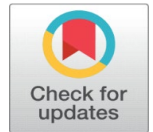


DOCUMENTATION OF OGBANIGBE FESTIVAL OF OWERRE-OLUBOR PEOPLE (IKA NORTHEAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA), AGBOR, DELTA STATE



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ABSTRACT

Identity is that characteristics that distinguishes, differentiates, and separates one community from another in terms of ideology, belief systems, organizational structures, mode of dressing, dialect, communal activities such as festival commemoration. Enshrined in one of man's communal activities is the yearly celebration of New Yam festival. New Yam Festival has been coined with various names in many climes in Nigeria. In Owerre-Olubor community, New Yam festival is associated with Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu) festival similar to that of Obie community of Aniocha nomenclature. The paper employed descriptive analysis, oral interview as well as related materials. The paper focused on Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu) festival, the origin of Owerre-Olubor community of Ika Northeast Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria including musical instruments and some songs used during the festival celebration. Four sampled song texts were selected and captured while one musical example from the four song texts selected was analyzed. The paper conclude that documentation is the only way to preserve culture of a people including music peculiar to such culture for the next generation in order to escape extinction.

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Keywords: Festival, Ogbanigbe

1. INTRODUCTION

Man is an entity, man has an identity, and man has culture and belief systems that guide his day-to-day activities. It is these characteristics of man that has given birth to the various cultures of the world today. In an attempt to differ and separate from one another man has invented his own ideology, dress styles, manner of greetings, marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies, death ceremonies, dance styles, songs, festivals to mention a few, of course, these are also affected by their geographical locations. One of the activities engaged in by man is the festival ceremony. This is done on yearly basis by different socio-cultural entity at an agreed date and month of the year by different communities within a geographical nomenclature. The English derivative of the term 'festival' has come to be applied to gatherings in which several arts are celebrated [Michael \(1996\)](#). According to [Ehiwario \(2005\)](#), festivals are very significant form of communal activity; they call for the best that any



particular 'also explained that to most Nigerians a festival is that chain of activities, celebrations, ceremonies, food, drink, and rituals, which mark the continuity of culture in an environment. These festivals occur at appointed times in the lunar calendar and mark the rhythm of life. Virtually every one of them has its characteristic or associated music or dance... In a huge basket, we can find a vast array of traditional festivals and ceremonies that traditionally mark either the rhythm of life, the life rites, and appointed rituals and ceremonies that dot the traditional lunar calendar of each ethnic group in Nigeria (p. 4, 5).

Nigeria is replete with diverse ethnic/cultural groups as highlighted above - these ethnic groups have their own specific and sometimes interrelated/similar festivals with variations in performance mode which are performed according to their lunar calendar. Delta State is ethnically diverse with people and numerous languages spoken in the State. Each community has at least one festival and most are celebrated annually while some are biennial. Among communities whose festivals are celebrated annually is an ethnic group in Delta State. This entity namely *Owerre-Olubor* community is domicile in Ika Northeast Local Government Area Agbor, Delta State. *Owerre-Olubor* town is situated between *Akumazi Umuocha*, *Ute-Ogbeje*, *Ekuoma* and *Obior*. *Owerre-Olubor* entity celebrates two festivals every year mainly *Igwe* festival and *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* festival. The celebration of *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* is the pivotal highlight of this paper because it's of importance and chief festival celebrated by *Owerre-Olubor* community. Although *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* festival is claimed to have been originated from *Obior* community, who are close community to *Owerre-Olubor* community there is no clear narratives on the origin of the said festival.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION /BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF OWERRE-OLUBOR COMMUNITY

Owerre-Olubor community of Ika Northeast Local Government Area of Delta State is surrounded by several neighbouring villages. These include *Umunede*, *Akumazi Umuocha*, sharing bounding with *Owerre-Olubor* to the west, *Obior* to the east-west, *Ute-Ogbeje* to the south, and *Ekuoma* to the north. The father of *Owerre* is *Olubor*. *Owerre* gave birth to five children, three legitimate children namely, *Onofo*, *Agboma* and *Etiti* and two others namely *Ese* and *Ikpulu*. These five children made up *Owerre-Olubor* community. Thus, *Owerre-Olubor* community is a conglomeration of five villages namely.

