

**Abor Iyime Awubu: Origin, History, Customs and
Traditions of the Abor Igbo People of Enugu State, Nigeria**

A Publication of the Abor Iyime Awubu Club 8

Editors

Dr. Ojel Clara Anidi, Ph.D

Chief Engr. Belije Madu

Professor Obinna Onodugo

Abor Iyime Awubu: Origin, History, Customs and Traditions of the Abor People of Enugu State, Nigeria

Editors:

Ojel Clara Anidi, Belije Madu, & Obinna Onodugo

This research/ book work was commissioned and assisted by the Iyime Awubu Social Club of Abor, Enugu State, Nigeria, in November 2021.

Accepted and being reviewed for publication, 2025.

Table of Contents

Editor's Page.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Acknowledgement	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1: The Igbo People and Perceptions (Ojel Clara Anidi).....	8
Chapter 2: Origins of the Igbo People (Ojel Clara Anidi)	21
Chapter 3: Aspects of Pre-Colonial Igbo Life (Adaobi Onodugo)	30
Chapter 4: The Agbaja and Ojewe-Ogene People (Ojel Clara Anidi)	38
Chapter 5: Abor Origin, Reorganisations, and Governance (Ojel Clara Anidi, and Ben A. Onodugo).....	45
Chapter 6: Review of Previous Works on Abor (Ojel Anidi)	56
Chapter 7: Traditional Political Structures in Abor (Ugonne Frances Onuoha)	Error! Bookmark not defined.73
Chapter 8: Technology, Blacksmithing, Architecture, Arts and Crafts in Abor (Ogochukwu Ani	86
Chapter 9: Forms of Folklore in Abor: Folktales (Akuko Iho), Praise Poetry (Igbu Evu), and Proverbs (Inu-okwu)	
Chapter 10: Personhood Ceremonies in Abor (By Ogochukwu Ani)	
Chapter 11: Indigenous Crops and Cuisines (Ogochukwu Ani and Ojel Anidi)	
Chapter 12: Abor Traditional Worship and Festivals (by Cajethan Ikechukwu Ikpa - Uzodigwe na Abor)	
Chapter 13: Traditional Health Care System and Longevity: A Pre-colonial Perspective (Francisca Okolo Mgbodile)	
Chapter 14: Migrations from Abor: A Focus on Our Relatives in Diaspora (Chike Okamkpa)	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and thank the Iyime Awubu Abor Club 8, for inspiring and commissioning the writing of this book. By so doing, the Club reveals itself as being composed of people of value, interested in the promotion of fundamental indigenous values, education, wisdom, and knowledge, which are generally observed to be grossly lacking in today's 21st century world. A number of scholars today believe that indigenous knowledge can play crucial roles in values (re)orientation and character (re)formation among the Nigerian citizenry who have generally lost their sense of values and direction. By extension, therefore, this research hopes to contribute in ameliorating the pervading dishonesty, immorality, corruption, crime, and irresponsibility of leadership as found in Igboland, Nigeria and the globe, today.

We thank the members of the research team, comrades who answered the call, believed in the cause, went into the fields, and with dogged efforts came up with worthwhile materials which have finally dotted the pages of this book, for the edification of our people and the Igbo race, at large. We also thank all our resource persons (cited and uncited), both the oral educators who granted us interviews, and the authors of several written materials who provided the information for this book. The intext citations and references indicate the names of many of these persons.

Specifically, we will like to acknowledge the following persons, who contributed to the writing of this book: *Adaobi Onodugo, Somto Akpugo, Nze Barr. Ben A. Onodugo (First Chairman, Abor Customary Court), Cajethan Ikechukwu Ikpa (Uzodigwe na Abor), Dr. Francisca Okolo Mgbodile, Dr. Chike Okamkpa, Mrs. Ogochukwu Ani, Dr. Obiora Innocent Anidi, Ugonne Frances Onuoha (Esq), Nneoma Lucy Onodugo, HRH Igwe Dr. Chike Onodugo, (Ujaligwa Umuavulu III), Arc. R. C. Anidi, (Okwanka n'Ebo), Hon. Jude Amadi, Gbulichi Elias Eruchie, Ozo Owhor b'ikem, Mr. Magbo Offor, Chief Gregory Emefu, Chief Barr. Matthew Obodoechi (Ochiagha Ujaligwa) and Chief Dubem Njeze (Osisoma Ujaligwa)*

The greatest of all the thanks and glory go to the Almighty God for without Him, we can do nothing.

Ojel Clara Anidi (Ph. D; M.A, English & Literary Studies; B.A. English/ History)

Chief Lecturer, Department of Language Studies, Faculty of General Studies, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu; & Senior Lecturer, Department of English and Literary Studies, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu

Chief Engr. Beejay Madu (Mii n'ezolu oha; add your qualifications)

Add Affiliations.....

Professor Obinna Onodugo (Ekuhelu-ngene; add your qualifications)

Chief Medical Director, University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Enugu

Other Affiliations.....

INTRODUCTION

A few things should be clarified from the onset of this book. First, the community and location presently called and spelt as 'Abor', in Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, should have been preferably spelt as 'Ebọ', as pronounced in our Igbo Agbaja (Wawa) dialect, in this book. In the course of editing this book, the editors considered adopting this indigenous spelling of the town's name, and had even gone halfway to change all mentions of the name 'Abor' to 'Ebọ'. However, in order not to leave readers confused as to the place being referred to as Ebọ, the editors decided to allow this generally known spelling, 'Abor', in this book. The spelling 'Abor', particularly with the last letter 'r' in the spelling, can be taken as our colonial heritage, along with many other artefacts of colonialism we have around us, which are not necessarily bad. Second, we have adopted the indigenous spelling of the name, 'Ojewe-Ogene' (as pronounced in the Wawa dialect) in this book. Ojewe-Ogene, as used in this book, is an alternative term to 'Ojebe-Ogene' or 'Ojebe Ogene' (as spelt in the central Igbo dialect), which earlier writers of this legend have often used. Third, the community and location being referred to as Abor in this book include the towns presently referred to as Abor, Umuavulu-Abor, and Amukwu-Abor. Umuavulu-Abor and Amukwu-Abor remain sons/ villages of Abor Iyime-Awubu (Abor n'isato), though they have now received autonomous status and recognitions as towns in their own rights in Enugu State, Nigeria. They proudly insert Abor to their names, in honour of this heritage.

The Abor community and locale is in the present-day Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, south east Nigeria. Abor is situated on a highland, about two-three kilometres from the 9th Mile Corner, Ngwo, along the old 9th Mile Corner to Nsukka road. It is bounded on the west by the towns, Eke and Ebe; on the north by the Ukana town, on the east by a group of Nike towns in Enugu East Local Government Area, and on the south by the Ngwo group of towns, particularly, Ameke Ngwo and Uboji Ngwo. According to popular oral traditions, Abor is the second son of a legendary woman named Ojewe-Ogene. The same traditions recognize Abor's father as Iyime-Awubu.

As mentioned above, Abor (Igbo spelling, Abọ) is preferably referred to and pronounced as 'Ebọ' (Igbo spelling, with accent) by the Abor people, particularly the elders and the local inhabitants. From every indication, the spelling, Abor, as used today, is an anglicised spelling of the indigenous name, Ebọ. Over the years, this anglicisation has also affected the real pronunciation of the name, as most people, including Abor people, now, often call the place, Abọ, instead of Ebọ (spellings in Igbo). Anglicisation of towns' names, in Igboland and other places in Nigeria, is fairly common, due to our British, foreign, colonial heritage; hence, such towns' names as Awhum, Awka, Awkunanaw, Orlu, etc., which if spelt in Igbo should be Ọhum, Ọka, and Ọkunano, Ọlu, etc. Indigenes of such localities with anglicised spellings are gradually going back to the original Igbo spellings of their localities. Thus, in the same way as the colonial spelling of the Igbo race was eventually changed from 'Ibo' to its correct spelling, 'Igbo', the 'Abor' name can also be corrected to 'Ebọ' or 'Ebo', with or without the accent in the letter 'o'. In support of this reasoning, the editors of this book would have opted to use the indigenous name, Ebọ, or Ebo (with or without the accent), but for the reason mentioned in the first paragraph. Maybe the town unions can try effecting and formalizing the necessary change, or we continue with the name 'Abor' as one of the community's colonial legacies.

It is also observed that a number of Igbo and non-Igbo communities, within and outside Nigeria, share similarities of name, in spelling or pronunciation, with the Abor town under study here. There are the Abor Hills in India, Asia; Abor town in the Volta Region of Ghana, West Africa; and Ebo town in Gambia, West Africa, along Brikama-Banjul Highway, close to River Gambia. In Nigeria, outside Enugu State, there are the Abo (sometimes called Aboh) axis, next to Isele-Ogwudu in Ndokwa East Local Government Area of Delta State; the Aboh town, headquarters of Aboh-Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State; and the Enugu-Abor community, in Ufuma, Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Coming to Enugu State, there are at least three communities whose names partly or fully sound like Abor or its indigenous Igbo Agbaja (Wawa) dialectical equivalent, 'Ebọ', or 'Ebo' (without the accent). These communities include: (1) Ebo, a hamlet close to Mgbuji, one of the villages in Iheamufu community in Isiuza Local Government Area; (2) Ndeaboh (can be written as Ndi-Aboh or Ndi-Abor, meaning 'people from Abor'), a community in Aninri Local Government Area; and (3) Umuebo (meaning 'children of Ebo'), a hamlet in Akpuoga Nike in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. It should be noted that the first letter, 'E', in Ebo, is pronounced with a lower intonation or accent, /,e/, by the people in Isiuza Local Government Area (the same pronunciation the Abor people (under study) use while referring to the ebọ (the farm lands closer to the homesteads). In contrast to the pronunciation of the ebọ farmlands, the first letter, 'E', in 'Ebọ' (the indigenous name for Abor) is usually pronounced with a somewhat higher accent /e'/. Also noteworthy is the prefix "Umu" (meaning, children) in the place-name, Umuebo. There may be other communities, unknown to the writers, now, with similarities of name with Abor, the place and community under study in this book.

Our interest in these similarities of names is obvious. Could there be any ancestral affinity between these communities, as mentioned above, and the Abor community under study? The names of places outside Nigeria sounding and being spelt like 'Abor' are not necessarily of key interest to the present researchers, as these may very likely be mere coincidences of names and spellings. Also, these similar Abor/ Ebo-sounding names within the Igbo communities may not be of much importance, as similarities of place-names abound in Igbo communities. So the several places, as mentioned, sounding like Abor/ Ebo may not necessarily indicate any close ancestral affinity between the communities. The researchers of this book, however, are interested in substantive migratory stories relating to Abor, Abor at home and in diaspora. Thus, for example, the findings revealing the relationship between the Umuebo community of Akpuoga Nike of Enugu State and the Abor community under study, as discussed here in Chapter 12 by Dr. Chike Okamkpa, should be of great interest to the reader interested in the migratory history of the Abor community.

Generally, this research attempted to examine the origin of the Abor community using four distinct theories/ hypotheses: (1) the Ojewe-Ogene (with Iyime Awubu) legend; (2) the Ebo Iyime Awubu legend (constituent villages or quarters seen as Abor Iyime Awubu's sons); (3) the migration theories; and (4) the Edda hypothesis. What seems most likely, looking at these theories, is that the area now known as Abor must have been occupied, probably gradually, at different periods of the people's history, beginning some centuries ago. The three main Igbo origin theories – the Oriental, the Niger/Benue, and the Igbo homeland – all invariably point at migrations as the major incidents enabling the spread of the people to different parts of

Igbo land, and other places. Onwuejeogwu (2000) reveals about thirteen major migrations and movements involving the Igbo people (Refer to Chapter 2). It is not quite certain which of the movements – whether the Stone Age (50,000 years ago to 900 AD), the Eri (8th to 9th century), the Nri (multiple, 10th to early 20th C), the Aro (17th-19th C), or any of the others, including the peripheral movements as itemised by Onwuejeogwu – that led to the eventual founding of Abor and their neighbouring communities, or whether Abor developed gradually through the accumulation of these movements. In the opinion of Onwuejeogwu (1977), the character of Igbo migrations remains a challenge to West African studies. Patterns of the population movements seem to be revealed in the Ozo title system, for example, as Onwuejeogwu contends. There is also the Achalonu-Olumba's (2009, 2010) hypothesis, corroborated by Umeh (2017), which claim that the Igbo culture predates all other civilizations of the world (Refer to Chapter 2). The issue of the Igbo origin is not an easy one; hence, Afigbo (1983) describes it as “a very maze within a maze”.

The work first looked at the larger enclaves from where the Abor people originated – the Igbo nation, the Agbaja-Enugu (Wawa) sub-nation, and the Ojewe-Ogene clan before focusing on the Abor community. The Abor political organisations, economy, farming, art works, including blacksmithing, architecture, folktales, music and their revered Odo and Ozo title-taking institutions were examined; Also, the people's indigenous crops and cuisines; traditional health care systems; as well as their numerous feasts, linked to different religious rituals, came under scrutiny. In summary, all the available sources, written and oral, on Abor culture and traditions, revealed the Abor people as highly spiritual, revering the supernatural, and constantly in search of natural balance, edification, human development, and the joy of living. The highly spiritual nature of the people made it easy for them to embrace the Christian religion when it came, together with the formal education that came with it.

This work is significant as it will help the present generation of Igbo, Agbaja-Enugu (Wawa), Ojewe-Ogene, and Abor youths, in particular, to learn more about their origin, culture, customs and traditions, with the view to applying the indigenous knowledge got for character building, values reorientation, and human capital development of their immediate and larger communities. We hope that this book shall help to inspire further studies on the vast topics touched.

Ojel Clara Anidi (Ph. D; M.A, English & Literary Studies; B.A. English/ History)

Chief Lecturer, Department of Language Studies, Faculty of General Studies, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu; & Senior Lecturer, Department of English and Literary Studies, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu

Chief Engr. Beejay Madu (Mii n'ezolu oha; add your qualifications)

Add Affiliations.....

Professor Obinna Onodugo (Ekuhelu-ngene; add your qualifications)

Chief Medical Director, University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Enugu

Other Affiliations.....

CHAPTER 1: The Igbo People and Perceptions (Ojel Clara Anidi)

Introduction: The Igbo Culture Area

As Abor is a locality in the Igbo culture area of Nigeria, it is deemed necessary to begin this discussion on Abor by generally examining the Igbo people, their land area and culture space in the Nigerian milieu. This helps to provide the necessary context and foreground for the study of Abor.

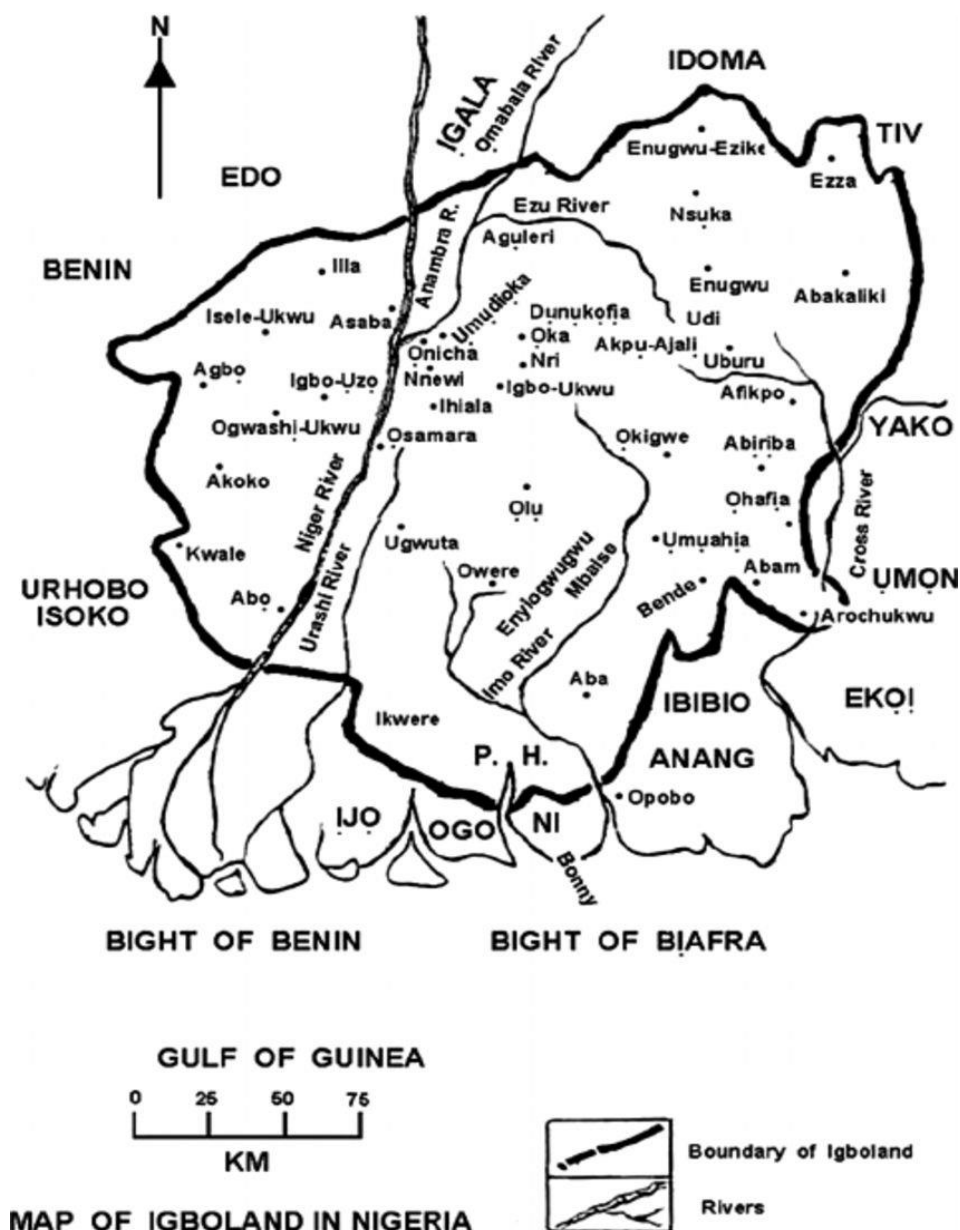
The term, ‘the Igbo’, refers to the Igbo people – ‘Ndi-Igbo’ (interpreted in Igbo language), who speak the varieties of the dialects of the Igbo language, and who dwell in the area referred to as Igboland. The Igbo homeland is situated in the southeastern part of Nigeria, West Africa. It lies on the east of the River Niger with a small extension on the west bank of the River Niger. The Igbo constitute one of the three largest culture groups in Nigeria, the other two being the Hausa and Yoruba, out of the many other culture groups in Nigeria, which include Kanuri, Fulani, Ibibio, Tiv, Ijaw, Edo, Efik, Nupe, Urhobo, Ekoi, Borgu, Ebira and a host of other groups. Ofomata (2010) describes the Igbo as “a resilient, energetic, hardworking, enterprising and positively individualistic group of people, [who] live in Southeastern Nigeria” (p.1). Citing the preliminary results of Nigeria’s 2006 Population Census, Ofomata reveals that Igboland covers a total surface area of approximately 41,000 square kilometers and has a population of 22,926,340 people. This implies that, as at 2006, Igboland has a population density of 559 persons per square kilometer, and is higher in population than 172 countries in the world and lower than only 48 countries; and in the African continent is higher in population than 46 countries and less in population than 10 countries. These figures do not take into account the sizeable Igbo population living outside Nigeria, in the neighbouring countries, and in every major region of the world (Ofomata, 2010).

