

Literary Evaluation of Urhobo Vanishing Cultural Identity through the Prism of *Arigo Again!*

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Abstract

This study focuses on the Urhobo vanishing cultural identity, using the Prism of *Arigo Again!* Urhobo culture is vanishing without efforts by scholars to prevent its further erosion. The objective of the study is to investigate the effects of social change on Urhobo vanishing cultural heritage. The study hinged on the possible world theory (PWT). Numerous social changes of the Urhobo are mirrored through the PWT and textually analyzed methodically. From the results of the textual analysis, it was discovered that the family and Urhobo traditional religion are some of the social structures that have changed in recent times as a result of social change; the belief system of the modern Urhobo people towards several held traditions has been altered in recent times due to social change; family bonding which was encouraged by interaction among neighbours and communal life have been battered due to the influence of social change. These changes have brought a shift in cultural identity, belief and value system of the Urhobo in this modern time. The paper concludes that the Urhobo cultural identity has been enormously diluted by social change. Therefore, it is recommended that Urhobo scholars, leaders and parents should promote their cultural heritage, teach the upcoming generation to value the Urhobo culture and discourage excessive Western influence.

Keywords: Urhobo vanishing cultural identity, *Arigo Again!* Possible world theory (PWT), textual analysis, social change.

Introduction

Urhobo cultural heritage is gradually vanishing. This is because most modern Urhobo people seems to prefer western lifestyle to the tradition held, belief and practice. Every culture is unique and has to be promoted through identifying with the customs, values and practices. Urhobo is one of the ethnic groups in Delta State. The Urhobo of Delta State occupy eight local government council areas in Delta Central Senatorial District and part of Warri South, Patani local government areas respectively and in the Ogoni area of Bayelsa state. The Urhobo language has about eighteen dialects spread across twenty-four kingdoms in Delta State. Urhobo has a rich culture, and from time immemorial they cherish their cultural heritage as shown in their dress code, marriage pattern, child naming, funeral performances, respect for elders, hospitality, economic life, religious beliefs, kingship, kinship, worldview, norms and values held as a way of their identity. Some aspects of the Urhobo cultural heritage are captured, preserved and transmitted through the oral and written literature of the Urhobo people. It is a major characteristic of the indigenous literature of all societies and nations that literature reflects the totality of the life of the people for whom the literature is written and spoken. Literature portrays man in his natural and supernatural environment through artistically created stories and songs, written or unwritten. Such stories and songs are a reflection of the cultures, traditions and values of the people for whom they are written. This assertion agrees with Obitaba (2019:2) who stated that, “By literature, we mean the sum total of works, product of imaginary writings treating particular problems of a given milieu... More importantly, we mean its essence, its primordial callings to domesticate the human minds among others”. Thus, all literary texts are subject to reality and are meant to provide solutions to societal problems and also for pedagogical purposes.

Urhobo has twenty-four kingdoms that spread across the following local government areas: Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Patani, Sapele, Udu, Ughelli North, Ughelli South, Uvwie, Warri South and the Ogoni in Bayelsa state (Ivworin, 2012; Ifesieh and Ejobee 2013). Urhobo has experienced revolutionary occurrences in her cultural identity. Some of these revolutionary experiences are repulsive, and others are tolerable or accepted by the people. The major cause of the revolutionary experiences can be attributed to social change. Social change in this study is defined as the alteration of the cultural practices and behavioural patterns of people who have lived together over time. Such changes manifest as a result of new ideas and value systems derived from westernization, migration and modernization. Social change manifests as a result of modifications of cultural institutions and social structures through human mobility and relationships. Culture, according to Egonwa (2010:1), “is the complex totality of values, attributes, skills, and other capacities acquired by man as a member of society”. In essence, culture becomes the foundation upon which civilization is built. It includes the beliefs, practices, language, arts, norms and values that define a group of people. To understand culture and its dynamics, one must appreciate the nature of human life concerning the society he belong and the changes that occur from time to time in that society.

