their mind is to achieve their mission and serve their interest. This interest is made more explicit in the next stanza.

Afọ anaghị eme ebere
Ọ na-adọ oke ụgwọ
Agụụ pụrụ m ụmụazị
Akọwa m gịnị?

Stomach does not have mercy
It draws immense debt
If hunger snatches children from me
What will I be saying?

In this stanza, it is evident that the sojourner is on an economic quest or adventure; they are on a mission for existential survival. This is captured in the maxim *Afọ anaghị eme ebere / Ọ na-adọ oke ụgwọ* 'Stomach does not have mercy, / It draws immense debt'. The maxim

states that the stomach does not spare anybody when it is empty; rather it wants you to pay your debts to it, in form of feeding it with food which it craves. Here, *afo* 'stomach' is a metonymy for food and food is symbolic of resources and not just that which is used to satiate hunger. The reason why it is not simply food is that, in their own homeland, there is food, sufficient or not; leaving their traditional communities implies that, they either want more resources or they are looking for virgin lands to exploit. Thus, the sojourner is seeking for food and resources that he needs to survive.

In addition, the poet used a rhetoric question to confirm the fact that the sojourner is on an economic quest, *Aguu puru m umuazi, / akowa m gini* 'If hunger snatches children from me / What will I be saying?' In the use of this rhetoric devise, the poet puts himself in the position of the sojourner with the use of personal pronoun *m* 'I/ me' in both clauses. The tone of the rhetoric question suggests desperation on the part of the sojourner; they are anxious about the welfare of their family represented by children and are therefore desperate to scour through land and sea to provide resources for their overall development. This parental disposition is in tandem with the culture of the Igbo as expressed in the proverb, *O kuko hapu kwom kwom, o were gini zuo umu ya* 'If the hen stops pecking, with what will it nurture the chicks'. Undoubtedly, parents are expected to keep working and making sacrifices aimed at feeding their children. In the next stanza, the poet presents a major motivation behind the quest for economic resources.

Onye nwee uche na ego
Ọ zaa nwa obi
Onye dị aghịrịgha
A kpọọ ya onye mmụọ

If one has sense and money
They will be named son of the land
If one is haggard
They will be addressed as fools

In this stanza, the poet presents two contrasting motivations behind the quest for economic resources by the sojourner. The first is the positive *Onye nwee uche na ego / O zaa nwa obi* 'If one has sense and money, / They will be named son of the land'. The implication of this saying is that wealth gives one prestige and high status in the society, and wealth attracts the respect of people in the society. It is the wealthy that are praised and eulogized and that are given chieftaincy titles to celebrate them. Although in Igbo society, character is seen as higher than wealth, hence *ezi aha ka ego* 'good name is better than money', however, money is highly esteemed, and the wealthy are accorded high honour in the land. It is for this reason that Igbo uses the maxim *nwata kwuo aka o soro okenye rie nri* 'when a child washes their hands, they will join elders to eat'. Washing of hands implies acquiring riches which elevates an ordinary person to the highest position in the community. Thus, the aim of the sojourner is to make wealth in a strange land and upon return, to change their social status in the society.

The second motivation is negative *Onye di aghirigha / A kpoo ya onye mmuo* 'If one is haggard, / they will be addressed as fools'. The word *aghirigha* 'haggard' is symbolic of poverty and lack; in the Igbo society, such people are negatively addressed, scorned and given appellations that depict their low estate. The position of the poet is that the sojourner is also in a quest to avoid being seen as a fool in the society due to lack of resources. In the next stanza, the poet states the sacrifices that attend amassing of wealth, as follows:

Ego dị n'ogwu
Ma a ga-achụ ya achụ
A ga na-achụ aja
Ka ikpe wee ma mmụọ
Ka ikpe wee ma mmuo

Money is in thorns
But it must be chased
Sacrifices will continue to be made
So that blame will be on the deities

This stanza captures the Igbo ideology on wealth which serves as a catalyst for wealth creation. In doing so, the poet employs two proverbs. The first, *Ego di n'ogwu* 'Money is in thorns' suggests that it is tasking to make money. The image of money in the midst of thorns implies that one must be ready to shed his own blood to acquire it. Just as one cannot possibly pluck fruit from a thorn-filled case without hurting their hand, it is not possible to acquire wealth without enduring some pain, either physical, mental or spiritual. Yet, in spite of the danger inherent in the quest to pluck money from thorns, the poet enthuses that it is worth it, *Ma a ga-achụ ya achụ* 'But it must be chased'. This disposition is germane with the Igbo maxim, *A naghi ekwo mgbagbu ghara ogu* 'You don't avoid going to war just because of death'. This is to say that, although acquiring wealth is herculean, and even dangerous, it is worth engaging in.

