

Deification of Hero: An Avenue for Realizing National Unity

Uche Janet Ogbalu

Department Of Linguistic/Igbo
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam Campus
e-mail: ogbalujanu@gmail.com
Phone: 07038045003

Abstract: When in 1846, Euhemerus, a Greek philosopher propounded a theory that all Greek gods were once men who were deified in their life time and worshipped as a god after their death. The Greeks never take the assertion kindly. Euphemerus was accused of sacrilege. Later findings by anthropologists proved Euphemerus correct. Heroes and deification of heroes are found in different parts of the world. The writer is aware that deification of a hero is a symbiotic venture. This means that the hero might have worked so hard in solving the people's problems, the people in return deifies him. In this write up, the writer is looking for the significance of this deification. The writer through oral interviews, visit to library and reading relevant books on the topic is able to arrive at the answer as stated in the write up.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of oral literature throughout the world is the existence of heroes and heroines. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a hero as "a mythological or legendary figure often of a divine decent endowed with great strength or ability." Oxford Living Dictionary on its own part sees hero as "a person of superhuman qualities and often semi divine." From the two definitions above, one deduces that everything about hero, that is his actions are far above that of ordinary human beings. This gives clue to why some of the heroes are deified and worshipped after their death.

2. SIMILARITY OF ORAL LITERATURE WORLDWIDE

It has been proved that oral literature throughout the world is related structurally. It has similar themes, motifs and it performs similar functions in various communities throughout the world, for example, the possession of heroes, characteristics of heroes and deification of heroes are found in different parts of the world. Scholars have been propounding theories to determine why such similarity exists in oral literature throughout the world. The writer uses the "theory of evolution" to account for existence of such similarity. Mbah and Mbah (2007:95) explaining this theory of evolution says:

It claims that human beings have evolved from anthropoid apes and prior to that evolution, from simpler organic forms. In the same vein, the mental constructs of mankind including its oral literature evolved independently in various localities, it has happened in more or less the same way...the product of the process of evolution is similar across humanity.

In other words God in his creation has put in man those things that made it possible for people in identical condition to act alike. The well developed brain in man in various parts of the world made it possible for man in identical condition

to behave alike. From this theory, heroes emerge in any community when there is great need to save or redeem his people during the mythical age. This mythical age is characterized by constant communal warfare, famine, destruction of lives and farmland by monsters, oppression of the people by tyrant ruler etc. At this period of need, a hero emerges to deliver his people as seen in Ameke Okoye and Ozoemena Ndivie in (Azuonye 1984). In Achara's *Ala Bingo*, the king has two sons. One is Ogu (War) the other is Mgba (Wrestler). These names are allegorical names. Each of them behaves according to his name. Ogu (War) single handed fights and devours all monsters and wild animals that trouble their land. He even extends his services to other communities that begged him for help. He accepts to help them provided they agree to feed him. Feeding him is not an easy task. Men collect big baskets of yams while women do the cooking. It takes him few hours to finish the food. Then he sleeps for three days. On his getting up he enters the forest and kills all the dangerous animals with his bare hands. The brother Mgba (Wrestler), wrestles and defeats both human, giants, spirits in wrestling contest and brings honour to his community.

3. CLASSIFICATION OF HEROES

From the study so far, the writer classifies the heroes into two groups:

1. Heroes ordained by the creator (God) before his birth.
2. Heroes achieved through hard work by ordinary men/women.

1. The heroes ordained by God: God purposely created them heroes, and so everything about them are extraordinary. They are extraordinary human beings. Their exploits both in the land of human and in the land of the spirits are extraordinary. The stories about them are fabulous for example their birth, manner of feeding their encounter with enemies are quite different from that of ordinary human

being. Once they finish their duty they have come to perform they disappear to the other world.