Cultural identity occupies an important place among the Urhobo people, and this is demonstrated by the slogan “*Urhobo ɔvuɔvo*”, meaning Urhobo is one (united). This is probably because of the role of culture in influencing the various aspects of behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes of the Urhobo people towards life. The researchers have observed from personal experience that there are significant changes in many aspects of Urhobo cultural practices, such as in burial, where, in the past, wake-keeping was observed but is presently prohibited for security reasons. Westernization and the untimely death of elders who could not pass the various processes of Urhobo traditional funeral rites also affected the Urhobo burial practice. The culture of widow inheritance is no longer practiced by many families, because most men nowadays are not ready to accept the wife of a late relative as an inherited wife. These issues are brought about due to social change in the various Urhobo communities. In those days, marrying more than one wife is a symbol of greatness. This is affirmed by Okumagba (1982:88) who maintained that, “In the olden days, the Urhobo man regarded his wife as his property and the wealth of a man was often determined by the number of wives he had”. Social change brought about by western civilization has promoted monogamy to the extent that an Urhobo man who marries more than one wife is seen as a transgressor and is criticized by those inclined to monogamy. There is, therefore, a strong relationship between man, culture and society. Literature functions as a form of cultural discourse, a medium that can be used to explain and analyze the cultural changes that occur within specific societies and across societies. The major assumption of this paper is that social change has played an important role in regulating the various sociocultural processes and behavioural patterns among the twenty-four Urhobo kingdoms, and has affected the cultural identity of the people within their environment. Ojaruega (2017), in her work titled “Songs only women sing: Females struggle with identities and role in traditional and modern Urhobo poetry” reveals how Urhobo women’s voice uses their songs to voice out their struggles and roles in the society. In present-day Urhobo, such songs have gone into extinction as they are no longer heard in the gathering of Urhobo women. These songs were used in those days to teach the younger ones their roles and position in the family and in their marriage, but are no longer performed as a result of social change.

Idogho and Osuya (2020) conducted a study on “Issues and content in African drama: A diagnostic study of African dramatic content of Agbarho Ibi festival” The findings of this study reveal that the dramatic elements identified by Aristotle are found in *Agbarho Ibi* festival and that the festival does not lack dramatic culture. Although the study investigates an Urhobo cultural festival, it does not provide an evaluation of how social change has affected the festival. These studies reviewed have helped to document aspects of Urhobo cultural evolution, religion, poetry and oral literature, but studies based on the evaluation of Urhobo vanishing cultural identity and Urhobo people’s cultural temperament in written literary works have not received reasonable attention of literary critics. This constitutes the gap and motivation for this study.

This paper explores the themes of culture and the cultural temperance of Urhobo people and provides an evaluation of how social change has affected Urhobo cultural identity and heritage as evidenced in Maduku's *Arigo Again!* (2014) literature text.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of the study is to investigate the effects of social change on Urhobo cultural heritage through the Prism of *Arigo Again!* The text above was constantly referenced. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- i. Discuss the influence of social change on Urhobo social structures.
- ii. Evaluate how social change has altered some of the belief systems of the Urhobo people;
- iii. examine the cultural temperament of the Urhobo on Urhobo thought and identity, and
- iv. Appraise the effects of social interaction on various social groups of Urhobo

Methodology

This study adopts the textual analysis method. This method, according to (<https://www.scribbr.com>) is used to systematically examine and interpret the content, underlying meaning and purpose of texts. The method is essentially about understanding how people make sense of the world through various forms of communication, including written, spoken and visual texts. This method is suitable for this study because it enables the researchers to uncover underlying themes, patterns and messages within the text under consideration and also to connect such themes to the Urhobo sociocultural context.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the possible world's theory (PWT). This theory was developed by the Anglo-Saxon school of analytical philosophy as a means to solve problems in formal semantics. Kripke, (1972), Lewis, (1973), Plantinga, (1979), and Rescher, (1979) were major defenders of this theory. The possible worlds' theory (PWT) was adapted to literary criticism in the late seventies by critics such as, Thomas Pavel, Lubomir, Dolezel and Umberto (Ryan (1991). An important tenet of this theory lies in the way the various worlds are accessed. For a world to be considered possible, it needs to show a certain degree of accessibility measured against the principle of minimal departure. According to this principle, unless otherwise stated, the physical and logical principles that govern our actual world are still in place in any of the actual possible worlds (APWs) evoked in a text. Hence, it is assumed that whatever characters that exist in the textual world belong to the same biological category as those we have in the actual world (AW). The conditions for accessibility, as adapted from Ryan (1991:558-9), make this framework appropriate for analyzing the text *Arigo Again!* They are:

- i. Identity of properties. Textual actual world (TAW) is accessible from the Actual world (AW) if the objects common to TAW and AW have the same properties.
- ii. Identity of inventory. Textual actual world (TAW) is accessible from the Actual world (AW) if TAW and AW are furnished by the same objects.
- iii. Compatibility of inventory. Textual actual world (TAW) is accessible from the Actual world (AW) if TAW's inventory includes all the members of AW as well as some native members.
- iv. Chronological compatibility. TAW is accessible from AW if it takes no temporal relocation for a member of AW to contemplate the entire history of TAW.
- v. Physical compatibility. TAW is accessible from AW if they share natural laws.
- vi. Taxonomic compatibility. TAW is accessible from AW if both worlds contain the same species and the species are characterized by the same properties.
- vii. Analytical compatibility. TAW is accessible from AW if they share analytic truths, i.e. if objects designated by the same words have the same essential properties.
- viii. Linguistics compatibility. TAW is accessible from AW if the language by which TAW is described can be understood in AW.

So, the more compatible a Textual actual world (TAW) is with the Actual world (AW) the more accessible it becomes. (Norgaard, Montoro, and Busse, 2010)

Arigo Again! Textual Analysis

The text under consideration reveals themes of sociocultural values that are real and are either rejected or whose practice is declining among the Urhobo people today. The major characters in the text are the young Arigo, Mr Okiti, his wife, Mrs Okiti and their children Jete and Ejiro. Other characters include Blakie, Maria, an Urhobo lady who, on migrating to the North changed her identity by converting to Islam and changed her name to Mariam Hajiya, Mr. and Mrs. Dayo, Okiti's neighbours, Maigemu, Okiti's driver, Mrs Umukoro, Arigo's mother, Dibi and Okiti's elder brother. The characters are created by Richard Maduku to achieve his purpose as a creative writer. He sets his narrative in Urotor (Ephron-Otor, his home town) an Urhobo community in the southern part of Nigeria and gradually moves to Kadugeri (Kaduna) in the northern part of Nigeria where he captures some Urhobo people living there and their neighbors with the view of creating a cultural contrast of how various individuals respond to the Urhobo culture. The Urhobo ethnic group like every other Nigerian ethnic group, brims with diverse kinds of cultural manifestations and strong traditions that they inherited from their progenitors. Unfortunately, there have been a very sharp decline or absolute rejection of these sociocultural norms and values in recent times by some Urhobo people.

Influence of Social Change on Urhobo Social Structures

Social structure is a term that refers to all interconnected relationships of various social groups and institutions created by man for the benefit of the people living together as a community or nationality. Social structures help people create harmonious relationships by providing opportunities to bond, grow and express themselves. Social structure defines how people interact and behave within the family and by extension the society. There is usually a strong bond among extended family members in Urhobo communities. This bond is strengthened through extended family meetings, contributions, widow inheritance marriage, caring for children of siblings and family members coming home during important festivals such as Christmas and burials. This family bonding is captured in the text thus: “A couple of Okiti’s relations, mainly the women, from other towns and villages had also come with their children, as was the custom during Christmas and traditional festivals, pp. 126” This family bonding has been negatively affected by the influence of social change resulting from the Nigerian economy, migration and urbanization. Those who have migrated to cities such as Maria in the text have changed her identity and no longer identify with their culture group living in the same city. She now lives as a concubine to an Alhaji, a Permanent Secretary in the State’s ministry of Education, without proper observance of the traditional marriage rite of the Urhobo. This relationship forced her to convert to Islam and embrace their culture to be accepted in a marriage relationship, pp. 45.

