Tarker Golozo: Portrait Of A Tiv Oral Singer

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Oral literature has been the original medium of communication in traditional societies. Unfortunately however, in most instances when contributions of individual members of a society are being considered, emphasis is usually placed on the contributions of the educated elites in such a society with rare attention given to the efforts of the oral artists who, through their songs preach unity and mobilise the populace to embrace many a government programmes/projects. In Nigeria for instance, whereas the role of literary artists like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Niyi Osundare, Buchi Emecheta, just to mention a few, are well known and appreciated both within Nigeria and beyond, hardly are the roles and contributions of the countless oral artists that are constantly playing important roles in the development of various sectors of the Nigerian state highlighted and celebrated. This paper is therefore a deliberate effort to critically project the life and times of Tarker Golozo, one of the most outstanding oral composers/singers that ever lived in Tivland of Benue State in the North Central geo-political zone of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Golozo’s comments on local, national and sometimes international issues are worth documenting and analyzing. The aim is to project and therefore state that when considering contributions of members of a society to its development, a holistic approach should be adopted so as not to alienate any significant segment of such a society. The paper concludes that more scholarly research activities should be carried out by oral literary scholars across the globe to highlight, document and preserve such contributions as it is being done for the written artists, across cultures.

INTRODUCTION

Oral literature performs important roles in the development of traditional societies. In some societies made up of different ethnic or tribal communities, the general tendency is to focus attention on the oral literatures of the so-called major traditions at the expense of what is considered the minority tribes. In Nigeria for instance, the three major tribes of Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba had received critical attentions on their respective oral literatures, culture and traditions without much having been known about the oral traditions of the more nationalities that make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Tiv people’s culture and oral literature, until recently was among the neglected ones. Some European anthropologists and colonial administrators and missionaries like M.C Abraham, Paul and Laura Bohanam had written about some aspects of Tiv culture and traditions but these were not really incisive scholarly works. Charles Keil, an American anthropologist was the first to have researched into Tiv songs and consequently published Tiv Songs (1979). But even Charles Keil’s work lacks critical and analytical enquiry into real
components of Tiv oral literature in general and Tiv oral poetry/songs in particular. Fortunately however, Tiv scholars have started showing a lot of critical interest in Tiv oral arts and culture. Through sustained research into various aspects of Tiv oral literature, especially as research for post graduate degrees, the literary world has come to get books on Tiv oral poetry. Some of such books include those by Ker (2002), Nyitse (2006) and Yina (2011) respectively. The present article is also one of the many attempts being made by Tiv Oral Literature scholars to tell the world about the rich oral traditions of the Tiv people. A brief literary portrait of Tarker Golozo, a famous Tiv oral composer and singer that ever lived, is used as a tip of the ice berg of what Tiv oral literature has to offer the literary world.

The Tiv People

The Tiv people live mainly in Benue State of North Central Nigeria. They are also found in large numbers as indigenous inhabitants in the adjoining states of Nasarawa, Taraba and Cross Rivers (Adagba 2003) just as many of them live in the northern part of the Republic of Cameroon. Although there are no definite population figures as to the exact number of the Tiv people, going by the 2004 Nigeria’s National population Census, the Tiv people can be said to number more than six million, especially those in the four states already mentioned. This excludes those living in other parts of Nigeria and elsewhere. No wonder the Tiv are the sixth largest ethnic group in Nigeria.

The Tiv people are great lovers of the art(s) as it performs great socio-cultural, political, economic and educational roles in traditional Tiv society. There are many artistic forms just as there are a lot of artists in Tivland. Tiv oral poetry consists of proverbs, incantations, chants, riddles and jokes and songs, among others. Songs form a major component of the prominent art forms in Tivland. Nyitse (2006: 8) explains that “This is underlined by the presence of two terms used by the Tiv for song according to the context within which they are used.” The terms for songs in Tiv are Imo and Icham. According to Abraham (1940:82),