The second proverb *A ga na-achu aja / Ka ikpe wee ma mmuo* 'Sacrifices will continue to be made / So that blame will be on the deities' is suggestive of the efforts expected of a person to make in order to acquire wealth. The understanding is that acquiring wealth is based on two factors, the human factor and the spiritual factor. In the human factor, the person is expected to make the requisite attempts and then hope that the deities will approve and reward their efforts with bounties. In the Igbo culture, sacrifices are made to the deities to attract their favour and blessings. By implication, the efforts made by a person to acquire wealth, in terms of hard work and labour are seen as sacrifice; therefore, it is expected that the deities will reward such sacrifices. Where the efforts are not rewarded, the person will not blame himself but will blame the deities for not playing their part. Thus, the Igbo perceive wealth as resources garnered through the partnership of humans and the deities. It is for this reason that the Igbo are not fatalists who believe that their lot is their destiny; rather they are wont to struggle, by every means possible to overcome their adverse lot, as the poet elaborates in the next stanza.

Onye nwe ndidi
O rie azụ ukpoo
Onye nwaa n'aka nri,
Ya nwaa n'aka ekpe

The person who is patient
They will eat fish caught by a net
The person who tries in the left hand
They should try in the right hand

In this sixth stanza, the poet focuses on the effort the sojourner should make to achieve the wealth objective. First, there is caution for the exercise of patience in the attempt, as couched in the maxim *Onye new ndidi / O rie azụ ukpoo* 'The person who is patient / They will eat fish caught by a net'. In Igbo society, fishermen use a looped net to catch fish; it is a process that requires a lot of patience because it may take days before a fish is caught. The fish caught in this kind of net is usually a big fish which is seen as a reward for all the time the fisherman waited. Thus, the sojourner is advised not be precipitous or make room for desperation. This fact is also supported by another Igbo aphorism, *Onye buru chi ya uzo, o gbagbu oonwe ya n'oso* 'A person who runs ahead of his personal god will kill himself running'. This aphorism is used to state that, although it is proper to work and make efforts, such labour should be spent with the cooperation of the deities, otherwise all the effort will come to naught. Nevertheless, the poet posits that no efforts should be spared towards realizing the wealth objective, *Onye nwaa n'aka nri, / Ya nwaa n'aka ekpe* 'The person who tries in the left hand / They should try in the right hand'. The concept of left and right hand signifies making all round attempts and leaving nothing to chance. The reason for this holistic approach is explained by the poet in the next stanza.

Onye taa ahụhụ
Ọ mara jide akụ
Ofeke ataghị ahụhụ
Amaghi ejide akụ

The person who suffers
They can keep wealth
A fool that did not suffer
Cannot keep wealth

The position of the poet is that, if one does not suffer to make wealth, the person may not be able to manage it. This is to say that managing wealth is as important as making wealth. Suffering in this sense constitutes all the sacrifices the sojourner made to become rich. It is tasking because of all the physical and mental energies spent in the process. It is expected that such a person will be prudent in the use of the wealth thereafter. In the converse situation, the person who did not suffer to achieve wealth is more likely to dissipate it *Ofeke ataghi ahuhu / Amaghi ejide akụ* 'A fool that did not suffer / Cannot keep wealth'. Such a person is termed a fool. They are seen as fools for two reasons; they did not sweat to make wealth, probably because they inherited wealth from their parents, or other unorthodox means. Secondly, the inability to manage the wealth, due to profligacy or prodigality makes the person a bigger fool.

In the Igbo ideology, there is no room for wasteful living, hence it is commonly said, *ejighi akpata atu fuo a bao garanya* "No one becomes wealthy through making wealth and wasting it". The poet believes that, due to the experience of pain and suffering by the sojourner, they will be good managers of wealth. The poet extends this idea to the penultimate stanza by stating that the price of being rich is sacrifice, as no one becomes rich on a platter of gold *Ihe e ji eme ogaranya adighi ofele ma ncha* 'What is used to show off wealth is not easy at all'. The poet maintains that it takes steady, continuous and consistent labour for a person to attain a high status, hence *Nwoke ezu ike*! 'Man never rests!'. The apostrophe at the end of this line suggests that it is a strong statement of fact. It is used to show that the male in Igbo society is always striving and hustling to make wealth. Irrespective of whether he achieves wealth or not, every man is expected to strive. The sojourner who is on the move, from place to place is

seen as an adventurer who has fulfilled this cultural expectation that man never rests. In the final stanza, the poet calls for respect for the sojourner.