The word ‘Igbo’ is derived from the Kwa, a group of languages in the Niger-Congo or Niger-Kordofanian family. In Kwa, ‘Igbo’ connotes ‘forest’ or ‘farm’ (Okafor (2017). In this regard, Okafor points to the use of similar words in the Igbo language; example, ‘ugbo’ which means ‘farm’, or ‘ugboko’ which means jungle. Okafor’s observation is quite apt, and can be taken further to the term “igbu ugbo” which means “to till the farm grounds”, as used by the Abor people of Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, under study. For Arinze (2008), the word, ‘Igbo’, has variously been used to mean “the people”, “man of the bush”, and, secondarily “slaves”. Some scholars believe that the use of the term ‘Igbo’ to mean one, unified, Igbo-speaking people belonging to one culture-area only came about after the twentieth century (Arinze, 2008; Ohadike, 1996).

For Ohadike (1996), before the twentieth century, Igbo persons identified themselves by their own smaller village unit, hamlet or kindred, descendants of one ancestor:

Before the twentieth century it would have been incorrect to speak of the Igbo as a single people; they were made up of over 200 separate groups. Although their customs and languages were clearly related; each group could have been considered a distinct society, encompassing perhaps twenty or thirty villages. An Igbo person who travelled thirty miles in Igboland might have great difficulty making himself or herself understood. (p.xix)

For Ohadike, the difficulty for the Igbo persons within thirty miles of each other in understanding themselves was due to the differences in the Igbo dialects spoken in the different places. But when contacts between the different distant Igbo communities became common during the colonial period (1900-1960), when many Igbo people ventured far from home to work at the different colonial government institutions, schools and offices in the urban and rural areas, they soon realized that they were all one Igbo people with a common culture; thus a broader Igbo culture-group identity started to develop. It must be stated, however, that though the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria identified more with their immediate kindred, village or community before the colonialists came, yet each community, then, still identified itself as Igbo, *ndi Igbo* (Igbo people), who speak the Igbo language, then.



(Map retrieved April 10, 2025, from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Igboland-in-Nigeria-Source_fig1-235720609)

Onwuejeogwu (1972) describes the Igbo culture-area as “an area delimitable by an imaginary line running outside the settlements of Agbor, Kwale, Obiaruku (West Niger Igbo), Ahoada, Diobu, Umuagbayi (Port Harcourt area), Arochukwu, Afikpo, Ndinioafu, Isiogo (Abakaliki), Enugu Ezike (Nsukka area), Ebu (west Niger Igbo)” (p.16). This imaginary line, according to Onwuejeogwu, enclosed an area in which the people not only speak the various dialects of the Igbo language, but also have typical and significant common culture traits, complexes, and patterns, up to or over fifty percent, developed around certain dominant culture themes, for a long time. For Onwuejeogwu, a culture-area is a geographic delimitation of areas that have the same dominant and significant culture traits, complexes or patterns. In such a scheme there may be culture-centres where the highest frequency of the dominant, significant and typical traits complexes or patterns occurs; and culture-margins where the traits, complexes or patterns tend to thin out, interpenetrate or overlap with culture traits of another neighbouring culture-area. The concept of culture area is an anthropological one, which does not cover many aspects of recent political development.

People who live within the Igbo culture area speak the same language, Igbo, and so constitute a speech community. Within this speech community, there are scores of dialects, including Ika, Ukwuani, and Enuani dialects in the West of the Niger; and Onitsha, Orlu, Owerri, Etche, Ikwerre, Nsukka, Ohuhu and Agbaja dialects in the East of the Niger (Anidi, 2008, p. 6). More recently, Okafor (2017) recognizes more distinct Igbo dialects, such as: Wawa (Agbaja) Igbo, Awka Igbo, Onitsha Igbo, Aro Igbo, Afikpo Igbo, Owerri Igbo, Bende Igbo, Rivers Igbo, and West Niger Igbo. Dialects of the same language may differ from one another in pronunciation, vocabulary, or other minor grammatical arrangements, but communication between speakers of the different dialects remains possible.

In terms of vegetation, Igboland falls across four major vegetation units: Rain Forest Savanna Ecotone, the Lowland Rain Forest, Fresh Water Swamp Forest, and Salt Water Swamp Forest (Ofomata, 2010). Areas of true rain forest, according to Ofomata, are characterized by an abundance of plant species per hectare, and it is this great density that makes it the richest in terms of biomass productivity of all terrestrial ecosystems. However, man’s influence has helped to reduce the Lowland Rain Forest to the Rain Forest Savanna Ecotone. The land is mainly low lying, with the exception of Awgu (1,287 ft.), Nsukka (1,315 ft.), and Enugu (1,715 ft.) (Edeh, 2007).

The Earliest Written Igbo History

The earliest written notes on the Igbo were mainly those of the eighteenth and nineteenth century European traders and slavers who often visited the delta region of Nigeria, and those of some American slave owners. The term ‘Igbo’ in most of these notes was spelt as ‘Heebo(s)’, ‘Eboe(s)’ ‘Ebo’, ‘Ibo’, or ‘I’gbo’, in mostly anglicised forms. Again, much of the information on the Igbo, as provided in the notes, are sketchy and so, as Isichei (1977) opines, one can hardly rely on such sketchy odd references while writing the history of the Igbo (the same way that one could never write the history of the Oyo Empire by collecting references to Eyeo and Hio). Yet, for the present researcher, these writings are important, for they provide some background information into the issue of the slave trade as it relates to the Igbo people. The history of the slave trade and enslavement, as painful as it was, is now being faced all over the

world by the different institutions associated with it, as a way of coming to terms with the facts and getting or providing the required healing in the process.

The European presence in the delta (coastal) region of Nigeria and contact with the Igbo began in the mid-fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese, and then the Dutch and finally the English. Between the years 1434 and 1807, the Niger delta region of Nigeria acted as a contact point between African and European traders. At that stage, the emphasis was on trade rather than empire building for the Europeans, and the trade consisted primarily of slaves. 'Heebos' (the Igbo) is mentioned, for instance, by Adams (1823) in his notes, thus:

This place [Bonny] is the wholesale market for slaves, as not fewer than 20,000 are annually sold here; 16,000 of whom are natives of one nation, called Heebo, so that this single nation has not exported a less number of its people, during the last twenty years, than 320,000; and those of the same nation sold at New and Old Calabar, probably amounted in the same period of time to 50,000 more, making an aggregate amount of 370,000 Heebos. (Adams, in Isichei, 1977, p. 11-12)

Adams further reveals that the 'Heebos' inhabit a country of great extent and are extremely populous, judging from the immense number annually sent into slavery. Adams's interest here is in the number of the Igbo people available for sale as slaves in the delta, coastal, region of Nigeria. Adams also seems interested in exonerating himself from the responsibility and guilt of this shameful trade, rather pushing the blame to the "Heebo" nation who "exported" a large number of "its people". It is now common knowledge that the Europeans who travelled across continents to obtain these slaves were the ones who master-minded the raiding and kidnapping of the Igbo and other African peoples who were being sold as slaves. These foreigners were the ones who sustained the slave trade and the ones who eventually abolished the trade. The African people who aided and abetted in this grand European scheme cannot be absolved from the crimes of this trade, though they were largely the pawns of the game.

Igboland was the main destination for the trading expeditions of the delta coastal people of Nigeria, not only because of the slaves that were usually captured from there, but also because it was rich in natural products. In this regard, Köler (1840), in Isichei (1977), writes as follows:

They [the Bonny traders] call Iboland Igbinni. It lies at the sources of the Delta, and is full of great forests and mighty trees. It is very rich in natural products – maize, rice, yams, oil palms, dyewoods, cotton, horses and elephants. The numerous inhabitants are hardworking, and make cotton cloth (egrabétta) ... iron knives, daggers, spears and musical instruments. [The words, 'Igbinni' and 'egrabétta', in this extract are not Igbo but Ibani] (p.15)

Köler, whose writings were interpreted by Dr. U. P. Isichei, was a German doctor who spent four months at Bonny, in 1840, collecting word lists and recording detailed observations about many aspects of Bonny life. Köler's study is significant for Igbo history, for it sheds light on Bonny/Igbo relations, and the role of Igboland as an exporter of agricultural produce, and metal goods, which has curiously been neglected by historians (Isichei, 1977). The Igbo's prowess in farming, industry and natural products became clearer after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, and a new trading era between the British and the Igbo concentrating on industry (palm products, timber, elephant tusks and spices) began. The British now saw the hinterland as productive, and refused to be confined to the coast. At this point they began to combine aggressive trading with aggressive imperialism.

Though there are inconsistencies in the slavers' notes on the Igbo, yet Crow's (1830) comments about the slavers' seeming preference of some Igbo slaves compared to other African slaves is worth examining. It seems also that the European slavers were fairly informed about the various African ethnicities, leading to the slave dealers' targeting of certain ethnic groups which plantation owners preferred. Crow's notes are quite revealing on these:

The Eboes...have already been spoken of as a superior race, and the inhabitants, generally, are a fair dealing people, and much inclined to a friendly traffic with Europeans, who humour their peculiarities. Their general honesty, when the loose nature of their laws, as respects Europeans, and the almost entire absence of the moral influence of religion amongst them, are considered, affords a favourable prognostic of what the negro character would be if placed under the restraints and precepts of an enlightened system of jurisdiction. P.13)

Crow here indicates that the Igbo are people of character and generally honest, which he finds surprising because to him, then, there was no "moral influence of religion" among the people to bring that about. Crow here obviously is unaware that the Igbo have their own fundamental type of religion which teaches the same morals as the more organized religious groups, and with which the people groomed their own society. Crow generally is of the opinion that the Igbo are preferred in the West India colonies for their fidelity and utility as domestic servants, particularly "if they are taken there when young, as they become the most industrious of any of the tribes taken to the colonies (p.14). This description, as simple as it sounds, might have played a remarkable role in the capturing, kidnapping and sale of young children into slavery in those dark days of the transatlantic slave trade.

There is a lack of uniformity, however, in these early accounts of the European slavers concerning the character of the Igbo people; obviously the accounts are usually influenced by the motives of the writers or of their informants. Köler (1840), for example, observes that the Igbo people, though hardworking, are aggressive. In his words, the Igbo are "warlike, wild, rapacious, and some of them are cannibals. Therefore, they have to put up with being spoken of, by the Bonny people, as they would speak of sharks, *Iboman wawa too much*, "Ibo people are very wicked"" (In Isichei, 1977, p. 15). Though Köler interprets "wawa" here as "wicked", it might mean "disagreeable". The literal meaning of 'Wawa' is 'No', or 'I do not agree'. With such a terrible trade on human merchandise being carried on with and by the Igbo people and on Bonny land, it is little wonder that the Igbo should be described in this way at that time, by the slave dealers, which includes the Bonny and the European traders. Again, the motive of the writers (the slavers) may be seen as being mostly self-serving. As the maxim goes, until the lion tells its own version of the story, the hunter remains the hero of his story". This description of the Igbo, particularly using the word "wawa", will come up again in one of the succeeding sub-sections and chapters.

One of the most remarkable histories on the Igbo slaves, as recorded by the slavers, was the Igbo slaves' despair upon being sent on board a slave ship; they often employed every strategy to effect the commission of suicide (Long, 1774; Crow, 1830; Chambers, 2013). As these writers have observed, the despair of enslavement and total aversion to purchase was worse for the class of the Igbo called "Breeche", "Breechee" or "Bruchee", anglicized spellings for "Gburu ichi" or "Mgburuchi", persons who had the "I'tschi" (ichi) scarification marks on their

foreheads and faces. The Igbo “*Gburu ichi*” with the ichi marks may be a full Ozo title holder, or only an ‘Mgburuchi’, someone who has commenced the steps (ceremonies) towards becoming an Ozo. Sometimes, the *Mgburuchi* may be someone from the Nri ancient kingdom, where almost every male-child takes the title. The Nri area was regarded as the spiritual centre of Igboland in those days, and the Nri people were taken as the ones who introduced the Ozo rites to most Igbo communities, then. In Igboland, then, it was an abomination to harm in any way, talkless of kidnap and sale into slavery, an Ozo or a wearer of the ichi marks (the Breeche). Again, it was a bad omen for any Mgburuchi and members of his family if the Mgburuchi having commenced the steps required in becoming an Ozo, is finally denied of getting to his final destination through death, or, in this instance, enslavement. It is no wonder then that for the Igbo Mgburuchi, it was better to be dead than to be alive to witness his enslavement. The presence of this high-ranking Igbo being so humiliated had a much more galling effect on his fellow shipmates and countrymen in misfortune (Adams, 1823). Among the Igbo, generally, may be, owing to their egalitarian way of life, suicide seemed a better alternative than submitting to enslavement.

Writing about his experience of the Igbo in Jamaica, Long (1774) contends that the great objection of the Igbo as slaves is their “constitutional timidity, and despondency of mind; which are so great as to occasion them very frequently to seek, in a voluntary death, a refuge from their own melancholy reflections” (Long, in Chambers, 305). Because of this tendency of the Igbo to resort to suicide (voluntary death), rather than submit to the drudgery of slavery, the slavers tended to watch them closely or otherwise treat them mildly. In this regard, Long (1774) contends that the gentlest and mildest treatment usually reconciled the Eboe (Igbo) slaves to their situation, and once their confidence was obtained, they manifested as great fidelity, affection and gratitude, as can reasonably be expected from men in a state of slavery. The Igbo women, according to Long, were better labourers than the men, probably because they were more used to hardwork and ‘ill-treatment’ in Africa. Of course, the African women have always been the backbone of many African families, communities and societies, though they hardly regard it as ill-treatment. The women only seek, more recently, for a little recognition of their efforts. It is little wonder then that the Igbo women fall into the category of good slaves by the standards of the slavers.

Chambers (2013), similarly, reveals that the enslaved Igbo, particularly men, resisted their bondage in ways that confounded their masters. Popular instances of the Igbo slaves’ resistance to slaving authorities, as mentioned by Chambers include: 1. The March 1816 Western Jamaican insurrection, where about one thousand slaves (mostly Igbo) plotted a general insurrection and elected a “King of the Eboes” and two captains. 2. The 1822 Monday Gell’s Denmark Vesey’s famous “Ibo Company” rebellion in South Carolina. 3. The ‘Ibos Landing’ on St. Simons Island, Georgia, which has become one of the few public sites of memory in the U.S. South. Concerning the last example, local tradition has it that a group of enslaved Igbo who had just arrived and were landed in chains, began to sing a song in their language; then following their Chief and all singing together they marched into the water to go back to Africa, and they all drowned, except a few who were rescued as precious commodities could not be allowed to waste. Thus, the ‘Ibos Landing’ became an enduring myth of resistance and confrontation with enslavement. Following such episodes, it was not uncommon to hear slaves in plantations, as seen in late-colonial South Carolina rice plantation, often teasing one another

with statements such as “You be Iba Niga [Igbo Nigger]; Iba Niga great ‘askal [rascal]” (Chambers, 2013, p. 2).

