

## Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century African Novel: Chukwuma Ibezute's *The Wisdom of the Chameleon*

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### Abstract

This article contends that Chukwuma Ibezute is one of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century African creative writers whose narratives do not deviate from the concerns of the society but stand as a means of tackling some of the issues confronting society and this is in recognition of the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup>-century African creative writers have not failed to respond to issues affecting society in contemporary Africa literature. This entails that African literature like every other world literature is what exposes to the world the values, the hurdles and the burdens of the African society. The article also affirms that through his fiction *The Wisdom of the Chameleon* (2007) Ibezute exposes the power tussle, irresponsible leadership, corruption and tribal consciousness that characterize the African society. These social ills are the root cause of conflict, autocracy, poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment in the African.

**Keywords:** 21<sup>st</sup>-century, Africa, Corruption, Chukwuma Ibezute, Society, leadership

### Introduction

Chukwuma Ibezute is one of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century African creative writers whose narratives do not deviate from the concerns of the society but stand as a means of tackling some of the issues confronting society. This is in recognition of the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup>-century African creative writers have not failed to respond to issues affecting society in contemporary Africa literature. No wonder Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah*, writes that 'the story is our escort, without it we are blind' (24). This entails that African literature like every other world literature is what exposes to the world the values, the hurdles and the burdens of the society. Of course, literature because of its practice in a society acquaints us with a better knowledge of a specific society. In this sense, an African creative writer who wants his or her work to stand as a means of serving his or her people must draw his/her materials from the society which he/she writes about. This is true because, as Rene Wellek and Austin Warren rightly observe:

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation. Such traditional literary devices as symbolism and metre are social by their very

nature. They are conventions and norms which could have arisen only in society. But, furthermore, literature 'represents' 'life', and 'life' is, in large measure, a social reality (94).

Thus, in reading, understanding and analyzing literature, the critic of literature in general and an African literature in particular, cannot ignore the social milieu of work without doing some injustices to it. This is the reason Priscilla P. Clark while authenticating the existence of sociology of literature maintains that there are four fundamental angles from which literature and society can be explored. The first is from the angle of place and the roles of literature in society. Studies which fall under this title are after 'descriptive discussion of literary phenomena, activities, individuals and institutions' (27) which respond to issues about who writes, publishes, criticizes, and reads what, where and when. The second is the effect of literature on society. Studies placed under this topic are particular about the moral values of a work of art. The third perspective, which specifically forms the basis of our contention in this article, is the place or function of society in literature. This third perspective concerns itself with the descriptive literary investigation of social themes, character types, trends, currents and manners inside a work of literature. The fourth category is the influence of society on literature. Under this rubric the consideration is that content determines form and form reflect the content. In essence, there is a correspondence between social and literary phenomena. Clark's argument is that the four groupings are theoretical constructs which are useful for ordering a discussion. No matter the angle from which literature and society are considered, they are binding for some reasons, mainly because a separation between literature and society is bound to be illogical.

This article, therefore, will examine how society is depicted in Chukwuma Ibezute's 21<sup>st</sup>-century novel, *The Wisdom of the Chameleon* (2007). In other words, the article will specifically explore how Ibezute uses some novelistic elements such as locale, characters, symbols, satire and even irony to represent an African society in his fictional work.

#### **The Society and Ibezute's *The Wisdom of the Chameleon***

Chukwuma Ibezute's *The Wisdom of the Chameleon* is a sharp suspenseful satire on the Nigerian political and traditional system. Set in Ohaizugbo autonomous community, the narrative circles round the novel's protagonist, Ihedigbo Otigba, who under false pretenses deceives his people as he campaigns for the post of presidency in Ohaizugbo Progressive Union- OPU elections. However, as soon as Ihedigbo Otigba wheedles his way into the office of the OPU president through the endorsement of 'the opinion molders and kingmakers' (1) in Ohaizugbo, he reneges on his campaign promises, and turns a thorn in the flesh of Ohaizugbo people. A character like Okwugha Madugha, who though objected to the election of Ihedigbo Otigba as OPU's president, also wangles himself into the centre stage of power.