The most important type of song is called Icham: this is composed and sung by professional bards on public occasions such as wedding, dances. The bard sings the theme to the accompaniment of drums and flutes and the spectators join in the chorus, the bard going from man to man, encouraging them to sing…

In addition to the explanation above, it is necessary to state that Icham (singular and Atsam for plural) has now come to refer to religious songs/hymns while those who compose/sing them are called Oricham (singular) while Mbaatsamev is the plural form. Imo (singular) and Amo (plural) refer to secular songs and those who compose/sing them are referred to as Orimo and Mbaamoo standing for the singular and plural forms respectively. The terms which are not interchangeable are used based on the content/functions of the songs. Another point which needs to be corrected from Abraham’s definition above is the feeling that there are professional singers in Tivland. This is not entirely correct because Tiv composers are first and foremost farmers and they take to singing as a part time activity. This further explains while most of the singing competitions or performances usually take place in the dry season (December to March) when farming activities are at their lowest ebb. Whether it is Imo or Icham, Tiv songs and singers always aim at entertaining, educating, mobilising, preaching peace among the citizenry and/or admonishing them to live God-fearing lives worthy of children of God, especially in the case of religious songs (Atsam).
The main subject of this article is Tarker Golozo, considered by many as the greatest Tiv oral singer that ever lived. Golozo’s songs mainly belong to the secular category of Tiv songs, as will be explained in what follows.

**Tarker Golozo: His Birth**

No 1 Tarker Golozo (as he is popularly addressed by his numerous admirers/patrons) was born in 1932 to Mr. and Mrs. Golozo in his native town of Ikumbur in the Mbatiav District of Gboko Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. Tarker Golozo explained in an interview with the present writer that five of his father's children (himself inclusive) were still surviving as at 1994. These are Zwabo, Saave, Tyozenda, Tarker and Demvihin. His father (Golozo) had many wives but by the time of his death, only one (Tarker's mother) was left: the other wives having divorced, died or just left their husband. Tarker's father also had some brothers, namely Akumun, Kwaghshinkyer and Ikocer, all of whom are now dead. All of them had stayed in one compound.

Out of the large number of wives that Tarker Golozo had, only ten were still living with him as at the time he sojourned to meet his ancestors in the year 2000. The artist had over forty-five children most of whom have acquired some form of western education. Each of his wives had at least a child and at least four of them (wives) were still within their productive ages by the time the artist went to join his ancestors. In order to take adequate care of his large family, Tarker Golozo supplemented his singing with farming. The artist explained so in a song entitled "Fetalaiza hembu Imborivungu" (Fertilizer is greater than Imborivungu) when he states: "M ngu gberen imo/kpa m ngu kahan sule..." (Even though I sing/I also farm...).

In physical appearance, Golozo was a well built man of great physique which almost betrayed his age of over sixty years. Hyacinth Ikyagba (1982:51) picturesquely paints a graphic picture of Golozo when he says:

Tarker Golozo possesses an imposing physique. He stands at about six feet tall; every inch of his frame is bulging muscle which streams against the seams of his habitual three-piece suit to breaking point. His face is covered with prominent tribal marks of his kusa (nail scarification) type. He walks with a firm, energetic tread, his massive shoulders slightly hunched. His head is covered with patches of black and grey hairs; the only feature which betrays his over sixty years.

**His Educational Background/Level of Literacy**

Tarker Golozo attended Roman Catholic Mission (R.C.M) Primary School at Lough between 1944-1950 in his hometown of Ikumbur where he read and obtained the then Standard Four certificate. Consequently, he could communicate in English, to some extent. Tarker Golozo was later invited by Rev. Fr. Turner (one of the missionaries in the area) to teach at the same R.C.M. School, Lough where Golozo had studied. He was later transferred to R.C.M. Azomon, still within Mbatiav. He taught for seven years before resigning. Golozo's acquisition of western education partly explained why he used some English terms in his songs.