The foregoing reveals that the Igbo were among the most difficult people to keep as slaves. Yet, as most of these early writers of Igbo history contend, as mentioned severally above, the Igbo could become one of the most industrious of any of the tribes taken to the colonies, if taken there when young or if treated gently and mildly. Nevertheless, one can say that it is a point of pride for the Igbo, that they were regarded by the slavers and slave dealers as difficult slaves. In this regard, Chambers (2013) notes as follows:

The historical fact that throughout the Atlantic world, from Bonny to colonial North America to Jamaica to the antebellum U.S. South, masters generally saw Igbo as “bad” slaves should, today, be a point of pride. Who in their right mind would wish to be remembered as a “good” slave? (p.3)

Reflecting on this, one may further relate the Igbo’s tendency to commit suicide rather than being enslaved or submitting to the drudgery of slavery to the largely democratic and egalitarian nature of the Igbo society. The typical Igbo, particularly, the men, are not used to serfdom; they are encouraged to be expressive and have an opinion on issues. Slavery, maltreatment or being forced to conform, against their will or principles, is not in their nature and will naturally be resisted. The women may manage better, in this case, as seen in the reports.

Olaudah Equiano’s Autobiography and Description of the Igbo

Apart from the sketchy notes on the Igbo by the European and American slave dealers and writers, the writings of an Igbo ex-slave in London, Olaudah Equiano, may perhaps be regarded as the first real attempt to describe the Igbo people and culture in a little more detail. Equiano in his autobiography, *The Astonishing Story of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African Written by Himself*, published in 1792, narrated with nostalgia his early life in Igboland. He identified his town as “Essaka”, one of the many districts under the kingdom of Benin, then. The town “Essaka” is difficult to locate in the present Nigerian map, probably because the spelling has been anglicized or is now spelt differently from the way it sounded to Equiano, then; or maybe Essaka is only a very small village unit or hamlet inside a larger town that is now on the map. A number of places, towns, and villages in Igboland actually sound like “Essaka” – Asaba, Nsukka, Ishieke, Iheaka, Nzuko (a hamlet in Umuavulu-Abor). However, scholars such as Jones (1967), as cited in Oriji (“Igboland, slavery and drums of war”) believe that Essaka is among the Igbo communities west of the River Niger. There are other researchers, such as Carretta (1999), who raise issues over Equiano’s nationality and year of birth.

It is obvious from Equiano’s descriptions of Essaka people and culture that Essaka is an Igbo community. Equiano’s spelling of ‘Igbo’ as “Eboe”, and description of his people as “Eboan Africans” are evident of the anglicisation of the terms, as seen in the earliest accounts on the Igbo. Again, the name ‘Olaudah Equiano’, though spelling is anglicized, indicates an Igbo origin. ‘Olaudah’ should be written as Olauda, without the ‘h’, in Igbo language. It can be interpreted in English as ‘precious metal with a loud sound’. Other interpretations, as given by Equiano himself, are “vicissitude or fortunate”, and “one favoured and having a loud voice and well spoken”. The surname ‘Equiano’ can be viewed as an anglicized spelling of ‘Ikwuano’ meaning ‘four homesteads related by blood’ or Ekwuano, meaning ‘four kitchenettes’, in

English language. Equiano's report that "dried fish" was a great rarity in their place, as their waters were only brooks and springs (p. 27), seems to indicate that his part of Igboland is not the riverine districts, where fishes were common.

The Igbo customs and traditions of Equiano's time, as portrayed in his work, are revealing enough – the leadership of the 'Embrenche' titled men, chivalry of the men, strong marriage traditions, polygamy, large families, how they kept their own slaves (treating them almost like other members of the family), farming, architecture, community cooperatives, folklore and dances, etc. As Equiano was only eleven years old before his kidnap and sale into slavery and eventual forced migration from Africa, some writers, as portrayed in the notes in the book, have wondered how Equiano would be able to recall vividly all that he wrote in his book about his early life. It seems anyway that an eleven-year-old person in a similar circumstance would remember in much the same way, with nostalgia, many years later, the things that were precious to him in his earlier years. For Equiano, "the first scenes of my life", as he puts it, "had been implanted in me with great care, and made an impression on my mind, which time could not erase, and which all the adversity and variety of fortune I have since experienced, served only to rivet and record..." (p. 42). Though Equiano has painted a beautiful picture of the Igbo cultural heritage in his book, yet, it is obvious from his narration that the slave trade already was leaving its toll on the people of that era. The agony of the transatlantic slave trade was intense for both the Igbo people taken and the Igbo society from which they were taken. As Crowder (1980) avers, the three or more centuries of the slave trade were indeed barren centuries for the Igbo: there were the pervasive insecurity, disintegration of social bonds and constraints on economic productivity. For Afigbo (2000), from about 1500 to 1850, a period of some 350 years, Igboland was one of the main recruiting grounds for African slaves (the third highest); most of the slaves shipped to the New World from such major slaving ports as Bonny and Kalabari were Igbo.

Common Perceptions of the Igbo People

Rising from the foregoing, one of the earliest things known about the Igbo were associated with the iniquitous slave trade. Igboland was known as a land torn by slave raids and wars. Such names as 'Long Juju', the 'Aro', 'Abam' and 'Ohafia', associated with this period, are believed to be synonymous with slave raids, violence and bloodshed (Afigbo, 2000). These stories gave the Igbo a very poor image: "They were seen as a violent, heartless people who were prepared to dispense with some of the most useful elements in their population – the young and the able-bodied adult" (Afigbo, 2000, p. 13). Additionally, the people living in the delta coastal regions of Nigeria who were the ones directly dealing with the foreign slave traders and whose lands were used as markets for the Igbo slaves developed very poor impressions of the Igbo, some kind of superiority complex and insolence over the Igbo, during the slave trade era.

After the slave trade, the next perception of the Igbo was mainly based on the British colonialists' view of the Igbo's largely segmentary political culture. The colonialists portrayed Africans with segmentary political culture as the last retreats of savagery and backwardness. The colonial apologists made certain concessions with the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba, and the Bini, whom they regarded as having reached the stage of barbarism in the evolution of their society and culture and even made the transition from barbarism, to the early stages of civilization. The Igbo, on the other hand, were categorized as savages, incapable of making the

transition to civilization because they had not attained the mega-state stage of political evolution, a stage these other nationalities were said to have attained from about 10th century A.D. (Afigbo, 2000). The Igbo were therefore portrayed by the colonial government as anarchistic and ungovernable. In this regard, the Igbo and the Tiv were regarded as similar. These views, however, seem to have been propagated by British anthropologists, political and administrative propagandists who were anxious to use these theories to explain to their home government why they had limited success in the Igbo region of Nigeria. The Aba/ Igbo Women Riot of 1929 helped to reinforce this view of Igbo people. In the Riot, “mobs of unarmed irate women reputedly threw themselves at well-armed British colonial soldiers and police in a bid to show their anger at some of the vagaries of foreign rule” (Afigbo, p. 14). But that Riot exposes the typical heroism of the Igbo, African women in times of crises. Though there were casualties and losses, yet the revolt yielded a number of positive changes for the entire Igbo nation, then. By 1930, the colonial government abolished the system of warrant chieftains, replacing them with clan heads (‘Isi Ani’s) appointed by the local communities rather than the British. Also, women started being appointed to serve at the Native Courts, then. The Aba/ Igbo Women’s War and the reforms that followed it have been described as a prelude to the emergence of mass African nationalism (Van Allen, 1975; Zukas, 2009).

There was also the perspective of the Igbo people as radicals. For instance, most of the colourful and educated Nigerian nationalists who played key roles in the struggle for Nigerian independence were from the Igbo stock – Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. Kingsley Ozuomba Mbadiwe and Mazi Mbonu Ojike. To the Igbo, the fact that these Igbo luminaries led the fight for Nigerian independence was viewed from a positive angle, but not so for the British administrators. The Zikist National Vanguard, for example, was renowned for its vociferous radicalism. There were also the Enugu Colliery workers strike of 1949. Additionally, the Igbos unsuccessfully attempted to secede from Nigeria, when they declared themselves the Republic of Biafra. The British viewed this as the Igbos fragmentationist approach to life and government and an attempt to “wreck what was believed to be Britain’s finest and largest piece of political engineering – the federation of Nigeria” (Afigbo, 2000, p 14).

The image painted of the Igbo at the Nigeria-Biafra War was that of an “uncalculating and impetuous people who with their eyes wide open decided to use their heads to break down a granite wall supported and protected by the rest of the world. The Nigeria-Biafra War may be compared to the Igbo Women Riot of 1929. Just as “mobs of unarmed irate women reportedly threw themselves at well-armed British colonial soldiers and police” at the Igbo Women Riot, in the same way, at the Biafran War, mobs of unarmed civilians literally threw themselves at well-armed Nigerian soldiers. In the Igbo characteristic way, Biafra’s only weaponry was “raw, suicidal bravery”, as Nwankwo (1980) puts it. For example, as Enugu was being threatened by the federal forces in 1967, the following hysterical situation played out:

Thousands of militia youths poured into Enugu asking for deployment. A large contingent came from Port Harcourt, another from Aba, another from Orlu, and others from all over Biafra.

But there were no arms! Something had to be done. All firearms – including dane guns – were commandeered. These could only arm a few score. The rest were armed with machetes, clothed and moved forward into the forests – to face a force armed with

machine guns and automatic rifles. Naturally hundreds of them died (Nwankwo, 1980, p.19).

The British obviously supported that fight by the Nigerian government to keep Nigeria one, against the Biafrans (mainly the Igbo), at the Nigeria-Biafra War of 1967-70.

During the Nigeria-Biafra War, some of the assumed Igbo people, living at the peripheral, delta, area actually worked and fought against the Igbo – they were termed ‘saboteurs’ by the Igbo people then. For Umeh (2017, Vol 1), the denigration of the Igbo race by some of these ‘assumed’ Igbo people was greatly magnified after the Nigeria-Biafra War. Then, for example, certain Igbo communities in Rivers State started adding ‘R’ to their names which read as “Umu...”, to now read as “Rumu...”, in attempt to deny their Igbo ancestry. “Umu” means “Children of...” in Igbo, but with the addition of “R”, to get “Rumu”, the Igbo meaning has gone. In Umeh’s opinion, these are all transient events, for, eventually, those concerned would come to terms and become proud again of their Igbo ancestors: “For one thing, most of the people concerned have not changed their Igbo names” (p.47).

Further, the colonial and post-colonial western education helped in producing a class of Igbo people who, in the words of Umeh (2017), “have been sucked into demonizing [their own] Igbo history and culture to curry personal favour, or so they hoped to, from their colonial masters by denigrating Igbo people’s history, culture, etc. – a classical example of one cutting one’s nose to spite one’s face, for a plate of pottage” (pp. 46-47). The Igbo fully embraced western education and so many of the educated Igbo then felt that their Igbo culture should be shunned in favour of the western culture.

Today one can say that the Igbo are perceived in a more positive light, though the subject is often a matter of controversy, tilting from positive to negative and vice versa. On this, Okafor (2017) posits that when a group of Nigerians of whatever ethnic group discusses the Igbo, they tend to do so in “contrasting attitudes of admiration and bitterness, condonation and condemnation, acceptance and hostility” (p. 6). The Igbo have been referred to as egalitarian and at the same time called a power-seeking group. Sometimes they are held in awe as people who work hard and are ready to put up with any kind of discomfort just to make an honest living. Their “Boi-boi” system of apprenticeship, for instance, has been hailed in many international academic economic fora as one of the most dynamic methods of youth empowerment; hence the Igbo have been applauded as one of the most forward-looking, progressive, people in Africa and indeed the world. At the same time, they are condemned by other culture groups in Nigeria as greedy, selfish and materialistic. Even the British scholar Jones (1949) utilizes oxymoronic terms when he states that the Igbo combined “extreme aggressiveness and enterprising individualism” in conjunction with “an equally striking degree of tolerance and gregariousness” which enabled them to co-operate and live peacefully together in over-enlarged village communities in the most over-populated area of Negro Africa (p.150).

Also, the Igbo people’s adaptability and willingness to accept other people’s cultures has been extolled on one hand and on the other hand condemned as their lack of identity with their own culture. Writing about the characteristic attitudes to the Igbo in Nigeria, Okafor (2017) citing Ottenberg (1962) states thus:

The Igbo are probably most receptive to culture change and most willing to accept Western ways [than] any large group in Nigeria. Hundreds of thousands of them have migrated to other parts of the country as a result of culture contact following the British conquest of their country between about 1860 and 1915. Despite their rural background, the Ibo find urban life stimulating and rewarding (Okafor, p. 6).

This same tendency of the Igbo to easily accept and imbibe other people's culture has been attacked by some Igbo scholars. In the words of Onyesoh (2002) as cited in Anidi (2008),

Nascent Igbo are more interested in showing that they are more Christian than the Pope, more English or American than the English or American; and even more Hausa/ Yoruba than Hausa/ Yoruba – elite or ordinary, the dressing code is a cacophony of Hausa, Yoruba, American, French and Igbo fashions. How well are we doing today? (Anidi, p. ix)

It should, however, be mentioned that the Igbo seem to have largely awakened and are responding positively to the calls for a Pan-Igbo culture awareness and identity.

The negative perceptions of the Igbo arising from a number of factors, as seen above, including the earliest written records on them, which were associated with the slave trade, the segmentary political structure of the Igbo, their “vociferous” fight for Nigerian Independence, and their Biafran/Igbo secession and eventual defeat in the Nigeria-Biafra War do not actually add up to a knowledge of the Igbo people and culture. Igbo scholars have therefore emphasized the need for guided and comprehensive research, analysis and synthesis into the ethics and ethos of the Igbo culture and civilization, as a way of showing and learning who the Igbo people really are.

References

- Adams, J. (1823). *Sketches taken during ten voyages to Africa, Between the years 1786 and 1800*. London: Hurst, Robinson, and Co., repr. New York; Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970.
- Afigbo, A. E. (2000). *Obi Ikenga: The case for a pan-Igbo centre for Igbo studies*. Abia State University Press Ltd.
- Anidi, O. (2008). *Sands of our land: Historical tales of Abor and Umuavulu*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fidgina Global Books.
- Arinze, F. A. (2008). *Sacrifice in Igbo traditional religion*. Onitsha, Nigeria: St. Stephen's Press.
- Baikie, W. B. (1856). *Narrative of an exploring voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Binue, commonly known as the Niger and Tsadda, in 1854*. London. John Murray; repr. London: Frank Cass and Co., 1966.
- Carretta, V. (1999). Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity. *Slavery and Abolition* 20 (3), 96-105.
- Chambers, D. B. (2013). *Enslaved Igbo and Ibibio in America: Runaway Slaves and Historical Descriptions*. Enugu, Nigeria: Jemezie Associates, 2013.
- Crow, H. (1830). *Memoirs of the late Captain Hugh Crow, of Liverpool*. London. (Crow's editors supplemented his text with authentic information, obtained from various sources).
- Crowder, M. (1980). *The story of Nigeria*. Britain: Redwood Burn Ltd, Trowbridge & Esher, reprinted.
- Edeh, E. M. P. (2007). *Towards an Igbo metaphysics*. Banbury: Minuteman Press (reprint).
- Equiano, O. (1792). *The astonishing story of the life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African written by himself*. Published/ Reprinted in Enugu, Nigeria: Abic Books & Equip. Ltd., 2007.
- Isichei, E. (1977). *Igbo worlds*. London: Macmillan Educational Ltd.
- Jones, G. I. (1967). "Olaudah Equiano of the Niger Ibo." In Philip Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Jones, G. I. (1949). Dual organization in Ibo social structure. *Africa*, 19 (2), 150-156.
- Köler, H. (1840). *Einige notizen uber Bonny*. Göttingen. (Extracts used as translated by Fr. Uche Peter Isichei).
- Long, E. (1774). *The history of Jamaica, or general survey of the ancient and modern state of that island*, 3 vols. London: Lowndes; repr. London: Frank Cass and Co., 1970.
- Nwala, T. U. (1985). *Igbo philosophy*. Ikeja-Lagos, Nigeria: Lantern Books.
- Nwankwo, A. A. (1980). *Nigeria: The challenge of Biafra*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Ofomata, G. E. K. (2010). The Igbo (Ndigbo): Vision, mission and the hereafter of a survey of the Igbo nation project: In G. E. K. Ofomata, & P. C. Uwazurike (Eds.) *A Survey of the Igbo Nation*, 2 (pp.1-23). New York: Triatlantic Books.
- Ogunmodimu, M. (2015). Language policy in Nigeria: Problems, prospects and perspectives. *International Journal of Humanities and Soce*, 5(9), 154-160.
- Ohadike, D. C. (1996). "Igbo culture and history." Preface to *Things Fall Apart*. Retrieved from <https://womrel.sitehost.iu.edu/REL-Igbo-Culture- and-History.pdf>
- Okafor, R. C. (2017). *A study of Igbo folk songs*. Enugu, Nigeria: Academic Publishing

- Company.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1972). An outline account of the dawn of Igbo civilization in the Igbo culture area. *The Journal of the Odinani Museum Nri*, Maiden Issue, 1 (1), 15-55.
- Onyeonuna, J. C. A. (1977). Alor: The impact of the slave trade. In Ed. Elizabeth Isichei, *Igbo worlds* (pp.50-52). London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Limited.
- Oriji, J. N. Chapter 8. Igboland, slavery and the drums of war and heroism.” Retrieved October 4, 2023, from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/fighting-the-slave-trade/igboland-slavery-and-the-drums-of-war-and-heroism/8160D60876BF94286D9F4173C14082E1>.
- Park Ethnography Program: African American Heritage and Ethnography: Distance Learning. “Which Europeans trafficked in slaves?” retrieved 6 July, 2023, from <https://www.nps.gov/ethnography/aah/aaheritage/histcontextsd.htm>
- Pruitt, S. (2017). “What part of Africa did most enslaved people come from?” *History*. Retrieved June 28, 2023, from <https://www.history.com/news/what-part-of-africa-did-most-slaves-come-from>
- Slavery and Remembrance. “Reckoning with legacies of slavery and slave trade”. Retrieved 6 July, 2023, from <https://slaveryandremembrance.org/>
- Umeh, J. A. (2017). *The march of Igbo civilization, Vol. 1*. Beau Bassin, Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing.

