

## THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY OF WRITTEN IGBO POETRY (1975–2015): THE INFLUENCE OF THE MISSIONARIES AND THE BIRTH OF THE IGBO ORIENTED POETRY

Chukwuebuka Uchenna ORAEBUNAM

*Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan*

**ABSTRACT** Written Igbo poetry (henceforth, W.I.P.)<sup>(1)</sup> is generally known to have begun with the publication of *Akpa Uche* (An Anthology) in 1975. Recent evidence reveals that W.I.P. started in 1934, with the publication *Akwukwo Ukwę n'Asusu Ibo* by the Church Mission Society (C.M.S.). Igbo scholars have chronicled the development of Igbo prose and drama, but the historical trajectory of W.I.P. is yet to be explored in literature. To this end, this paper presents an account of the developmental journey of Igbo poetry from its oral form to its present written state, taking into consideration all the factors that contributed to its growth and metamorphosis. The study claims that the missionaries laid the foundation for the birth of W.I.P. in 1975. The study also finds that, since the final debut of W.I.P. in 1975 through 2015, a period that commemorates four decades of the existence of W.I.P. in Nigeria, W.I.P. has grown tremendously in terms of quantity.

**Key Words:** the Igbo; Development of written Igbo poetry; Igbo poetic origins; the Missionaries.

### INTRODUCTION

The publication of the first Igbo prose, *Omenuko*, by Pita Nwana and D.N. Achara's *Ala Bingo*, both in 1933 marked the beginning of written Igbo literature. Earlier studies on written Igbo literature have paid more attention to the prose and drama genres with less attention paid to the poetic genre. Two prominent Igbo scholars, Emenyonu and Onyekaonwu, have given the Igbo novel an exhaustive historical study, leaving the study of W.I.P. at the periphery of Igbo scholarship. For instance, Emenyonu (1978) chronicles the development of the Igbo novel in his book, *The Rise of Igbo Novel*, and Onyekaonwu (1986), in his doctoral thesis, surveys all written Igbo fictions within a period of 15 years (1933–1983). This means that Igbo novels have received far greater historical attention than Igbo drama and poetry. In 2010, Nnabuihe presented a historical account of written Igbo drama in his doctoral thesis (Nnabuihe, 2010), but the history of W.I.P. has still not been studied.

Ugonna sought to understand how Igbo poetry has grown when he asked, "Is there Igbo poetry? If there is Igbo poetry, to what extent has it grown? What characteristically is Igbo poetry?" (Ugonna, 1982: 20). In his attempt to provide some empirical answers to Ugonna's questions, Ikwubuzo (2007) assessed the level of growth of W.I.P. in three decades (1975–1995), in terms of its study in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. There is now a legion of Igbo and non-Igbo scholars who cannot track the historical development of W.I.P. due to the unavailability of historical documents. The aim of this study, therefore, is to fill this knowledge gap by providing a detailed account of the developmental trends of W.I.P., with a view to achieving parity in Igbo literary studies. The study argues that before the debut of the first anthology of written Igbo verse *Akpa Uche*, which was edited by Romanus M. Ekechukwu in 1975, the Igbo had written Christian religious poems which were published in 1934; a year after the debut of the first Igbo novel. *Omenuko* (Nwana, 1933) and *Ala Bingo*

(Achara, 1933).

A qualitative research method was used in this study while the exploratory and ethnographic research designs were adopted in the organization of data. Exploratory research design was used to gain background information and identify the gap in the developmental trajectory of W.I.P. The ethnographic design was used to elicit and interpret primary data based on the background information gathered. This study also adopted a purposive sampling method in the selection of informants. Five Igbo poets and scholars in Igbo studies were purposively selected and interviewed based on their knowledge of Igbo literature, history, and language. Unstructured interviews were conducted to elicit data from these five informants. Eleven publishing houses, Evans Brothers (Ibadan), University Press Limited (Ibadan), Format Publishers (Enugu), Cowries and Mandillas (Onitsha), University Publishing Co. (Onitsha), Learn Africa Plc (formerly Longman Nigeria; Lagos), Pacific Publishers (Obosi), Macmillan Nigeria (Lagos), Fulladu Publishing company (Enugu), Elite Publishers (Onitsha), and Nelson Publishers (Lagos), were purposively selected for consultation. The selection was based on the fact that majority of Igbo poets published their works through these publishing companies. Four markets where Igbo poetic texts are sold in large quantities were also visited for data collection. The markets include, Main market (Onitsha), Relief market (Onitsha), Eke-Awka market (Awka), and Yaba market (Lagos). The information derived from booksellers in these markets was used in ascertaining the quantity of Igbo poetic works in the public domain.

## IGBO POETIC ORIGINS

Oral Igbo poetry (henceforth, O.I.P.) which stems from the people's belief in the supernatural could be said to be the mother of W.I.P. The early Igbo, whose major occupation was hunting, conceived poetry through the invocation of the gods (Okediadi, 2004: 250). In their bid to survive, the early Igbo used to hunt, depending on the help of different spirits and gods, for their daily kill. Whenever they sought the favour of the gods, they employed poetry (chants and songs); when they were confronted with dire situations, they employed incantations to invoke the power of the gods to come to their rescue; with that, the gods always came to their aid. It was with this string of connection that the Igbo developed its own traditional religion.

The Igbo traditional religion became a rendezvous point between O.I.P. and oral Igbo drama (O.I.D). The *mmonwu* (masquerade, the Igbo traditional drama) performers used a broader width of Igbo chants and songs in their performance. The *ndi dibia* (herbalists) on the other hand, made use of recitations and chants while communing with spirits. Having found traditional religion to be a communicative link between them and the gods, the early Igbo used songs, incantations, and chants which they dramatically presented at the village squares, kings' palaces, and shrines or at any other place designated for such performance, in a bid to interact with the gods and seek their intervention. This symbiotic relationship between the Igbo and poetry transubstantiated into what I have termed 'Igbo poetic life circle.'

Igbo poetic life circle relates to the way the Igbo see life from birth to death. For instance, when a child is born in the traditional Igbo society, birth songs are deployed to appreciate God for the child given to them as a gift and thank the parents for doing a good job. Anytime the baby cries, lullabies are used to put the child to sleep and to initiate the child into the rhythmic nature of Igbo life. In Igbo society, the early training a child receives is given through folksongs which promote easy comprehension and assimilation (Ojukwu et al., 2014). When the child begins to grow, satiric and other pedagogical songs are used to groom

the child into the culture of his/her immediate society. When the person is getting married, marriage songs are used both to entertain and instruct the child on how to build the home. Upon the demise of the person, funeral dirges are used to bid him/her farewell. The implication of this is that poetic renditions characterise the Igbo person's rite of passage.