**Golozo’s Technique of Composition**

Some children inherit traditional arts such as weaving, blacksmithing, hunting and singing, to mention just a few, from their parents. In the course of my interview with the oral singer, I asked Golozo whether he learnt the art of singing from any of his ancestors. The poet stated that he did not inherit singing from anyone. According to him, the art of singing came to him by accident! When he used to go to
school as a pupil, whenever any pupil stole from home or school and he came to know of it, he would compose a song to ridicule such a pupil. Then a major incidence also happened that contributed to his becoming a singer. That was when he lost his wife and he was so sad that he started lamenting by composing a dirge in her honour. Golozo composed a song within twenty minutes and when the corpse of his wife was taken for burial, he came out with the following:

**Tiv Version**

*Mbagbe wam ou kende me ee*

*Wan Igbinde Tyobo ou undu mu ee ee*

*Mbagbe wam ou uza hana ee?*

*Awua Igbinde Tyobo u undu mu ee ee*

**English Translation**

My Mbagbe, you're left me ee

Wan Igbinde Tyobo; you've left me ee ee

My Mbagbe, where have you gone ee?

Awua Igbinde Tyobo, you're left me ee ee

Thereafter, the oral poet claimed that he never had problems composing any of his songs. If he was to compose any topical song either to mobilise people for a government project or educate them about the necessity for such a project, all he needed were the major components of the issue(s) under consideration. He explained that using his level of literacy, he would then know how to bring the various segments together, to compose a coherent song. Thereafter, he would test-sing such a composition with his companion, Agule Mki, until they finally arrived at an acceptable version of the song. It was only then that such a song was ready for performance before an audience.

The above method adopted by Mr. Tarker Golozo in composing his songs can be seen to embrace pre-composition, composition-in-performance and some formulaic elements of composition. Golozo also stated that he knew how to put various elements together to form a song. But how did Golozo perform before his audience? Let us briefly but critically analyse this aspect of the artist’s career.

**.How Golozo Delivered His Songs/Poems to His Audience**

Oral researchers, until recently, had not paid as much attention to "performance" of orature texts as they have done to the text itself. However, the importance of performance in orature is recognised even among societies where writing performs a great role. For instance, in (Greek) classical literature, Stanford has observed that "the poetic meaning in the fullest sense often depends (partly)... on the sound of the words (and) those sounds reach deep into the creative process of the author and into the mind of the hearer." 4

But what really is meant by performance in the oral arts and how significant is it? Performance in oral literature generally means the rendition of a tale or myth, the enactment of a song or music and other acts. It may be staged just for a select audience or an unrestricted one. In almost all cases, performance involves singing, dancing, clapping of hands or stamping of feet, especially where the audience is showing its appreciation of the performance. In a good performance of oral literature, the audience is therefore able to take away the result of the interaction between the reception and the way the performance has been rendered. In such an event, the audience's reaction affects the quality of the performance and at the end of it all, both the audience and the performer share a common experience.

Oral literature is generally meant to be performed because it is through performance that it realises its true potentials. Performance is thus a mode of preserving oral literature because through
it, the audience is not only presented the material in its "raw form" but this is also enriched by the action that accompanies the words. Paralinguistic features like gestures, and facial expression, for example, are also incorporated in the course of the performance. Richard Bauman suggests that performance should be understood as "a mode of speaking." This is probably because in performance, there is dual sense in artistic action which is the doing of the folktale or poetry and the performing which comprise the style of the presentation.

Performance is also a unifying thread that can be seen tying together all the otherwise diverse components of orator. Bauman (1977: 42) agrees that performance offers to the participants a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to performance as a mode of communication.