The Urhobo practice their traditional religion where the supreme God, referred to as *Oghenè* is worshipped through the ancestors ‘*Eriwin*’ and community/personal deities. The belief in ‘*Eriwin*’ is the force that bonds members of the Urhobo family together, whose fear enables members of the family to live righteously in accordance with the cultural norms. The family and the African traditional religion are structures that are greatly influenced by social change. The manipulative teachings of some Christian sects and Islam have done so much harm than good to the extent of making the native Urhobo to change their traditional birth name and spiritual orientations in the guise of religion. In the same vein, the Muslim sees non-Muslims as infidels thus disrupting the Urhobo communal life and by extension, African communalism. Thus, an Urhobo woman married or in a relationship with a Muslim is forced into embracing Islam and the Northern culture. Maria was captured as one who practised dual religion, as captured in the text. “Her dual religion and change to the Northern women dress style was done to please her man... pp. 45” While in the North, she is a Muslim and when she visits her home town (Urhobo) she pretends to be a Christian. The social structures discussed above are common to the textual actual world (TAW) and the actual world (AW) of the Urhobo people; thus (TAW) is accessible from (AW) as evidenced in the text. The influence of Western education, Christianity and Islam has brought significant changes in the orientation and lifestyle of many Urhobo people who no longer believe in the power of ‘*Eriwin*’ and the extended family

bonding. It is very rare today for a man to either release their children to stay with their relatives or accept their relatives' children to stay with them. The family structure among the modern Urhobo is more or less that of nuclear because the trust and love that exists in the family structure has faded away. Another issue is the problem that religion has brought into Urhobo land. The unity and synergy that exist in Urhobo communal life have faded. In the text, it was observed that when the wife of Mr. Okiti left the house in annoyance because her husband refused to send Arigo out of the house, the neighbours' wives went immediately to the motor park to bring her back home and also settle the matter.

“...Mrs Dayo and two other women from the neighbourhood had got a hint of the situation. They had made straight for the motor park.
... After much persuasion, by the trio, she reluctantly got off the long-distance commercial car pp106”

This kind of relationship described in the text, which existed then, is very rare today. The doctrine of being your neighbour's keeper no longer exists among most Urhobo people. They no longer have time for communal meetings and visiting home for traditional festivals and other important ceremonies.

The Influence of Social Change on the Belief System of the Urhobo People

A belief system commonly refers to a set of ideologies or a set of principles that helps to interpret the everyday reality of any social group of people or an ethnic group. Belief systems are structured sets of principles or tenets held to be true by individuals and larger groups. The Urhobo people from time believed in reincarnation and dreams. When Arigo was born, the family believed that he was the reincarnation of their late father, and a fulfilment of the dreams some of them had previously.

He appeared to many of us in dreams”, replied Okiti’s half-brother, “and in all these dreams, he told us that he will be coming back to life in the family again. Not long after, the boy was born and everybody who saw him exclaimed that our grandfather has fulfilled his promise. For the little boy was an exact replica (p14.).

The belief in the ancestors by the Urhobo people was also captured in the text: “The woman concludes by adding that it was not herself that willed it but Okiti’s great ancestors. pp17”. It has been observed in this study that the belief in reincarnation and the control of the ancestors, “*Eriwin*” no longer holds sway among many Urhobo people today as they have been influenced by Christianity. The ancestors are no longer venerated by the modern Urhobo.

The Influence of Social Change on Urhobo Language and Urhobo Naming Pattern

One major way in which social change has affected the Urhobo sociocultural domain is the outright neglect of the Urhobo language in favour of English and the Pidgin languages. The Urhobo people in olden days believed so much in the use of their language. In the text, it is evident that Okiti wants to ensure that his children are able to understand and communicate in Urhobo language, a vision he could not achieve at the end, and even himself was a victim of same because the influence of social change made him to drop his traditional Urhobo name for an English name: “He (Okiti) dropped his traditional birth name (Ochuko) for Henry when he was to be baptized as a Christian” (p44). People and things are known and distinguished by the name they bear. Humans are denominated and designated by name. Thus, people can be identified as related to an ethnic nationality in Nigeria by the name they bear. In the same vein, people who bear names from the same language see or identify themselves as related. Today the influence of Christian baptismal names, Islamic and Western culture names has affected the naming pattern of Urhobo. Just as Okiti dropped his traditional name, Maria an Urhobo lady changed her name to Hajiya Mariam (p44). There are people like Maria who choose to change their identity when they sojourn in a foreign land in order to have a sense of belonging and blend with the indigenes, while others see bearing Anglicized or religious names as a show of civilization. They refer to such foreign names as ‘*Oyibo names*’ or ‘baptismal/ Islamic names’.