These earlier forms of O.I.P. were orally transmitted from age to age. Every generation has oral artists who contribute new poems to the Igbo poetic repertoire through their artistic skills and creative imaginations. But since these poets did not have orthographic means of documenting their creative works, the names of these original composers have long fallen into the state of oblivion and their works are communally owned. O.I.P. has been broadly classified by Igbo scholars to include folk ballads, incantations, satiric, lullaby, work, festival, love, marriage, and birth songs, to mention but a few (Egudu & Nwoga, 1971; Ogbalu, 1974; Nwadike, 2002a; Ikwubuzo & Oraegbunam, 2016). These classifications were grouped into three major categories by Uzochukwu (2001) to include: songs (*uri/egwu*), chant (*mbem*), and recitation (*ngugo*). This classification of O.I.P. bears witness to the fact that before the Igbo ever had contact with the Western civilisation, the poetry of the Igbo was well-developed and it also served the sociological needs of the people. This explains why some of the poems written in the first decade of W.I.P. mirrored the Igbo traditional ways of life.

## WRITING EVOLUTION IN IGBO LAND AND THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITTEN IGBO POETRY

After many years of orality in Igbo land, the Igbo started looking for ways of documenting events in their history, life and folklore in which poetry is a key aspect. This attempt led to the evolution of two types of sign writings in Igbo land. The first and older of these sign writings was markings on the wall. An instance of this model of writing is seen in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), where Okonkwo's father, Unoka, drew different file groups of lines of chalk on the wall, representing the debts he owed people. Unfortunately, these signs were not used to write poetry for two clear reasons. First, these signs lack the capacity of being used as phonetic representation of sounds in a language and as such could not be used to express human experience which is required in poetry. Secondly, the wall is not good means of preservation, since it cannot be easily transferred from one person to another.

The second and more popular form of writing among the Igbo was the *Nsibidi* signs. Unlike the markings on the wall, *Nsibidi* signs were accepted by many pre-colonial Igbo communities. Concerning the role of *Nsibidi* signs among the Igbo, Nwadike (2002a: 22) notes:

*Nsibidi served various functions in the localities where it operated; identity label, public notice, private warning, declaration of taboos, amorous dealings, reckoning of goods and money, keeping records and decorations, and as the Ekpe and Okonko societies spread and acquired importance in the traditional government, Nsibidi became quite important socially, economically and politically.*

Nwadike's submission here reveals that *Nsibidi* was not used by every member of the society. It was used exclusively by members of secret societies<sup>(2)</sup> among the Igbo, some of which include, but not limited to *Okonko*, *Mmonwu*, and *Èkpè*. These esoteric societies placed high premium on the knowledge of *Nsibidi*, which they saw as a key in keeping the core secrets of the cults. Consequently, the more *Nsibidi* signs members learn, the higher they climb in these cults. For this reason, *Nsibidi* was not used in writing poetry. Although, *Nsibidi* was at some point used in documenting court proceedings in Igbo land (Afigbo,

1975: 74) but there is no evidence of *Nsibidi* being used in the writing of any genre of Igbo literature. More importantly, since the members of these cults constitute a fragment of Igbo population, the rest of the Igbo society continued with their O.I.P.

The earliest attempt at writing Igbo poetry was the effort of the Christian missionaries, Church Mission Society (C.M.S.), who through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), published their translated *Book of Common Prayer* into Igbo language as *Akwukwọ Ekpelu nke Anẹkpelu Cuku n'Ọgbọ* (Ibo Holy Prayer Book) in 1934 (C.M.S., 1934a). The text was divided into two parts. The first part contained the C.M.S.'s prayers, catechisms, collets, and other church proceedings. The second part of this book had hymns (poems) that were translated from Church of England's *Hymns Ancient and Modern* into Igbo language and titled, 'Akwukwọ Ukwę n'Asusu Ibo' (henceforth *A.U.A.I.*) (C.M.S., 1934b).

To distinguish the creation of the Igbo from the translated hymns, the hymns written by the Igbo were all branded 'original.' The reason for branding them 'original' was to give the creative right to the Igbo. This was why, when *Akwukwọ Ekpelu Anẹkpelu Cuku n'Ọgbọ* (which had *A.U.A.I.* as its second part) was revised in 1977, as *Ekpere na Abụ* (henceforth *E.A.*) (Prayers and Hymns), which is today used in the Anglican Communion, Church of Nigeria, all the hymns written by the Igbo in *A.U.A.I.* were grouped together alongside with other new hymns written by the Igbo and titled: 'ABỤ NKE NDI-IGBO CHEPỤTARA' (Hymns created by the Igbo). In the *E.A.*, these hymns written by the Igbo in *A.U.A.I.* were given different numbers. For instance, hymn 70 in *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S., 1934b: 65) is found in *E.A.* as hymn 373 (C.M.S., 1977: 288):

[Poem 1]

**Hymn 70 (*Akwukwọ Ukwę n'Asusu Ibo*)  
(ORIGINAL)**

1. Ọyim, biak'inu akuko  
Nke nuku ifu-n'anya  
*Koros* – Jesu nwulu, Ọnwulu  
Maka ifim na ngi azi
2. Madu nine bu ndi njo,  
N'anya Cuku nke di nso

*(1. My friend, come and listen to a tale  
Of a great love*

*Chorus – Jesus died, He died  
Because of me, you, and everybody*

*2. Everybody is all sinners  
In the sight of holy God) (my translation)*

**Hymn 373 (*Ekperena Abụ*)**

1. Eyim, bja, nu akuko  
Nke ihu-n'anya uku  
*Koros* – Jisus nwuru, Ọ nwuru,  
N'ihim, gi, na madu dum.
2. Madu nile bu ndi-njo  
N'anya Chineke di nso.

The above poem continues until the eighth stanza. If one takes a careful look at the above poem, one will readily notice that the only difference in the two hymns is in the orthography that was used in it. While the hymn 70 was written in union Igbo,<sup>(3)</sup> the hymn 373 was written with Ọnwu's orthography.<sup>(4)</sup> The table below is a list of some of the hymns which were earlier written by the Igbo, published in the *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S., 1934b) and later revised in the now *E.A.* (C.M.S., 1977) under the group title 'Abụ Nke Ndi-Igbo Cheputara' (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Hymns written by the Igbo in *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S., 1934b) and its position in the revised *E.A.* (C.M.S., 1977)

S/N	<i>A.U.A.I.</i>		<i>E.A.</i>	
	Hymn number	Page	Hymn number	Page
1	50	51	391	304
2	21	23	376	291
3	170	142	385	299
4	171	143	386	300
5	273	227	390	304
6	274	227	399	310
7	70	65	373	288
8	7	259	374	289
9	10	261	378	292
10	18	268	388	302

The *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S., 1934b), contains 304 hymns among which 28 of the hymns were poetic creations of the Igbo. These poetic creations of the Igbo, as expected, were influenced by the Western poetic writing tradition, as they were written in verses as against the O.I.P. that has never appeared in print and as such does not have a clear distinction of number of lines in a verse. Just like many other hymns in *A.U.A.I.*, which were translated from English to union orthography, these 28 Igbo hymns were written in couplet, triplet, quatrains, and some in octave. Since these early Igbo creations were all lyric poems, tunes were assigned to them to help singers.