CHAPTER 2: Origins of the Igbo people (Ojel Clara Anidi)

Introduction

A number of Igbo and other scholars have conducted researches into the origins, customs and traditions of the Igbo people. Today, some theories or hypotheses on Igbo origin have been formulated by the scholars, based on Igbo ethnographies, oral traditions and archeological findings. These theories generally seem to indicate that the Igbo belong to a very ancient civilization; they have also attempted to establish the more recent Igbo movements or migrations; yet, they hardly have established any concrete fact about the remote, ancient, past of the Igbo. Before discussing the theories of Igbo origin, the sources of the Igbo theories of origin, customs and traditions shall be discussed, in the subsection following.

Sources of the Igbo Theories of Origin, Customs and Traditions

1. Ethnography

Ethnography is the documentation and analysis of a particular culture through field research. It means the portrait or profile of a people based on actual experience got by living with the people (Okafor, 2017). Several published studies contain an interesting rich store of Igbo ethnographic materials. Olaudah Equiano's autobiography, *The Astonishing Story of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African written by Himself*, published in 1792, as discussed earlier, is considered as the first work on the Igbo people and history, apart from the sketchy earlier notes by the European traders and explorers. After Equiano's work comes the work of Archdeacon G. T. Basden, the European anthropologist/ colonial administrator/ missionary, who contributed to what is regarded now as the most outstanding study of Igbo culture. Basden's publications on the Igbo include: *Notes on the Ibo country and the People of southern Nigeria* (1912), *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (1921) and *Niger Ibos* (1938). Other works on the Igbo published by Europeans include Hartland's (1915) *Ibo-speaking peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Leith-Ross's (1939) *African women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria*, Forde's and Jones's (1950) *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of Southeastern Nigeria*, Jeffrey's (1954) *Ikenga: The Ibo Ram-headed God*, and Ottenberg's (1962) *Ibo Receptivity to Change*. There have been hundreds of other more recent publications on the Igbo by the Igbo themselves, including Isichei's (1976 and 1977) *A History of the Igbo People and Igbo Worlds*; Onwuejeogwu's (1975 and 1981) *The Igbo culture area*, and *An Igbo Civilisation: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony*; Afigbo's (1983 and 2000) "*Traditions of Igbo origins: A Comment*", and *Obi Ikenga: The Case for a Pan-Igbo Centre for Igbo Studies*; Francis Cardinal A. Arinze's (2008) *Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion*; etc. Also, some literary works which have helped to portray the Igbo society, culture and traditions include: Chinua Achebe's novels, particularly *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964); Flora Nwapa's novel, *Efuru* (1966); Romanus Egudu and Donatus Nwoga (1973) *Igbo Traditional Verse*; and a host of other Igbo works.

Some of the scholars who have worked on the Abor, Ojebe Ogene, Agbaja, Igbo culture area (the focus of the present study) include: Romanus Egudu (1973) *The Calabash of Wisdom and Other Stories*; Lucy O. Onodugo (1980) "*Chieftaincy Music in Abor Town*" (NCE thesis, Alvan Ikoku College of Education); Dillibe Onyeama (1982) *Chief Onyeama: the Story of an African God*; Ignatius S. Ozoemena and Emmanuel O. Njeze (1998) *Ojebe-Ogene Clan: In Diaspora, Myths, Facts and Realities of Origin and Migration*; Dons Eze, Sam Mbah and Okey Ezea (1999) *The Wawa Struggle: A History of Factional Dissension in Iboland*; Festus M. Okolo

(2000) *The History and Culture of Abor*; Ojel Anidi (2008) *Sands of our Land*; and Dons Eze (2009) *Enugu: (1909-2009)*; Nicholas I. Omenka, Ambrose C. Agu, and Anthony Anijiello (2012) *Our Journey with God: Golden Jubilee Reflections on Enugu Diocese, 1962-2012*; among others. These works mentioned here as well as other written and oral traditions have given special insights into the origin, history, customs and traditions of the Abor, Ojewe Ogene and Agbaja people, which belong to the Northern Igbo culture area, close to the Igala, Idoma and Tiv peripheries.

2. Archeological Findings

Archeological findings have helped to shed light on how the Igbo lived many years ago in the place they inhabited. The excavations done by Hartle (1967) and Anozie, Chikwendu and Umenyi (1978), in Uturu, for examples, showed early Stone Age artifacts including a complete factory. Excavations at Afikpo by Hurtle (1967) reveal industrial settlements – iron, metal, bronze – some 5000 years ago. The caves at Adadama and the Afikpo region suggest a culture that flourished about 4,800 years ago. Also, Thurstan Shaw's (1978) excavation at Igbo-Ukwu revealed bronze/ brass castings by the cire-perdue technique, which is known to be ancient for Igbo-Ukwu metal workers. The dating obtained for the Igbo-Ukwu assemblage of bronze/ brass industry proves that the industry was flourishing before the advent of the first Europeans to the West coast of Africa. These archeological evidences indicate that the Igbo have inhabited their culture area, for at least, as far back as the first millennium (10th Century).

3. Oral Traditions

Oral traditions involve the histories, myths, legends and culture of a people transmitted orally through stories, folktales, and proverbs from generation to generation. Through oral traditions, the Eri, Nri, Agbaja, and Ojewe-Ogene myths of origin, for examples, have been transmitted. These myths of origin will be discussed later in this work. The Agbaja and Ojewe-Ogene myths directly relating to the origin of Abor Town, is examined in Chapter 4. There are two main kinds of theories under the oral traditions of origin: Autochthony/ Original Generation theories, and Migration theories.

Autochthony or original generation traditions

Some Igbo communities believe that they are autochthones, natives, indigenes or original inhabitants of their lands, as the oral traditions of the communities have no account of the people living somewhere else. Archeological evidences have been used to support or refute this. The Eri/ Nri myth is an instance of an autochthony or original-generation oral tradition. Eri came down from the skies (God-like); it did not migrate from somewhere.

Migration traditions

There are several theories of migrations of the Igbo, some based on far-fetched inferences drawn from several sources; some based on oral traditions, and some evidential. Some Igbo communities believe they migrated from somewhere in the Sudan or Middle Nile Region. Coincidentally, some Yoruba who are also members of the Kwa group of languages also believe in their migrating from the Nubian Region of Egypt and Sudan. Migration theories have become widespread in recent centuries. The versions of the Agbaja myth as will be seen in Chapter 4 are instances of the migration oral traditions.

The Igbo Theories of Origin

Oriental Hypothesis/ Theory

The proponents of this theory believe that the Igbo have Jewish origins. There are two main variants of this theory: one identifies the Igbo as one of the lost tribes of Israel; the other traces them to ancient Egypt. These speculations have no clear historical basis despite certain common practices found among the Igbo and the Hebrew nation; examples, circumcision, manner of naming children, sentence structure and similarity in some words, religion and ritual symbols, love of adventure and enterprise. Olaudah Equiano was one of the earliest proponents of the Israel/ Hebrew origin, drawing analogies between the customs and traditions of the Jews and the Igbo – their practice of circumcision, maternity/ confinement, naming ceremony, etc. – to proffer that the Igbo are one of the lost tribes of Israel. Other scholars who followed in the footsteps of Equiano to form the Oriental School of Thought include G. I. Basen (1972), M.D.W. Jeffreys (1946), E. K. Ijeomanta (1926), H.R. Palmer, (1920), and F.C. Ogbalu (in 1979).

Niger/Benue Theory

This theory postulates that the Igbos originated from the Niger/Benue confluence region. The reasoning might have been introduced following the rich Nok archaeological findings and other discoveries in the area. There is also the linguistic theory of glottochronology and lexicostatistic. Glottochronology explains the evolution of a language in terms of the rate of change of its vocabulary. One of the core proponents of this theory, Joseph Greenberg, a renowned linguist, explains that the Igbo language belongs to a family of languages called the Kwa family of languages. The Kwa language is believed to have branched off from the parent Niger-Congo proto-language about ten thousand years ago. The Kwa language family gave birth to such languages as Igbo, Yoruba, Edo, Igala, Idoma, Igbira, Ewe, Akan, Nupe, Bassa, Igede, Ijaw, Ibibio, etc. The Igbo and Yoruba are believed to have separated from the Kwa proto-language about four thousand years ago (Ezinwa, 2013, Nwankwo, 2007). All speakers of the Kwa family of languages, including the Igbo, are said to have migrated from the Niger/Benue region, around the present confluence town of Lokoja. It has been argued that it was from Lokoja that the Kwa group of language family dispersed to different areas, aided by environmental hindrances and long period of isolation. Common vocabularies in the languages to show their common origin include the following: the four-day market days have identical names in Igbo, Igala, Idoma, and Edo. The Igala, for example use the terms Eke, Orie, Nkwo and Afor as used in the Igbo market days, except Orie which they call Ede. The name for stone in Igbo is 'okwute', and 'okuta' in Yoruba and Edo. The Igbo call mouth 'onu' and the Yoruba similarly call it 'enu'. The Ikwerre dialect of Rivers State is similar in pronunciation to Igbo names. The Niger-Benue Confluence theory presupposes that it is difficult to separate a people's origin from the origin of the people's language.

Autochthony (Igbo Homeland) Hypothesis

This postulates that the Igbo people originated or migrated from areas identified as primary cores or communities commonly referred to as the Igbo heartland – the Nri/ Oka (Awka), Olu (Orlu)/ Owerre (Owerri), and parts of Okigwe. Some evidences of early human occupation in the areas include: the reduction of the natural vegetation from the rain forest to derived savanna

suggesting protracted utilization; the antiquity of the people's oral traditions/ sayings.; the people from the areas or nearby areas do not have migration stories of their origins. Archaeological findings and artefacts from the area reveal radiocarbon dates $2,935 \pm 15$ BC. This shows that human activity in the areas have existed for several millennia. Similar artefacts (pottery shards) found from Nsukka also show the same late Stone Age (4500 years ago) activities. Prof Shaw's excavations in Igbo Ukwu (Oka/ Olu) axis reveal a high degree of social and political organization that must have taken centuries to achieve before 1000AD.

In agreement with the Igbo homeland theory, some traditions of the Ojebe-Ogene and Agbaja clans (including the Abor community, under study) point to secondary or tertiary migrations from Awka. Other traditions concerning some communities in Abor, point to migrations from the Igala area. More will be discussed on the Nri movements in subsequent sub-sections of this book.

Igbo 'First World Civilization' Theory

More recently, scholars such as Professor Catherine Acholonu-Olumba, and Professor John Anenechukwu Umeh claim that the Igbo culture predates all other civilizations of the world. The findings of Acholonu (2009, 2010), and of Umeh (2017) coincide with Hartle's archeological excavations revealing late stone age artefacts, and Leaky's (1972) evidence from his archaeologist son and wife, as reported by Aniakor (2019), that man's ancestors had lived in Africa for more than two million years.

Acholonu-Olumba in her anthropological researches published in three volumes, *The Gram Code of African Adam*, Book 1 (2009), *They Lived Before Adam*, Book 2 (2009), and *The Lost Testament of the Ancestors of Adam*, Book 3 (2010), connects the Igbo origin to the cultural, anthropological and spiritual origins of humans – to the Egyptian records of “Punt/Panthea”, and in the Hebrew Bible, to the place “Eden” (Acholonu, 2010). Citing diverse sources such as: Gram Code, ancient eastern Nigerian rock art inscriptions, Igbo-ukwu bronze inscriptions, (Pre-)Nri oral traditions, Yoruba Ifa traditions, Benin Ogisa traditions, the Hebrew Cabbala, lost books of the Bible – the Nag Hammadi Scriptures, Sumerian Enuma Elish, and the Hindu Ramayana, etc., Acholonu suggests that the cradle of human civilization may have been at the Igbo part of the world. These findings are interesting in view of the fact held by linguists that the original homeland of the Bantu sub-culture is within the Benue-Ikom linguistic geographical zone of Nigeria. The region has been the centre of successive ‘out of Nigeria’ migrations by cultural colonialists to various parts of the world from time immemorial. Facts reveal that the Proto Indo-European, the mother of all European languages, was a language spoken in West Africa, even though European linguists have never associated the Niger-Congo language family with the Euro-Asian language family. Acholonu here cites Merrit Ruhlen's (1994) *Prologue to the Origin of Language: Tracing the Evolution of the Mother Tongue*, which states that “the classification of languages into language families is based on discovering words in different languages that are similar in sound and meaning”. The arbitrary nature of the sound/meaning relationship guarantees that neither the environment, nor human psychology, nor anything else, other than common descent, can motivate the matching of certain words with certain meanings in different languages (Achalonu, p. 29, citing Merrit).

The borrowing of a number of basic words among numerous languages, says Ruhlen, never occurs in language, except as proof of migration of bearers of the seed language across the affected area. The path of language, then, is the path of human civilization. Acholonu demonstrates the borrowing of numerous Igbo basic words by languages as far-flung as Chinese, English, Hebrew, ancient Canaanite and Greece. Example: The English word, 'say' is expressed in Igbo as 'si', or 'saa', etymologically developed from old English 'secgan', Germanic 'sagen' (Igbo 'sikene/sakene), Old Latin 'insquam', 'I say' (Igbo nsikwa/ asikwam', 'I say', emphatic). In the same vein, English 'cock' derives from Old Norse 'kokkr', Old French 'coq', Medieval Latin 'coccus', and Igbo 'okuko'. The present researcher finds this interesting, and can give another example of such similarities of words. The English word 'impunity' can be compared in sound and meaning to the Igbo word, 'mpu'. Acholonu's hypothesizes that Igbo seems a major chunk of the missing link in the search for the proto-proto-language of humanity – the original seed language/ mother tongue. This discovery thus places the Igbo at the origin of human civilization and long before it.

Like Acholonu-Olumba, Umeh in his works, *Igbo People: Their Origin and Culture Area* (1999), and *The March of Igbo Civilisation, Vol. 1* (2017) argues that the Igbo were the first ones created by God and so they left their marks all over the world. Umeh here names words of seeming Igbo origin found in other world languages. These words show that the Igbo are "highly spiritual, religious, artistic, mathematical, scientific, philosophical, astrologers, astronomers, architects, industrious, humorous, musical and creative people" (Umeh, 2017, p.42).

Neighbouring Great States Traditions

Many communities in the northern, northwestern, western and southwestern peripheries of Igboland today trace their origin to either the Edo Empire of Benin or the Igala Kingdom of Idah, the two great states that at different times in the past loomed large in the affairs of these zones. Umu Eze Chima communities of Onitsha in the western periphery, for example, usually claim an origin from Benin, following the analogies of the British colonial anthropologists. Onwuejeogwu's (1979) analogy however seems to indicate that the village chiefdoms of Onitsha go back to a period earlier than the rise of the Benin Kingdom. Other near-by towns to Onitsha claim mixed heritage; example, Agbor, Isele Uku, Obior, Ibusa, Ezi claim both Igbo and Benin origins. There are also claims of Igala origin by a number of communities in the Nsukka and Udi areas in the northern Igbo periphery. The Enugu-Ezike community, for example, even claims both Igala and Edo origins. Further, some proponents on the Aro origin claim the Aro are an amalgam of Igbo, Ibibio, and Akpa elements. Such claims of origins from/ connections to great kingdoms in the past are also found among certain communities in Abor (under study here). Umuavulu-Abor, according to some oral sources, is made up of various settlers including the Igara (same as Igala) in Kwara State. Refer to Chapter 5.