Ohaizugbo, as described in the novel, is a microcosm of Nigeria where anti-social activities thrive without any serious confrontation by any individual or groups; a country where power tussles are the order of the day; a country where leadership rotates among a few particular individuals, and the leaders lead with impunity, and the electorates die in silence with the belief that these failed elected leaders, at all levels of government, can only be brought to order by not re-electing them after their tenure is over. This is even reiterated in the words of Onuoha Chukwu:

If the president doesn't administer well, we will get him out of power in the next four years elections, that's the essence of democracy. The power to enthrone and dethrone leaders and rulers belongs to the people. (2)

The implication of this is that African leaders will continue to impoverish the people and pull the nation down until the end of every four years. Of course, these statements by Onuoha Chukwu are indeed ironic. The African system of government is autocratic instead of democratic. Without doubt, the people's votes do not count because leaders are imposed on them. For instance, despite the fact that Okwugha Madugha has from the onset opposed Otigba's candidacy, 'the opinion moulders and kingmakers' – the political bigwigs in Ohaizugbo consider Otigba eligible for the presidential position. Onuoha Chukwu makes it clear to Okwugha that the prominent men, the political top-dogs, in Ohaizugbo have 'already endorsed Ihedigbo Otigba. How do we stop him now without creating confusion and causing upheaval in the community?' (2) The inferences here are (1) that only a few political bigwigs in the Africa society determine who governs the people; and (2) that the citizens of Africa who have been denied voting rights should continue to endure the bad and painful situation in which they found themselves.

Ibezute's *The Wisdom of the Chameleon* represents Nigerian politicians and traditional rulers who tussle with one another for power not because they want to serve their fatherland or community but because they want to loot the common wealth of the nation. In this novel, Ibezute, indeed, paints an unpleasant picture of a community that is on the verge of effacement, because of the fatal stranglehold of unreliable leadership. Consistently Ohaizugbo has been downsized as a pitiful and wretched community regardless of its overflowing natural resources. In the novel, it is indicated that the community is endowed with crude oil but in spite of that fact the Ohaizugbo citizens generally and the people of Afornta village particularly, on whose land the oil exploration is carried out are abandoned, starved and underdeveloped. Why? Because of the traditional ruler of Ohaizugbo, Eze Hilary Onwuka and the OPU president, Ihedigbo Otigba, hijack and share the oil money released for the development of Ohaizugbo community. The money ends in developing only the likes of Eze Onwuka, a symbol of degeneration of African traditional rulership system, and Otigba, a symbol of autocracy in modern African politics, who are at the aisles of power, respectively. At the end, these inhuman elements turn agents of denationalization and mismanagement of the people's oil industry. Despite the fact that their chameleonic and unpatriotic deals have been noticed, yet they do not want to leave the power corridor.

It is because of this sharing of the national manna among those who are at the helm of affairs that brings about leadership tussle in the land. It is the cause of all conflicts in the world of the novel. According to Onuoha Chukwu 'this senseless crisis ignited by greed and man's disregard for his fellow man has turned everything upside down, and people are even afraid and scared of their brothers and relatives' (99).

Ibezute uses his fictional work to expose some of the ills which those who tussle for power carry out in order to grasp or uphold it. It is highlighted in the novel that 'power is towering and intimidating. Sometimes, it drives who acquires it mad' (59). Otigba does everything within his reach to dismantle and dismember anything and whoever that hinders him from retaining the OPU's most influential and respected office. He thinks of nothing but of 'how to retain power till *thy Kingdom come*' (60). This italicized emphasis marks absolutism on the part of OPU president; and to show that his hegemony remains unchallengeable. Otigba sidelines