The Omambala hero, Ameke Okoye in Azuonye (1984) has it that Ameke Okoye was conceived in an extraordinary manner without coming together of mother and father. He was born after gestation period of thirty-nine years (39years). At birth, he was so huge and fully grown. The entire nursing mothers of his community, Adaja contributed their breast milk for Ameke's feeding. Later all the men in his community each contributed one big basket of yams for his feeding. All women of the community cook the yams which took him few hours to eat. He drinks straight from the lake and drains the lake dry in one sip. Ameke engages in twenty six (26) fiercest encounters with the monsters and giants that ravaged their land. He triumphed over these creatures. Normally during his encounter, his people sing praise songs to him which spur him to action. At the end of his mission on earth, Ameke dies while being swallowed up by his antagonist. His antagonist also dies while swallowing Ameke. From the stories collected from the people of Omabala, activities of Ameke Okoye gave rise to the following phenomena:

- i. Hotels and restaurants originated from the gathering of hundreds of women of Ameke's community to cook for the gargantuan Ameke.
- ii. The origin of Muslim Ramadan fast is attributed to general compliance with decree of Enu-nyilimba (the monster) that no one should eat, drink or taste anything during his seven week feast in heaven.
- iii. Stairs of the building originated from what was placed for Ameke through which he climbed to the sky to bring down the wicked Enu-nyilimba.
- iv. Some rituals and customs of the community are also traced to the episodes in Ameke's story for Ameke is recognized as the greatest of their heroes. He is honoured with a ram, eight yams and a cock.

Another cultural hero in this category is Ozoemena Ndiive. In Udechukwu (1984) Ozoemena is planted by Chukwu, the great God, into his mother's womb. Ozoemena's gestation period is fourteen years. After birth at the age of seven, Ozoemena demanded for a farming matchet of extraordinary length and width to enable him clear the thick bush in his area and farm to feed his people. The matchet whose length stretches from Aguleri to Lagos about 200km apart was manufactured for him by entire Awka blacksmiths. With this matchet, Ozoemena was able to clear thick bush with only three strokes of matchet. During the clearing, Ozoemena disturbed the monsters that inhabit the thick forest. These monsters pursued him. He fled to the land of the spirits where he lived for seven years. There, he learnt numerous technical skills and arts that befit his people's occupation. He introduces new farming and fishing techniques to his people. Some other heroes from this area

include Omalinze, Omaljima Ndegene, Ojaadili Udeoba, Ataa Nwaijara and Onoja Oboli. The story of these heroes takes several days or months to conclude. The narrator would always cleverly suspend the audience attention when the snippets of the story are told. The people's curiosity to know what happens next in the story makes them gather next time. The telling of these stories and listening to them is always a happy movement for the people of this area. In some cases the story is told with accompaniment of musical instruments 'ekpili' and so the audience can enjoy themselves by dancing, clapping of hands and praising the artist as the story goes on. Commenting on the stories involving these heroes, Azuonye (1984:9) asserts:

Realism is not the aim of romantic epic. Its aim is to create an eerie other worldly atmosphere, a dreamlike vision removed from the world of observable phenomena. The primary means by which this is achieved is the use of superlative form of over statement which we may call romantic hyperbole.

This area is the home of ekpili music. Almost every individual in this area knows how to tell some of these stories, but there are some expert artists who know how to manipulate these stories in order to achieve audience maximum satisfaction.

As stated before the people of his area are farmers and fishermen. The gathering of the audience and the telling of these stories normally takes place in the rainy season when river Omambala overflows its bank. On its receding many fishes are left behind by the river. The people caught these fishes and dry them. The drying of these fishes takes some nights. So the telling of these stories about their heroes and their accompaniment of musical instrument are used to keep the people awake throughout the night of drying the fishes.

2. Heroes Achieved through Hard work: The second group of heroes are those people who achieved heroism through their hard work in carrying out their exploits in the society. Their actions are realistic. They are warriors, hunters, wrestlers, artists, farmers, medicine men, husbands, housewives etc. They are ordinary human beings who are motivated by love or by the spirit of community boldly confronts danger in battle, hunting or other risky enterprises in single minded quest for personal or communal honour. For example in the epic war song of Ohafia Igbo, Azuonye (1984:7) shows the heroine, Nne Mgbafo, an ordinary house wife who loses her husband in a battle in enemy Ibibio land, boldly dresses up for battle and armed with a matchet and a gun, she ventures into the enemy territory in search of her husband. Her courage impresses the enemy who captured her husband hostage and they released him to her.

