

**THE POETRY
OF
SOCRATES MBAMALU**

WETIN MY CHURCH DO FOR ME

Na so so hunger wire me
I run go meet my pastor
He com dey search for something
I think say na money
He comot tithe register

Na him economy crash
I no com get cash
I go meet church
Where I dey pay offering
They tell me say money no dey.
I wonder where all my money go.

I contribute money for church university
They talk say na God work
I even help them build am
After the school complete
My salary no fit send my pikin go the school

Pastor say make I be church worker
I work well well
All my money and time I give dem
Small contribution like dis
I go chuk hand for pocket
I no sabi say
na the money na him pastor
Go use buy private jet
And him wife limousine
Me still dey use my benz; leggediz benz

My church dey collect taxes pass government
Even the one wey they suppose give Caesar
They go ask for am
For Sunday we dey give offerings wey get different names
Tuesday na to sow seed
Thursday na prayer offering

I com dey wonder, na who dey do the work?
God or pastor

Make una no stone me o
But as I sit down now
I still dey think wetin church do for me
Even when person die
They no go ask if him be Christian
They go ask which church him dey go

DARKER THAN WHITE

I paint you with my words
Ugly or beautiful,
Good or bad.
I still paint you

Who says?
The book of life is not black
Or that black is not life
The gods

They call dark black
And night . . .
Even black is pure
Acknowledges the gods

WATERS OF ORIGIN

Once . . .

My eyes saw what they refused to believe.

I waited like the long travelled Saharan camel

Thirsty and thirsting. . .

I longed and panted like the deer

For waters of clean origin

Once. . .

My eyes saw what they refused to believe

The human sacrifice to the gods,

The sacrifice of an *osu*

Blood must be spilt!

The land must drink

Once . . .

My eyes saw what they refused to believe

The dotted leopard playing with a lamb

The spotted cheetah eating grass

Africa must remain Africa

The birth of all mankind

Once . . .

My eyes saw what they refused to believe

The sugar coated skin of my queen

Beautiful as the palm tree

She I saw

And my eyes refused to believe

ROUSE OF THE SOIL

My legs dance!
Dance! I said.
For the ancestors blow you a flute
The spirits of the land play you drums.

But you say. . .

The song by the gods
Is a bitter pill,
It churns my tummy.
I won't dance.

You, son of the soil dance!
Dance! I said.
For the ancestors blow you a flute
The spirits of the land play you drums.

Aha! Eeeh! Igbo kwenu!
The song of the gods
Drives my spirit into a frenzy
And I dance.

Dibia!
Pour out a libation
Let us celebrate
For I have the lips of the gods
But not their status

In the spirit land
My ancestors call me
A reincarnation of Onuigbo
The meticulous one.
Who art thou?

FOR THE GODS

I laugh...
I laugh not alone but with the gods
For they have confirmed
That a leper can also marry a princess,
That a beggar on the floor is blessed than the rich man on the
table

Beautiful things are not for all
And not all tongues taste honey
For the gods are just, yes they are
The youth's arms, strength they give
His cranium, but a pinch and allow

The old men, wise sayings give
Their arms, but a bleak shadow of vigour past,
An old man's rag is costlier than the youth's shiny garb
Yes, the gods are just.
I seek depths,

To see, to touch, the realm of ancient wisdoms
But what man dare aspire to the gods' status?
I am but minute, humbly taking the hand that I am dealt.

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ΑΝΔ ΤΗ ΓΡΟΥΝΑ ΩΕΠΤ

The unceasing rain had given no hope for tomorrow. All creatures had been subdued and made to lie low in their various shelters. The swaying trees paid obeisance to the harsh wind, accompaniments of thunder and lightning made nature an orchestra, singing a symphony to the dictates of its maker; the Unmade.

The death of the former Biafran Naval Commander was recognized by the gods of the land upon whose sands he had fought to defend his people. Everything was in a state of comatose, the burial arrangements, the grave digging and all that pertained the dead,

‘You know, your father was a man of the sea’, said his uncle to him, ‘so, it is no surprise that the whole sea wants to empty itself on the land.’

The death of a hero was mourned by nature that day. The village mourned and the land wept. A convoy, from the hospital where his corpse lay, to the village summarised it all. He was coming to where it all started. Where he had played with the sand of the earth and eaten the produce of the land. He was giving back to the earth what the earth had given him; his body became one with the earth. A sudden halt pulled me out of my reverie. It was the turn of mortals to pay respect to the dead. We had come to the entrance of the passage, the gate to Nenwe. Pphhshhh the gunpowder burned and then Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! He was welcomed by the famous *okpo-nali* the traditional Nenwe gun salute. His spirit had been welcomed into the spirit world. Boom! Boom! Boom! The gun powders boomed and the ground shook. Everybody comes into the world with some level of respect. Some increase theirs; others decrease theirs, while some are just there. His?

That day nature respected mortals, and kept to itself and mourned. The threatening clouds could do no more than threaten; the sun could do no more than smile, and the wind, just whispered. The harmony was perfect. Nature had given mortals the right to bury their dead. As the coffin touched the earth, the land was honoured to receive the remains of its child that had come home after a long journey on the earth. And the ground wept.