Performance is thus the cornerstone of oral literature which to a large extent is able to comprehend much more of the totality of human experience. Now, how did Tarker Golozo use to deliver his songs to his audience? Normally, the duo (that is Tarker Golozo and his singing partner, Agule Mki) would not just sing but had to be invited by someone or a group of people to come and perform. Sometimes, if government (at whichever level) was organising or launching a programme or campaign, Golozo was contacted to compose songs either for the mobilisation or education of the people on the programme. Golozo would usually lead in the song and Mki acted as the chorus. When Golozo performed with his singing companion, Agule Mki, "the unison sound is so perfectly tight that a listener might easily imagine that one man with two sets of vocal cords was doing the singing." (Ikyagba, 1982)

There was a time Golozo introduced the use of musical instruments in his oral performances but he later abandoned the practice. According to him, as he explained to me in the course of our chat in his compound during the course of my interview with him already referred to, if he were to continue using musical instruments, he would hardly have time to stay at home and contribute to the proper upbringing of his children. His presence at home normally checked some of the excesses that his children could have indulged in were he to be away. He therefore preferred to be a good parent than a wandering minstrel in search of material things.

This is not, however, to say that Golozo did not consider financial rewards relevant to his practice. In any case, he never used to out-rightly demand for such rewards even from those people for whom he composed panegyric songs/poems. However, as an artist in a capitalist society, Golozo's practice could hardly be divorced from the general socio-political and economic behaviour of people within his society. This is because in most capitalist societies, the artist's freedom and products are to a large extent, subordinated to the sway of economic tendencies within such societies. As a Mexican aesthetician, Adolfo Sanches Vazquez rightly noted

In a capitalist society, a work of art is 'productive' when it is market oriented, when it submits itself to the exigencies of the market, the fluctuations of demand and supply. And since there is no objective measure by which to determine the value of his particular merchandise, the artist is subject to the tastes, preferences, ideas, and aesthetic notions of those who influence the market. In as much as he produces works of art destined for a market that absorbs them, the artist cannot fail to heed the exigencies of this market: they often affect the content as well as the form of a work of art, thus placing limitations on the
artist, stifling his creative potentials and his individuality. (Vazquez, 1973:84)

Taking this observation into consideration, we can understand why Golozo's oral performances could be said to have been influenced by the material consideration of his Nigerian society. Thus, his admirers invited him to come and perform for them. At such performances, drinks and food as well as financial rewards could be freely given to the artist.

Through his performances, Golozo could inflect his message or atmosphere of his songs by the way he dramatised, his speed and singing styles, the pauses he adopted, rhythmic movement, gestures, facial expressions and so on. Unfortunately for us, these are paralinguistic features that cannot be adequately reflected on the pages of paper.

**Golozo's Poetic Language and Diction**

It is apparent that the language of poetry is somewhat different from everyday speech. Sometimes in order to colour his language and diction, a poet may decide to use loan words from other languages, irrespective of whether his audience understands them or not. In fact, Horace (4th BC) writing on the “Art of Poetry” even advised his fellow Romans to feel free to borrow from other languages, such as Greek, to beautify their poetic expressions. This is what is generally referred to as 'poetic licence'. C.S. Lewis explains why and how a poet may decide to use a language which may add colour and distinction to his work.

What is the point of having a poet inspired by Muse, if he tells the stories just as you or I would have told them? It will be seen that these two demands, taken together, absolutely necessitate a Poetic Diction; that is, a language which is familiar because it is used in every part of a poem, but unfamiliar because it is not used outside poetry. A parallel... would be the language of a liturgy. Regular church goers are not surprised by the service - indeed they know a good deal of it by rote, but it is a language apart. Epic diction, Christmas fare, and the liturgy are all examples of ritual - that is, something set deliberately apart from daily usage, but wholly familiar within its own sphere.(Lewis, 1942: 20-21)

The above lucidly explains how the poet, more so the oral poet, turns everyday language use into special usage thus attracting attention to the colourfulness of his message and how it is delivered. This can be achieved through the poet's use of images, proverbs and other forms of figurative language. Some oral poems, however, make their impact without much reliance on figurative language but just through beautiful evocative descriptions.