The names and number of the poets that composed the Igbo hymns in *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S., 1934b) are not clear. However, Nwadike (2002a) explained that the most translations Rev. Thomas J. Dennis did were with the help of some Igbo indigenes like the Catechist Mr. Alponus Onyeabo and Mr. Anyaegbunam. Maduekwe collaborated Nwadike's position when he explained that it was Mr. Anyaegbunam from Obosi that headed the team that wrote most of the Igbo hymns in *A.U.A.I.*<sup>(5)</sup> The text *A.U.A.I.* was originally written in the union orthography which Igboanusi (2006) claims Rev. Dennis imposed on the Igbo at a conference held in Asaba on August 14, 1905. This union orthography used in the writing of *A.U.A.I.* favoured Onitsha dialect over other dialects of the Igbo, which was why *A.U.A.I.* was nicknamed by majority of the Igbo as *Ukwe ndi Onitsha* (songs of the Onitsha people).<sup>(6)</sup> In furtherance of our claim that all the hymns labelled 'original' in *A.U.A.I.* are indeed the original creation of the Igbo, let us examine one other hymn among these 28 hymns in *A.U.A.I.*

[Poem 2]

**Hymn 278      Lacrymax.      7.7.7.**  
**(Tune only, H. C. No. 259)**

**Original**

1. Onye gwalui goba mō?  
 Ayi mel'ife nna-ayi melu.

My translation

*(Who asked you to practice traditional religion?  
 We did what our fore fathers did.)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Nna-i gbue o <u>cu</u> , igegbu?   | <i>If your father commits murder, will you kill?</i>   |
| 2. Ndi dibia nalafu ngi,<br>Si ngi ny <u>ę</u> ę ndi-m <u>o</u> nni,<br>Gwam, ma ozu neli nni?         | <i>Medicine men are deceiving you,<br/>Telling you to continue giving food to the spirits,<br/>Tell me, does corpse eat?</i> |
| 3. S <u>o</u> Nwa Cuku bu Dibia<br>Nke new <u>ę</u> pu njo n'obi:<br>Gbo nkpa-i nine m'iy <u>o</u> Ya. | <i>God's child is the only medicine man<br/>That purges sin from the heart<br/>Solve all your problems. Amen.)</i>           |
- (C.M.S., 1934b: 230)

The above poem clearly proves that all the hymns labelled 'original' in *A.U.A.I.* were indeed the poetic creations of the early Igbo Christian converts who were basking in the euphoria of their newfound faith. It mirrors the fierce resistance from traditional believers that greeted the missionaries when they arrived in Igbo land. According to Ugonna (1984), the highest resistance the missionaries faced was from the *mmonwu* (masquerade) cult. The missionaries confessed that the *mmuo* (spirits) was a major obstacle to their missionary works in Igbo central area (Ugonna, 1984: 25).

The message in the poem can be better understood when we recall that the Igbo have strong regard for their ancestors. It is a belief that is embedded in the traditional religion and philosophies of the Igbo. Poem two was an attack by the missionaries on the Igbo belief systems, using the early Igbo Christian converts against their own kinsmen. Again, the poem is a satirical hymn, written by the early Igbo Christian converts who were already convinced that Christianity was superior to the Igbo traditional religion. The poem was used as a tool to lure the then unbelievers into accepting Christianity. The thought in this poem shows that it was not translated from English but composed by the Igbo.

Another reason the C.M.S. permitted the poetic contributions of the Igbo in the translated hymns from *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S., 1934b) was because of the education ordinance of 1926. Due to the controversy that welcomed the 1882 education ordinance, which the Wesleyan and the C.M.S. played a huge role in, the education ordinance code of 1926 was enacted by the British government in Nigeria, and it became operative from May 27, 1926. After its enactment, the education code led to the inauguration of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (I.I.A.L.C.). Some of the objectives of I.I.A.L.C. were to advise and aid in the publication of studies on African languages, folklore, and native art, to promote an understanding of African languages and social institutions, and to study the possibilities of their use as an instrument of education (Lugard, 1928).

Nwadike (2002a) is of the view that a lot of policy decisions on indigenous education in Africa were influenced by the I.I.A.L.C. The institute also assisted in no small way, in the opening of a translation bureau in Nigeria, solely for the purpose of translating available literatures that were originally in English into Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, and Efik languages. Seeing the level of work on ground already, the C.M.S. keyed into the native language revolution championed by the I.I.A.L.C. The present study believes that the main reason the C.M.S. keyed into the language revolution was to increase the number of their converts. The C.M.S. believed that if the Igbo could see their own hymns written by their own people as part of what the church uses, they would be more willing to accept Christianity over their traditional religion.

The C.M.S.'s *A.U.A.I.* (1934b) is thus taken to be the first and the most visible attempt towards the development of W.I.P. The text, therefore, becomes the solid foundation upon

which W.I.P. began. Thus, any discourse on the development of W.I.P. that does not acknowledge it should be considered incomplete. These Igbo hymns are part of what Finnegan in her *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970) called ‘religious poetry.’ Finnegan (1970: 165) asserts that in Africa, there is a pool of religious poetry and some of these religious poetries include prayers, hymns, praises, oracular poetry, and possession songs. Finnegan further states that these forms of African religious poetry vary in their contents and functions across cultures. Finnegan opines that the missionaries played an important role towards the emergence and development of African literatures, which Igbo poetry is no exception. However, it was not just the Christian missionaries that influenced African literatures but also Islamic missionaries (Finnegan, 1970). The Islamised people, such as the Hausa or Fulani in the northern parts of West Africa and the Swahili-speakers in East Africa, have their own Arabic-influenced poetry; the *dabteras* of Ethiopia also have their ecclesiastical poetry that is linked with the Coptic Church while there are hymns and lyrics which arose from the impact of Christianity (Christian missions) in many parts of the African continent (Finnegan, 1970).