From Ogbalu (2011:2), Aro, one of the prominent deity in Abagana was a heroine from Ohafia in Abia State who led a group of mercenaries from Ohofia to Abagana in Njikoka Local Government Area to help its people in their

inter communal wars. In her life time, people from Abagana and various communities around Abagana were coming to her for help, to release some of these mercenaries to them in their inter communal wars. In the evenings when these mercenaries return to her, Aro fed them with well prepared cocoyam mixed with vegetables. Later, men from Abagana joined in Aro's entertainment. Aro never discriminated, she treated them well just as she treated her mercenaries. The people of Abagana in appreciation to Aro's treatment to them, initiated her into masquerade cult. She became 'nne mmonwu'. This means that she is an intimate member of masquerade cult. This is an honour which is rare to be given to a woman in the community. Her image was also drawn on the wall of the village square. Later the people of Abagana deified her. Today Aro is one of the prominent deity in Abagana and in the neighbouring towns. She is the goddess of thunder and lightning. She uses these elemental cosmic forces to exert justice in human society. Aro dictates liars and thieves. She is noted for her instant dispensation of justice. She is merciless with the offenders.

4. DEIFICATION OF HEROES

Cambridge English Dictionary defines deification as "the action of making someone or something a god." The action of making someone god is the highest honour the folks in the community can bestow on a hero. The hero is deified in appreciation of his numerous achievements in the community. He has done those things which ordinary human beings cannot do in the community. In other words the hero has supernatural power. Deification of a hero stems from careful observation of the hero's activities in the community and the unanimous conviction of the folks that the hero is not an ordinary human being but a god.

Deification is found all over the world. For example, Euhemerus in Okebalama (2003:11) observes that most of Greek gods were men who were deified. Euhemerus maintained that Zeus, one of the principal gods of Greeks was a Cretan who travelled widely in the east and was deified there before returning to die in his native Crete.

In Okpewho (1985:2), Spencer affirms that god Aesculapius was a deified medicine man whose counterparts may be found in contemporary savage societies. George Frazer in support of this claim has it that a multitude of evidence from Noway to Bantu in Africa shows that "savage gods were once medicine men who lived real lives and died real death." Deification of heroes could be seen in many parts of the world like America, Asia, Egypt etc. In Acts (Holy Bible) 14:11-15, Paul and Barnabas were about to be deified by the people of Lystra because of the marvelous works they did. Paul and Barnabas rejected the offer by telling them that they, Paul and Barnabas were just ordinary human beings like themselves.

In Yoruba land (Nigeria) the Yoruba scholars support Euhemerus view. They maintained that major figures in their pantheon were deified men. In Okpewho (1985:5) Babalola asserts that god Ogun was a temperamental war

lord who was deified after his death. Bamidele (2003) affirms that Sango was powerful king of Oyo who carried out many exploits and successfully conquered many people and so was deified. Bamidele maintains that amongst the folks in Yoruba, Sango and Ogun are most feared gods. They are omnipotent and omniscient gods. Bamidele (2003:180) says:

Experience has shown that the folk mind does not take the name of Sango or Ogun in vain since he cannot take a risk with his level of belief... in gods. I submit that the folk mind believes in the god as a guardian of public conscience in redressing justice and truth.

The spirit of implicit confidence in the powers of gods in determination of human destiny is universal throughout the world.

5. DEIFICATION AND IGBO PEOPLE

Igbo are very appreciative. They are reciprocal and always their brother's keeper. They believe that "one good turn deserves the other", that is "aka nri kwọọ aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwọọ aka nri" in Igbo language. Basden (1982:43) rightly observes that "Igbo people are very hospitable and many of their chiefs are nature's gentlemen". When an Igbo man receives gift, it is unethical for him or her to take the gift without reciprocation. When this is given to him or her, the person receives it with joy. Later she reciprocates by either giving her giver his or her own gift no matter how small. Igbo people are hard working. They are not beggars. They hate begging. That makes other tribes in the country see them as proud ethnic group. In order to reciprocate the selfless services rendered to the people by the hero in alleviating the people's sufferings which no other human being can do, they therefore resorted to deification. Deification is the highest honour which the community can bestow on him. By deification, the hero is now elevated to supernatural status. He is now a god worshipped and revered by the people. Afigbo (1981:7) asserts that Onoja Oboli, a six fingered hero warrior and one of the Abatamu in Igala was deified in Ogurugu Nsukka. He is worshipped in Ogurugu till this day. Okabalama (2003:11) asserts that in Nsude Udi Local Government, their hero was a renounced wrestler. Uto Nsude was deified and worshipped in Nsude till this day. A festival is held in his honour in remembrance of his wrestling championship every two years. Okebalama (2003:14) says that Omaliko, the god in Abatete was a deified medicine man from Asaba. In Abatete, he was treating the sick in Abatete and surrounding towns. He was deified by the people of Abatete in appreciation for his kindness. Afigbo (1981:45) says that:

Because Igbo became directly dependent on land, they had to evolve a whole system of rules, laws and rituals to control land use. Because the land fed human beings

with food just as a woman feeds her children, it came to be conceived as a woman, a mother. And because of the way it transformed crops when sown, godlike powers came to be attributed to it, leading to the deification of Ala.

When ala was deified the rules and laws guiding the use of land then acquired religious sanctions. A healthy relationship exists between ala, ancestors and other gods of the community.

From the study so far, it is clear that these heroes emerge to solve the people's imminent problems and in some cases the hero can extend his helpfulness to other communities that begged him for help. The heroes are not selfish or self centred. Their motivation is just to save his people and to save the entire humanity. They save the people from oppressive rules, communal wars, hunger, menace from monsters that ravaged their farmlands and kill the inhabitants. These heroes fight their adversaries with bar hands. They have no weapons. The highest weapon they use is matchets and clubs. They have no guns.

For the success of his mission there must be cooperation between the hero and his people whom he had come to save. In the first instance, the people must be ready to obey his instruction. For example, in the feeding of Ameke Okoye, members of his community contributed to his feeding. They sing heroic songs of praise to him which gingers him on in his fights.

6. RELIGIOUS LIFE OF IGBO PEOPLE

Isichei (1977:24) rightly observes that "Igbo people were nothing if not profoundly religious and all accounts of their life reflect the fact". Basden (1920:117), on his own part affirms:

Holding the most profound belief in the supernatural, the Igbo is deeply conscious of his relationship to the unseen world, and every precaution must be observed in order to keep the spirit of the departed in a state of peaceful contentment.

In their nature, Igbo people are very religious, they are conscious of their life after death. They therefore try to maintain good relationship with the supernatural forces and the spirit of the ancestors so as to have peaceful rest in underworld after their death.

Igbo people believe in Chukwu "Obinigwe." Chukwu is the supreme being that dwells in the sky. This God (Chukwu) created everything both heaven and earth and all things visible and invisible. He is called Chi ukwu or Chukwu because he is greatest to all other gods. Below Chukwu, the supreme being are other gods and idols. To Ogbalu (n.d: 45) "these small gods are certainly not idols." Ilogu (1985:37) gives the names of such gods in this category as, Anyanwu 'the sun god', Igwe 'the sky god' and

Amadioha 'the spirit of thunder and lightning', "ala, the earth goddess". Also found in this group are all the deified gods of the land. They are all supernatural whose images cannot be found in these deities shrines. It is interesting to note that these gods are localized. Every community has its own gods whom they worship. For example in Abagana, Arọ is the prominent divinity of the community. There are other divinities members of the community worship but Arọ is the greatest and most influential. People come from different parts of Nigeria to consult her and beg for her favour. They tell the priest of Arọ their problems. The priest in turn consults Arọ through divination to ascertain the mind of Arọ. After this consultation, the priest then relays the message of Arọ to the client. The worshippers of Arọ usually offer gifts to Arọ. Arọ is both benevolent as well as malevolent goddess. She gives instant punishment to the offender and bestows progress and good health to the just. To ward off Arọ's wrath, people placate her with gifts. Equally people who received favour from Arọ also come to appreciate her with gifts. The offenders to Arọ also offer gifts and sacrifices to Arọ so that Arọ will have mercy on them.

In Abatete, in Idemili Local Government, there are other gods but the most influential is Omaliko. In Agulu in Aniọcha Local Government, Haaba is the most powerful etc. Idols have images representing them in their shrines. Though one can say that these images are constructed by man, people still have great confidence in them and worship them and also offer sacrifices to them just as they do to other gods. Both gods and idols are worshipped by the people in their respective shrines. People offer sacrifices to them because sacrifices have tampering effect on these gods and idols.