Local Migrations/ Movements Traditions

There are a number of oral traditions referring to migrations or population movements of Igbo communities. While some of the movements are regarded as having taken place several hundreds of years ago, some are recent enough to be remembered by the elders of the communities. The anthropologist Onwuejeogwu (2001) has identified thirteen major movements/ migrations of the Igbo people and culture in the Igbo culture area. They include:

1. The Stone Age movement that resulted in the Ugwuele-Okigwe culture, probably between 50,000 years ago to 900 AD.
2. The Owerri movement: pre-AD 9th century
3. The Eri movement: 8th to 9th century
4. Nri multiple movements: 10th-early 20th century
5. Isu movements: 15th-16th century
6. Ubulu movements: 16th-17th century
7. Ukwani movement: 16th-17th century
8. Ezechima movement: 17th century
9. Olukwumi movement: 16th century
10. Aro movement: 17th-19th century
11. Iduu movement: 17th-18th century
12. Igala movement: 18th-19th century
13. Peripheral movements on the Igbo border line cultures

A little mention will be made of the Nri and Aro movements (Nos. 4 and 10 above), which could be described as instances of religious and economic hegemony in Igboland and, somehow, evidences of a kind of centralized authority among the Igbo. Mention will also be made of the Igala (sometimes called Igara) and other minor peripheral movements. These movements may have affected the Abor community in one way or the other.

The Nri Kingdom (Years 948 - 1911)

The Nri area along with neighbouring areas/towns in Umueri clan traces its origin to Eri, believed to have come from the sky, “the sky being” sent by Chukwu (God) (Isichei, 1997), who is believed to have settled in the region around 948. The oral tradition concerning Eri, as propagated in the Anambra valley, depicts the Nri as having a strong influence on the Igbo culture, particularly with the spread of the Ozo title-taking institution. That is one school of thought; there may be other schools of thought on that matter. The Eze Nri and his dwarf ministers/ messengers had far-reaching influence in the Igboland of old.

The Arochukwu Kingdom (Years 1690 -1902)

The Aro Kingdom and movement was another form of hegemony, dominating the Igbo communities during the slave trade era. The Aro ancestral land, otherwise known as Arochukwu, in the present Abia State, borders with Obotenmi community of the present Akwa Ibom State, formerly Cross River State, on the western side; Ututu Ezema on the northern and eastern sides; and Ihechiowa on the south. The same way that the Nri used the instrument of ritualized religion to build their authority, the Aro also exploited ritualized religious and judicial powers of the oracle in their area, *Ibini Ukpabi*, in addition to the trade in slaves to build their confederacy. The Aro capitalized on their strategic location at the border land between the coastal, delta, people trading directly with the Europeans and the Igbo people in the hinterland. They thus gained control as intermediaries in the transatlantic trade. The Arochukwu kingdom was a mixed settlement of slaves and slavers and increased in population by absorbing Igbo and non-Igbo peoples.

The Igala Movement (18th -19th Century)

The Igala came into Igbo settlements through two main routes: by land during brief military expansion to Nsukka, Okpuje, Obukpa, Eha Alumona, etc., and by water over a sustained period of trade, fishing and Ida runaways to Okpanam, Nzam, Anam, Asaba, Oko, Atani, Abala, Osomari and Okwe. According to Onwuejeogwu, some non-Igala settlements sometimes claimed Igala origin for descent-group politics and prestige. However, there is an area of Igalaland, Ebu, that has become absorbed by Igbo immigrants. The Ozo title system was modified by Igala incursions.

Minor Peripheral Movements

The Idoma, Tiv, Ibibio, and Ijo (Ijaw) neighbours of the Igbo had had course over the years to migrate to the Igbo culture area and their Igbo neighbours had also sometimes migrated to their sides.

From the foregoing, the issue of Igbo origin is not an easy one; hence, Afigbo (1983) describes it as “a very maze within a maze”. Generally, one can say that much of the ancient origins of the Igbo people, like those of other illiterate communities, have been lost in antiquity. The theories, ethnographies, excavations, oral traditions, etc. have only attempted to make sense of some of it. It seems fairly certain, however, that the different parts of Igboland have gradually occupied the area where they now occupy through a culture of migrations or movements.

References

- Acholonu, C. O. (2005). *The gram code of African Adam*. Abuja, Nigeria: CARC Publications.
- Acholonu, C. O. (2009). *They lived before Adam: Prehistoric origins of the Igbo The never-been-ruled (The Igbo since 1.6 Million B.C.)* Contributors, Ajay Prabhakar, Eddy Olumba. Abuja, Nigeria: CARC Publications.
- Acholonu, C. O. (2010). *The lost testament of the ancestors of Adam: Unearthing Heliopolis/Igbo Ukwu – The celestial cities of the Gods of Egypt and India*. Abuja, Nigeria: CARC Publications.
- Afigbo, A. E. (1975). Prolegomena to the study of the culture history of the Igbo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria. *Igbo Language and Culture*. Oxford: University Press.
- Afigbo, A. (1981). *Ropes of sand: Studies in Igbo history and culture*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Afigbo, A. E. (1983). Traditions of Igbo origins: A comment. In A. E. Afigbo (Ed. *History in Africa*, 10, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3171687>.
- Aniakor, C. C. (2019). The artist and the story of man (A commentary). In Eds. Richard Elekwa, Ebuka J. Dunu, and Kenekwue Udeaja. *Radiance of the creative spirit: Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi in three decades* (pp.204-208). Enugu, Nigeria: The PanAfrika Press.
- Anozie, F. N., Chikwendu, V. E., & Umenyi, A. C. (1978). Discovery of a major pre-historic site at Ugwuele, Uturu, Okigwe. *West African Journal of Archeology*, 8, 171-176.
- Basen, G. I. (1912). Notes on the Ibo country and the Ibo people of Southern Nigeria. *Geographical Journal*, 39(3), 241-247.
- Chikwendu, V. E., & Umeji, A. C., (1979, published 1983). Local sources of raw material for the Nigerian bronze, brass industry. *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 9, 151-165.
- Dike, K. O., & Ekejiuba, F. I. (1990). *The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1650-1980: A study of socio-economic formation and transformation in Nigeria*. Ibadan, University Press Ltd.
- Ebighbo, C. (2002). Iguaro Igbo Heritage Lecture: The Igbo lost worlds: Enugu, Nigeria: Ezu Books.
- Emeka, L. N. (1989). Eri: The founder of Igbo nation. *Uwa Ndi Igbo*, 2, 41-43.
- Equiano, O. (1792). *The astonishing story of the life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African written by himself*. Published/ Reprinted in Enugu, Nigeria: Abic Books & Equip. Ltd., 2007.
- Ezinwa, V. C. (2013). A history of Nigerian peoples and cultures (from antiquity to contemporary times): Learning from the ancient past, at present and looking to the future. Ezinwa Production.
- Granger, D. A. (2021, February 21). Annals: The rise of the Kingdom of Nri. *Village Voice*, 2021. Retrieved July 15, from <https://villagevoicenews.com/2021/02/21/annals-the-rise-of-the-kingdom-of-nri/>
- Hartle, D. D. (1967). Archeology in Eastern Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*, 93, 134-143.
- Jeffreys, M. D. W. (1946). Dual organization in Africa. *African Studies*, 5(2), 82-105.
- Nwaezeigwe, N. T. (2007). *The Igbo and their Nri neighbours: A study in the politics of Igbo culture and origins*. Snaap Press.
- Nwauwa, A. O. (1995). "The evolution of the Aro Confederacy in Southeastern Nigeria, 1690-1720: A theoretical synthesis of state formation process in Africa. *Anthropos-Freiburg*, 90 (4/6), 353-364.

- Odunze, S. E. (2016). The rise and fall of Aro hegemony in Igbo land. Mini Project, Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Nigeria.
- Ogbalu, F. C. (1979). *Omenala Igbo*. Onitsha, Nigeria: Varsity Industrial Press.
- Okafor, R. C. (2017). *A study of Igbo folk songs*. Enugu, Nigeria: Academic Publishing Company.
- Omenka, N. I. (2012). Colonialism and the advent of Christianity in Onitsha. In N. I. Omenka, A. C. Agu, and A. Anijelo (Eds.), *Our Journey with God: Golden Jubilee reflections on Enugu Diocese, 1962-2012* (pp.1-10). Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press Nigeria Ltd.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1972). A short history of the Odinani Museum, Nri. *The Journal of the Odinani Museum*, 1(1), 5-8.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1979). The genesis, diffusion, structure and significance of Ozo title in Igbo land. *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, 25, 117-143.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1981). *An Igbo civilization: Nri Kingdom and hegemony*. London: Ethnographica.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1987). "Evolutionary Trends in the History of the Development of the Igbo Civilization in the Culture Theatre of Igboland in Southern Nigeria". *Ahiajoku Lecture Owerri*: Ministry of Information and Culture.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1997). *The principles of Ethnogeneachronology: Dating Nri (Igbo oral tradition)*. Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiope Pub.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (2001). *The evolution of the Ozo and Eze title in the Igbo culture area 300 BC - AD 2000*. Benin City: UTO Publications.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (2001b). Iguaro Igbo Heritage Inaugural Lecture 2001. Front for Defence of Igbo Heritage (FDIH).
- Oriji, J. N. "Chapter 8. Igboland, slavery and the drums of war and heroism." Retrieved October 4, 2023, from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/fighting-the-slave-trade/igboland-slavery-and-the-drums-of-war-and-heroism/8160D60876BF94286D9F4173C14082E1>.
- Palmer (1921). NNAE, ARODIV 1/7/33. Memo on "Aro people".
- Shaw, T. (1978). *Nigeria: Its archeology and early history*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Umeh, J. A. (2017). *The march of Igbo civilization, Vol. 1*. Beau Bassin, Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Umeh, J. A. (1999). *Igbo people: Their origin and culture area*. Enugu, Nigeria: Gostak Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd.

CHAPTER 3: Aspects of Pre-Colonial Igbo Life (Adaobi Onodugo)

Introduction

Before British colonialism, the Igbo were largely a politically fragmented group. There were variations in culture, such as in art styles, attires and religious practices. Various subgroups were set according to clan, lineage, village affiliation and dialect. There were not many centralized chieftaincy, hereditary aristocracy, or kingship customs except in kingdoms like that of the Nri, Arochukwu and Onitsha. This political system changed significantly under British colonialism in the 19th century, when kingship was introduced into most local communities by Frederick Lugard, as “Warrant Chiefs”. The Igbo, and consequently Abor people, became overwhelmingly Christians under colonization. An attempt has been made below to show some aspects of the general economic and socio-political traditions of the Igbo people.

Economic Activities of the Igbo

The Igbo have always engaged in activities that make their lives worthwhile, while giving them economic sustenance. In the olden days, they did a wide variety of activities such as iron-work, pottery, basket weaving, textiles and agriculture. According to Ofomata (2002), the Igbo acquired knowledge of iron-working and this helped them in adapting to their environment. Evidence of this can be seen in the Oka (Awka), Nkwere and Abiriba works. Prof. Harle’s archeological excavations in the Oka area produced 15 iron gongs, an iron sword and a large number of bronze bells which date as far back as 1495±95 A.D (Ofomata, 2002, citing Harle, 1968). These craftsmen produced their works and sold them not just within their villages but to other towns. For instance, James Bardot in his book published in 1746 reveals that swords were being manufactured by the Igbos in the Niger Delta towards the end of the 17th century (Ofomata, 2002).

Pottery was a vital vocation undertaken in Igbo land. The women of Ehugbo (Afikpo) and Okigwe areas of present Ebonyi and Abia States, respectively, and those in Ishiagu, Nsukwa and Ewuru in present Delta State were famed for this skill. Also, Awha people in present Ezeagu Local Government Area of the Agbaja Igbo culture area are noted for their pottery products. In this regard, Nwokike (2006) writes that it is common to find pieces of pottery hung on branches of trees in village squares, built into mud walls, hung on walls of houses, or abandoned by the roadside as articles of traditional worship in Awha. These potters produced a wide range of earthen ware such as cooking pots, bowls, mugs, water jugs and containers. The making of pots was done by individual women but the baking of the pottery was done by other members of the community. The tradition of pottery goes back in time and this can be seen in the Igbo-Ukwu excavations done by Shaw (1970). Over 20,000 pieces of pottery were recovered from the sites.

The weaving industry was also prominent in Igbo land. The cloth and basket weaving industry have provided employment particularly in places like Akwaete (Abia State) and Ubulu Ukwu (Delta State). The weaving of the cloths was done on a narrow, simple loom usually kept in a corner of the room. This provided job opportunities for mostly women who spun and weaved cotton. When I. Spencer and his party visited a west Niger town, Ubulu-Ukwu, in 1897, they found that the inhabitants were very hardworking and that they produced cloth for various uses;

some of which were equal to Western produced cloth (Ofomata, 2002). The *Evayiku Odo* costume of the Ojebe Ogene clan which includes the Abor community, under study, is a good example of how to employ palm leaves/fonds in dressing.

The Igbos also undertook some carving. According to Ofomata (2002), the products included boxes of different sizes with decorated surfaces, Ofo (staff of office and justice), stools and mortars and pestles. The Landers (1832) noted that in the 19th century, all the large canoes plying the Delta rivers were made at Aboh, on the bank of the West Niger.

Agriculture was also a prominent contributor to the economy of Igboland. Yam was and still remains one of the most important crops in the land. Nri traditions, for instance, assert that yam cultivation is as old as the foundation of Nri itself (Thomas, 1913). From Pacheco Pereira (1937), we learn that large quantities of yams were bought in the 15th century from the interior and brought to the Niger Delta in trade canoes (as cited in Ofomata, 2002).

For millennia, the Igbo have heavily engaged in trade, the exchange of goods, both within and outside their areas. Markets were and are still held in a cycle of four days – Eke, Orie, Afo and Nkwo. Markets were named Eke ukwu (big Eke); Eke nta (small Eke); Orie ukwu (big Orie); Orie nta; etc. Big market days were held every 8 days and consisted of traders in the market town and from the neighboring villages. If two neighbouring villages had their market days on the same day; one was small while the other was bigger. This arrangement helped reduce intercommunal clashes and regulated the cost of products in the markets. Trade among the Igbo was not limited to inter and/or intra village affair; other Igbos and non-Igbos were involved. For instance, there is evidence of trade with people from Northern Nigeria. The Nsukka people, for example, traded through overland routes with the Igala and Akpoto in Benue State. The Igala are said to have brought in horses, goats and beads in exchange for slaves, finished cotton cloth and palm oil (Afigbo, 1973).

Igbo Socio-Political System

Before colonial rule, emphasis then was more on kindred, village or clan groups. These groups got their names following certain patterns, such as:

- (i) Distinct names of their ancestral founders – Umu Ojewe-Ogene (children of Ojewe-Ogene), Umuleri (children of Eri), Umuahia (children of Ahia), Umuogali (children of Ogali), Umuebo (children of Ebo), etc.
- (ii) Their geography or contours – Ugwu-na-ani (hill-and-valley), Ama-nkpume (place of the rocks), Enu-ugwu (hill-top), Aniocha (white soil), Idemili (water settlements), Obinagu (forest/ farm-dwellers), Aguata (grass farmlands), etc.
- (iii) Relating to offshoots of the main group – Igbo-etiti (the Igbo living at the centre), Igbo Ukwu (the huge Igbo), Agu-Abor (the Abor forest/farms), etc.

The Family

The family is a very important unit in the Igbo society. It is the foremost unit of the society and the center of political socialization of the individual. Essentially, it is in the family that the individual learns how his community works, his family lineage, traditions. It is the first school in whatever one learns. This gives the individual a sense of identity and helps secure their place in the world. One will be taught many things like proverbs, laws and customs of the land,

critical events in the community and eventually gets to fully participate in these events, when he or she becomes an adult. The father is regarded as the head of the family and is responsible for the general safety and the spiritual welfare of the family. The father holds informal court over matters that affect the family, settling issues and finding resolutions.

The oldest male in the family, who is generally regarded as the father, is also regarded as the moral and administrative head of the family. His scope of influence extended to matters like family land and property; conflicts arising from family possessions; marriages and general welfare.

The Umunna

The next most important social unit in Igboland was and still is the Umunna (kindred). According to Ofomata (2002), the Umunna are a set of nuclear families who are of one patrilineal descent. The Umunna is regarded as the starting point of one's communal identification among the Igbo. Every member of the Igbo society has a lineage. In the pre-colonial Igbo land, if an individual is a stranger, he is regarded as a member of the lineage of the citizens in whose house he sojourns; if he is a slave, he is regarded as a member of his master's lineage, and if he is a ritual slave, he is regarded as belonging to the lineage to whom the shrine of his dedication belongs (Jones, 1961).

The Umuada

Complimentary to the Umunna is the Umuada (Umunne ndiomu or Ada ndiomu, as called in Abor), which is made up of all (adult) female members of nuclear families who are of one patrilineal descent. These days, the Umuada associations can extend to include all daughters of the different kindreds in the village or town, or larger still, in the clan, local government area, or the entire state. In pre-colonial Igboland, the opinion of Umuada on various issues were sought and were highly regarded. They were always invited to intervene to resolve family/kindred issues in their maiden communities and families. The Umuada, along with other women traditional associations, such as Ndiomu nwunyedi (wives of the Umunna), and Ndiomu Obodo (Women of the village or town), wielded enormous powers and is an age-old unique administrative institution in Igboland. Up until this day, the Umuada are seen and respected as peacemakers in Igboland.