the likes of Adigide Ejionye (his immediate predecessor), Okoko Ede and even the members of his executive. He also humiliates ‘Onuoha Chukwu and other popular men and women’ (58) who initially supported him to gain ascendancy. In everything, he ‘has no regard for his predecessors in office’ (58). As long as he is concerned all appearances of opposition to his autocratic leadership style must be shunned. To this end, he engages the idle and hungry youths as his thugs. Truly, ‘he doles out fabulous amounts of money to these unemployed youths to keep them on the waiting for any emergency’ (58). Besides, he embraces diabolism as a means of fortifying himself. This is true because it is stated in the novel that he protects himself with a fetish medicine- ‘bathing and infusing into his eyes the blood of fifteen giant rams’ (94). On the part of Onuoha Chukwu, the novel’s antagonist, who strongly opposes Otigba’s overbearing leadership style, it is equally revealed that his group engages itself in a similar act of operating with charms so as to be able to dethrone Otigba, and have Onuoha Chukwu enthroned. This diabolic character of some politicians and their sycophants in this fiction reveals that politics in Africa is dirty and bitter.

In the novel a serious conflict also revolves around the ancient *iroko* tree at Ohaizugbo central market. According to the narrator, ‘this remarkable tree was another thing known to have brought disagreement between Eze Ohaizugbo and Ohaizugbo Progressive Union president’ (62). It is pointed out that Otigba had a nightmare. In his nightmare, Otigba sees Onuoha Chukwu and his group go to the foot of the *iroko* tree alongside two complex and harmful and fierce-looking native doctors. The men slaughter ‘two big rams, a he-goat, one rough-feathered and one non-tail-feathered fowls for sacrifice on the tree’ (62). While they dance and repeat incantations after the native doctors, they also chant a song of victory:

We will outlive our enemies  
We will watch them crumble and fall  
Especially Ihedigbo Otigba  
Ohaizugbo is not his property  
The gods of the land will strike him  
He will definitely fall from power (63).

Soon after Otigba regains consciousness, he consults some seers and fortune-tellers who inform him not to take the dream light. As a consequence he cuts down the *iroko* tree, which signifies disrespect of tradition and culture of the land. Because Otigba has a premonition that he would lose his presidential position if he fails to act, therefore, all calls to stop his anti-tradition work is ignored. He refuses to listen to neither Eze Onwuka and others nor ‘the daughter of River Nkasi who owns Ogirigwo, the deity of Ohaizugbo which the giant *iroko* represents’ (64).

This is a revelation of the fact that there are external conflicts in the novel: conflict between man and society and conflict between man and supernatural being. However, no matter how strong a person might be, when he launches attacks against society and its gods, he can never win. Thus, victory must surely be for the people so long as they persistently demand and stand on their right.

In the novel Otigba represents that Igbo proverbial dog which does not sniff a smell of shit when its death is at hand. Otigba’s pigheadedness pushes him to postpone ‘indefinitely the Ohaizugbo Progressive Union general elections due constitutionally to take place by December 27 of that year’ (94) with the excuse that no meaningful elections could take place in the midst of

distrust, violence and ill-feelings among the natives' (94). Nonetheless, this is done because of his selfish reason of power retention. It is quite unfortunate that his quest for absolute power tears Ohaizugbo community apart. The community witnesses the emergence of new radical town unions such as Ohaizugbo Welfare Union- OWU and Ohaizugbo Radical Reformers Union- ORRU. Both OWU and ORRU aim at correcting the wrongs in the society.

