

The Translation and Analysis of Annang Oral Poetry: "Uto" Annang (Ballad)

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Abstract

This paper translates and analyses the Annang oral poetry 'uto' (ballad). The paper elaborates the view that the 'uto' Annang is embedded with literary devices and figurative languages that serve as embellishments. Seven 'uto' Annang provide Data for the study. Dell Hyme's Ethnopoetics is used as the theoretical framework. This theory which is a derivational from Ethnolinguistics not only advocates that researchers should go into the field to experience the performance of the oral art but also holds that poetic interpretation should be done by researchers who are either indigenes of the research area or have lived in the research area long enough to be thoroughly encultured. The *skopos* theory is the model which the work has used. Analysis of the 'uto' Annang reveals that they contain philosophical, mystical and educating content. They are a reflection of life, nature and penetrating comments on social, religious, political event, praise and criticism of society and persons abound. The paper also reveals that there is need for translation to be author – centered, reader – centred and translator centered while the social and cultural features of literary texts are faithfully rendered during the transformation process into the target language (TT). The paper concludes that 'uto' Annang as a whole encapsulates part of the Annang worldview and culture and there is need to preserve this particular genre to avoid extinction.

Keywords: *ethnopoetics, ethnolinguistics, skopos theory, annang worldview, 'uto' annang*

Introduction

Annang oral poetry include cradle songs, "Awire" women songs, Uko Akpan songs, Chief Okon Udo-Udo's songs, Akpanam Jack's "Uto" (ballad), Precious Augustus ' "Uto" etc. They include also creation of imageries, rhythm, symbolism and creation of lyrical self expression in the Annang aboriginal language. Like contemporary literature, Annang Oral Poetry sheds valuable insights into human nature and the universal themes of life, death, marriage, greed, corruption, problems of good and evil and jealousy. Literature, no matter its shape and form is not the exclusive property of any nation. Every tribe and nation has their literatures existing in different forms, so do the Annang. The "Uto" Annang translated and Analysed in this paper include "Itoro eti Eka" (The Praise of a good mother), "Udo ndo ke Ini Elem (Getting married as it was in the days of old), "Adam anam abio Ekpo ajok nte urua" (Adam is the reason the land of the dead is crowded like the market), "Awasi kujak Akwa Ibom Etua aba ajed" (O! God, do not allow Akwa Ibom to cry again!), "Che Awasi" (Look unto God), "Lagos Annem ajoro nanga elung" (Lagos is sweet but it's hard to live there), and "Ntrukupom (The Eagle). Annang Oral Poetry is rich in morals, contain philosophical, mystical and educating contents. They also contain literary devices, figurative language and symbols.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Dell Hymes Ethnopoetics as its theoretical framework and Hans Vermeer's Skopos theory as its model. Ethnopoetics focuses on the aesthetics and poetics structuring of oral arts. Wikipedia free Encyclopaedia perceives Ethnopoetics as a method of recording text versions of oral poetry or narrative performances (i.e. verbal lore) that uses poetic line verses and stanzas instead of prose paragraphs to capture the formal poetic performance element which will otherwise be lost in written text.

Ethnopoetics is viewed by the poetry foundation as "a method of analyzing linguistic structures in Oral literature". The goal of any ethnopoetic text is to show how the techniques of unique oral performers enhance the value of their performances within their specific cultural contexts .Dennis Tedlock argues not only that pauses in Oral performances indicate where poetic line breaks should occur in the written texts which he compares to musical scores but also that words formatted reflect the more subtle qualities of speed used in oral performances. Tedlock opined that "ethnopoetic score (or text) not only take in silences, changes in loudness and tone of voice, the production of sound effects and the use of gesture and props. Dell Hymes believes that even previously dictated texts retain significant structural patterns of poetic repetition that is the "reason why" storytellers use pauses in the oral performances (97-98). Overall then, ethnopoetic method and theories strive to capture on the written page the unique artistic elements of individual culture, oral poetry and narrative performance tradition or what folklorist will call their verbal lore. A harmonization of these strands in ethnopoetic theorizing gives this paper a bearing and provides a platform to interrogate the

messages encapsulated in the “Uto” Annang collected for this study in terms of their meaning and relevance in the Annang Worldview.