Unity within the kindred (Umunna and Umuada) is strengthened and emphasized by the fact that the kindred can be traced to one single ancestor by living relatives. Blood ties are taken seriously and even held to be sacred. Each kindred is under the leadership of the oldest male child- *Onye ihiiu*. His duties include performing religious sacrifices and representing the kindred when attending meetings with other kindreds, among others. The Head of the kindred (*Onye ihiiu umunna*) is a respected position, regardless of the level of wealth of the person and grants the owner certain privileges. This includes the traditional respect given to him; access to certain choice parts of an animal that the family has in common when slaughtered for a meal/ feast. The vehicle of administration is the meeting of the kindred over which he presides. Any adult can attend such meetings.

The Clan

The clan is yet another level of sociopolitical organization in Igboland. The clan is larger than the kindred, but smaller than the obodo (village). A collection of communities, make up a town. The number of clans that make up a village vary. Members of one kindred must marry outside of the kindred but members of a clan, can marry each other.

The Village

The village also holds special significance to Igbos. It provides a sense of solidarity and unity for the people. Other factors of common interest and unity include the habitation and possession of one territory, the possession of one central market and the subscription to a shrine of importance. The village is usually controlled by a traditional council. According to Ofomata (2002), the village council is composed of the collection of '*Onye ihu's (Ndi ihu)* of the kindred, titled men, elders and all adults. The village council is not a regular assembly with a set body of rules; rather, it is made up of ad-hoc members who come together to make decisions concerning various issues.

The Town

The largest social and political unit is the community or town (obodo, Ala as it is called in parts of Imo and Abia States, or Ani as it is called in the Enugu or Agbaja area, under study). The community can be described as a collection of lineage groups occupying one area and bound by a belief in one common ancestor (Ofomata, 2002). Horton (1956), however, argued that the bond of one Ani or Ala (land, in English) was a more important factor of community unity and identity than that of a common ancestry. This is because groups or lineages which did not descend from a common ancestor could be held together by the common laws of the land. Generally, the factors of common interest included the habitation and possession of one territory, the control of one main market, and the subscription of one shrine of importance (Ofomata, 2002). Government at the community or town level was an extension of what happens at the kindred level. The town assembly handled the administration of the town. This assembly was an informal assembly that gathers when necessary. The external relations of the town, such as organization of war, land disputes, or punishment of members of other towns, were usually among the main concerns of the town/ village assembly.

Some other socio-political institutions in pre-colonial Igbo land are summarised below:

The Titled men exercised a great deal of political power in the pre-colonial Igbo society. These were men who were awarded titles on account of their achievements. The achievements may include acquisition of wealth, distinction of themselves in war, or remarkable societal support. Title holders along with the head-chief were the law makers of the land. They participated in policy formulation and administration on the community's behalf. Titled men also ensured the rules of the villages were generally followed and managed conflicts between village members.

The Masquerade Societies also took part in the administration of the community. There were several categories of secret societies in Igboland, but one thing they had in common, then, and now, is that they only allow males to join these organizations. Some communities call theirs *mmanwu*; others call it *Omabe*; while some others call it *Odomagana*. Abor is one of the communities that practice the *Odo* as a masquerade institution in Abor. Masquerade societies

were open only to initiates who had performed some ceremonies/ rituals. The masquerade societies were used to enforce decisions made by the elders. Masquerade societies worked like the police force and sanitation officers, depending on the situation. Masquerades in some communities intervened in conflicts that arose out of forbidden behaviors (*Nso Ani*), regulate sexual and matrimonial behaviours and the behaviour of children and adults. Additionally, masquerades were also used to maintain a link between the community's past ancestors and present community. Masquerades, in this sense, were very much like present-day Christian saints, only that women are included in the Christian saints. Through the masquerades, the community remembers the deeds of distinguished men. During masquerade festivals, songs are sung in remembrance of these men. Songs are also sung in mockery of men who have done wrong deeds too.

The Ozo Institution was one of the institutions used in upholding law and order during the pre-colonial times. According to Onwuejeogwu (1979), citing the Nri traditions, the first man to take the Ozo title was the first Eze Nri. This culture element associated with leadership then diffused to other parts of Igboland. Though the system was controlled from Nri, it evolved into different forms in different parts of Igboland. The system diffused rapidly because it is adaptive to the segmentary lineage system of the Igbo system of governance. Even though the Ozo title is a microcosm of the Eze Nri, yet the Eze Nri differs from the Ozo or other forms of the Eze, for he is identified in the Nri religious myth as "participant in the creation of the world". The Eze Nri, for the Nri people, derives his divinity from Chukwu, the Creator, and all Eze Nris are believed to derive their sacred and mystical powers from Eri, the founding ancestor. All Ozo title holders symbolize leadership par excellence. The installation of an Ozo was centered on his ability to speak the truth and maintain justice and peace among his people. He achieved the position by working hard for it. The Ozo is taken to have received the *alo* of his lineage, which symbolizes the ike (power) that came from Chukwu (God) through Eze Nri. The *mkpa alo* or *okiki* (the short elephant tusk) is handed over to him with the *alo* on the day of his installation. He is later given the *Ofo* of the ancestor, also derived through Eze Nri. The *Ofo* legitimized the use of power. Power to act for people was believed to be of divine origin, while authority to use the power is of social origin.

The Ozo title-holders or the 'Mgbuluchi' (the Ozo aspirant, who has undergone the process of scarification, but has not yet attained the Ozo), with their ichi marks, could travel unharmed at that time when human beings were essentially commodities. Thus, the ichi scarification marks became an indelible identity mark for the Ozo, different from the other paraphernalia of the Ozo usually seen during public ceremonies, including special red cap with eagle feathers 'ebuba ugo', rope anklets (*akali*) on both legs, the right to carry and blow the elephant tusk and the use of a special staff (*oji*). The ichi identity marks helped to guarantee the Ozo's personal safety while away from his home or clan (where he was easily recognizable) in those days of the slave trade and kidnaps.

The Age Grade system was deeply ingrained into the Igbo political and administrative system. Usually, a typical Igbo community is stratified into age grades. Members of younger age grades also performed law enforcement functions. They acted as the police of the community and enforced the laws and customs of the society. They also defended the territorial integrity of the community, should the need arise. They were also used as instruments of community

development and carried out public works. They executed functions like the construction of roads, foot paths, markets, community centers. They also helped in farm work and construction of houses.

From the foregoing, the Igbo political organization before the Colonial era was mainly based on a quasi-democratic republican system of government. Communities were usually governed and administered by a consultative assembly of the common people, led by the elders, in other words, a council of elders. This system of government guarantees the citizens' equality, as opposed to what obtains in the feudalist system where a king rules over the subjects. However, there is evidence that some kind of kingship or hegemony, particularly, as it pertains to religion – what some scholars refer to as religious subordination – had existed in Igboland, being the Nri and Aro Kingdoms. Igbo socio-political institutions were not only decentralized but were also democratic. Decisions were reached based on consensus, by the collective efforts of members of the group. Issues were discussed and examined extensively and then a decision would be reached.

References

- Abanuka, B. (2004). *Philosophy and the Igbo world* (pp. 77-78). Snaap Press.
- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart* (pp. 62–66). Penguin Books.
- Adibe, G. E. M. (2009). *Igbo Issues: Values, Chi, akala aka, Ikenga, magic, agwu and manipulation of divinities*. (pp. 112, 121, 122) Mid-Field Publishers Limited.
- Afigbo, A. E. (1973). Trade and trade routes in 19th Century. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2(1), 87.
- Baikie, W. B. (1856). Narrative of an exploring voyage up the River Kwora and Benue (Commonly known as the Niger and Tsadda) in 1854 (pp. 287–288). London.
- Bardot, J. (1746). An abstract of a voyage to New Calabar River or Rio Real in the year of 1699. *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, 5, 462.
- Basden, G. T. (1912). Notes on the Ibo country and the Ibo people, Southern Nigeria. *The Geographical Journal*, 39(3), 241. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1778438>
- Echeruo, M. J. C. (1995). *Igbo-English Dictionary* (p. 112). Longman.
- Edwards, P. (1969). *Equiano's travels* (p. 4). Heinemann.
- Forde, D. (1970). Ecology and social structure. *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 31(1970), 15.
- Hartle, D. D. (1968). Stop Press: Radiocarbon dates in Nigeria. *West African Archeological Newsletter*, 9, 73.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1968). *Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy* (E. S. Haldane & F. H. Simson, Eds.). Routledge and Paul. (Original work published 1892)
- Horton, W. R. G. (1956). God, man, and the land in a Northern Ibo village-group. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 26(1), 17–28.
- Ijoma, J. (1984). Igbo Origins and Migration. *Uwa Ndi Igbo* (2nd ed.).
- Ijoma, J. O. (1989). Igbo origins and migration. *Uwa Ndi Igbo: Journal of Igbo Life and Culture*, 2, 68-74.
- Levine, R. A. (1966). *Dreams and Deeds. Achievement Motivation in Nigeria* (p. 181). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LeVine, R. A. (1967). *Dreams and deeds: Achievement motivation in Nigeria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Melson, R., & Wolpe, H. (1970). Modernization and the politics of communalism: A theoretical perspective. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4), 1112–1130.
- Misch, G. (1950). The dawn of philosophy (p. 47). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Northcote W. T. (1969). Anthropological Report on the Ibo-speaking Peoples of Nigeria: English-Ibo and Ibo-English dictionary (pp. 59–60). Harrison and Sons.
- Nwaezeigwe, N. T. (2007). The Igbo and their Nri neighbours: A study in the politics of Igbo culture and origins. Snaap Press.
- Nwosu, H. N. (1977). Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service (pp. 17–21). Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Ofomata, G. E. K. (2002). *A survey of the Igbo nation* (pp. 41-46, 219, 219-224, 234-239, 416-422). Africana First Publishers.
- Okolo, F. M. (2000). *The history and culture of Abor* (1st ed., pp. 12–20, 34–44, 47, 50–54, 55–65, 71, 80, 96–102, 113–119, 135–137, 181–192, 208–214,).
- Pereira, D. P. (2010). *Esmeraldo de situ orbis* (G. H. T. Kimble, Trans.). Ashgate. (Original work published 1937)
- Shaw, T. (1970). Igbo-Ukwu (pp. 269–270). Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.

- Shaw, T. (1977). *Unearthing Igbo-Ukwu* (pp. 94–100). Ibadan, Nigeria, & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer, I. (1879). Church Missionary Intelligencer 1879 (p. 242).
- Uchendu, V. (1965). *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (Vol. 10, p. 12). Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Ukwu, U. I. (1967). The development of trade marketing in Iboland. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 3(4), 647–662.
- Warner, E. A. (1901). A visit to Akwukwu. Church missionary Intelligencer, July 1901, 3.

CHAPTER 4: The Agbaja and Ojewe-Ogene People (Ojel Clara Anidi)

The Agbaja Area of Igboland

The Agbaja are a sub-nationality within the Igbo nation, who currently occupy the geographical space of the present Enugu and Ebonyi States, including the Afikpo and Ohaozara areas of the old Abia State (Eze, Mbah & Ezea, 1999). For Eze et al., the Agbaja people are culturally and linguistically contiguous and also had “faced the same problems of economic, social, and political deprivations and therefore had together waged a relentless war against these deprivations” (p.1).

The Agbaja area is situated on much of the highlands of the Udi-Awgu-Nsukka hills, and the rolling lowlands of Ebonyi River basin to the West, lying partly within the semi-tropical rain forest belt of the south, and the open woodland and then the savannah land as it approaches its northern boundary with Benue State. The *Enugu (Wawa) State Memorandum...Presented to the Ayo Irikife Committee on the Creation of More States in Nigeria* (1975), delineates the Agbaja area, as above. The *Memorandum* further states that the word ‘Wawa’, meaning ‘Empathic No’, is easily spoken or accepted as the dialect of the vast majority of the Agbaja area. It should be noted that Enugu State currently consists of three senatorial zones – Enugu West, Enugu North and Enugu East. Abor is within the Enugu West Senatorial Zone and part of the Agbaja sub-nationality.

HRH Igwe Apostle Kingsley Chime, Igwe of Abia community in Udi Local Government Area, and former Chairman of the Enugu State Council of Traditional Rulers in an interview with the Amokwe Tv reporter, Onyia Hillary, on November 22, 2022, revealed a school of thought of the Agbaja legend. His theory states that the Agbaja ‘nation’ evolved from a man called Agbaja, an itinerant trader from Awka trading between Awka and Nsukka. Chime’s claim about Agbaja coming from Awka seems to have derived from the Igbo homeland origin hypothesis, Awka seems to be the closest (apart from distance, also in terms of culture and language) to the Agbaja locality, out of the three related areas (Oka (Awka), Olu (Orlu), and Okigwe axis) considered to be the original homeland of the Igbo, according to some proponents. It is believed that the Igbo people had established themselves around the Awka-Orlu-Nri axis about 900 AD. One can also link Chief J. U. Nwodo’s (of Ukehe) proposition, as cited in Ozoemena and Njeze (1998), about the possibility of the founding of the Umu Ojewe-Ogene homeland at Ebe by 1270 AD (late 13th century), following from secondary or tertiary migrations from the Igbo homeland. Incidentally, Igwe Chime, in his own account, believes that Ojewe-Ogene is the first child of Agbaja.

Eze et al. (1999) has almost the same account as given by HRM Kingsley Chime in the 2022 interview. For them, the historical clans of Agbaja who claim blood relationships among the towns include: Umu-Oshie, Umu Neke, Umu-Oshie-Akulu (Umu Ezeagu), Umu Ojebe-Ogene (alternatively, Ojewe-Ogene), Umu Ugwunye, and Ngwo. Their constituent parts are as follows:

1. Umu-Osie (Oshie) – made up of Nsude, Eke, Okpogho, Awha, and Obioma communities
2. Umu Neke – comprising the towns of Udi, Abia, Amokwe, Agbudu, Obinagu, Umuabi, Umuaga, and Nachi

3. Umu-Oshie-Akulu or Umu Ezeagu – made up of Owa, Oghe, Umana, Umumba, Oghu, Obinofia, *Oba and Olo
4. Umu-Ojebe-Ogene – comprising Ebe, Abor, Awhum, Okpatu, Ukana, Umulumgbe, Ukehe and Umunko in Igbo Etiti area
5. Umu-Ngwunye – made up of the communities of Egede, Affa, Akpakwume, Nze, Umu-Awka, Nike and Aku also in Igbo Etiti.
6. Ngwo – Ngwo ... (Eze et al., 199, p.22)

It should be noted that Eze et al. accept that the account, as summarized/ itemized above, may be contested, particularly by some groups outside the Oshie, Umu-Ojebe-Ogene, Umu-Ngwunye and Ngwo historical clans. Also they contend that while the other groups of Umu-Ezeagu and Umu-Neke accept that they are all Agbaja, they however do not agree that they have any connection with towns outside their clan group.

The “Wawa Complex”

Any Igbo Agbaja youth born from the mid-1980s or early 1990s may not understand that there was a time in Igboland when the appellation ‘Wawa’ was a stigma, signifying all abhorrent things – ‘bush’, ‘stupid’, ‘ignorant’, ‘crude’, ‘unfashionable’, ‘detestable’, ‘slave’, ‘outcast’, etc. Then, any person from the Agbaja geographical area was referred to as a “Wawa person”. Then, Agbaja people who wanted to be socially acceptable across Igboland would go to any length to hide their Agbaja origin while in the midst of their other Igbo friends or associates from Onitsha, Anambra, Owerri, etc., for fear of being denigrated, derided or rejected, since they did not want to be referred to as the bush “Wawa people”. Speaking the Agbaja dialect, which was then referred to as Wawa, was anathema, so everyone tried to imitate the more ‘refined’, ‘sophisticated’ Onitsha dialect, which could be equated with ‘speaking English’, at that time.

To further drive home this point; most Igbo literary works and translations from the English language. including the Igbo Bible and other religious (particularly the Roman Catholic Mission) teachings, were all done in the Onitsha dialect (which is the first part of Igboland to come in contact with the Missionaries).

Later, through the efforts of F. C. Ogbalu and other linguists, the ‘Central Igbo’ was introduced, and became the more acceptable autography used for all official and education purposes. A critical look at the ‘Central Igbo’ indicates that even that too is largely the Owerri dialect. Presently, however, as Okafor (2017) reveals, “Many teachers now encourage pupils to use their natural dialects instead of a particular ‘prestige’ language” (p. 7). That is interesting, for apart from the fact that it encourages originality of expression, it also removes the element of ‘shame’ and ‘inferiority’ that one may encounter while using one’s own native tongue.

While the entire Igbo suffered from misuse, marginalization and injustice during the transatlantic slave trade, colonialist and Independence eras in Nigeria, the Agbaja people, with the Wawa complex, suffered a double jeopardy: they suffered in Nigeria and in Igboland, as well. In the words of Eze, Mbah, and Ezea (1999). “the Agbaja people were discriminated against, suffered prejudice and were treated with condescension by their fellow Igbo” (p.vi). Köler’s (1840) comment, for example, that the Bonny and other people living in and around

the delta area in Nigeria where the slaves were sold/ bought would speak of an Igbo “as they would speak of sharks, *Iboman wawa too much*” is revealing. Köler (a German) interpreted the comment in italics as “Ibo people are very wicked” (p. 15).