Apart from power tussle in contemporary Ohaizugbo politics, there is also traditional Ezeship tussle in the same society. The novel presents two characters - Hilary Onwuka, Gburugburu I, Eze Zuzugbo Zugbo of Ohaizugbo and an unnamed character described as the Challenger - that fight against each other for Ezeship throne. While Eze Onwuka fights to retain his Ezeship position, the Challenger fights to overthrow him because he (Eze) connives with Otigba to trample on people's rights. But, to avert his overthrowment, Eze Onwuka employs the services of fetish medicine men to checkmate 'his adventurous opponents' who have "their eyes on his throne" (85). He also relies mostly 'on his membership of a secret cult', even though he is 'a leading Christian' (85). The implication of this is that most African traditional rulers do not follow God's way but depend on occultism. For these African traditional rulers, Christianity is nothing but a camouflage and 'a façade for the unscrupulous and a narcotic for those who are suffering' (Cook & Okenimkpe 130). In the words of Ian Robertson, 'the dominant religion legitimates the interest of the ruling class and, like a narcotic lull the oppressed into acceptance of their lot' (265). This is the reason why a character like Eze Onwuka engages himself in inhuman programs, using Christianity as a cover in order to deceive the people. Apart from fighting for power retention, Eze Onwuka desperately commits himself 'to securing the throne for keeps for his lineage' (87). To consolidate this, he passes a law which makes the throne hereditary to his descendants without the consent of others.

Unfortunately, Eze Onwuka faces an affluent and influential challenger who 'promises to build a new secondary school for the community; actualize the community's stillborn electricity project; tar major road across the community to Aforukwu Ohaizugbo market; and start and complete a pipe-borne water project' (86). To this end, the idea of balkanizing the Eze's throne through the creation of a new autonomous community out from Ohaizugbo is prioritized. But, for fear of losing five villages that will form the envisaged new autonomous community, and ruling only two villages that will constitute the old Ohaizugbo, Eze Onwuka secretly indulges himself in all sorts of criminal works such as kidnapping and assassination of those perceived to be his traditional enemies.

Without the doubt, in *The Wisdom of the Chameleon*, leadership bankruptcy is the fulcrum on which the episodes revolve. In the novel Otigba stands for modern African politicians, particularly modern Nigerian politicians, while Eze Onwuka represents traditional rulers in Nigeria and the rest of Africa who advocate absolutism and remain insensitive to the welfare and agitations of their subjects, respectively. The catastrophe that befalls the people of Ohaizugbo begins when Otigba betrays his people and Eze Onwuka who had once brought development to his community embezzles public funds together with Otigba and collaborates with Otigba to suppress the agitations for a new autonomous community. These woes that betide Ohaizugbo people because of leadership failure remind us of bad leadership experience of Nigerians. Writing on this Chinua Achebe says thus:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing

wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of true leadership (*The Trouble with Nigeria I*).

For Otigba, he runs an irresponsible leadership. Instead of making and implementing policies that will ameliorate the living condition of the people, a leader like Otigba upholds a tyrannical government, a government that overtaxes its citizens:

Market women are paying heavily for their stalls everywhere. Traders, red palm oil producers and palm kernel merchants pay heavy taxes for transactions at Ohaizugbo central market. After normal taxes and rates, Ohaizugbo taxable adults are still compelled to pay different forms of taxes in the name of levies, to run the community (59).

Apart from being compelled to pay heavy taxes that end up in the pocket of a few individuals, Otigba's government unleashes violence on the people. 'Even the members of Ihedigbo Otigba's executive are often disregarded and bashed in the president's show of pigheadedness' (60). This shows that he is a stereotype of an ideal dictator.

Again, Ibezute's narrative shows us a picture of an African society where corruption which is celebrated among leaders has given room to the normal degeneracy of a whole society. In this novel the likes of Otigba, Eze Onwuka and Okwugha Madugha are portrayed as corrupt leaders who pride themselves on social ills. Apart from pocketing the crude oil money meant for the development of their community, both Eze and Otigba embezzle "the sum of five hundred thousand (500,000) dollars donated by sons and daughters of Ohaizugbo in Diaspora towards Ohaizugbo development efforts" (92). They also fail to give accounts of the one hundred thousand dollars which the Ohaizugbos in diaspora donate yearly for the welfare of the natives. Otigba, as the OPU president, has a myopic attitude of spending public fund. He issues 'Ohaizugbo Progressive Union cheques recklessly' as if the union is "his personal business" (92). While, also, Otigba launches 'a new Toyota Land Cruiser jeep and a Baby Lexus car', Eze Onwuka adds 'to his fleet a Mercedes T130 jeep' (92). On the part of Okwugha Madugha who is as crooked as his name implies falsehood, he, being closely related to some of the big financial pillars of OPU, usurps the offices of the treasurer and the financial secretary, and uses the opportunity to embezzle the people's money, and gives inaccurate account when he is confronted by his boss, Otigba. But, how would Otigba expect transparency from his subordinate when he (Otigba) is unreliable? This is nothing but a mark of leadership failure. The actions of these three characters remind us of the words of Emmanuel Obiechina:

The political upheavals that have taken place in independent African countries soon after the departure of the colonial powers are partly caused by some of the politicians not living up to the expectations of the people (at least the articulate middle class of traders, artisans, secondary school and university graduates) who put them in power. In some countries, politicians have corruptly enriched themselves; in others, they have neutralized the democratic process, imprisoned or persecuted the opposition, and stifled criticism ("Politics in the Early African Novel" 97).

Actually what we find in the world of Ibezute's world are politicians who boycott the democratic process and also corruptly enrich themselves. The level of degeneracy in Ohaizugbo community is so high that even a traditional ruler like Eze Onwuka adopts Machiavellianism. In essence, the Eze Onwukas of this world make clever and secret plans to realize their intrigue and are not honest with their people. In the novel, for instance, Eze Onwuka confers honorary chieftaincy titles on pot-bellied rich traders who have no clean records in the community for 'bags of money' (90). This type of honorary award given to corrupt big businessmen exists because the system under which these corrupt chiefs live makes corruption simple and rewarding. These corrupt chiefs, according to Achebe, 'will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient' (38) for them. The patriarchal nature of Ohaizugbo makes the male characters in Ibezute's work to pride themselves on libertinism. While corruption is considered as a norm, women's thighs are taken as a recreation centre for men. Even though a male character like Okwugha Madugha has before he joined politics possessed a character that is worthy of emulation (strong will to acquire an automobile maintenance skill without minding his mates and talks and backbiting), his flaw is that he flirts outrageously with married women. For example, he does not spare Angela 'whose husband is vested a knight of the Church' (112). He tries to seduce Mrs. Lizzy Iheanacho but fails. As a politician Okwugha stands for betrayal and unreliability. He is a man of double life. Another example of libertinism is seen in what Lizzy Ugomma suffered at the hands of Ohaizugbo men. Before her wedding to Ekeh Iheanacho, Lizzy Ugomma suffers sexual humiliation at the hands of men who see her like a sex machine for their sexual gratification. 'As far as she was concerned, men were the bundle of heartless chauvinists whose value for women was to satisfy their animal urge' (96). While in school, Lizzy falls prey at the hands of 'a gang of four men' who break into her hostel and rape her in turns. This apart, she is coerced into sex by 'some of her lecturers in order not to carry over any course' (96). The questions that come to mind here are: Which nation whose school system is run like this can survive tomorrow? How can female students be subjected to an examination which will determine their success on the bed of male lecturers? These do not only show the high level of sexual immorality in Ohaizugbo that represents the Nigerian society but also connote that male genital serves as a weapon of oppression against women. It also connotes aberration and worthlessness on the part of University male lecturers who are supposed to live an exemplary character which students will learn from.

In this novel Ohaizugbo is also depicted as a nation where economic hardship forces the ordinary people into unholy occupations. We are presented with characters that go into prostitution as a result of poverty. In other words, unlike in Ibezute's other work of fiction, *Victims of Betrayal* (1998) where it is indicated that there is prostitution caused by greed, here we are faced with prostitution caused by poverty. For example, Lizzy Ugomma Ihediegwu turns a part-time commercial sex trader because of poverty in her family. She drifts into prostitution so as 'to fund her education and take care of her ageing parents' (96). Ekeh Iheanacho, a male adult character that is unable to marry a wife on time because of poverty also resolves to satisfy his sexual instinct by patronizing a part-time sex worker like Lizzy. This is buttressed in the following conversation between Ekeh and Lizzy:

"I am yet to get married because of harsh economic realities prevalent in this country."