Based on the foregoing, the study claims that both the translated hymns and the original hymns by the Igbo in *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S, 1934b), provided the inspiration for the emergence of W.I.P. However, an examination of the content of these hymns in *A.U.A.I.* reveals that the hymns served only the interest of the missionaries; hence, their usage was restricted only to the church. Their writers were also not given the freedom to express themselves in the manner that poetry is known for. This was why the content of the hymns, except for poem two, did not mirror the philosophies, neither did it project the worldviews of the Igbo. It only served the interest of the missionaries. This explains why most Igbo scholars do not regard *A.U.A.I.* when discussing the history of W.I.P.

There is no doubt in the fact that these hymns may have influenced the early Igbo poets at the time, composing poetry in the corners of their homes, while waiting for the right opportunity to showcase their poetic compositions which was modelled according to the Western poetic writing tradition as exemplified in *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S, 1934b). This explains why all the poems that appeared in the first known W.I.P., *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975), followed the Western poetic writing style (couplet, triplet, octaves, and quatrain), the same style used by the early Igbo Christian adherents that contributed in *A.U.A.I.*

## THE RISE OF IGBO ORIENTED WRITTEN POETRY

It was expected that the publication of *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S, 1934b) should have immediately stirred up the desire in the Igbo to start publishing the type of poetic works that would mirror and project the experiences of the Igbo, but unfortunately, that was not the case. Just like what happened after the publication of *Omenuko* (Nwana, 1933) and *Ala Bingo* (Achara, 1933), where the two novels were welcomed with great enthusiasm but no other novel followed their publication for many years (Onyekaonwu, 1986), for a couple of decades after the publication of *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S, 1934b), no Igbo poem emerged. Emenyonu (1978: 57) explained how the premium Nigerian government placed on the study of English language after the publication of *Omenuko* (Nwana, 1933) discouraged most people from consolidating on the legacy laid by *Omenuko*. This was also the fate W.I.P. suffered. All the people who had good command of English had access to juicy government businesses and positions (Emenyonu, 1978). This discouraged people from writing in Nigerian languages. Onyekaonwu expressed his disappointment as regards to this development when he stated that:

*After the publication of Omenuko and Ala Bingo in 1933 and considering the enthusiasm with which these works were received, one expected that subsequent works by other writers would emerge. But for a couple of decades, no other serious work was forthcoming (Onyekaonwu, 1986: 33).*

Notwithstanding the fact that Onyekaonwu's observation was in relation to the development of Igbo prose fiction, he did not foresee the role of that enthusiasm which greeted the debut of *Omenuko* (Nwana, 1933) and *Ala Bingo* (Achara, 1933) played in the development of W.I.P. It is my opinion in this study that the motivation behind the publication of *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S, 1934b) was that the C.M.S. saw the desire of the Igbo to have their literatures in print which manifested in the wide acceptance of *Omenuko* and *Ala Bingo*. In a bid to satisfy this desire of the Igbo to see their poetry too in print form, the C.M.S. allowed the Igbo to contribute their own hymns in *A.U.A.I.*

More importantly, it is also important to state that the orthography controversy,<sup>(7)</sup> which lasted for 32 years (1929–1961), caused more problems for the Igbo, a problem also recorded in the developmental trajectory of Igbo language and literature (poetry inclusive). While this controversy tarried, emerging poets who were putting their thoughts together for publication became confused; not knowing the right orthography to use in their writing. For this reason, all through the years of the orthography controversy, no Igbo poetic text emerged. In 1961, when the controversy ended with the emergence of the Onwu's orthography, people were afraid to publish their works because they were not sure if the controversy had truly ended. In the apex of this state of dishevelment, in 1967, the Nigerian civil war started. When the war began, all attempts and preparations towards the publication of W.I.P. were again halted.

During the war (1967–1970), the Igbo, as expected, were more concerned with staying alive than engaging in poetic writing. A good number of emerging Igbo writers went into hiding while a few of them joined the war as Biafran soldiers. Igbo novelists like Tony Ubesie and Joseph C. Maduekwe played active roles in the war. Ubesie joined the Eastern command of the Biafran army in Enugu as a recruit and rose through the ranks to become a Captain (Nnabuihe, 2005: 58). Maduekwe, on the other hand, worked with the mobile station of Radio Biafra. While working at this mobile station during the war, Maduekwe presented Igbo chants known as *Onyekulum* (Night Masquerade) on air, together with Okookon Ndem, who presented 'News Talk on Radio'. Maduekwe presented this chant on behalf of an Igbo masquerade known as *Ayaka*. Maduekwe explained that his reason for presenting the chant, *Onyekulum*, on radio during the war was to: excite the mind of the Biafran soldiers fighting at the frontlines, encourage non-fighting Biafrans who were weakened due to the heat of the war, and demoralise spirit of the Nigerian soldiers<sup>(8)</sup>. The manuscript used by Maduekwe can be said to be another attempt towards the birth of W.I.P. Nevertheless, since the manuscript was never published and its content was transcribed oral texts, it could not be taken as the W.I.P.

After the war in 1970, the war experience reignited a renewed interest in Igbo language in the Igbo. Many people started teaching their wards how to speak, read, and write Igbo language. Writers started publishing their literary (prose fiction) works in Igbo. Onyekaonwu (1986) claimed three reasons were responsible for the literary boom in Igbo literary scene after the war. First, the interval of three years created by the war (1967–1970) assisted in persuading people to believe that the orthography controversy had truly ended. Secondly, the Igbo sense of cultural awareness and ethnicity were reawakened by the war. Lastly, since there was restriction of movement during the war, writers had the opportunity to write and document their experiences which eventually formed the theme of their works. Writers like Joseph U.T. Nzeako, Joseph C. Maduekwe, Tony Ubesie, and a few others registered their



presence with their prose texts which travelled across many Igbo states and beyond. A lot of Igbo writers who published their prose texts at this time began writing poetry but continued publishing novels because there was no market for W.I.P. yet. As in the case of the Igbo novel, experience of the civil war also provided emerging Igbo poets with sufficient experience and lessons that formed the bedrock of their poetic writing. This explains why the theme of war and death was common in the poems that emerged in the first decade of W.I.P. (1975–1985). For instance, Ubesie wrote on havoc caused by Nigerian jet fighters during the civil war in his poem titled ‘Ugbọ Elu Oḡu’ (Aeroplane of war) in *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975), Madubiike in *Utara Ntị* (Emenanjo, n.d.) wrote on the power of bomb in his poem ‘Ogbuniigwe’ (Bomb), Maduekwe in *Nkà Okwu* (Maduekwe, 1979) presented the effects of war in his poem ‘Agha’ (War), to mention but a few. These poems point to the fact that some of the poems written in the first decade of the existence of W.I.P. were written during and shortly after the war before the final debut of W.I.P. in 1975 with *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975).