As mentioned earlier, the literal meaning of the term “Wawa” in the Agbaja dialect of the Igbo, is “Emphatic No” or “I do not agree”. Thus, “wawa”, as used by Köler, may be better interpreted as “The Igboman is disagreeable”. There is an additional suggestion that the Agbaja people were in the majority among the captured slaves; that might explain why the captors, slave dealers, and slavers were fairly conversant with the word ‘wawa’. Slavers and slave dealers were more interested in their personal profit than in the personal welfare of the slaves, so any slave that says “No”, or “Wawa” was unwelcome and indeed ‘wicked’, for them. The Slave traders wanted an agreeable slave, but the Igbo slave, as shown in literature, was hardly an agreeable slave. Consequently, the word, ‘wawa’, then became a symbol of unpleasantness, slavery, distaste, detestability, disagreeability, even wickedness. Some factors that led to the complex relationship that existed over the years between the Agbaja Igbo and the rest of the Igbo would now be examined, below.

The Late Arrival of Western Education in the Agbaja Area

Apart from the slave trade, the late arrival of Western missionaries and educators in the Agbaja area was an additional developmental setback. Western education started from the coastal regions, in the south, from where the European ships landed. It was the discovery of coal in Enugu, in 1909, that brought ‘White’ interests in the Enugu Agbaja area for the first time. Thus, while the first school in Igboland was opened in Onitsha in August 1843 by Reverend J. C. Taylor of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, the first school in Agbaja area was opened in Udi on July 9, 1914, seventy-one years later. The missionary activities in Igboland have sometimes been portrayed as mere spiritual arms of various European interests (territorial and economic) in sub-Saharan Africa, yet, one cannot quantify the benefits of missionary activities, particularly missionary education, in the life of the Igbo people. The benefits of Western missionary education then, included freedom from ignorance, from fear, diseases and poverty.

The Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) played a great role in the setting up of schools and churches in the Agbaja area where Abor (the town under study) is located, in the early twentieth century. In the Eke Parish of the RCM, Kanife (2012) reveals that the first converts were baptized and confirmed on 8th August 1918, under Fr. Joachim Correa, the first resident Parish Priest at Eke. These converts were from Eke and the neighbouring towns of Abor, Awhum, Ebe, Ngwo, and Okpatu. On this, Okuta (2019) differs a bit, for he reports that the first Abor converts, Chief Isaac Madike and Jerome Ugwu, were baptized in 1921.

Concerning the setting up of church and school by the Roman Catholic Mission in Abor (the locale study), for example, Okuta (2019), citing Omenka & Anijielo, notes as follows:

“[In] 1919 Chief (Ozor) Ngwunwagu Onodugo liaised with the Catholic Mission at Eke through Chief Onyeama the Okwuluoha I of Eke to open up a church and school at Abor. The former surrendered shanty building in his compound for these two purposes. That formed the nucleus of Church and School developments in the entire town.” (pp. 28-29)

The above goes to show the efforts made by some persons, including Chief Onyeama of Eke and Chief (Ozo) Ngwunwagu Onodugo of Abor, in the establishment of schools and churches which were catalysts in the development of the Agbaja communities. The Roman Catholic Church at Eke Parish through Chief Onyeama of Eke, eventually became the coordinating centre for many of the activities of the Roman Catholic Mission in the Agbaja/ Enugu region, during that era.

It should be noted that the Anglican (CMS) schools at Onitsha had been functioning for many scores of years before the RCM schools came on board. Again, the Onitsha Province then remained the headquarters of the missions and schools and government establishments within the Agbaja area. This meant that to get any major service from the Colonialists, the government, schools, and churches, at that time, one had to travel to Onitsha.

The Discovery of Coal and the Sudden Rise of Enugu, Agbaja Region

The discovery of coal on top of the Udi escarpment, 'Enu-ugwu', by a team of British geological explorers led by Sir Albert Kitson in 1909 dramatically, unprecedentedly, changed the history of that area and of the people living in and around it. The city which developed out of this discovery, Enugu (an anglicized spelling of 'Enu-ugwu', the real name) lies at the foot of the Udi-Awgu-Nsukka hills, surrounded by a stretch of low hills, and sits at an altitude of 240 miles above sea level (Eze, 2009).

The mining of coal began in Enugu soon after the British colonial government and a number of Ngwo chiefs led by Chief Onyeama of Eke signed an agreement for its exploitation in 1915. By 1917, another agreement that ceded ten square miles for both the Colliery and the development of what the government later called Enugu Township was signed between the colonial government and, this time, the Udi Chiefs, some of whom could trace the boundaries of their communities' lands inside the Enugu Collieries. The Chiefs that signed the 1917 agreement were:

1. Head Chief Onyeama of Eke
2. Chief Okalafor of Eke
3. Chief Nnadi of Ngwo
4. Head Chief Ofo of Ngwo
5. Chief Ukwuani of Ngwo
6. Chief Ozo-Eze of Ngwo
7. Head Chief Ngu-Agu [Ngwu-nwa-agu] of Abor
8. Head Chief Ozo-Eze of Nsude

(File No. C8/1924, Udi Colliery and Railway Lands Agreement 'B' (NAE); Nwabara, 1977; Onyeama, 1982; Eze et al. (1999); Anidi, 2008)

Note: This document, as cited, was one of the earliest, important, written, documents that mentioned Abor in history and highlights the influence of Abor in Enugu politics, then.

The first immigrant settlers in Enugu came in 1915 and that year, the first shipment of coal from the Enugu mine to the United Kingdom begun. In the first year of its operation, Enugu Colliery had about 800 daily paid labourers, in addition to the better-established technical cadre – clerks, technicians, foremen, mechanics, etc. While the high-grade workers came from districts outside Enugu, such as Warri, Calabar, Onitsha, Owerri, Benin, Port Harcourt,

Abeokuta, Cameroun, Sierra Leone, most of the labourers were drawn from the surrounding villages in the then Udi Division, with the help of the warrant chiefs. Hair (“Unpublished Study of Enugu”) reports as follows on the relationship between the new immigrants/ “foreigners” who made their homes in Enugu” and the “indigenous” population coming from surrounding villages:

“These immigrants to Enugu preferred not to mix with the Udi men who lived in the Colliery camps. Onitshas and Awkas looked down on the Udi as ‘wawa’ or bushmen. Also, they found the ‘deep Ibo’ spoken by the Udis difficult to understand. The immigrants from Owerri took much the same view of the Udis in the Colliery camp.

[Meanwhile] “The Abajas tended to regard the Colliery as an Abaja Colliery, and they disliked intensely the ‘foreigners’ who work there, the men from Onitsha and Owerri. Few abajas were literate, and hence most of the better jobs went to ‘foreigners. For instance, in 1921, the Abajas complained that there were no Abaja boss-boys, that is, foremen. During the 1920 strike, the Abajas offered to return to work if they could ‘work by themselves’, that is, if the ‘foreigners’ were dismissed” (as cited in Eze, 2009, p. 7).

These cited paragraphs above indicate the source of the sour relationship that came to exist between the indigenous population of the Agbaja-Enugu area and other immigrants to the Coal city.

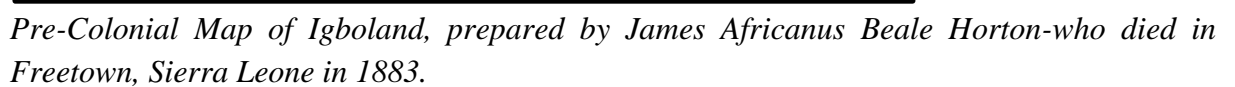
The Struggle for the Creation of Enugu State

The Enugu-Agbaja indigenes’ consciousness and struggle for emancipation began gradually over the years. The formation of the Enugu Aborigines Improvement Union in 1928 was one of the early efforts towards this vision. By 1957, the Union was no longer only an Enugu affair but had broadened in scope to accommodate all other areas of the northern Enugu, leading to the formation of Udi-Nsukka-Awgu United Front (UNAUF) made up of Enugu North leaders both within and outside the ruling NCNC (National Convention for Nigeria and the Camerouns).

According to the *“Enugu (Wawa) State: Memorandum presented by All The Wawa Speaking People of the East Central State – The Northern Ibos To the Ayo Irikife Committee on the Creation of More States in Nigeria”* (1975), the first formal petition, then, to the Military Head of State for the creation of Enugu State was seen as a vindication of the Enugu-Agbaja (Wawa) cause. For several years, the Agbaja leaders did not give up, notwithstanding their disappointments and frustrations in 1976 and 1987, respectively. They continued pushing until their prayers were eventually answered, on Tuesday August 27, 1991 when Enugu State was created.

Today, all of the negative connotations ascribed to the word, ‘wawa’, and the people who speak the Wawa Igbo dialect seem to have gone, completely. In their place comes a positive realization of the many personable and values-oriented qualities of this group of people – kind-hearted, friendly, good-looking, hardworking, team player, educated, enterprising, people of character. The people now clearly, proudly, identify themselves as the Wawa Igbo sub-nationality, without the usual age-old complex.

The Agbaja is one of the single largest Igbo sub-nationalities. It comprises 34 towns across 686 square miles, defined by the ranges and valleys of Udi Hills. A map of pre-colonial Igboland, prepared by James Africanus Beale Horton around 1850 detailed in figure-1, below illustrates the extent and boundaries of Agbaja sub-nationality.



The Ojewe-Ogene Clan and Historical Legend

The Ojewe-Ogene clan (also written as Ojebe-Ogene, in central Igbo orthography, or alternatively, as two separate words, Ojewe Ogene (in Wawa dialect) or Ojebe Ogene (in central Igbo dialect) is a constituent part of the Agbaja sub-nationality, as shown in the last subsection. It is also extrapolated, from the accounts/ literature, that the Ojewe-Ogene clan origin may have dated back to the 13th century. The Ojewe-Ogene communities are located in the north-western end of Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. It is bounded in the south by Eke and Ngwo towns, both in Udi Local Government Area, in the West by Oghe in Eze-Agu Local Government Area and Affa in Udi Local Government Area and in the north by Ikolo, Ochima, Aku, Ohebe-Dim, umunna, Diogbe and Umunko all in Igbo-Ekiti Local Government Area of Nsukka Senatorial Zone. Reporting on the Ojewe-Ogene Igbo culture area, Mr. J. Barmby in his Intelligence Report of 1934 remarked that the place is broken and hilly except in the extreme East where the settlers from Umunko and Ukehe have pushed their farms and houses out into the plain (cited in Ozoemena and Njeze, 1998). The villages in this area, according to Barmby, are situated for the most parts at the foot of the hills, the tops of which are grassy with innocent trees. Some rivers in this area include Ofieyi (also called Iyiuku by the Nike people where it flows into), Eva, Ohune, and Usara. There is also a spring called Ofie, and a lake of some size. Some of the hills in this area are Ugwu Okpatu, Ugwu Abor, Ugwu Ikpogwu and Ugwu Amakofia, the god of war.

The towns considered to belong to the Ojewe-Ogene clan (Umu Ojewe-Ogene) are seven in number. In order of their seniority, they are Ebe, Abor, Ukana, Awhum, Okpatu, Umulumgbe, and Ukehe. In certain accounts, Umuoka is included as the eighth child, as seen in Eluka (2013), for example. However, Ozoemena and Njeze (1998) reported that Umuoka is said to be an offspring of Awhum, meaning that Umuoka is the nephew of the seven sons of Ojewe-Ogene. Also, Aniatu (2013) sheds some light on Umuoka's relationship with Ojewe-Ogene. She explains that sometime in the past, a part of Umuoka village in Awhum (the Amaozala Uwani hamlet) abandoned its settlement in Awhum and moved northwards close to Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area, its present abode. The event leading to that movement concerned a member of the community's justified killing of an Ozo, but then a subsequent penalty of nine human heads as sacrifice in atonement of the Ozo's death, which was the tradition then, was to follow. To avert this punishment, the community fled to their present abode. Today, the direct Ojewe-Ogene sons/ communities have given birth to a number of other sons/ autonomous communities, and nephews of the original seven sons of Ojewe-Ogene. Abor, for instance, now has two other autonomous communities, Umuavulu-Abor and Amukwu-Abor; Okpatu has one additional; Ukehe, five more and so on.

Ozoemena and Njeze (1998), citing Chief J. U. Nwodo of Ukehe, hypothesized that the founding of the Umu Ojewe-Ogene homeland at Ebe would have happened by 1270 AD (late 13th century). In the same vein, Chief Nwodo, in the same cited work, reasoned that Ukehe (the last son of Ojebeogene) must have got to his/their present location by 1480 AD (late 15th Century). It should be recalled that some theories of the origin of some Igbo people believe that Igbo people had established themselves around the Awka-Orlu-Nri axis about 900 AD. Migrations from such centres could possibly take three centuries to get to Ojewe-Ogene area, because as Ozoemena and Njeze (1998), citing Ifemesia (1973), opine, the Igbo are very local in their cultural orientations; they move very little and when they migrate they do not go far. However, no archeological investigation has yet been carried out to confirm these speculations.

References

- Anidi, O. (2008). *Sands of our land: Historical tales of Abor and Umuavulu*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fidgina Global Books.
- Anidi, O. C. (2022). The Ojebe Ogene Clan and legendary origin. In *Nzuko Agbaja: A Publication of the Agbaja Peoples Summit 2022 (Agbaja: The people, their history and culture)*, 49-50.
- Asogwa, J. (1991). *C. C. Onoh: Politics & Power in Eastern Nigeria*. Enugu, Nigeria: Idika Press (Nigeria).
- Ebe Ojebe Ogene TV, You Tube page of Mazi Onyekachukwu.
- Eluka, A. (2013). Youthfulness: The Dynamics of our Development. *Ojebe-Ogene Searchlight*, 1(2), 7-8.
- Enugu (Wawa) State: Memorandum presented by All The Wawa Speaking People of the East Central State – The Northern Ibos To the Ayo Irikife Committee on the Creation of More States in Nigeria (1975)
- Eze, D., Mbah S., & Ezea, O. (1999). *The WAWA struggle: A history of factional dissension in Iboland*. Enugu, Nigeria: Delta Publications.
- Eze, D. (2009). *Enugu: (1909 – 2009): A century in search of identity*. Enugu, Nigeria: Linco Press Nig. Ltd.
- Hair, P. E. A. Unpublished Study of Enugu. National Archives, Enugu.
- Kanife, E. C. (2012). From mission to a local church. In Eds. Nicholas Omenka, Ambose Chineme Agu and Anthony Anijielo (pp.24-30), *Our Journey with God: Golden Jubilee Reflections on Enugu Diocese, 1962-2012*. Enugu: Snaap Press.
- NAE (1924). File No. C8/1924, Udi Colliery and Railway Lands Agreement 'B'
- Nwabara, S. N. (1977). *Iboland: A century of contact with the British (1860-1960)*. London: Hodder and Stroughton.
- Okafor, R. C. (2017). *A study of Igbo folk songs*. Enugu, Nigeria: Academic Publishing Company.
- Okuta, I. B. C. (2019). The role of the Church in the postmodern world: Abor Christian community centenary celebration. In *100 Years (1919-2019) of the Catholic Church in Abor* (pp.24-30). Enugu: Mekanand Publications.
- Omenka, N. I. (2012). Colonialism and the advent of Christianity in Onitsha. In N. I. Omenka, A. C. Agu, and A. Anijielo (Eds.), *Our Journey with God: Golden Jubilee reflections on Enugu Diocese, 1962-2012* (pp.1-10). Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press Nigeria Ltd.
- Onyeama, D. (1982). *Chief Onyeama: The story of an African God: A biography*. Enugu, Nigeria: Delta Publications (Nigeria) Ltd.
- Onyeama, D. (2022). Agbaja and the 'King' Onyeama mystique. In *Nzuko Agbaja: A Publication of the Agbaja Peoples Summit 2022 (Agbaja: The people, their history and culture)*, 22-24.
- Ozoemena, I. S., & Njeze, E. O. (1998). Ojebe-Ogene Clan in diaspora, myths, facts & realities of origin and migration. Enugu, Nigeria: Franko printers Co. Nig. Wawa TV, Interview with HRM Igwe Chime on 31st October 2022.

CHAPTER 5: Abor Origin, Village Reorganisations, and Governance (Ojel Clara Anidi and Ben A. Onodugo)

Introduction

The Abor community is situated on a highland, about three kilometres from the 9th Mile Corner, Ngwo, along the old 9th Mile Corner to Nsukka road. It is bounded on the west by the Eke and Ebe towns, on the north by Ukana Town, on the east by Nike group of towns in Enugu East Local Government Area, and on the south by Ngwo group of towns particularly, Ameke Ngwo and Uboji Ngwo.

Abor, like most towns in Udi Local Government Area, sits on the crest of a range of hills which run from Benue State, through Enugu State, and terminate in Imo State; these range of hills are referred to as the Udi Hills. The famous Milliken Hill road meanders through one of the crests through Enugu-Ngwo, down to the Coal City, Enugu. Looking from Enugu city, the crest is an escarpment with a long stretch of slope which goes westwards, beyond Ezeagu and Uzo-Uwani Local Government Areas and down to the River Niger. The eastern and western sides of the crest are also riddled with caves. Cascading at various points of the escarpment are water falls, streams and rivers of different sizes. On the eastern side of Abor are such streams and rivers as Iyi Offie, Iyi Ohune, Iyi Alulu, Iyi Usala, Oti-baba, and others. Unfortunately, most of these rivers, beautiful natural heritages of our people, have been destructed during the construction of the Enugu-Onitsha Express-way.