"There you go. You have said it all. The cause of the sore led to the pains." (45)

It is unfortunate that a character like the rich man portrayed in the novel, because of Lizzy's family predicament uses his affluence to swindle the poor girl. As a prostitute, Lizzy gives service to the man but he refuses to pay her 'a Kobo'. When she tries to fight the man he pulls a gun and threatens to blast her head, thereby pushing her into a total submissiveness. Again, because of poverty in Lizzy's family, Lizzy's beautiful elder sister is given to 'a rich man to be his house keeper for an agreed monthly remuneration' (97). Unfortunately Lizzy's visit to her elder sister in the rich man's house leads her into sleeping with the wealthy man. It is revealed that the wealthy man, through Lizzy's elder sister, lures her by promising to send both Lizzy and the elder sister to school and also 'build at least a four-bed room bungalow for their poor parents in the village' (97). But after using Lizzy for one month he drives her away 'under the pretext that he thought she was a virgin' (97). This action of the wealthy man marks sexual, physical and psychological abuse of women by men. It also brings to our knowledge that Lizzy is a symbol of women subjugation in African society.

Lizzy's experience in the male-dominated society where she sees herself makes her conclude that the men folk in her society 'are domineering; unfaithful and a bunch of cheats' (114). She strongly holds the view that all men are the same despite the fact that her husband, Iheanacho, has proved to her that 'all men were not Lucifer as she had thought' (115). Among her experiences for her unchallengeable ideology about men is another encounter with her lecturer during her University days. The lecturer, a professor of Linguistics, being fond of her helps her academically whenever the need arises. Thus, out of clean mind she goes with her fiancé, Iheanacho, to show appreciation but the Professor, after their visit, becomes unfriendly to the point of telling her that he neither needed to know her fiancée, 'nor those costly wines and hot drinks, but herself' (115) when she asks him why he wears 'a long face' (115). In this novel, Lizzy, after all her untold experiences, is portrayed as a transformed woman who does not go back to her vomit. She represents the born-again African women who have sincerely renounced immoral lifestyle, and have preferred learning under men to being 'in the midst of women whose stock in trade' is "gossiping, slandering and quarrelling' (116).

Furthermore, the level of moral decadence in the imaginary world of the novel has gone so high that even there is the lack of African cultural values in youngsters. What is practiced among girls, for instance, is indecent dressing. The rate at which young girls perambulate round Ohaizugbo community rouses a mad man known as *I want a Lady* to run after an indecent-dressed 'middle-aged-responsible-looking lady' (104). Here the deduction is that the way Africans dress addresses them. In addition, an African nation that allows its culture identity to die is bound to face embarrassment.

Through the use of oral history a revelation of the chameleonic instinct of Okwugha Madugha is traced to his lineage:

Okwugha Madugha comes from a lineage who in principle believe that a man of Wisdom, wits and intelligence is that who chickens out in the face of strong challenge, and changes his stand the moment his interest is not well protected" (118).

This excerpt suggests that the unreliability and 'chameleonness' of the Madughas of this world are traceable to genes inherited from their parents or ancestors. We are told that Okwugha's



father's elder brother once won the OPU presidential elections but was denied victory. Instead of Okwugha's father who had together with his kinsmen refused acceptance of the decision to stand, his ground, he goes behind and takes the offer of replacing his elder brother made to him by the incumbent president. In other words, Okwugha's father cunningly switches off from his elder brother's political camp to another where his own personal interest is met. It is revealed that Okwugha's birth took place soon after this incident; and he takes after his father's chameleonic nature. Undoubtedly, Okwugha replicates his father's character during Otigba's political campaign. Together with his village people Okwugha fails to support Otigba but as soon as Otigba wins and is sworn in as the OPU president he crosses over to his camp.