- 1) *Umuonofu*
- 2) *Umuagboma*
- 3) *Etiti*
- 4) *Umuikpuru* and
- 5) *Umuese* or *Umude-ese*

During the celebration of *Ogbanigbe* festival, these five villages assemble together to worship in the shrine of '*Edofi*' - this shrine ('*Edofi*') was brought from *Ndokwa* in *Kwale* according to oral history. Different drums are used for the dance while each village meet at the Chief's palace before going to visit the chief holding the title of *Olubor* (the first son). This title is rotational, so also is the chieftaincy and kingship titles. According to oral tradition, the commencement of *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* as a festival in *Owerre-Olubor* community was originally initiated by their

ancestors in commemoration of the unique funeral dance that accompanied the corpse of *Diagbor*, the father of *Owerre* on his demise at *Ejeme* where he was receiving treatment, down to *Owerre-Olubor* where he was buried. After some thousands of years of this celebration due to change and continuity, the dance/rites used to accompany the deceased corpse of *Diagbor* metamorphosed into what is known and called *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* festival. It began to be commemorated in recent years at the maturity of new yams and this change took effect after the inception of the *Ogwudes*.

3. OGBANIGBE FESTIVAL (IME-EGWU)

Oral tradition had it that 'Ogbanigbe' otherwise called 'Ime-Egwu' for hundreds of years is a jubilant dance and celebration in commemoration of the survival through the second part of the ordeal of farming season. As noted by [Mbiti \(1975\)](#) in his write-up "The Prayer of African", that harvesting is usually associated with some festivals, prayers are said, some incantations are recited by the people in the traditional capacity as priests, diviners, elders, heads of families and so on. This above assertion would be said of the Owerre-Olubor people that engage in various activities that lead to the celebration of Ogbanigbe 'Ime Egwu'.

4. ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE OGBANIGBE FESTIVAL

The second part of the farming season includes clearing of farmlands, cultivation of yams and other farm crops, staking of yams and weeding of already planted crops begins from after the *Igwe* festival. One can safely say that *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* festival is a continuation from *Igwe* festival, although emphasis is not placed on the *Igwe* festival. Oral history has it that when in August every year, the *Ogwude* of Owerre-Olubor observes that the yams are getting matured or are really matured for harvesting, he surmons the elders, his council of chiefs and their deity (*edofi*) priest to a meeting. The *Ogwude* then fixes a date for the new yam festival and celebration, after the deity priest must have performed some rites to the *edofi* their deity god. The New Yam festival and Ogbanigbe festival are interwoven for the new yam festival marks the beginning of Ogbanigbe 'Ime-Egwu' festival. The new market days are *Nwkor* or *Ogba*. According to [Onwuekwu \(2005\)](#) 'elaborate preparations are made, and often people who live outside the town in question endeavour to come for the occasion. [Ehiwario \(2005\)](#) added that 'festivals create room for people to renew their friendship, since members of the feasting community travel from far and near to felicitate with their friends, well-wishers, families, relations, and other members of the community at home. Festivals are very significant forms of communal activity; they call for the best that any particular society can produce. While [Nketia \(1974\)](#) corroborated that the degree of social cohesion in such communities is usually very strong, not only may the members know one another but also that, they may be bound by a network of social relations [Nketia \(1974\)](#). This is also applicable to the people of Owerre-Olubor community of Ika Northeast Local Government of Delta State. All sons and daughters of *Owerre-Olubor* community home and abroad are invited for this august occasion. Also, publicity is created through various medium to reach all and sundry. *Ogbanigbe* festival is usually celebrated either in September or October of every year as the season may warrant.