In 1971, Romanus, N. Egudu and Donatus, I. Nwoga collected and published selected oral Igbo poems in their *Poetic Heritage*. With this publication, *Poetic Heritage* became the first transcribed oral Igbo poetic text in print. However, *Poetic Heritage* is not considered as a text on W.I.P. for two reasons. First, the poems in *Poetic Heritage* are oral poetry that was not created by Egudu and Nwoga. Secondly, the language they used in presenting this poem was English.

#### THE BIRTH AND FIRST DECADE OF WRITTEN IGBO POETRY (1975–1985)

In 1973, Oxford University Press organised a literary competition to showcase literary works written in Nigerian indigenous languages. This platform prepared the ground for the eventual emergence of W.I.P. (Ikwubuzo, 2015). It gave writers the opportunity to display their works which they had been documenting over the years. Upon hearing of this competition, C.W. Ajaegbu, J.C. Obienyem, I.O. Iroha, L. Amasike, and a few others made submissions for the contest. It was not clear who won the contest and efforts to get this data from Oxford University Press proved abortive. At the end of the competition, Romanus. M. Ekechukwu, a teacher at Uli High School, Ihiala, burdened by the poor state of W.I.P., gathered some of the poems that were submitted for this literary contest and a few other works he got from key popular Igbo writers like Nzeako, Maduekwe, Ubesie, and a few others whom their works (novels) had become popular among the Igbo and edited them in 1974. The poems were later published by Oxford University Press in 1975 and titled *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975). Ekechukwu’s intention was to encourage the publication of more Igbo poetic texts as is clearly expressed in his statement: “...we are presenting this work to the public not as an achievement but as a beginning, not as an authority but as a stimulus, not as the best but as a prototype which artists will look upon to fashion the best” (Ekechukwu, 1975: viii).

*Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) then became the first written Igbo poetic work that was indigenous to the Igbo, chronicling the sociological issues of the Igbo world. The content of *Akpa Uche* truly reflected the sociological life of the Igbo as against *A.U.A.I.* (C.M.S, 1934b) that was published for religious edification. The anthology, *Akpa Uche*, contains 65 poems from 13 poets (C.W. Ajaegbu, J.U.T. Nzeako, T.U. Ubesie, E. Egbuchulem, J.C. Maduekwe, I.O. Iroha, K. Amasike, N.C. Olebara, M.C. Ogunjiofor, C. Emenike, I.E. Akoma, J.C. Obienyem, R.M. Ekechukwu). Upon its publication in 1975, *Akpa Uche* became one of the most sought-after Igbo texts. The poems in *Akpa Uche* address issues that relate to people’s

experiences on natural phenomena, things, places, politics, the society, philosophy, and elegies in the most delightful Igbo poetic diction. Let us instantiate this claim by looking at one of Obienyem's poem in *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu [ed.], 1975), which he titled 'Onwa' (Moon) where he writes;

[Poem 3]

Onye ihu yā na-àchapùta n'àbàlì,  
Agboghò ọchì ya na-àtù ka àkpàlì.

Ọ bụrụ àkwa ekē àmaghī m,  
A kòọ jī nà ya, àhughī m  
Aluluū mmīrì nà-àgbarū ya ihu.  
Èhihiè nà-èlu yā ilu.  
Mà ọ na-eso m àchọ ùdàrà n'àbàlì ọkọchì

Ọnwa, onye agadī nà òkoro nà-anùrụ ọnù.

My translation

*(One whom his face shone at night,  
The Lady whom her smile  
enchantments like the breaking waves.*

*If it is a python's egg, I do not know,  
If yam is planted in it, I haven't seen,  
Rain cloud makes her face frown  
Noon makes her bitter*

*But she joins me in search of cherries at  
night of dry season*

*Moon, whom both young and old is  
happy with.)*

(Obienyem in Ekechukwu [ed.], 1975: 6–7)

The imagery that was evoked through the poets' stylistic use of language in the above poem justifies the claim that most of the poems in *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) were indeed written in the most delightful Igbo poetic diction. The dominant device in the above poem 3 is personification which is reinforced in all the lines and laced with tonal end rhyme in lines 1-2 and 3-4 and other formal features which makes the poem aesthetically pleasing to readers.

Being the first poetic text to be written by the Igbo about the Igbo society and presented in Igbo language, *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) was welcomed with a lot of enthusiasm by the Igbo general public being the first of its kind. The poetic text also became epicentre of poetic teaching and discourse in academic institutions where the study of Igbo poetry already started with the study of transcribed oral texts. Not long after *Akpa Uche* made its debut, Emmanuel Obike, encouraged by the level of acceptance that greeted *Akpa Uche*, published his self-acclaimed "original Igbo ballad" *Eke-Une*. Regrettably, the text *Eke-Une* bears no date of publication, but it was learnt from Ugonna (1982) that *Eke-Une* got published shortly after *Akpa Uche* debuted in 1975.

For two years, the acceptance and influence of *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) and *Eke-Une* (Obike, n.d.) grew even beyond Igbo interstate borders. In 1977, Oruruo L. Ogugua published his poetic text *Obiageli* which also does not bear any date of publication (Ogugua, n.d.). The publisher (University Publishing Company, Ibadan) could not provide the date of publication, however, in a comment, Professor Ikwubuzo<sup>(9)(10)</sup> states that "I happen to have Prof. Ugonna's personal copy of *Obiageli* where he wrote 1977 as the date, he got the copy." Based on this, the present study assumes that *Obiageli* must have been published earlier in 1977.

After Fredrick Chigozie Ogbalu (founder of the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture [S.P.I.L.C.]) fought for the establishment of Igbo departments in institutions of learning like Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri in 1974, Awka and Okene Colleges of Education in 1978, University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1980, Eha-Amufu and Nsugbe Colleges of Education in 1981 (Anizoba, 2013), one of the major challenges that confronted Igbo poetic studies in these institutions was scarcity of poetic texts that would be used in poetic analysis. Being the only poetic texts available at this time (1975–1977), *Akpa Uche*

(Ekechukwu, 1975), *Eke-Une* (Obike, n.d.), and *Obiageli* (Ogugua, n.d.) were used in the study of W.I.P. in all the secondary schools and higher institutions of learning where Igbo language and literature were taught.