“Arigo was also of cultural importance to Okiti. Since he was brought to live with them, Okiti was glad to note that his daughter was picking up many Urhobo words” p. 60. Before the coming of Arigo to Okiti’s house, Okiti’s daughter was very fluent in Hausa to the detriment of Urhobo, her mother tongue. This phenomenon is a major problem for cultural identity; hence it gave Mr Okiti a great concern. Most Urhobo children today in places like Warri and other Urhobo townships such as Abraka, Agbarho, Effurun and Ughelli cannot communicate fluently in Urhobo let alone those in the North, West and Eastern parts of Nigeria. Social change has so much affected the speaking and love for the Urhobo language to the extent that a child speaking Urhobo is seen as antisocial or *Ogburhobo* (Ifesieh & Aleh, (2013). This was many years ago when the researchers were in primary school, our teacher forbids us from speaking vernacular (our indigenous language) in class, the teachers thought they were doing us good then, following the trend of civilization at that time. Thus, the upcoming generation was discouraged from communicating in their mother tongue. Nevertheless, the importance of the mother tongue to the development of the child cannot be overemphasize, hence the celebration of World Mother Tongue Day every February 21st worldwide as enacted by UNESCO. Even with the effort of UNESCO in this regard, children born to Urhobo parents and some parents who cannot speak the Urhobo language today, thus the language may go into extinction if it is not salvaged.

Urhobo Marriage Practice

The Urhobo people are known for polygamous marriage practices; they also practice the widow inheritance type of marriage. The author captured the desire of Urhobo for many wives in the text and how social change has affected the marriage practice of the Urhobo people. “No matter the education or whatever religion they professed, the bug to marry many wives was very strong among the men of this area. Only abject poverty could deter them from marrying more than one wife (p12)”. Social change has affected the marriage institution of the Urhobo people. The Urhobo see marriage as the beginning of family life and the conjugal relationship of a man and woman in society. By nature, the Urhobo man was a polygamist, and any man of average means had two or more wives.

Okumagba (182: 88) revealed that “No Urhobo man was happy and content with one wife or having children with one woman”. This revelation is further confirmed by Ilega (2003) that polygamy is central in the Urhobo marriage system. The reverse is the case with the modern Urhobo of today, majority of them like Okiti are averse to polygamy: “Though he was averse to polygamy, Okiti had never stopped to wonder if the bug for marrying many wives would bite him later in the future (p. 12)”. Apart from Christianity and modernity, the society has changed due to issues of birth control campaigns and the present Nigerian economy; even the wealthy among the Urhobo now stick to one wife. Polygamy and rearing many children is now old-fashioned and is frowned upon and detested among the Urhobo. This is contrary to the old tradition and philosophy of the Urhobo founding fathers, who believed in having large families.

Widow inheritance type of marriage is another sociocultural tradition that is very significant to the Urhobo culture. Mr. Okiti’s hatred for the practice of widow inheritance is revealed in the text: “Okiti could not fathom what made his elder brother think that he was so tied to their culture as to inherit a late relation’s wife. This was one of the aspects of their culture which he had sworn never to observe”. (p 129). Apart from polygamy, there are other important issues relating to Urhobo marriage practice that have been overtaken by events and modernity. Most important to this discourse is widow inheritance type of marriage, which has been a healthy and acceptable practice handed over by their progenitors. When an Urhobo married man dies, the widow must be allocated to one of his junior brothers or a very close kinsman. If she refused to remarry, which is not common in those days except for elderly widow, she could choose to remain in the family to take care of her children as long as she remains unmarried or she have to return to her family and her family will return the bride wealth paid on her to the late husband’s family while the children given birth to in the marriage remains as members of the late husband’s family.

Thus, when Umukoro, the father of Arigo died, Okiti’s elder brother did everything possible to see that Okiti accept the late brother’s wife in marriage “I have done the necessary groundwork

and I am sure nobody will protest if mama Arigo is given to you". Okiti bluntly refused the proposal because he has sworn never to observe this aspect of the Urhobo culture as evidenced in the study text (p129) Urhobo view marriage as a social contract between two families. The wife must see herself as a wife to the family and must join the meeting of the family wives. It is the custom that the wife must address both male and female in the family she is married into as husbands. She is expected to genuflect and respect members of her husband's family, irrespective of their sex or age. The text captures this phenomenon as it were, but the modern Urhobo wives do not observe this tradition any more. In the text, Mrs. Okiti refers to Arigo as her little husband. "He is not my son... he is bigger than me... he is my little husband..." (p 99). Even though Arigo is just a little older than her daughter, she is expected to respect him being her brother-in-law. This tradition has been overtaken in modern times to an extent that Urhobo wives no longer genuflect or have respect for their husbands' relatives, especially those who are junior to them.