Skopos Theory:

Skopos theory is a Translation Theory. Pratima Shastri opines that “Skopos” in Greek means “aim”. According to this theory:

Text is written for a particular purpose and a particular target group. This theory reflects a shift from linguistic and formal translation to a functional communicative and socio-cultural oriented concept of translation. Translation refers to an act of transfer between cultures. The Translator is a mediator between cultures. He has to create a new message for the target readers (36).

Skopos theory is an approach to Translation which was developed in Germany in the late 1970s which reflect a general shift from predominantly linguistic and rather formal translation theories to a more functional and socio-culturally oriented concept of translation. This functional and socio-cultural concept encapsulates Annang Oral Poetry.

Skopos theory takes seriously factors which have always been stressed in action theory and which were brought into sharp relief with the growing need in the later half of the twentieth century for the translation of non-literary text types. In the translation of scientific and academic papers, instructions, for use tourists guides, contracts etc, the contextual factors surrounding the translation cannot be ignored. These factors include the culture of the intended readers of the target text and of the client who has commissioned it in a particular the function which the text is to perform in that culture for the readers (Schaefer 40).

Paul Kussmaul observes that “The functional approach has great affinity with Skopos Theory. The function of a translation is dependent on the knowledge, expectations, values and norms of the target readers who are again influenced by the situation they are in and by their culture” (149).

Translation and the Annang Oral Poetry:

Translation could be viewed as a linguistic bridge which links speakers of different languages and enables them to move from one language to another (Ajunwa 3). A text is viewed as an offer of information made by a producer to a reader. Translation is both interlingual and inter-cultural. It involves both linguistic and cultural transfer and in other words it is a culture – transcending process. Arthur Schopenhauer sounds pessimistic about poetic translation. “Poems cannot be translated; they can only be transposed (re-written in the target language) and that is always awkward” (6). This problem is even more glaring when translating from African languages to English and even when faithful attempts to translate from target text (TT) to source language (SL), often results in the unintentional distortion of the source language poetic message. Since translation needs semantic endeavour, the translator of any piece should be an indigene or one who has lived sufficiently long enough in the language area where the target text is from.

Annang oral poetry has come to stay to debunk such “obnoxious notion by the Western world that non-literate cultures cannot boast anything sufficiently profound to be called literature, since the traditional definition of literature ties it inextricably with the phenomenon called writing” (Okoh 20). Annang Oral Poetry presents itself in different forms like the “Awire women songs, cradle, songs, various oral bards’ lyrics and the “uto” Annang representing the Ballad (what is recited). Poetry is a universal form of artistic self-expression. Through it, man articulates his thoughts and feelings for public sharing and experience (Akporobaro 396). Poetry is intertwined in the culture of the people, the linguistic forms of the people and the history of the people. The Igbo have their Oral Poetry. The Yoruba have theirs in the forms of *Oriki* and *Ekun Iyawo* while the Hausa have their own as *Kundun*. In that same vein, the Annang also have theirs and they range from (what is sung – *Ikwo*), (what is recited – *uto*) and (what is acted - *elinam*). The Annang Oral Poetry encapsulates the Annang worldview and retains the culture of the people aside from containing morals and figurative language.

Sources of Annang Oral Poetry:

Annang Oral Poetry has an origin. Source in this context refers to the place where information for oral poetry is taken. It refers to things, objects, situations and circumstances that inspire the Annang Oral artist to weave his art. Poetry is spontaneously created through inspiration. The poet is triggered off by circumstances and situations which offer the Annang Oral bard ample opportunity to recite, sing, and perform to the delight of the audience. In the Annang land, there are various sources of inspiration which includes the Annang culture,

traditions, norms, Annang traditional occupation, and modernity as brought about by colonialism and its aftermath, death, motherhood and many more. Ime Ikiddeh observes that:

Oral literature derives its materials from that body of a people's spoken as opposed to their written culture that we call the oral tradition... Oral literature embraces such forms as traditional epics, dirges, praise poems, ritual and topical songs, festival and an occasional drama and other forms of poetic and dramatic performances that are traditional in form (55).

Themes in Annang Oral Poetry

All works of art have some specific views on life and some moral or philosophical view of human society. Theme is the central idea, the main subject of the work of art. Nwanyanwu posits that; The theme of the work is the idea we work out from a play, a poem or novel. The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or central insight. It is the unifying generalization about life stated or implied in the story" (Perrine 100). Margaret Busby rightly puts it that "only an African knows what it is to be African" (532). So in that same vein, Annang oral Poets weave their art with the premise that "only an Annang man knows what it is to be an Annang man and an African in general. He alone is able to draw themes and motifs from his cultural environment. The Annang oral artist must reveal a certain vision of his society. Sometimes theme and subject matter may be taken as meaning, the same thing at other times it may not. Subject matter is denotative while theme is connotative. "Uto" Annang has both aspects.