Next to these lesser gods and idols are the innumerable minor deities. Prominent among them are 'agwu' the spirit of divination and herbal medicine, 'ifejioku', the spirit of farm work and other numerous spirits that inhabit the rivers and lakes. The supreme God has no shrine and no place of worship, but he is supreme to all other deities. Ogbalu (n.d.: 47) acknowledge that the supreme God is never in conflict with these minor divinities. Ogbalu affirms:

The laws of God are the laws of the gods and idols and visitation with punishment or blessing for their transgression fulfillment could be equally applied by them singly or otherwise. In other words, divinities are in concert, none opposing the other. It is therefore for man to find which divinity is responsible for what comes to him and offer his worship and sacrifice accordingly.

Though these supernatural forces have different names in different localities in Igbo land, they work together and so man's implicit confidence in them is assured. Most of these deities are more prominent in their action, they are mostly feared and respected in the locality than others and so these

more powerful deities attract people from different parts of the country who come with one form of problems or the other for the deity to solve for him. When his problem is solved for him, he then offer sacrifice, and in appreciation to what the deity has done for him.

The Igbo have implicit confidence in the spirit world. The relationship is maintained through obedience to the society's code of conduct and respect for one's custom and tradition. Through obedience to these laws of supernatural forces who the people believe are omnipotent and omniscient and omnipresence and who never tolerate any nonsense from offenders. Through obedience to these forces, peace and unity is maintained both in the community and in the whole nation, Nigeria.

The Supreme Being, Chukwu also created 'chi' or personal god or one's guardian angel. Ilogu (1985:35) referring to this chi says that "chi is a portion of God's divine being which he puts in an individual at the time of his conception." This 'chi' plays great role in determining one's faith on earth. All good fortunes and bad fortunes that come across individual on earth must seek the consent of the individual's 'chi'. If the 'chi' allows it, then it happens to the individual. One's 'chi' moves along with the individual for protection and guidance; hence this Igbo proverb, "onye buru chi ya uzọ, o gbagbuo onwe ya n'osọ." meaning that one must not move ahead of his 'chi' in taking any decision. One must seek the consent of his 'chi' before embarking on any action. Another Igbo proverb says "Ebe onye dara ka chi ya kwaturu ya". This means that any bad fortune that confronts a man, is the will of his 'chi'. His 'chi' has destined it to happen like that.

Onwuejeogwu (1983:4) in his own part sees 'chi' as one of the four existence of Chukwu. In this light, individuals worship his or her 'chi' as one of the gods. Men generally worship the spirit of their ancestors. Women worship their 'chi' or guardian angel represented in 'ogbu' tree and called 'ogbu chi'. There is a festival celebrated in honour of this 'chi', known as 'igọ chi'. Every woman who attains the age of womanhood takes her 'ogbu chi' from her mother. This she plants in her husband's compound. She offers sacrifice to her 'chi' through this 'ogbu'. At death of the woman, her 'ogbu' is cut down by her people to mark the end of the woman's life on earth. This also enables her join her dead relatives in the spirit world.

The Igbo people attribute every event they cannot understand to the handiwork of God or the spirit of ancestors. The Igbo recognize the important role these supernatural forces play in their lives. That is why they attribute every event they cannot understand to the handiwork of God or the handiwork of his 'chi' or the handiwork of his ancestors. This implicit confidence on these supernatural forces make Igbo people offer sacrifices to them because they (the Igbo) believe that sacrifice has tampering effect on the lives of the people. The Igbo also believe that the spirits, divinities and created order like trees and animals could intervene in human affairs. This belief had

continued to direct and control the Igbo man's actions. The Igbo believe that the power of supernatural forces help to shape the characters of members of the society and ensures morality amongst members of the society.

7. WHY DEIFICATION SUCCEEDED IN IGBOLAND

The Igbo people by nature are very appreciative. Deification of a hero is one of the ways of appreciating what the hero did in the community. They are appreciating him for delivering them from the hands of their enemies and for improving their standard of living. They are very religious ethnic group. As they have seen that the hero has qualities of these supernatural forces, for example the hero is doing those things which ordinary human being cannot do. They then deify the hero. The Igbo belief that these supernatural forces have power over life and death and so they are conscious of their relationship with them and offer sacrifices to them. Deification of a hero is normally a gradual process. When a hero is deified, his image is drawn at the wall of the village square. People respect him but they do not worship him. He is worshipped when the generation that deified him has passed on. No one can tell how he was deified.