Three years after the poetic dominance of these three texts, Nolue Emenanjo compiled and published the second anthology of Igbo written verse, *Utara Nti*, in 1979 (Emenanjo, n.d.). Again, just like *Eke-Une* (Obike, n.d.) and *Obiageli* (Ogugua, n.d.), *Utara Nti* also bear no date of publication, but Nwadike (2002b; 2006) claimed *Utara Nti* was published in 1979. Maduekwe<sup>(11)</sup> explained that it was after he submitted poems to Emenanjo for publication in *Utara Nti* that he started thinking of publishing his own collection of Igbo poems. Later in 1979, Longman Nigeria published Maduekwe's *Nkà Okwu* (Maduekwe, 1979). The third poetic text that was published in 1979 after *Nkà Okwu* was Obienyem's *Mbem Igbo* (Nwadike, 2002b; 2006). This means that *Utara Nti* (Emenanjo, n.d.) was the fourth Igbo poetic text, *Nka Okwu* (Maduekwe, 1979) was the fifth while *Mbem Igbo* (Obienyem, 1979) was the sixth.

In 1980, Emenanjo edited and published his second anthology *Nkemakolam* (Emenanjo, 1980). Two poetic texts were published in 1982: *Aka Weta* (Achebe & Udechukwu, 1982) and Maduekwe's second poetic text for children *Okiri 1* (Maduekwe, 1982). In 1983, Julie N. Onwuchekwa published her *Akpaala Okwu* (Onwuchekwa, 1983) while Umeh published his *Okponku Abu* in 1984 (Umeh, 1984). Emenanjo also published another poetic text in 1984 titled *Ogwumagala* (Emenanjo, 1984) and in 1985, two poetic texts were added to the number, *Abu Umu Priamari* (Achalonu, 1985) and *Uka Ndu* (Ogu, 1985).

Among the poets in the first decade of W.I.P., the renowned Igbo linguist, Emenanjo, distinguished himself by the level of his contributions towards the growth, sustenance, and development of W.I.P. This is evident in the number of poetic works he edited and also contributed to: *Utara Nti* (Emenanjo, n.d.), *Nkemakolam* (Emenanjo, 1980), and *Ogwumagala* (Emenanjo, 1984). Another poet that is worthy of commendation is Maduekwe, who, based on his contributions towards the development of W.I.P., can be said to be the most prominent poet in this first decade. He contributed 11 poems in *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975), 7 in *Utara Nti* (Emenanjo, n.d.), and authored 2 sole poetic texts, *Nkà Okwu* (Maduekwe, 1979) and *Okiri 1* (Maduekwe, 1982).

*Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) has remained, until date, the most popular, most read, and criticised Igbo poetic text in the world. The collection of poems in it remains evergreen and the remarkable themes the poems protrude are still relevant until date. The degree of appreciation *Akpa Uche* has received is due to the quality of the poems in it and the calibre of poets that contributed to it.

## WRITTEN IGBO POETRY IN ITS SECOND DECADE (1986–1995)

With the success of W.I.P. in the first decade, going by the increasing number of poetic texts and the enormous support poets received from members of the public, more people were encouraged to write more poetic works. The first poetic text that emerged in this decade was Obierozie's *Ekpe Nna*, published in 1986 (Obierozie, 1986). Two years later, Anelechi B. Chukuezi, a medical doctor and writer, who published *Udo ka Mma* (the first written Igbo drama), published the second poetic text in this decade, *Akọ Bu Ndu*, in 1988 (Chukuezi, 1988). In 1989, two poetic texts were published: Ezeuko and Anowai published their *Echiche* (Ezeuko & Anowai, 1989) while Goddy O. Onyekaonwu published *Uche bu Afa* (Onyekaonwu, 1989).

W.I.P. continues to witness an increase in terms of extant texts as four more texts were

published in 1990. Out of these four texts, Inno. U. Nwadike edited and published an anthology titled *Nri Uche* (Nwadike, 1990a) and published a sole poetic text *Echiche Miri Emi* (Nwadike, 1990b). Also, in that same year, *Abụ Ekele Dike* (Echebina, 1990) and *Echiche* (Uba-Mgbemena, 1990) were published. No other Igbo poem was published since then until 1992 when Nwadike published another poetic text *Mbido Abụ* (Nwadike, 1992) and Ikwubuzo et al. published *Omenkà* (1992) which became the last text in this decade.

It thus becomes apparent that Nwadike emerged the leading poet in the second decade of the existence of W.I.P. Nwadike edited one anthology and published two other poetic texts in this decade (Nwadike, 1990a; 1990b; 1992). There is no gainsaying the fact that the quantity of the poems published in the second decade is less than the poems published in the first decade, nevertheless, the quality of the poems remained very high, both in terms of the subject matter addressed in them, the diction employed, formal elements, and in terms of their production, like *Omenkà* (Ikwubuzo et al., 1992) and other poetic texts published in the second decade.

#### WRITTEN IGBO POETRY IN ITS THIRD DECADE (1996–2005)

In terms of quantity of extant text, it was observed that W.I.P. improved significantly in the third decade of its existence, as against the previous decades. A total of 19 poetic texts were recorded in this decade. Emmanuel Obike et al. opened the road to poetic publication in this period when they edited and published an anthology *Ekenegwuregwu* in (Obike et al., 1996). In 1997, Chinedum Ofomata ventured into the Igbo poetic scene when he published his *Ọ Dị M n'Obi* using his publishing company, Format Publishers (Ofomata, 1997). After Ofomata's work, no other poem was published until 2000, when *Nnunu Mgbama* (Agu, 2000) and *Aka Tijie* (Ihejirika, 2000) were published. The highest number of Igbo poetic publications was recorded in 2001 as seven texts were published: *E chezọla, Okwu Ndu, Echiche M* (Ofomata, 2001a; 2001b; 2001c), *Olisa Amaka* (Obakhena, 2001), *Nsibiri* (Onyeji, 2001), *Okụ Nwanne na Utara Ntị Ndị Ọzọ* (Ifejika, 2001), and *Akọ na Uche* (Echebima, 2001).

In 2003, Nkechi Okediadi published her *Ije Uwa* (Okediadi, 2003) while Okwudili Njelita published her *Amandianaeze* (Njelita, 2003). Sequel to his earlier poetic publications in 2001, Ofomata published another poetic text, *Arima*, in 2004 (Ofomata, 2004), while Stella O. Agwuna's *Echiche Amamihe* was also published that same year (Agwuna, 2004). In 2005, three texts were added to the growing number of extant texts in Igbo and they were: *Uche bụ Akpa* (Anozie, 2005); *Okpokọbara* (Ikwubuzo et al., 2005), and *Uwa Onye na Chi Ya* (Ekegbo, 2005). The content of most of the poems published in this decade addresses social, cultural, and economic issues, while a few addressed issues relating to natural phenomenon.