Oral poetry is not anonymous as it is believed to be. Uko Akpan, Precious Augustus, Chief Okon Udo-Udo, Akpanam Jack to mention but a few have proved this as they put together their oral art and perform in functions and ceremonies. Jasper Onuekwusi observed that "Among the Igbo, but in this case, Annang, specific artists are recognised and known to be authors and performers of their own chants" (9). The themes in Annang Oral Poetry "Uto" are treated below;

Chant 1: "Ito ro eti Eka" – The Praise of a good mother

Many song writers have harped on this very topic "The praise of a good mother". Prince Nico Mbarga (1976) conjectures this same theme with pidgin in *Sweet mother, I no go forget you*. Mbilia Bele, Pepe Kale and Tilda all sing about the praise of a good mother. The Annang Oral poet is not left out in this venture of eulogizing the mother for she is a life giver, nurse; organiser, caretaker and shares procreation duties with God. Akporobaro supports this notion that "the most characteristics features of the praise poem is the invocation of the noble and heroic qualities of the subject through the use of appropriately suggestive metaphors, symbols and allusions (56).

In "Udo ndo ke Ini Elem" (Getting married as it was in the days of old), the central idea here is the way marriage was contracted in the past. Marriage is a universal phenomenon and the Uto Annang oral artist deems it fit to include it in his art. In "Adam anam abio ekpo ajok nte urua" (Adam is the reason the land of death is crowded like the market). The chant is the synopsis of the fall of man. Death is a natural and universal phenomenon; it is the reason "abio ekpo" is in the increase.

In "Awasi kujak Akwa Ibom etua ajed" (O God! Do not allow Akwa Ibom to cry again! The theme is the awesome killing of the (Nigerian) Akwa Ibomites by the Hausa (Sharia). It serves as a personal letter to God just like Alice walker who presented her heroine "Celie" and her personal letters to God. This particular Uto Annang signifies that the Uto Annang Oral artist is abreast of the things happening in Nigeria and is indirectly involved in peace keeping and national development.

In "Lagos Anem ajoro nanga elung" – Lagos is sweet but it's hard to live there the theme here is that of Hardship of urban life. The Chant provides at a glance the hustle and bustle of Lagos life. The crowded houses, hard life and armed robbery attacks on Lagos streets.

In "Ntrukpom" – (The Eagle), the central theme here is death; the final journey of man on earth; It is a dirge and a philosophical piece that is rendered in funerals of highly placed Monarchs.

In "Che Awasi"- Look unto God, (Augustus 78), the central theme is that of absolute dependence on God Almighty as not looking unto him will amount to failure and disappointment in one's life.

Figurative and Literary devices in Annang Oral Poetry: please state briefly what do figurative and literary devices mean in oral songs

Chant 1: In line three there is the use of simile, the mothers sweetness is compared to sugar. In stanza 8, the sweetness of the mother is further compared using the device of the simile.

"Usen ndongoke Nne ana awiong
Mma idiagha mkpo
Mma ami ijeme

Akpe atua ajed anye afufughu
Inem eti Eka nlomo
Me nse nche”

Translation:

When I am sick, my mother sleeps hungry
If I do not eat, my mother does not want to eat
The sweetness of a mother, what do I compare it with?

In stanza ten, line one there is the use of simile comparing the love of a mother to the clouds of rain “Ima Eka ajen asebid elim afugho” *Translation:* The love of a mother is like the clouds when it gathers to rain down” In line 3 of this stanza, there is the use of apostrophe, an address to an absent object, persons or idea “Mkpa! Kuugwod eka ajen aba ukpong ajen”. (Death! Do not kill the mother of the child again and leave the child). In stanza fifteen, the poet makes use of proverbs

“Eliang elip ne duop aninge nwuong akan iliok akiko unen”

Translation: Thirty crickets sweeten the water than a bad cockerel.

Meaning: A good step-mother is better than a bad mother.

Hence, the crickets refer to the good step-mother and the cockerel refers to the bad mother.

In “Udo ndo ke ini elem” (getting married as it was in the days of yore) the poet in stanza nine makes use of Biblical allusion of Jesus turning water into wine.