Onye hụ onye ije
Ya nye ya nsọpụrụ
Meere onye ije mma
O nweghi onye ma echi

If you see a sojourner
You should give them respect
Do good for sojourner
No one knows tomorrow

In the last stanza, the poet concludes by advocating for the sojourner to be acknowledged and honored. The clause *nye ya nsọpụrụ* 'give them respect' and *Meere onye ije mma* 'Do good for sojourner' are ways the poet wants other people to treat the sojourner, for all the reasons stated in the previous stanzas. Apparently, the people he wants to respect and favour the sojourner, referred to as *onye* 'you' are those majority in the country who are tied to their traditional domains without any experience of migration. Compared to the sojourner, the people at home have no experience of life in other places, the culture, belief system and world view of other ethnic groups, and the challenges of living in a novel environment where the sojourner is seen and treated as a stranger, without as much right as the natives.

In the last line, the poet sums up his missive with an aphorism, *Onweghi onye ma echi* 'No one knows tomorrow'. This popular Igbo saying is not used by accident; the point being asserted by the poet is that the sojourner can achieve their aim for venturing out, and become rich anytime, given their antecedents and experiences. It is expected that when the sojourner eventually comes back home, he will not come empty-handed but will arrive with the proceeds and bounties of their itinerary, which is the sole reason for the adventure. In the Igbo belief, after the sojourner has acquired wealth, he must come back to show off, hence the popular saying *Akuruo uno* 'wealth should reach home'.

The Average Igbo sojourner would not realize their mission of amassing wealth and remain in the foreign land; he must go back home to show their kinsfolk that their adventure had yielded the desired dividends, and the community will celebrate them by, in some instances, giving them chieftaincy titles to crown their efforts.

In sum, the analysis has shown a holistic account of the sojourner from the Igbo perspective. The poet has successfully mirrored the reality of Igbo migratory experience in the poem *Onye Ije* [The migrant]. In the next section, the major findings of the study will be discussed.

The poem *Onye Ije* [The migrant] resonates with the idea of migration. The Igbo of Nigeria are generally acknowledged as traditional sojourners or migrants; matter-of-factly, no other black African ethnic group sojourns as much as the Igbo. It is for this reason that they are found all over the world. In present day Nigeria, the Igbo are mainly domiciled in the Southeast geo-political zone. However, aside a fraction of Igbo who are aborigines in States such as Rivers and Delta, substantial number of Igbo internal migrants are found in the rest of the twenty-eight States of Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Arguably, in all the major cities in Nigeria, East, West, North and South, the Igbo constitute the highest non-natives in demography, apart from the host community. The story is the same across African countries, Europe, the Americas and Asia. It is for this reason that it is commonly said among Nigerians that, if one goes to any place without encountering an Igbo, one should be wary of that place. Essentially, there is an Igbo in virtually every country in the world, perhaps making them the most migrant ethnic group in Africa, if not the world.

Lee's (1966) work 'A Theory of Migration', propounded the notion of Push and Pull factors in migration research. He conceptualized that there are certain factors which act to drive people away from an area, known as Push Factors, and other factors which act to attract people to an area, known as Pull Factors. Push factors include poverty, desertification, famines/droughts, fear of political persecution, poor healthcare, and natural disasters. Pull factors include more job

opportunities and better living conditions; large market, easy availability of land for settling and agriculture, better healthcare system, and security. From the perspective of Lee's concept of migration, it is apparent that the factor that pull the Igbo away from their native land to other places is mainly economic, represented by large markets. As a result, in all the major markets in Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Ghana, etc the Igbo are either dominant or have a sizeable population. This paper argues that the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria are the most migratory among the ethnic groups in Nigeria and Africa. The 1997 Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research's study on migratory behaviour among different ethnic groups indicated that the Igbo are the most migratory among the over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. According to Ojukwu (2009), a significant component of Igbo life is the tendency for adventure, and as a result, out of the entire black race, the Igbo are one of the most restless the most traveled. Mgbeafulu (2003) posits that migration of the Igbo to other parts of Nigeria was catalyzed by the British government with the construction of the Nigerian Railway, which provided impetus for the Igbo to move to other parts of Nigeria in droves. This fact is corroborated by Achebe (1983: 56) who provided reasons for the migratory habit of the Igbo thus,

Igbo culture being receptive to change, gave the Igbo man an unquestioned advantage over his compatriots in searching credentials for advancement in Nigeria's colonial society. Unlike the Hausa-Fulani, he was unhindered by a wary religion and unlike the Yoruba, the Igbo man was unhampered by traditional hierarchies. This kind of creature fearing no god or man, was custom-made to grasp the opportunities such as they were, of the white man's dispensation…

Achebe's position is that the Igbo is a free man; relieved of the manacles of religion and social hierarchies, he moves from place to place in search of resources. Undoubtedly, the reason for the migratory tendency of the Igbo is economic, as established in the poem, thus designating the Igbo as economic migrants.