There are so many gods and idols and other unseen gods worshipped in Igbo land which nobody knows their origin. It is always sacrilegious for one to ask about their origin. If at all one asks, the reply is always "it is there before I was born." It is always sacrilegious for one to make further enquiry about the existence of these innumerable gods. The only thing members of the community that own the god can do is to project the image of the god as an omnipotent, omnipresence and omniscient god. The manner of their projection of their god's activities determines the number of worshippers of the god and the number of people from other parts or the nation that come to consult the idol.

8. SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP OF DEIFICATION OF HERO AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Deification a hero benefits both the hero and the host community in the following ways:

The hero's selfless exploits was carried out in the community to save members of the community from dangers that confronts them. The hero's objective is to make life better and happier for members of the community. Members of the community in return of this kindness deify the hero. By this deification, members of the community had immortalized the hero. The hero is now a god, reverend and worshipped not only by members of the community but also by other people from other communities that have confidence in the god. Ogbalu (2014:xi) rightly observes that "Igbo people has songs for every situation, ranging from birth to death." When the hero engages in war to liberate his people from their numerous enemies, heroic praise songs are evolved by members of the community. These songs ginger the hero on in his endeavour. The folks also tell exaggerated stories about the hero and his encounter in the community. These stories are usually highly exaggerated. By the end of

the hero's encounter numerous heroic songs and stories that give account of the hero's exploit are evolved.

Among the Anambra River Basin, in such towns like Aguleri, Nando, Anam and other neighbouring communities such stories are known as 'ita' in these area. 'Ita' is a long narrative that give account of their gargantuan hero's encounter with the monsters, magicians and some supernatural forces. Such story can be in form of song or story. The song is normally accompanied with musical instrument known as 'ekpili'. Some of these stories take about six or more days to complete. Generally, almost every individual in this area knows how to tell the story. That is why this area is generally called home of 'ekpili' music. Azuonye (1984:9) asserts:

Realism is not the aim of the romantic epic. Its aim is to create an eerie other worldly atmosphere, a dream like vision removed from the world of observable phenomena.

In other words, the 'ita' whether song or story required an expert artist who is able to use romantic hyperbole in projecting the activities of the hero. Anambra River Basin is the home of 'ekpili' music. Minstrels of this area are skilful in telling these stories and these stories are used for the people's entertainment. It is interesting to note that the telling of these stories in this area had continued to improve and modernize that today Igbo people can proudly assert that they have romantic epic. The capacity to project the epic hero to the supernatural level rests upon an experienced minstrels. These minstrels have other amateur minstrels who come to learn the art from the minstrel. This means that the art of playing 'ekpili' music is handed down from one generation to the other.

9. USES OF THESE SONGS AND STORIES

The people of Omambala area are mostly fishermen. In the rainy season, when River Omambala overflows its banks, it carries many fishes with it. When it is receding most of these fishes are left behind. They become stranded and so these fishes are collected by the people for drying. It takes several nights to dry these fishes. In drying these fishes people must be awake throughout the night. To keep the people awake, they tell 'ita' stories with accompaniment of 'ekpili'. The people are happy listening to them and dancing the steps of 'ekpili'. There is festival organized for the experts in telling these 'ita' stories. It is of pride and joy for one expert to emerge king of 'Ekpili' music. The winner is awarded a prize. This ginger many people to put interest in learning the story and in playing the 'ekpili' music. This has led to improvement and modernization of 'ita'. This has then given rise to Romantic Epic. Today, Igbo people and Nigeria in general proudly boost of having a Romantic Epic in Igboland in particular and in Africa in General. For entertainment, these songs are used for entertainment during festival, wedding ceremony,

funeral ceremony and in other ceremony they are invited to perform. These songs are in themselves educative, they contain cultural elements and so they are used in cultural preservations. It portrays how the people of the period live their own lives.