5. OPERATUS MODERADUM OF *OGBANIGBE* FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

A festival is a day set by the community to celebrate certain events that happened in the past. It is a day of merry making, and so, every member of the community looks forward to the day of the festival. Mbiti (1975) noted that some festivals involve paying homage to the dead. In the rituals associated with this festival, the spirit of the dead is invited to participate in the merry making and prayers to them to protect and provide for the people are made. Turner (1971) on the other hand, observed that in most African society prayers predominate most festivals in addition to thanksgiving to the celebrations. Special oblations and sacrifices are also part of the ceremonies. From the evening of the New Yam celebration, the elders and chiefs enter the period of solemnity known as *Iba - nzu* (that is, holy week). From *Iba-nzu* to actual day of the festival, there would be night of wake-keeping accompanied with dances done by the provosts to the titled men and many others. The festival lasts for six days. The sixth day is a festive day till the end of the festival which is *Igbu-Agbo*. The less in rank among the titled men lead the early celebration of dances till they go and hand over the leadership to the '*Iyase*' of the town. The *Iyase* then leads the crowd to important personalities, especially elders and heads of villages and to other places and spots that are of interest. The day is one of the happiest days for the entire citizens of *Owerre-Olubor* community.

Neighbouring communities far and near take delight in coming to observe the celebration, these usually stand along the streets and roadside; many of them even join the participating community in the dancing because of its thrilling nature. The last place visited by the *Iyase*, titled men and crowd is the palace of the *Ogwude* of *Owerre-Olubor*. After much dancing and entertainment, all leave the *Ogwude's* palace to perform the rite for *Igbu-Agbo*. This *Igbu-Agbo* is done in the evil-bush or forest known as *Ejo-Ofia Ikpekpe* (that is, cemetery)

No stranger is allowed to follow them except the titled men and few selected dancers with their drums go to this evil-bush to perform the rite of *Igbu-Agbo* - these return back to their homes in silence (this time there is no drumming). The performance of *Igbu-Agbo* signifies the end of dance performance associated with the *Ogbanigbe* festival. It is worthy of note here that elderly men who did not accompany those who went to the evil-bush (*Ejo-Ofia*), perform their own *Igbu-Agbo* in front of their compounds saying exactly the same words altered previously by the titled men and selected dancers who went to the evil-bush thus: "*Odoh-Ololokomi*" seven times. Prior to the performance of *Igbu-Agbo* rites, the elders go to '*Ilo-Chi* to give thanks to "*Chi*" (God) for sustenance especially for allowing them to eat of the fruits of their labour. This is usually done on the fifth day (*izu*). It is believed by the *Owerre-Olubor* people that after the celebration of *Ogbanigbe* festival, peace exists all through the community of *Owerre-Olubor* land.

6. INSTRUMENTS/SELECTED SONGS USED IN *OGBANIGBE* FESTIVAL

In African society, various instruments are associated with various ceremonial performances according to specific function performed by these instruments. In *Ogbanigbe* festival celebration certain instruments were used and these include.

- 1) *Aturuaka* (elephant tusks) an aerophone instrument.

- 2) *Nne-Egede* (mother drum – three or four in number) a membranophone instrument.
- 3) *Umu-Egede* (children drum – not of the size with the 2 above) also a membranophone.
- 4) *Eboma* (Gong – two or more as the case may be) an idiophone instrument and
- 5) *Ishaka* (Maracas) also idiophone.

These instruments are used to entertain the populace during *Ogbanigbe (Ime-Egwu)* festival celebration. Some popular songs used include *Owerre gbali gbali, Aho unwu mulu aho, Oo Nelone ilolo and Oo Onyeoma ejene Egwu*. The above selected songs are tabulated below including its English equivalent.

Song I

Owerre gbali gbali

Owerre, gbali, gbali – o-ho!

Owerre, gbali, gbali – oho!

gbali, gbali – oho!

gbali, gbali – oho!