#### WRITTEN IGBO POETRY IN ITS FOURTH DECADE (2006–2015)

The developmental progression of W.I.P. surprisingly took a downward turn in this decade as there was a massive decline in the number of publications. Nwadike's anthology, *Akọnauche* (2006) became the first work that was recorded in this decade. In that same 2006, Chinedu Ofomata published *Ulari* and also *Obi Ọcha Umụaka* in 2007 (Ofomata, 2006; 2007). Subsequently, *Ibisi* (Ofomata, 2008) and *Uche bụ Ahịa* (Ikeokwu & Onyejekwe, 2009), and *Ọ Natara Chi* (Ifeka, 2009) were published. In 2013, Chinedu Ofomata again published *Udara Oma* (Ofomata, 2013). Two poetic texts were published in 2015: *Abụ Ụtọ*

(Ezejesi, 2015) and *Olu Umunwaanyi Mba Afirika* (Nwaogu, 2015). Some of the major theme of poems published in this decade addresses issues on poor leadership, natural phenomena, ecology, and deviant behaviours in the Igbo (Nigerian) society.

Some of the factors that affected the development of W.I.P. in this decade included, but were not limited to, author-financed publishing, negative attitude of the Igbo towards their language due to insufficient effort in the area of language planning and language maintenance, and the policy on education which prohibited students in science and commercial classes from offering any Nigerian language subject at senior secondary level, even if they want to (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013). These factors resulted in lack of market for the sale of poetry in Nigerian languages (Igbo inclusive), which continue to discourage publishers from accepting manuscripts in Nigerian languages.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the developmental trajectory of W.I.P., taking into consideration all the factors that gave rise to the birth of Igbo poetry from its oral state to its present written state. The study reveals that the missionaries laid the foundation of W.I.P. in 1934 before it finally debuted in 1975 with *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975). The paper finds that since this final debut of W.I.P., W.I.P. has grown tremendously in terms of extant text. Fourteen Igbo poetic texts were published in the first decade of the existence of W.I.P., 10 in the second decade, 19 in the third decade while 9 in the fourth decade were published. The study answers Ugonna's (1982) earlier question which he sought to know if there is Igbo poetry and to the extent it has grown. The present study proves that W.I.P. has indeed grown. However, this growth is not without its challenges that now threaten the further development of W.I.P. as observed in the fourth decade. The study, therefore, recommends that Nigerian government should ensure that the knowledge of and a credit pass in one Nigerian language become a *sine qua non* to gaining admission into the nation's tertiary institutions as it has always been. This will encourage creative writing in Nigerian languages and further save literatures in Nigerian languages from extinction.

## NOTES

- (1) Written Igbo Poetry (W.I.P.) in this study denotes poems written by the Igbo in Igbo language, and one which mirrors the sociological issues—socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic life of the Igbo. They are poems that are opposed to transcribed oral texts.
- (2) The concept of secret societies in the early Igbo society relates to the elites. They are men that made positive impact in their immediate societies.
- (3) Union Igbo was a writing method developed and used by the C.M.S. between 1901 to 1929. It is an amalgam of five key Igbo dialects: Onitsha; Bonny; Uwana; Owerri; and Arochukwu. The union Igbo period followed the Isuama Period.
- (4) Onwụ orthography is the present official orthography of the Igbo language. It was recommended by the Onwụ committee and was accepted in 1961.
- (5) Joseph Chukwuweluna Maduekwe is one of the Igbo foremost writer and poet. He contributed six poems in *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) and *Utara Nij* (Emenanjo, n.d.). His *Nka Okwu* was published in 1979. He is an award-winning poet who his *Okiri 1* (Maduekwe, 1982) won him his first literary award in children poetry.
- (6) Based on my interview to J.C. Maduekwe on October 7, 2018, at his residence in Ojooto, Anambra state.

- (7) The orthography controversy refers to a period of great contention among the Igbo (scholars and elite), religious organizations in Igbo land and agents of Nigerian government as to the right orthography to adopt for writing Igbo (1929–1961). The Onwụ orthography was accepted to settle the long controversy that greatly affected the development of Igbo language and literature for 32 years.
- (8) See Note (6).
- (9) Iwu Ikwubuzo is a professor of Igbo Literature at the Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- (10) Comments from I. Ikwubuzo as regards to this issue in June 2020.
- (11) See Note (6).

## REFERENCES

- Achara, D.N. 1933. *Ala Bingo*. Longman, London.
- Achebe, C. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann, London.
- Achebe C. & Udechukwu (ed.) 1982. *Akaweta*. Okike, Anambra.
- Acholonu, C.O. 1985. *Abụ Ụmụ Primari*. University Press Limited, Ibadan.
- Afigbo, A.E. 1975. The place of Igbo language in our schools: A historical approach. In (F.C. Ogbalu & E.N. Emenanjo, eds) *Igbo Language and Culture*, pp. 68–75. Oxford University Press, Ibadan.
- Agu, O.A. 2000. *Nnụnụ Mgbama*. Cepta Nigeria Limited, Enugu.
- Agwuna, S.O. 2004. *Echiche Amamihe*. Lincel Publishers, Onitsha.
- Anizoba, O.M. 2013. *Nke M Akọla M: Ndị Igbo na Asụsụ Ha*. Paper presented at the memorial lecture of Chief (Dr.) F. Chidozie Ogbalu, pp. 13–29. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.
- Anozie, C.C. 2005. *Uche Bụ Akpa*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- Chukuezi, A.B. 1988. *Akọ Bụ Ndu*. Longman, Lagos.
- C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society) 1934a. *Akwukwọ Ẹkpẹlu nke Anẹkpẹlu Cuku n'Ọgbo*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London.
- 1934b. *Akwukwọ Ukwe n'Asusu Ibo (Ibo Holy Prayer Hymn Book)*. In (C.M.S.) *Akwukwọ Ẹkpẹlu nke Anẹkpẹlu Cuku n'Ọgbo*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London.
- 1977. *Ekpere na Abụ (Ekpere Anẹkpere Chineke N'ọbọ N'okwu Ibo) (Revised and Enlarged Edition)*. C.S.S. Bookshop, England.
- Echibima G.N. 2001. *Akọ na Uche*. Evans, Ibadan.
- 1990. *Abụ Ekele Dike*. Heinemann Educational Books Limited, Nigeria.
- Egudu, R.N. & D.I. Nwoga 1971. *Poetic Heritage: Igbo Tradition Verse*. Nwankwo-Ifejika, Enugu.
- Ekechukwu, R.M. (ed.) 1975. *Akpa Uche*. Oxford University Press, Ibadan.
- Ekegbo, R.N. 2005. *Ụwa Onye na Chi Ya*. Mabcom Systems Ventures, Awka.
- Emenanjo, N. (ed.) n.d. *Utara Ntị*. Evans Brothers, Ibadan.
- (ed.) 1980. *Nkemakọlam*. Heins Publishers, Owerri.
- 1984. *Ogwumagala*. University Press Limited, Ibadan.
- Emenyonu, E. 1978. *The Rise of the Igbo Novel*. Oxford University Press, Ibadan.
- Ezejesi, N.R. 2015. *Abụ Uto*. Pacific Publishers, Obosi.
- Ezeuko, R.O. & J.I. Anowai 1989. *Echiche*. Etukokwu, Onitsha.
- Finnegan, R. 1970. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford University Press, Republished (2012) by Open Book Publishers, Cambridge.
- Ifejika, P.C. 2001. *Oku Nwanne na Utara Nti Ndi Ozo*. Snapp, Enugu.
- Ifeka, O. 2009. *Ọ Natara Chi*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- Igboanusi, H. 2006. Agents of progress or problem-makers?: Missionary activities in the development of the Igbo language. *African Study Monographs*, 27(4): 157–168.
- Ihejirika, O.C. 2000. *Aka Tijie*. Onibonoje Publishers, Ibadan.
- Ikeokwu, E.S. & M.C. Onyejekwe 2009. *Uche Bụ Ahịa*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- Ikwubuzo, I. 2007. Three decades of written Igbo poetry: An appraisal of its growth. *Journal of Igbo*