In recent times, most Urhobo women do not allow their husbands' siblings or family members to visit or stay with them. The extended family relationship is gradually giving way to the nuclear type, where parents' and family members' opinions do not count in decision-making in the Urhobo marriage institution. Women now see such intrusion into their home as a threat to their relationship with their husbands, they no longer see themselves as visitors in their matrimonial family. Mrs. Okiti became repugnant to the culture of seeing herself as a visitor in a house and family she struggled to build with her husband, and decided to fight for her rights as a modern wife. In her mind she reasoned that "Wives may be visitors, but some visitors are more powerful than some hosts" (p106). So, she insists that Arigo must go back to the village. Such authoritative ideology stems from the feminist reasoning that has infiltrated the Urhobo society.

The influence of social change on Mrs. Okiti enables her to stand her ground that Arigo must return back to the village or she will pack out of the house, "Take Arigo back immediately or else..." (p103). Most Urhobo wives today are seen by the older folks as controlling their husbands. This phenomenon has made most mother in-laws uncomfortable staying or visiting their sons. It was the belief in the culture of Mr. and Mrs. Okiti that a wife in her matrimonial family is a visitor because when she dies, her remains must be taken back to her family. Her opinion is irrelevant when family issues are treated and decisions are taken. The Urhobo woman of today has fought against this belief; it has almost become nonexistent as a result of the feminist struggle in modern times. It was a real struggle for Mr. Okiti to oblige his wife's order "he began to ponder on his wife's order: "Take Arigo back immediately or else..." (p 104). Despite the fact that Okiti saw that it was very wrong of his wife to have asked him to send Arigo back, which is against their culture where a wife was perpetually regarded as a visitor (p 104), Mr. Okiti has to return Arigo back home in order to save his marriage.

Most Urhobo women today are said to be controlling their husband using different kinds of threats on the husband who wants to avoid making trouble with his wife. This phenomenon has caused serious strain in marriages and family relationships. Some cases result in divorce when the husband chooses to stand his ground as the head whose decision is final. Public opinion from my recent field work (2024) in Delta Central Senatorial District reveals that one of the reasons why some modern Urhobo men go into polygamy and having concubines today is as a result of their wives' un-submissive attitude.

v. Influence of Social Change on Child Care and Discipline

Urhobo people believe so much in child education, care and discipline. They do all within their power to see that children do not grow up to become a disgrace or liability to the family. It is on record that the Urhobo are the first to raise funds to build a school of their own and also send one of theirs abroad to study in order to become the principal of that school. This was how prestigious Urhobo College in Effurun was established. Ekeh (2005: V), cited in Ivworin (2012:47) captured these efforts. It was not until the 1940s, during the difficult years of World War II that Urhobo cultural leaders mounted a major campaign for mass education for the youth at any cost. They built the famous Urhobo College, a Secondary School that was devoted to the education of Urhobo young men. The above efforts of the Urhobo leaders are the same spirit with which Mr. Okiti and Arigo's mother to garner everything within their ability to see Arigo to school. The Urhobo in those days saw education as the best way to greatness and to rank high among other nations. The quest of the Urhobo people for discipline and education in retrospect is captured in the words of Arigo's mother in the study text. "Arigo ... could be beaten like any other child when he misbehaved, but should never be hit on the head with either hand or stick (P. 17)". Mr. Okiti as a caring Uncle. He wants to give the best education to Arigo as seen in the text: "After fattening Arigo up with city food and ensuring that he took his morning and evening bath for a couple of days, Okiti decided that he was presentable enough for school" (P. 38).