On Golozo's songs, one sometimes notices an uncomplicated use of words which are aimed at creating a populism designed for educating or mobilising the masses: raising (food) productivity; or informing his audience about political and other events that are going on within the society. Sometimes these songs are meant for solidarising with freedom movements (e.g. the song on Namibia) in other parts of the world. In a song on the need for the people of Benue State to register for the 1979 general elections that would usher in the Second Republic (1979-1983), for instance, the poet stressed the fact that irrespective of whether one was Tiv, Igala or Idoma, (the three major ethnic nationalities that made up the then Benue state) they should all go out en mass and register so that they would be able to elect into office candidates of their choice. Golozo further admonished his audience not to insist that since Nigerian politicians usually forget their electorates once they are elected into office, they (the electorates) would not again "vote someone to buy a car and throw dust upon them". Thus, the poet reminded the people that "if you return from the farm and consider the suffering you encountered there, you won't invite a brother to join you in eating food." From all indications, the
language of this poem is uncomplicated because it is meant to create socio-political awareness among the audience. Moreover, the poet resorted to using images and symbols that have to do with farming activities because his immediate audience, the Tiv people are predominantly agrarian.

Golozo also made use of a lot of repetitions in most of his songs. This is because repetition creates rhythm, builds suspense and adds emphasis to parts of the poem. Repeated lines or refrains often mark out those places where an audience can join in the performance of the poem. Another feature of orature that is commonly used by Golozo is the repeat-and-vary technique. This applies when lines or phrases in poetry (or narrative) are repeated with slight variations - sometimes just by changing a single word. The oral poet also employs the sound device of tonal assonance which can determine the meanings of words depending on the tones in which the syllables are called out. It is as a result of all these devices used by the oral poet that we agree with Abraham (1968:10) that

the oral creator or performer...is obliged to use expression which is immediately understandable because of the oral nature of his presentation and the limitation which this places upon his audience... Oral compositions gravitate towards conventional expression and repetitive expression because they are more immediately understandable and retainable.

Even though repetition is generally a poetic device, it is not used just because of its utilitarian purpose alone; it is also a crucial poetic element that distinguishes poetry from prose.

**Golozo's Audience**

Since Tarker Golozo composed and sung in Tiv language, 99% of his audience is made up of Tiv speaking people. Wherever Tiv people are found in Nigeria, the chances are that 70% of Tiv songs - whether on audio cassettes or otherwise - are the songs of Golozo! Various types of dance groups, especially those who play in hotels (the Kpingi dancers) or those at 'burukutu' (a local intoxicating drink brewed from guinea corn or millet) drinking places appropriate Golozo's songs for their respective uses. Golozo's audience is therefore made up of Tiv people in the four states earlier mentioned in the course of this paper and those who can speak and understand Tiv language wherever they may be found in the world.

The quality of his message is what really endears Golozo to his admirers. There is hardly any major event or person of note in Tivland about whom Golozo did not compose a song. His songs cover social conditions, education, politics and even war. Moreover, Golozo's good and memorable voice, his retentive memory, his ability to sometimes create a song on the spur of the moment or at short notice and his histrionics are also some of the qualities that endear Golozo's acceptability. These abilities are developed and mature overtime. Thus, there is no formal or institutionalised training for any Tiv singer, as such.

Golozo's audience spread across Nigeria, mainly because of the availability of both his records and cassettes. Radio Benue, Makurdi and Radio Nigeria, Enugu where Tiv programmes are aired, both contribute to the popularity and wide acceptance of Golozo's songs. Occasionally, Golozo would be invited either for performance or interview by either the State Radio Station in Makurdi or even the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Zonal Station in Makurdi, the Benue State capital city. All these media helped in spreading and popularising Golozo's career and consequently enlarging the size of his audience and admirers. Let us take a critical assessment of the role of the African oral artist vis-a-vis Tarker
Golozo’s contribution to national development.