10. FINANCIAL BENEFITS

Minstrels from these area are invited when one is organizing wedding ceremony, funeral ceremony or other important function. The minstrel charge money for entertaining the quest. In addition, the guests come out and spray money on the minstrel and other members of the group. Playing 'ekpili' and telling 'ita' stories is now a lucrative profession with which one can sustain his life on earth.

Equally in parts of Ohafia in Abia State, Ngwa, Abiriba, Arochukwu, heroic war songs erupt during their inter communal wars. These songs are used to spur the warriors into actions. At the end of these wars, these songs are used for entertainment purposes. In this modern time, these songs give rise to historic epic. One can then proudly conclude that both romantic Epic and Historical Epic exist in Igbo land in particular and in Africa in general.

11. POSSIBILITY OF EMERGENCE OF HERO AND HIS DEIFICATION IN THIS MODERN TIME

Hero is defined as "a person of superman qualities and often semi divine." A hero is one whose actions are far above ordinary human being. He offers selfless services to his people. He alleviates his people from their problems single handedly. In other words he lives and dies for the love of his community and for the alleviation of the problems of mankind. Emergence of hero/heroes can still be found in the present or modern time for example the story surrounding Nnamdi Azikiwe and Jomo Kenyetta in their nationalistic struggles as portrayed in Ogbalu (2009:39). In this story Nnamdi Azikiwe is Nigeria's national hero while Jomo Kenyetta is Kenya's hero. Emergence of hero in a community is consensus choice of members of the community. They portray the hero as a semi god who does the things ordinary human being cannot do.

On deification of hero, Hume in Okpewho (1983:2) sees deification as "inability of the primitive mentality to operate except in response to some powerful sensation which automatically gave rise to mythic figures." Spencer in like manner calls deification, "creations of the irrational mentality of the primitive mind." Many scholars of the modern period also support the claim that deification of hero is primitive and uncalled for. This means that in this modern time, deification of hero is no longer possible while emergence of hero is still possible in area or in community where the spirit of love for the community is still practiced.

12. CONCLUSION

Heroes and deification of heroes are found all over the world. Though it is said to be the inability of the

primitive mentality to operate except in response to some powerful sensation, deification of heroes show that human being all over the world have the same sensation when they are placed in similar conditions. Deification is beneficial both to the hero and the folks that deified him. It is so because the hero has been immortalized and worshipped as a god. While to the folks, the telling of the stories is used for entertainment in an important occasion. It also gives them financial benefits. There are other benefits which the folks derive from the emergence of heroes and their deification.

REFERENCES

- [1] Achera, D. N. (1963). *Ala Bingo*. London: Longman.
- [2] Afigbo, A. (1981). *Ropes of Sand*. Ibadan: University Press.
- [3] Azuonye, C. (1990). *The Heroic Age of Ohafia Igbo* Genevece Afrique vol. xxviii No. 1.
- [4] Azuonye, C. (1984). *Romantic epic of Anambra Igbo in Owa Ndi Igbo* vol. 1(1).
- [5] Bamidele, L. (2003). *Sango Myth and its Challenges in Science, Art and Religion in IBA, Essays on African Literature, in Honour of Oyin Oguba*.
- [6] Basden, G. J. (1982). *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*. Onitsha: Varsity Press.
- [7] Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- [8] Ilogu, E. (1985). *Christianity and Igbo Culture*. Enugu: Nok Publishers.
- [9] Isichei, E. (1973). *The Igbo People and the European*. London: Faber and Faber.
- [10] Mbah and Mbah (2007). *Azuonye: Lectures on Igbo Literature and Stylistics*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- [11] *New Collegiate Dictionary* (1983). Merriam-Websters Inc. U.S.A. Springfield.
- [12] Ogbalu, U. J. (2014). *Igbo World View in Selected Songs of Minstrel Ibealoke*. M. A. Project of the Department of African and Asian Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.
- [13] Ogbalu, U. J. (2011). *A Peep into the Spirit World: Achikwu as an example of Traditional Drama*. Onitsha: Uchac Publishers.
- [14] Okpewho, I. (1983). *Myth in Africa*. Ibadan: Intech Priates.
- [15] Onwuejeogwu, (1983). "Significance of 'Afa' in Igbo religious Philosophy: A Case Study of Nri." Unpublished Seminar Paper S.P.I.L.C University of Nigeria Nsukka, September 1983.