(Emphasis *Iye-wo, Iye-wo, Iye-wo;*)

Iye-wo, Iye-wo, Iye-wo

gbali, gbali – o-ho!

Ony'iwe erie nga na ji

Ony'iwe erie ngana akasi

Ony'iwe erie ekpu nodene, rie]

otori, Nke hoduni – o-ho!]

gbali, gbali – oho!

gbali, gbali – oho!

gbali, gbali – oho!

gbali, gbali – oho!

Iye-wo, Iye-wo, Iye-wo;

Iye-wo, Iye-wo, Iye-wo;

Iye-wo!

gbali, gbali – oho!

gbali, gbali – oho!

Owerre come together

Owerre, unite, come together –oho!

Owerre, unite, cometogether –o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

(an exclamation, as a way of putting emphasis on the song)

come together –o-ho!

Enemy has eaten yam

Enemy has eaten akasi

Enemy has eaten what will kill him
- o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

(an exclamation, as a way of putting emphasis on the song)

come together –o-ho!

come together –o-ho!

The above song is sung intermittently with the following songs below.

Song II.

<u>Aho Unwu Malu Aho Nwa</u>	<u>the Year of Famine</u>
<i>Aho unwu nalu Aho nwa - o-o-o-ho</i>	the year that famine existed-o-o-o-ho
<i>Dine nwiaye anu-ogwu ori -o-o-o-ho</i>	Husband and wife fought for ori -o-o-o-ho

Song III.

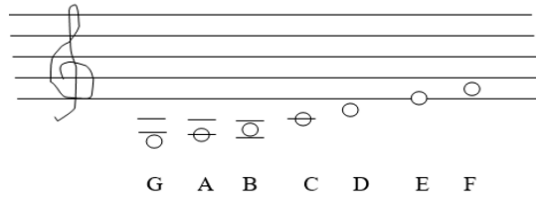
<u>O-O-Nelo-ne ilolo</u>	<u>O-O-Think, Think</u>
<i>O - o - Nelo-ne ilolo</i>	O - o - think, think
<i>Nwabuzo Ukpali nelone - ilolo</i>	<i>Nwabuzo Ukpali</i> , continue to think
<i>Onye nveli ilolo, ya lone, ilolo</i>	Whosoever can think, keep thinking
<i>Nwabuzo Ukpali ya lone ilolo</i>	Let <i>Nwabuzo Ukpali</i> think
<i>Onye nveli ilolo, ya lone, ilolo</i>	Whosoever can think, keep thinking
<i>Aho we no gbu ohere noli alinma - ilolo</i>	The year that juju priest is killed, is never good - think

Song IV.

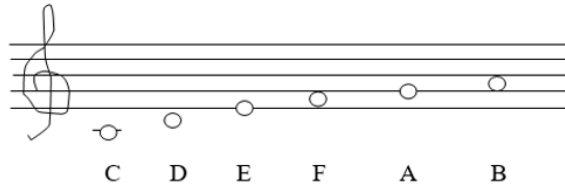
<u>O-O-Onye-Oma Ejene Ogwu</u>	<u>Do Not Go to War</u>
<i>O-o-onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	O-o- do not go to war
<i>onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	do not go to war
<i>onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	do not go to war
<i>Ihe ri-nma Ogwu-eri (2ce)</i>	it is the good thing that war takes (2ce)
<i>O-o-onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	O-o- do not go to war
<i>onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	do not go to war
<i>onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	do not go to war
<i>Onwenna nw'Ogboko,ozu nwuhu</i>	<i>Onwenna</i> daughter of <i>Ogboko</i> corpse looks
<i>Ochoma ebo</i>	for the family
<i>O-o-onye-oma ejene ogwu</i>	O-o- do not go to war
<i>Onwenna nw'Ogboko,ozu nwuhu</i>	<i>Onwenna</i> daughter of <i>Ogboko</i> corpse looks
<i>Ochoma ebo</i>	for the family

**7. SHORT ANALYSIS OF MUSICAL EXCERPTS OF SONG TEXTS
FOUR "DO NOT GO TO WAR"**

Oral translation of song texts Four (4) into noted music is in Key C. The music is characterized by short notes and long notes, sequence, and repetition. It has a very short-range starting from G below middle C to F above the middle C that is from (G A B C D E F) as shown on the staff below.