Golozo’s Influence on His Society

All art works are meant to be utilised by the audience either directly or indirectly. The oral poet has a direct contact with his audience and is therefore necessarily integrated with his society as the literate poet is not. This is because the literate poet may only be able to reinforce his society’s ethos, but the oral poet must. The oral poet, then, differs from the literate in his creative sensibility and in his relationship with the audience, both in the described sense and in the literal sense of actually having an audience (Buchan 1972:171). The oral poet thus helps in reinforcing societal values and sanctioning those that are antithetical to societal growth/reputation. One way the oral singer achieves this is by being firm with his listeners, driving home his points with emphasis, repeating his statements and varying his diction. He might even "enlist their (i.e. the audience's) cooperation in refrains and in body movement ranging from stamping of feet, clapping of hands to dancing" (Thompson 1974):86). The audience could also join him in singing his songs - especially when some members of the audience know such songs.

Golozo’s aims, judging from the content and contexts of most of his songs could be said to be a determination at promoting the struggle towards positive change in his society. This could be brought about through many ways, one of which is to make the people self-sufficient in food production as can be seen in many of his songs on agriculture. For example, his songs on ‘Fertilizer’ are meant to achieve this aim. An excerpt of one of such songs can buttress this point:

Tiv Version:

\textit{M ngu gberen imo kpa m ngu kahan sul\c{e}}

\textit{Yan m yam agugu gula m na aningban}

\textit{Kpa lu hen sul\c{e} wam}

\textit{M yam ngun m lu hedan ne kpa}

\textit{Yan m tee wanbari wam, m yam ye.}

\textit{Or ngu afa gat so nan gba oron er inam ana}

\textit{Man Bunde Tyodugh}

\textit{Kera kpa u vande lun a kire hen ya wou ga yo}

\textit{A nau dubu kpaangoor ga}

\textit{U vihi a bee we er}

\textit{Kwagh u ineu ka naira deri mom oo!}

English Translation

Even though I sing I also farm
I bought a motorcycle and gave my brother
It was from my farm
This one I am riding
I sold my rice and bought it.

Out of ignorance some keep saying I was given

Mr. Bunde Tyodugh

If you already don’t have financial foundation
Even if you are given a thousand naira
You will quickly spend it
And you feel it was just one hundred (naira).

(Naira is Nigeria’s currency and a thousand naira the time the song was composed was a lot of money because by then, the exchange rate of naira to the US dollar was 0.67 naira to one US dollar; not currently (November 2015) when it is 250 naira to one US dollar! )
Golozo is generally acclaimed the best composer in Tivland that ever lived, even in present day Tiv society, more than fifteen years after his death! This is mainly because his songs are melodious; they embody a lot of wisdom and they are concerned with a variety of issues of great relevance to the contemporary socio-political existence of the Tiv vis-a-vis their relationship with other Nigerians. Above all, Golozo's songs are popular as a result of their high sense of responsibility and decorum. In other words, Golozo never composed abusive or obscene songs.

Golozo's socio-political relevance to his society is also a confirmation of "the functional integration of the traditional African artist in his society which... serves as an argument against the disembodied conception of art of the “art for art's sake” school" (Gugelberger 1985:35). In this direction therefore, Ngugi's advice to the African artist becomes very relevant. Ngugi (1985:35) states I believe that the African masses will build a place to feel at home... The African novelist, the African writer (and indeed the African oral artist) can help in this struggle. But he cannot do this if he insists on a liberal posture. He must be committed on the side of the majority...

It is instructive to know that Tarker Golozo could be said to have sided with the people in their struggle to liberate themselves from forces of oppression at different times. In 1964, during the much publicised but erroneously called “Tiv Riots” especially Atem Ityough (Head Crackers), Golozo was literally hounded around by the infamous Native Authority officials of the Northern Nigeria Congress (NPC) controlled Tiv Native Authority (Tiv N.A.) in Tivland. His 'crime' was that he sided with the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) - a political organisation led by J. S. Tarka which aimed at liberating the Tiv people from the clutches of the Hausa/Fulani hegemony. The NPC wanted Golozo to compose songs in their praise while at the same time abusing the UMBC and its leaders. When the poet refused to be used in this way, he was hounded for arrest and possible imprisonment. Somehow, Golozo survived the assault of the NPC leaders.