Tribal consciousness and mockery for non-natives feature in Ibezute's fiction. In work, Ohaizugbo is delineated as a community where full respect and freedom are accorded to only core aborigines, and not to non-natives. For example, Okoko Edeh's ancestral town is Omunenu but he is unaware of it until he is mocked and disrespected for it by a young man. Soon after these mockery and show of hatred, Okoko Edeh is arrested by the police and falsely accused 'of being in possession of narcotics' (131), and as a consequence spends 'three months in detention', and dies 'of unidentified illness' (151). In the same vein, Omunenu people (Okwugha's maternal people) always exhibit their tribalistic and antagonistic character to any non-native in their place who prospers. Undoubtedly, Omunenuans are enemies of non-natives' success. For instance, a progressive and energetic son of Ohaizugbo who has risen to the rank of superintendent in the police is not allowed to head a Police Division in Omunenu for too long when he is posted there, because he is non-native. Instead the Omunenu people eliminate him through a diabolic means. The promising police officer dies of 'infection' that causes the swelling of the stomach known as 'njo afo' (151) a few days after seeing a dead tortoise near his office table. These tribal consciousness and hatred for non-natives show that there is animosity and disunity between people in an African society depicted in the novel by Ibezute. In other words, the two communities – Ohaizugbo and Omunenu – which represent Nigeria dislike each other regardless of the fact that they claim oneness as a nation.

Ibezute's *The Wisdom of the Chameleon* does not just represent the challenges confronting the people of Ohaizugbo, but, it also proffers solutions. The novel's zenith is demonstrated in Eze Onwuka's and Otigba's nemesis, and the election of Onuoha Chukwu as the new president of OPU. For example, as Eze Onwuka's challenger escapes from a ghastly car accident which leaves the others involved dead, Eze Onwuka becomes schizophrenic, which leads to his being flown abroad for treatment. Subsequently Otigba is murdered by gunmen. Otigba's death thus pushes Eze Onwuka back home immediately as he recovered.

Eze Onwuka who is supposed to be neutral in politics involves himself in partisan politics by strongly supporting Mr. Amana Okoro, 'a returnee from U.K.' (170). But, despite the Eze Onwuka's support for Mr. Amanna Okoro, still Onuoha Chukwu emerges a winner in the OPU's presidential election. Unfortunately, Eze Onwuka's nemesis manifests itself the more as he suffers paralysis of the right leg and hand while mourning his wife; loses his two eldest sons and a daughter through the car accident. The lesson from this is that traditional African rulers must learn to be honest with their people and detach themselves from partisan politics and be for all and sundry in their traditional communities where they rule if they want to be free from nemesis.

It is important to note that the second coming of Onuoha Chukwu as the new president of OPU is symbolic. It symbolizes the change in the African political system. As an agent of change,

Onuoha Chukwu embarks on redressing wrongs done in Ohaizugbo by the previous administration of Otigba. Chukwu, for instance, refuses bluntly to admit Okwugha Madugha, an epitome of corruption and betrayal, into his administration, irrespective of Madugha's letter of inclusion to him. What this means is that Nigerian society and every other African society need the Chukwus of Africa for the sanitization of their political system and development of their land.

### **Conclusion**

Indeed this paper has disclosed that the society delineated in the fictional work of Ibezute is characterized by power tussle, irresponsible leadership, corruption and tribal consciousness. These social ills are the root cause of conflict, autocracy, poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment in the society of Africa. Shown also is the high level of African traditional rulership compromise with African politics, which pinpoints the fact that there is no virtue and trustworthiness in the African traditional rulership system.

Importantly, political and traditional leadership change is emphasized as the solution to the problems facing Ohaizugbo, a representation of Nigeria. This change will come only when the imposition of leaders on Africans is resisted, and the people of Africa are allowed to choose their leaders. Besides, change will come when all hands are on deck, and traditional African rulers refrain from stealing and partisan behaviour and, also, stop to advance the interest of any politician.

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