In the present day, Urhobo as it is in most parts of Nigeria, child discipline both at home and in the school is a thing of the past. Children of today are no longer interested in education; they are uncontrollable and most parents are doing nothing to stop this trend. There are some parents who even go to their children's school to warn teachers who want to instill discipline in the children. They pay people to write examinations for their wards, thus encouraging them to grow up as cheats and fraudsters. This growing tendency in recent times has led to the development of the so-called yahoo boys, which is trending presently and has made many parents and their children to see education as a scam.

vi. Urhobo Thoughts and Identity

One of the functions of literature is to use language to communicate a message in a precise and effective way. The researcher observed that the language of thought in the text can be assessed and decoded in the Urhobo actual world (UAW) as a finger-print of the Urhobo culture and worldview. Richard Maduku portrays the sociocultural temperance of Urhobo people on reincarnation through the protagonist to reveal Urhobo thought and belief in reincarnation. The central character, Arigo is said to be his grandfather reincarnate. He was therefore named Arigo, the name of his grandfather. This thought is further exhibited in the way the child was treated and accorded the respect due to a grandfather. Such naming, belief and thought no longer reign among the Urhobo of today as they have been erased by the influence of social change (Nabofa, 2005).

Urhobo thought and identity is also exhibited through the use of special chants, which is a common phenomenon among the Urhobo. Chants are used by native doctors as well as other competent native speakers to express their belief and surprise emotions, praise, thanks, or as a way of averting evil with the consciousness that there is a spiritual force that helps or saves. Urhobo thought, taboo and identity are embedded in such chants and pithy sayings. Chants are also used to transmit Urhobo indigenous knowledge. They are very important aspects of the Urhobo folklore that are used to preserve the Urhobo language and cultural heritage. Darah, Ivworin and Agbogun, (2024) assert that efforts should be made by the Urhobo people to save Urhobo language and culture from the pangs of extinction by all concerned stakeholders. According to them, while language reveals what is important in a culture, the former shapes the latter. In the study text, Papa Ejiro in one of his chants, expresses the importance of chants as embellishment:

It will never happen,

It has never been heard of before
that while in a foreign land

One of us got missing
And was not found
again Our gods are not
asleep,

Our ancestors never sleep... (p. 96)

In response to the above chant, Mrs. Okiti asked: "What about our sons who never returned from the civil war?" Papa Ejiro replied to her that those who died in the war misbehaved, that "they broke many of our taboos". This shows that lack of knowledge and non-observance of taboo have their gross consequences. It is evident among the Urhobo, as it is in most African

ethnic groups, that lack of indigenous knowledge and observance of cultural taboos has gross consequences on those who default. It is evident from the Urhobo actual world AW today that most Urhobo have lost grip of these cultural thoughts that have helped to shape the thought pattern, belief and identity of Urhobo people. Thus, there is so much betrayal and misbehavior which have led to the untimely death of many youth and great Urhobo personalities in their prime.

vii. Urhobo Sociocultural Heritage

Although the author's reason is that "Strict righteous training or not, children who would be bad would always be bad p63". The researchers have observed that the society then and the society now are significantly different because of the emerging social changes. The society then was positively instructive to the extent that children competed to do what was right. They influence one another both at school and at home through traditional games and stories. The negative use of social media and peer group influence on the society today can be adjudged inimical to the proper upbringing of children. Peer pressure and influence can result in pre-teens and teenagers to act in certain ways or making certain decisions, as stated in (gchildren.net.au), such as: a. Choosing the same clothes, hairstyle or jewellery as their friends, b. Listening to the same music or watching the same television show as their friends, c. changing the way they talk or the words they use, d. doing risky things or breaking rules, e. working hard at school or not working as hard, f. dating or taking part in sexual activities, g. vamping, smoking or using alcohol or other drugs.

A critical reading of the text under review reveals that Arigo's behaviour is being influenced by peer group activities and the city life he has been exposed to, in contradistinction to his village experiences. Thus, Arigo was described as a little boy, full of innocent curiosity and who acts on impulse, experimenting with all the various things he encounters in the city.

viii. Discussion of Findings

The text under review conveys the sociocultural temperament of Urhobo people diachronically as a response to some definite cultural experiences that are being attacked or influenced by social change. As participant observers assessing the textual actual world (TAW) from the Urhobo actual world (UAW), the researchers observe that some cultural features by which the Urhobo are identified have changed with modernity, which is a major element of social change. For instance, widow inheritance and polygamy have become old-fashioned. The modern Urhobo man frowns at such practices. These changes have been attributed to the influence of Western education, Christianity and the nature of the Nigerian socioeconomic situation. The change is shown in the text thus:

Okiti could not fathom what made his elder brother to think that he was so tied to their culture as to inherit a late relation's wife. This was one of the aspects of their culture which he had sworn never to observe. (P. 129).