“Jesus ke idem amo akemama ndo, Amaka ke Galilee akenam utibe nkpo

Nwuong akaba ade uko Uked agwuo enwong.

Translation: Jesus himself loved marriage. He went to Cana of Galilee and performed diverse miracle, water was turned into wine all the people drink”

In Stanza 12 lines one and thirteen, the poet makes use of explicit use of proverbs,

Stanza 12: “Isideghe akpara anwaan anem ujo ebe achin afere”

Translation: It is never heard that the wife has a sweet voice, and the husband rejects her soup.

Line 13: “Emaewinne nnukpo isin ke ikod, eno njen unen item.

Translation: If the hawk is pursued into the bush, the young chick is then advised.

The poet also makes use of simile in the uto Annang in

Stanza 14, “Ufok ndo atie nte ikang ekarika, ansitie ke essien abong atueb, nkpakab nsisin iwuo, ansisine ke ufok abong ufiop ikang alaibom nnik ukod”.

Translation: The matrimonial home is like the harmattan fire, the one outside complains bitterly of cold, If I should only put my head in, the one inside complains that the intense heat of the fire will break his/her legs”.

In “Lagos anem, ajoro nanga elung, the poet employs sarcasm to ridicule the *Lagosians* in stanzas 14 – 16. The poet makes use of the ideophone in stanza 15 line 7, “Asuquo nyong ufoke anye afungu iso kpab! *Kpab* is the sound made by Asuquo refusing to go home. Stanza 17, ridicules the change of local names to western names like “Unwa-Akang”. The second daughter of famine) to “Nkporonisia” i.e. a corruption of the name Veronica.

In “Ntrukupom” – The Eagle (dirge) the poet makes explicit use of symbols and imageries.

“Ntrukupom adaka urua nyiong usung, akpede ala anyong ili, alaman ikaba alod, sa utere ama aka kpasuk usung urua ande, ade mkpo keed, ekpuku ntang enim, se ekama eteiye ammo ke alorobod” (Jack).

Translation: The Eagle has gone to a far away market, if it will come back, it will take a very long time, because the vulture went just that same way but one thing, the feather has been plucked and kept for their remembrance on earth” (Jack).

In the above except, the Eagle, (Ntrukupom) represents the dead person that dies. “Urua nyiong usung” (Far away market) refers to the land of the dead. “Ntang” (wings) symbolized the children left behind for their remembrance on earth.

Finally, in “Che Awasi” – Look unto God, the poet employs Biblical Allusion referring to Shedrach, Meshach and Abednego as those that looked unto God and were not ashamed.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations:

This paper has made an attempt to translate and analyse the “Uto” Annang. Seven “Uto” Annang provided data for the study. Ethnopoetics was used as the theoretical frame work and Skopos theory its models. In

accordance with ethnopoetics, the research has gone into the field, experience the performance, collected the data, Translates and analyses the Annang oral poetry (“Uto” Annang). It was discovered that “Uto” Annang contains philosophical, mystical, sarcastic, educating content to mention but a few.

“Uto” Annang reflects on life and nature. The social, religious, political, praise and critical issues does not fly over the head of the head of the Annang oral artist as he/she traps them down and recites them amidst the admiration and cheers of his/her audience. The paper also reveals that there is need for translation to be author-centred, reader-centred and translator-centred while the social and cultural features of literary texts are given faithful transformation into the target language (TL) from source text (ST). This paper concludes that the “Uto” Annang encapsulates part of the Annang worldview and culture and there is need to preserve this particular genre to avoid extinction.

The paper also concludes that Annang oral poets represent “The Voice” (Borrowing from Gabriel Okara) of the Annang Land and Akwa Ibom State in General. They represent the voice of the common man, and the voice of the masses. The poets here are also seen as preservers of culture and history of the Annang People, their social customs and values. It therefore behoves on scholars and lovers of oral poetry as a matter of urgency and sense of cultural pride and commitment to document research on and preserve Annang oral Poetry together with its dramatic form (“Ekpo” Masquerade) to avoid extinction. Annang Oral Poetry has gone “Beyond Entertainment” (Iwokedok 18) just like Uko Akpan’s songs that reveal an embodiment of melody, wisdom and topical issues which have been employed to examine the collective existence of his people and the socio-political scene in the country. “As miners dig into the ground in search of precious mineral resources, so it could be submitted that similar efforts be made in digging into “folktales” to find hidden treasure”, (Usman 32). In this context Annang oral poetry to find hidden treasures.

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