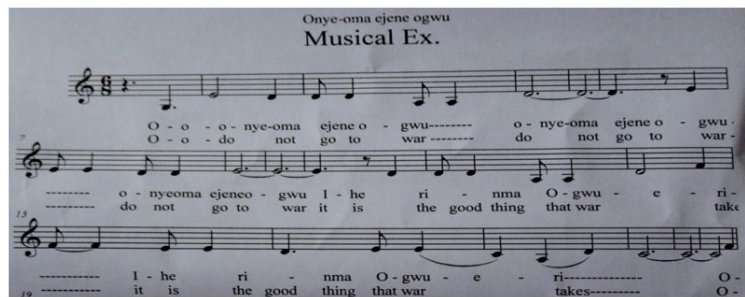


Re-arranged in the Scale of C thus:

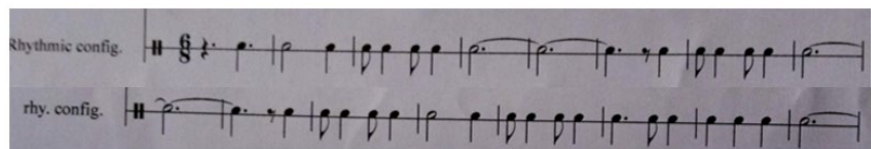


The music is in a six - scale formation as opposed to major and minor scale formation which is arranged from the first note (root) to the eighth note (octave) for instance alphabet (A to A, B to B, C to C and so on). The melodic structure is characterized with various motions such as conjunct, disjunct, clockwise, and anti-clockwise movement. It has an intervallic structure of a 6th, 2nd, 4th, and a 3rd. The music also has a rhythmic structure that is characteristic of African music. See musical excerpt below:

Melodic Structure



Rhythmic Structure



8. ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SONG TEXTS IN ENGLISH EQUIVALENT

Song Text 1: Owerre Come Together

Owerre, unite, come together –o-ho!

Owerre, unite, come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Enemy has eaten yam

Enemy has eaten akasi

Enemy has eaten what will kill him - o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Come together –o-ho!

Song Text 2: The Year of Famine

The year that famine existed-o-o-o-ho

Husband and wife fought for ori –o-o-o-ho

Song Text 3: O-O-Think, Think

O – o – think, think

Nwabuzo Ukpali, continue to think

Whosoever can think, keep thinking

Let *Nwabuzo Ukpali* think

Whosoever can think, keep thinking

The year that juju priest is killed, is never good – think

Song Text 4: Do Not Go to War

O-o- do not go to war

Do not go to war

Do not go to war

It is the good thing that war takes (2ce)

O-o- do not go to war

Do not go to war

Do not go to war

Onwenna daughter of *Ogboko* corpse looks for the family

O-o- do not go to war

Onwenna daughter of *Ogboko* corpse looks for the family

Traditionally, a text is understood to be a piece of written or spoken material in its primary form (as opposed to a paraphrase or summary). A text is any speech of language that can be understood in context. It may be as simple as 1-2 words (such as a stop sign) or as complex as a novel. Any sequence of sentences that belong together can be considered as text [Thoughtco \(2021\)](#) Texts whether written (composed) or unwritten (sung orally) are an important aspect of music. Although there are music compositions without texts being associated to them, a good percentage of music composed, or song orally are generally associated with texts. Most of the lines of the four song texts under consideration were repeated probably for emphasis; hence repetition technique which is one of the common features of African music and music of other world culture featured prominently in song texts 1, 3 and 4. Also the song texts are replete with figurative statements thus:

- Enemy has eaten *yam*
- Enemy has eaten *akasi*
- Husband and wife fought for *ori*
- Let *Nwabuzo Ukpali* think
- The year that '*juju priest*' is killed, is never good
- *corpse* looks for the family

Each song texts have very important messages sent to the audience which in this case is the Owerre-olubor community and Agbor municipality in general. The song text(s) spoke of unity among Owerre-olubor community. The song text(s) also made fun of famine indicating and or alluding that during famine there is the tendency to horde food which may lead to various vices an instance is the fight between husband and wife as indicated in song text example 2. The song text in example 3, shed light on the traditional belief of Owerre-olubor people revealing their belief on the role of the priest; that the year the priest is killed is very disturbing probably signifying a bad omen while song text 4, is an appeal to the people of Owerre-olubor community not to engage in war because war do not bring good rather wastage and disunity. The song texts are also characterized with long and short prose. Many world cultures celebrate one form of festival or the other – often times associated with music. These songs often talk about the story and history of the people, the travail and or victory of such culture. The four song texts under consideration portray various pictures; it emphasized the importance and imperativeness of 'unity', the effect of 'famine', 'omen' and the devastating effect of war and encourages peaceful cohabitation among member communities. The bane of some societies today is the devastating effect of war with its attendant sibling 'famine'. It is a fact that development and progress of any society lie firmly on peaceful co-existence in any country and among member nations.

9. CONCLUSION

A brief historical account of the emergence and metamorphosis of Owerre-Olubor community of Ika northeast local government area of Delta State, Nigeria was highlighted. Also highlighted is the community's festival '*Ogbanigbe* festival' modus operandus including instruments and some songs used during the festival celebration. It is noteworthy that some of the song texts used during '*Ogbanigbe*

festival' celebration teaches about moral values, the dignity of labour, self-reliance, and the importance of dwelling together in unity instead of warring with one another – recognizing the need for communities to dwell together in order to advance communal development which is also a reflection of the State and the Nation Nigeria in general.

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APPENDIX I

Onye-oma ejene ogwu
Musical Ex.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Onye-oma ejene ogwu" (Musical Ex.). The score is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are in Igbo and English. The English lyrics are: "O - o - o - nye-oma ejene o - gwu - do not go to war - do not go to war - o - nye-oma ejene o - gwu - do not go to war - o - nye-oma ejene o - gwu - do not go to war - I - he ri - nma O - gwu - e - ri - tak it is the good thing that war takes O - o - nye-oma ejene o - gwu - do not go to war - do not go to war - o - nye-oma ejene o - gwu - O nwenna nw'Ogbo - ko, o - do not go to warr Onwenna dau ghter of Ogbo 9 zu nwuhu Ucho-ma e - bo ko corpse looks for the fam - ly".

APPENDIX II

Musical Ex. Rhythmic config.

mus. ex. rhy. config.

mus. ex. rhy. config.

mus. ex. rhy. config.

mus. ex. rhy. config.

mus. ex. rhy. config.

The image displays a musical score for Appendix II, consisting of six systems. Each system contains two staves: a top staff for musical examples (mus. ex.) and a bottom staff for rhythmic configurations (rhy. config.). The musical examples are written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The rhythmic configurations are written in a bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 9, 17, 26, and 34 indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The musical notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines, while the rhythmic configurations use vertical stems and flags to represent specific rhythmic patterns.

APPENDIX III

NOTE

- Eke, Nkwo, Afo, and Ori is designated market days among the Delta Ibos of Delta State, Nigeria. These market days are also similar to that of South-Eastern people of Nigeria.
- Ori is a type of food prepared from corn
- Nwabuzo Ukpali is the name of a man who hailed from Obio a neighbouring community to Owerre-Olubor community
- (akasi) a type of leaf that germinates \on the ground
- Ejo-Ofia Ikpekpe means cemetery