The reaction of Okiti suggests that most of the cultural norms and practices have changed. The situation is heightened by urbanization. Urban dwellers think differently from their rural counterparts in terms of the cultural beliefs and practices. Apart from urbanization, religion and Western education have also contributed to changing the psyche of many modern Urhobo.

There is vivid evidence of social changes between the upbringing of children in the cities and those in the villages. Social change is a dominant feature in *Arigo Again!* The arrival of Arigo into Okiti's family made Mr. Okiti to take a more careful look at these sociocultural changes. According to the observation by Okiti, "children brought up in the traditional way had what could be termed unlimited freedom when compared with the so-called civilized method of the urban dwellers". The differences in the life of the urban and rural Urhobo are occasioned by the influence of modern life as against what exists in the rural areas. Thus, children in the urban are alienated from the cultural norms, thereby making it difficult to introduce them to their cultural heritage. The above phenomenon is further revealed in the peer group pressure and influence that took its toll on the protagonist of the novel- Arigo. The behaviour and actions of Arigo portray a curiosity that can only be exhibited by a child who is moved from the cultural setting of his childhood experience to another. Such also is the case of the adult Maria, an Urhobo lady, who on relocating to the north, dropped her Urhobo culture in preference for northern culture and she is now being addressed as "Hajiya Mariam" an attitude that shows that "*Igari re Urhobo vwerhe Urhoboo*" (Urhobo garri never tastes sweet to the Urhobo). She is said to have cut the picture of a typical northern lady. "As she opened her mouth in greeting, Okiti discovered that she had a golden tooth commonly worn by men and women who had gone to the holy land of the Muslims as pilgrims". Richard Maduku is able to relate to his readers the cultural conflicts that manifest when two cultures come into contact. The result of such cultural conflict is cultural change. The dominant culture subdues the other. This is evident today to the extent that the Urhobo culture is presently being subdued by Western cultures. This phenomenon is captured in the text: "I have a few points to settle in my house too", Okiti thought in reference to Arigo and the conflict of the culture that his arrival had aggravated in his home".

Richard Maduku's *Arigo Again!* as examined in this study, shows how social change influences the cultural beliefs and social identity of Urhobo people in the past and present, as evidenced in the link between literature and society. The research shows that social change influences the

attitudes and belief system of most Urhobo in their actual world (UAW) today, contrary to what was handed down by their progenitors. Social change alters the lifestyle, beliefs and cultural orientation of the Urhobo people as evidenced in their use of the Urhobo language, belief in reincarnation, naming pattern, religion and marriage institutions, child upbringing, widow inheritance, marital rites and wives' attitude toward husband's relatives in the Urhobo world view.

ix. Conclusion

This study x-rays how social change influences Urhobo cultural identity through the prism of Maduku (2014)'s *Arigo Again!* The findings of the study reveal how social change, manifesting through migration, religion, western civilization, feminism, peer group pressure and peer influence affect the identity of the Urhobo people. Most important aspects of Urhobo worldview and their cultural practices as seen in their actual world (AW) mentioned above are clearly documented in and communicated through *Arigo Again!* Through the use of language, themes, plot and character creation, the author reveals how social change affects the sociocultural life and belief system of the Urhobo society. The text leaves several strong impressions on a wide array of issues relating to Urhobo cultural heritage that are being eroded through social change occasioned by the instrument of Western civilization and urbanisation. The paper therefore, concludes that the Urhobo cultural identity has been grossly affected because of social change.

x. Recommendations

The study recommends, among other things, that:

- a. Urhobo scholars, leaders and parents should promote their cultural heritage by teaching the upcoming generation to value the Urhobo culture and discourage unnecessary Western influence.
- b. Parents who are able to speak the Urhobo language should train their children in the basic elements of the language and culture. This will encourage the children to use the language as a medium of expression at home and project the identity of Urhobo in a world of cultural conflict and competition.

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