In spite of the positive role being played by the African oral artist, it is unfortunate to note that "many foreign scholars have assumed that the principal role an African poet plays within his society is not more than providing entertainment (Abalogu 1985:35). In fact, the role of Tarker Golozo, and indeed many other Tiv oral poets, goes beyond this assumption. Many Tiv oral poets are not just concentrating their attention on the events happening within or around their immediate environments. They are also responding to both other local and international events because even though oral literature remains a vigorous art; rooted in rural communities... (it is) flourishing too in the towns. It is adapting to modern circumstances just as it adapted to and reflected change in the past. Oral poets now deal with aspects of the refugee problem and of state corruption and violence which are sadly but absolutely modern (Mapanje & White 1983:1-2).

A critical study of Golozo's songs reveals that the oral poet would introduce and discuss various socio-political issues within the contexts of his songs. Through this method, he usually recounted important historico-political events of/about his people. He was also like many other Tiv oral singers, the custodian of the society's traditions and culture. What Habib Ahmed Daba says of the Hausa poet is also true of the Tiv oral artist namely that "... his music is not only for social activities but also deals with the economic and political existence of all Nigerians and of Africa at large."(Abalogy, 1981:211). We may recall Golozo's song on the need for people to register and vote in the 1979 elections as being one of his songs
emphasizing the need for mutual co-existence among Nigerians.

However, Golozo as an oral artist operating within the larger Nigerian society, the society's decadent values sometimes exerted influence on him. Thus, sometimes, his encouragement of the people to support government programmes smacked of abetting corrupt practices by government officials. In the song on the 1979 general elections referred to earlier, Golozo could be seen advising his fellow Tiv people to go and vote for candidates of their choices: they should disregard the feeling that once such people are voted into power, they forget the electorate. Inasmuch as this advice may also be interpreted as being Golozo's own way of indicting the politicians for abandoning those who elect them into offices, Olatunde Olatunji's observations about the role of some oral poets about this issue is instructive.

Many an oral poet, for money and political favour, sings the praise of corrupt and bogus rulers who are by their actions enemies of their people. Many oral poets today sermonise so that the toiling masses may shut their eyes to the glaring criminal irresponsibility of their rulers, for true leaders we are yet to have (Olatunji 1972:27).

On the whole, there is no doubt that Tarker Golozo, even after his death but through his songs has been helping in the propagation of many government policies in Nigeria. His songs (while not coming out clearly as partisan political songs in most cases) have nevertheless helped in explaining government policies to his audience and thus successfully mobilising his audience to actively participate in government or community development projects. To be able to achieve these, the oral poet composed and sang songs on almost any topic of national interest ranging from the Nigerian civil war, the various military and civilian regimes as well as their respective programmes. It is noteworthy that Golozo was one of those who helped in the propaganda machinery of the Federal Government of Nigeria during the civil war of 1967-1970. He disclosed to me that when he travelled to Algeria, England and the USA in 1969 on a government propaganda delegation, he usually sang on the need for reconciliation between the federal government and the Igbo who wanted to secede.

Conclusion

A society’s development is occasioned by the contributions of its citizens and organizations. Most times however, when such contributions are being assessed, emphasis is usually focused on what the elites in such a society have been able to do. In view of the discussion in this paper however, it is obvious that the so-called non-literate people, like the oral artists, also make a lot of contributions towards the overall development of their respective societies. Consequently, taking a critical appreciation of Tarker Golozo used as a case study in this paper, it is possible to conclude that a more holistic consideration of contributions of citizens to societal development should usually be undertaken so as not to alienate crucial sectors of the society.

Notes

1. The actual date, that is, day and month in 1932 that Tarker Golozo was born is not known even to the artist himself. That explains why 1932 is just given as his date of birth. Tarker Golozo however went to rest with his ancestors on Tuesday, December 1999 and was buried in February, 2000.

2. Interview with Tarker Golozo in his compound at Ikumbur, Mbatia District of Gboko LGA, Benue State, Nigeria on Friday, 20th May 1994.

3. This was revealed to me by Golozo himself in the course of my interview with him on 20/5/94
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