Culturally, there are two fundamental aphorisms that underlie the reason for Igbo migration. The first is anchored on Igbo mask drama

Anaghi a no out ebe ekiri mmonwu "You don't stay in one spot to watch the masquerade". The Igbo masquerade stemming from celebration of the ancestral spirits is quite a spectacle; the masks are designed in a way to attract and retain the attention of watchers and admirers. The masks are designed with multi-coloured tapestries that make them a beauty to watch. As a result, during displays on stage, watchers change positions for the purpose of getting a better view of the rich spectacle. In this aphorism, the masquerade assumes the symbol of life or the earth, implying that life is too beautiful to be lived in one place. The Igbo believe that other places in the world hold different fascinating features of the earth, and therefore, if one must have a holistic view of the earth, one must move from place to place. The second aphorism is based on experience thus, *Onye ije ka onye isiawo ihe ama* "A sojourner is wiser than the aged". The idea is that the sojourner contacts other cultures and peoples, and so has a richer and broader world view. Behind this view is the understanding that every culture has their unique ideology and way of life; imbibing other cultural norms makes one more experienced and knowledgeable. Ordinarily, age is equated with wisdom in virtually every culture; however, compared to the vast experiences of a sojourner, the static aged person pales to insignificance in wisdom.

An outstanding finding in this study is acculturation or assimilation, as the case may be, as reflected in the inter-ethnic encounters experienced by the sojourner as a result of inevitable culture contact. According to the poet, *Onye ghara mba jee mba, o rieihe o na*-aso 'If one leaves a land to go to another land, they will eat what they forbid' signifying the pressure mounted on the sojourner to adjust his beliefs and adapt to the socio-cultural situation in the mainstream host society. Berry (2005) posits that the outcome of exposure to two or more cultures by an individual migrant is that the migrant experiences at least two types of changes of social and psychological nature. The social change involves behavioral shifts which affect the way the individual behaves in such areas as eating habits, language use, fashion style, and self-identity. The psychological change involves acculturative

stress that includes emotional reactions that the individual experiences such as anxiety and depression. Berry (2006) also posits that, in the migration context there are four behavioral acculturation orientations: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Integration refers to those individuals who value both heritage cultural maintenance and adoption of the host culture and intergroup relations. Assimilation refers to a rejection of the heritage cultural identity and the adoption of the host culture. Separation is the strategy adopted by immigrants who advocate maintaining their heritage culture without adapting to the host culture and do not value intergroup relations. Marginalization is used to describe those immigrants who do not value both their heritage culture and the host culture and are therefore averse to maintaining them or relating with either group marginalization. In confirmation of this reality Ajani & Onodje (2016) found that, in the city of Ibadan, in South-West Nigeria, many Igbo internal migrants, particularly the young have successfully integrated into Yoruba culture; they speak the Yoruba language like natives, and they cherish Yoruba cuisine and fashion. However, their study demonstrated that while the Igbo migrants expressed a high degree of integration into their host culture, they did not fail to retain certain cultural elements of their heritage culture. Evidently, in the migration context, as stated by the poet, sojourners are constrained to submit to the norms of the host society, mainly for reasons of benefiting or reaping the resources prevalent in the host society.

6. Conclusion

This study has focused on a poem based on Igbo ideology on migration. Undoubtedly, the Igbo are the most migrant group among all black people in the world, given their presence among other ethnic groups across Nigeria, Africa and beyond. It is interesting to note that the major factor underlying Igbo migration is economic; the people are aware of opportunities in other regions, particularly opportunities for trade, hence they move to explore and exploit resources. In this adventure, the Igbo are wont to make sacrifices such as adapting to the

culture of their hosts, and in some instances being assimilated. It is expedient that the explorer should give up certain attributes of themselves if they must penetrate their hosts to tap their resources. Such integration of acculturation has been highlighted as a common feature of the Igbo migratory experience. Consequently, such orientations can make the migrants less ethnocentric, and more cosmopolitan in approach to inter-ethnic relationships. Cultural integration implies that such migrants are shorn and bereft of bias and prejudice which often mar inter-ethnic affairs in Africa. The poem has also shown that, although the Igbo migrant amass wealth from their host community, they eventually repatriate such resources back home; the implication is that, although they are outside their heritage domain, they are still conscious of home. This study recommends that, the Igbo should maintain their migratory culture for reasons of diversity and inclusion which the Nigerian society needs for social and political harmony and economic growth.

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Received 03.04.2025. Received in revised form 20.07.2025. Accepted 21.07.2025