- Studies*, 2: 51–56.
- 2015. 100 years of literary enterprise in indigenous Nigerian languages: Trends, challenges and prospects. *Journal of the School of Languages*, 7: 11–29.
- Ikwubuzo, I. & C.U. Oraegbunam 2016. Igbo folksong and their social functions. *Igede Igbo, A Journal of Igbo Studies*, 2(1): 107–122.
- Ikwubuzo, I., C.U. Ogbulogo & L.C. Okoro 1992. *Omenkà*. Trumpeters Concept, Owerri.
- Ikwubuzo, I., C.L. Okoro & E. Eze 2005. *Okpokoobara*. Trumpeters Concept, Owerri.
- Lugard, F.D. 1928. The International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. *Africa* 1(1): 1–12.
- Maduekwe, J.C. 1979. *Nkà Okwu*. Longman Nigeria, Lagos.
- 1982. *Okiri 1*. Longman Nigeria, Lagos.
- Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council 2013. *National Policy on Education*, 6th Edition. NERDC Press, Lagos.
- Njelita, O. 2003. *Amandianaeze*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- Nnabuihe, C.B. 2005. *Agumagu Ederede Igbo: 1933-2003: Aha Akwukwo na ndi Odee*. Green Olive, Lagos.
- 2010. *Written Igbo Drama: A Critical Analysis*. Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos, Lagos.
- Nwadike, I.U. (ed.) 1990a. *Nri Uche* (An Anthology of Igbo Poems). Totan Publishers, Owerri.
- (ed.) 1990b. *Echiche Miri Emi*. Kawuriz & Manilas Publishers Limited, Onitsha.
- (ed.) 1992. *Mbido Abu*. Pacific Publishers, Obosi.
- 2002a. *Igbo Language in Education: An Historical Study*, Pacific Publishers, Obosi.
- 2002b. *Agumagu Igbo: Iduuazi, Akuko Nkenke, Ejije na Abu, 1933-2001*. Paper presented on 'Igbo Studies in the 21st Century', at the Princess Alexandra Conference Centre, June 12–13, 2002. University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.
- (ed.) 2006. *Akonauche*. Pacific Publishers, Obosi.
- Nwanna, P. 1933. *Omenuko*. Longman, Green & Co, London.
- Nwaogu, N.I. 2015. *Olu Umunwaanyi Mba Afrika*. Pacific Publishers, Obosi.
- Obakhena, R.E. 2001. *Olisa Amaka*. Claverianum, Ibadan.
- Obienyem, J.C. 1979. *Mbem Igbo*. University Publishing Company, Onitsha.
- Obierozi, A.K. 1986. *Ekpe Nna*. Pacific Publishers, Obosi.
- Obike, E. n.d. *Eke-Une*. University Publishing Company, Onitsha.
- Obike, E.A., M.C. Onuegbu & C.B. Nnabuihe, (ed.) 1996. *Ekenegwurugwu*. Navic Igbo Enterprise, Lagos.
- Ofomata, C.E. 1997. *O Di M n'Obi*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2001a. *E Chezola*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2001b. *Okwu Ndu*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2001c. *Echiche M*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2004. *Arima*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2006. *Ularj*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2007. *Obi Ocha Umuaka*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2008. *Ibisi*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- 2013. *Udara Oma*. Format Publishers, Enugu.
- Ogbalu, F.C. 1974. *Igbo Poems and Songs*. University Publishing, Onitsha.
- Ogu, J. 1985. *Uka Ndu*. University Publishing Company, Onitsha.
- Ogugua, O.L. n.d. *Obiageli*. University Publishing Company, Onitsha.
- Ojukwu, E., N. Onuora-Oguno & C. Esimone 2014. *The Essence of Introducing Rhythm to the African Child through Folk Music: A Pedagogical Approach*. The 2014 West East Institute (WEI) International Academic Conference Proceedings Vienna, Austria.
- Okediadi, A.N. 2004. A thematic study of selected Igbo poets. *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5: 247–272.
- Okediadi, N. 2003. *Ije Uwa*. Fulladu Publishing Company, Enugu.
- Onwuchekwa, J.N. 1983. *Akpaala Okwu*. Evans Brothers, Ibadan.
- Onyeji, C. 2001. *Nsibiri*. Edition Innsalz, Nigeria.

- Onyekaonwu, G.O. 1986. *The Development of Modern Igbo Prose Fiction, 1933–1983: An Historical and Stylistic Survey*. PhD Thesis (unpublished), University of Ibadan.
- 1989. *Uche Bụ Afa*. University Publishing Company, Onitsha.
- Uba-Mgbemena, A. 1990. *Echiche*. Macmillan, Lagos.
- Ugonna, N. 1982. The growth of Igbo poetry. *Igbo: Journal of SPILC*, 1: 20–25.
- 1984. *Mmọnwụ: A Dramatic Tradition of the Igbo*. Lagos University Press, Lagos.
- Umeh, J. 1984. *Okpọnkụ Abu*. Cepta Nigeria Limited, Enugu.
- Uzochukwu, S. 2001. *Traditional Funeral Poetry of the Igbo*. University of Lagos Press, Lagos.

——— Accepted April 2, 2021

Author's Name and Address: Chukwuebuka Uchenna ORAEBUNAM, *Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, 002 Ibadan, NIGERIA*.  
E-mail: oraegbunamebuka [at] gmail.com