Additional prominent physical features in Abor include the following hills; Ugwu Nkpo, Ugwu Ocha, Ugwu Uffie, Ugwu Nwakenyi (Ugwu St. Peter), Ugwu Obobo (Afor Ofufe), Ugwu Gidi-Gidi and others. There are various sizes of shallow and deep gullies such as Ogwugwu Obunegu, Ogwugwu Ubiekpo, Ogwugwu Umuikwo, Ogwugwu Ogoh. These gullies are caused by flood waters that accumulate at various locations in the locality.

Origins of Abor

Abor origins can be discussed through four major theories:

1. The Ojewe-Ogene (with Iyime Awubu) Legend
2. The Abor Iyime Awubu Legend (constituent villages or quarters seen as Ebo(Abor) Iyime Awubu's sons)
3. The Migration Theories
4. The Edda General Hypothesis

The Ojewe-Ogene (with Iyime Awubu) Legend:

Part of the Ojewe-Ogene legend has been discussed in the preceeding chapter, at the tail end. This legend is the most popular of the three theories of Abor origin. There are a few varaiaations of the Ojewe-Ogene legend, or theories of the origin of the different towns / sons of Ojewe-Ogene. The most popular version has it that Ojewe-Ogene was a woman, and she gave birth to the different towns that make up the Ojewe-Ogene clan. She married several husbands each of whom fathered one or two of her seven children. The father of Ebe, her first child, was Eriudene; the father of Abor, her second child, was Iyime Awubu; Ukana's father was Ogwugwu Ebenebe; Awhum's father was Ujom Eket; Okpatu and Umulumgbe, it is alleged, have the same father, known as Edem; though, in certain accounts, Ukwu Edem is said to be

the founding father of Okpata, while Edem is the father of Umulumgbe – Edem exists in all the accounts. Ukehe who is the last of the Ojewe Ogene children is said to have been fathered by Ojimanam, though some accounts called him Ojime Igweonyia. As mentioned earlier, Umuoka, from the accounts, may not be regarded as a direct child of Ojewe-Ogene, but her grand-child, depending on how one looks at it. Umuoka migrated from Awhum to their present settlement in Igboetiti area. Odim Aneke is said to be the father of Umuoka. In the same vein, it is said that Ozalla, in Nkanu, is an off-shoot of Okpatu.

It is also purported that Ojewe-Ogene had one daughter, Ugwunye. This only daughter got married to Onicha Aku, with whom she bore Nike (Dan Nkoloagu, as quoted by Ozoemena and Njeze, 1998). Till today, Nike still refers to this ascendance – ‘Nike-Ugwunye’. This is a pointer to the issue of matrilineage in those days. However, Ugwunye, it is claimed, divorced Onicha Aku, and got married to Ezedike, with whom she bore more children. The offspring of this later marriage include Egede, Affa, Akpakwume, Nze, Oghu, etc. From the various accounts, Ojewe-Ogene’s offspring (children and grandchildren) are not limited to Udi Local Government Area, particularly, the northern part of the local government, but spread out to parts of Igbo-Etiti, Enugu East, and Nkanu Local Government Areas, in Enugu State.

The Ojewe-Ogene story, it must be born in mind, is only a legend or myth. The towns and locations in the stories assume the qualities of human beings, playing allegorical functions. The heroes and heroines are also painted as super-human beings. Such stories usually contain some truths about geneological linkages and affinity between certain communities.

Some other accounts say that Ojewe-Ogene is the combination of the names of the father and mother of the clan; that while Ojewe is the father, Ogene is the mother of these towns in the clan. The earliest documented/ written account about the Ojewe-Ogene origin, prepared in 1938, by the pioneers of the ‘Ojebe Ogene Students’ Union’, of the College of the Immaculate Conception (C.I.C.) Enugu, actually projected the family view of the couple, Ojebe (Ojewe) and Ogene, who gave birth to the towns. In the opinion of Mr. Steve Attah, on 27th October 1996, in his submission to the ‘Ojebe Ogene Sports Committee’ (as cited in Ozoemena and Njeze, 1996), that earliest written account on Ojewe Ogene seemed to have been motivated by the patrilineal and patrimonial nature of the Igbo people, particularly following the ideals of the colonial masters and the new Christian religion. He argued that the oral history being taught to children before the documented history portrayed Ojewe-Ogene as the founding mother of the Ojewe-Ogene clan. From the foregoing, particularly, considering that the original legend views Ojewe-Ogene as a woman, one may surmise that, at some period in the past, our part of Igboland might have run the matrilineal social frame work, tracing their descent through the mother’s line.

The Abor Iyime-Awubu Legend (constituent villages or quarters seen as Abor Iyime Awubu’s sons):

This legend views Iyime Awubu as the legendary father of Abor, the same way that Ojewe-Ogene is viewed as the legendary mother of Abor. It postulates that the eight villages that constituted Abor originally were the descendants of the eight sons of Abor Iyime Awubu. There are three versions of this legend.

The first version says that Abor Iyime Awubu had three wives.

- The first wife gave birth to three sons, namely **Ugwunani, Ozalla and Amukwu**, collectively called Ikenge.
- The second wife gave birth to four sons, namely **Ebongwu, Ngwuagu, Amezike, and Ubiekpo**, collectively called Ibute.
- The third wife gave birth to one son called **Umuavulu**.

Each of these sons became a village with his descendants.

The second version of the theory claims that Abor Iyime Awubu had one wife who gave birth to all the eight sons, namely Ugwunani, Ozalla, Amukwu, Ebongwu, Ngwuagu, Amezike, Ubiekpo, and Umuavulu.

The third version of this theory focuses on the quarters in Abor Iyime Awubu, not necessarily villages. It states that Abor had three sons, Ikenge, Ibute, and Umuavulu, who respectively gave birth to the children who make up the different villages seen in the quarters.

The Migration Theory:

This theory has it that waves of migration contributed to the eight sets of village groupings in Abor. Proponents of this theory believe that the Abor villages came from neighbouring towns of Igboland. Writing about this theory, Lucy O. Onodugo (1980) in her NCE Thesis - *Chieftaincy Music in Abor Town*, citing an unnamed source, stated that the migration school of thought on the origin of Abor ascribed some migration origins to the following villages: Ubiekpo village – an off-shoot of Agbani, then Nkanu Local Government Area; Ngwuagu village – from Olo in then Udi L.G.A.; Ugwunani and Ozalla villages – common heritage from Ogwugwu in Awgu Local Government Area then. According to this school of thought, as Onodugo further stated, Umuavulu village is believed to be a composition of distinct and varying settlers, “some were made up of Igaras in Kwara State” (p.3). Onodugo in the study, however, described some of these claims as “top-heavy and lopsided” (p.3). Chief Festus Madukaligwe Okolo (2000), in his own analysis on the issue of migrations in Ebo, as published in his book, *The History and Culture of Abor*, states that: “It is believed that certain kindreds and families of Abor migrated from such places as Ngwo, Olo, Agbani and Ukana. There may be more areas of migration that may be unknown to me” (p.3). He further states as follows: “But I must not fail to remark that among those kindreds and families alleged to have been involved in the migration myth, there are many descendants of the *Amadi* group. It then becomes difficult to differentiate between the *Amadi* group and the stranger elements” (p.3). For the present researcher, considering the general origin of the Igbo people (discussed in Chapter 2), migration is a constant phenomenon among the people. Indeed, the history of every community on earth is mostly of migrations. People move about and settle wherever they feel is more habitable than where they came from.

The Edda General Hypothesis:

The hypothesis that Ebo(Abor) might have originated from an Edda General who lost his way after a fight is portent and plausible. This hypothesis, earlier discussed in Anidi (2008), originates from Isichei's (1976) insight that:

The Abam, Edda and Ohafia were interested in glory not geography. They were taken to the war by the Aro guides, and often had the vaguest idea of the route. Many in fact failed to return. Abboh, east of Enugu, is an example of a town founded by a straying Edda general. (Anidi, 2008, p. 17, citing Isichei, 1976, p. 84)

The closeness, in spelling and pronunciation, between “Abboh”, as mentioned by Isichei, and our own Abor, the town under study, including Isichei’s mentioning of ‘Enugu’ which is nearby to “Abboh”. The confusion is whether our own Abor is east or west of Enugu. Enugu is east of Abor, but Abor is west of Enugu. Yet, the towns and locations being mentioned further down the passage after ‘Abboh’, though spellings are anglicized, show remarkable resemblance with the towns and communities surrounding our own Abor:

Abam traditions remember only the disastrous attack against Obegu; for the rest, the wars were fought vaguely ‘in Elugu’

There were many records of their [Cross River fighters] activity in the Enugu-Nsukka area. Nike, a state with close links with the Aro, hired the Abams to attack both Opi and Ukehe, on various occasions..... Ohafia traditions record a successful war in Agbaja, and the total sack of ‘Ukpati’, near Enugu. (Anidi, p. 18, citing Isichei, 1976, 84)

Locations such as ‘Elugu’ (which may be Enugu), Enugu-Nsukka, Nike, Opi, Ukehe, and ‘Ukpati’ (which may be Okpati), as mentioned above, are quite close to our own Abor. Reviewing this issue once more in the present work, Anidi tends to reflect that it might actually not be wrong to describe the Abor locality, under study, as lying east of Enugu. It depends on where one is standing. Though, politically, Abor is presently grouped under Enugu West Senatorial Zone, in Enugu State, but Abor lies side by side with Nike communities, such as Eziana, Nokpa, Alulu Nike, all grouped under Enugu East.

Though one may not be sure of how much of the original story has been correctly preserved in the Edda or Abam traditions, as reported by Isichei, but if one should take the case further, to hypothesize further, there is a characteristic feature of some of our Abor people that is similar to that of the Edda, Abam, or Ohafia warriors, then; that is – their love of military glory. Regarding this, HRM Dr. C. C. Njeze (Odaliye), the traditional ruler of Umuavulu-Abor, then, informed the present researchers that in the days of the internecine wars, Abor never bought mercenaries to fight for them. They loved the glory of battle – the likes of Nnadi Onuigbo, Oluluo Ogu, Okolo Igbo (Umu Ozo Edikpa). There were actually four of them from the Ozo Edikpa family who were warriors. There were also Umu Ezeakawa (youths from the Ezeakawa family), among others. Ebo’s practice of fighting their wars by themselves was quite different from that of most of their neighbours who usually employed mercenaries. Conversely, Abor has not been known to fight as mercenaries, too. It is worth mentioning too that Ugwunani village, believed to be the eldest of the eight sons of Abor, is projected to have first settled at its present location – the deepest, oldest, remotest area of Abor – during the slave trade era, by the 12th - 18th centuries. If this was actually the case, then there might be some connection between the present Abor settlement and the slave trade. All these are hypotheses which are yet to be confirmed. The issue of origin for any Igbo community is not an easy one, because, as been mentioned before, much of the ancient origins of the Igbo people, like those of other illiterate communities, have been lost in antiquity; hence, Afigbo (1983) describes any research into the Igbo origin as “a very maze within a maze”.

Abor in Pre-Colonial Era

Before the advent of British rule, Abor was an autonomous and sovereign entity, paying no allegiance to anybody. It was self sufficient in all it needed, its contact with outsiders was limited. The people of Abor were farmers, hunters, wine tappers, blacksmiths, carvers, sculptors, statue makers, builders of thatched and mud houses. They communicated in the

community through narrow winding pathways that were maintained through general community works, known then as *Olu Obodo*. Market places were their important social and economic contact places. It was in the market and during market sessions that important and influential personalities held meetings where the affairs of Abor were discussed and decisions taken.

The Orie Market (*Obodo Imo*) in Abor was originally located in Amukwu village, before the decision was taken to re-locate the Orie Market to its present location in Umuavulu village. Various reasons are now given for the re-location. Legend has it that Umuavulu-Abor warriors waylaid Nsude warriors with their hired Abiriba warriors at a point near the Ajali River, on their way to attack Abor. Nsude was roundly defeated in the battle that ensued. Abor was very grateful to the Umuavulu warriors and thus relocated *Obodo Imo* to its current location. This fighting capacity of Umuavulu warriors also accounted for the location of Umuavulu village, away from the other seven (7) villages of Abor, at the western border of Abor with Eke (sister to Nsude). Both Eke and Nsude had waged wars against Abor from time to time, in the precolonial era, sometimes with hired Abiriba warriors.

Governance in Precolonial Era

Before the advent of the British rule and its adjunct Christianity, Abor was an independent and self-governing entity. Governance in Abor was in the hands of a few well-to-do individuals, who constituted *Oha Abor* which was a conglomerate of people with diverse interests. Its membership was undemocratic and was based on the ability of an individual to perform costly ceremonies associated with joining the *Oha Abor*. The *Oha Abor* operated then with a crude executive called *Ndi Ishi-oha Abor*.

The roles of the *Oha Abor*, included the following:

1. Defence of the Abor territories, which today are among the largest in the Ojewe-Ogene Clan. The *Oha Abor* had maintained a formidable army whose commanders were Isi Offiah Ngwumahalu (who later took the Ozo title and was referred to as Ozo Isioffia Onodugo) and Ozo Nnadi Onuigbo.
2. Maintenance of peace in Abor and limiting slave trade within Abor. The *Oha Abor* held Abor together for a very long time.
3. Formation and development of customs, tradition, culture, feasts, ceremonies, etc. of Abor. Its decisions on the affairs of Ebo(Abor) were final and binding on all citizens of Abor.

Political Structure and Transformations

According to Cosmas I. Ugwu, who was the former Chairman of the Abor Customary Court; the original formation of the eight villages of Abor has undergone two major transformations; hence he itemizes three major village groupings of Abor: the original formation, the second formation (merger of Ebongwu and Ngwuagu), and the current formation.

The formations (and transformations) are in the following order:

Original Formation of Abor villages, according to seniority

1. Ugwunani
2. Ozalla
3. Amukwu
4. Ebongwu
5. Ngwuagu
6. Amaezike
7. Ubiekpo
8. Umuavulu

Second Formation (Merger of Ebongwu & Ngwuagu villages)

1. Ugwunani
2. Ozalla
3. Amukwu
4. Dinigweze
5. Dinunobe
6. Amaezike
7. Ubiekpo
8. Umuavulu village (Autonomous community)

Current Formation of Abor (as at December 2024)

1. Ugwunani
2. Ozalla
3. Amukwu (Autonomous community)
4. Dinigweze
5. Dinunobe
6. Ubiekpo
7. Amaezike
8. Ebongwu village
9. Umuavulu village (Autonomous community)

The above village groupings have been compiled by Cosmas Ugwu (Justice of Peace, JP), with some inputs from Chief Eloka Nnamani, the current President of the Abor Progressive Union. Note that the Abor Progressive Union as used here is concerned with the current eight villages of Abor, without the inclusion of Umuavulu which is now an autonomous community.

Component parts of the current nine (9) larger Abor communities, as compiled by Nze Barr. Ben Onodugo, with the assistance of Chief Eloka Nnamani, President Abor Progressive Union and Dr. Netchy Mbeze, President, Umuavulu-Ebo(Abor) (Autonomous Community) Progressive Union:

Ugwunani Community

- i. Onuodoagu
- ii. Umudinugwu
- iii. Ogwube

- iv. Obeagu Ofufe
- v. Umuowagu
- vi. Ihekwe
- vii. Ihudiaba n'Olate

Ozalla Community

- i. Ishi Ameke
- ii. Okunito
- iii. Amukwa

Amukwu Community

- i. Ezi-Amukwu
- ii. Etiti
- iii. Obodo Akpaka

Dinigweze Community

- i. Okpoma Uwenu
- ii. Okpoma Uwani
- iii. Umuani Uwenu
- iv. Umuani Uwani

Dinunobe Community

- i. Unuokweshi
- ii. Amufu/Umukaghuhu
- iii. Akama

Amaezike Community

- i. Izzi
- ii. Ogwofia

Ebongwu Community

- i. Uwenu
- ii. Ebongwu Uwani

Ubiekpo Community

- i. Umuzo Uwenu
- ii. Onuodoagu
- iii. Umudioku
- iv. Umuzi
- v. Amaekwulu/Ebouwani
- vi. Emegu
- vii. Umuzo Uwani

Umuavulu (Ujaligwa) Community

- i. Amogwu
- ii. Umuikwo

- iii. Ohemje
- iv. Umuezike
- v. Ezionya
- vi. Nzuko
- vii. Umuoka
- viii. Eziagu
- ix. Uwenu-Uwani
- x. Umuzozo-Uwani
- xi. Umuzozo Uwenu
- xii. Eguma
- xiii. Orobo
- xiv. Alagu

Note: Some Abor elders, for example, Chief (Gbuluichi) Elias Eruchie, in an interview with Dr. Ojel Anidi (23 October, 2024), are of the opinion that the original formation of Abor n' isato, eight sons (villages) of the larger Abor has been distorted by the present nine-villages formation of the larger Abor, as seen above. According to Chief Eruchie, the Ozo and Gbuluichi title-holders of Abor prefer that the original arrangement of the Abor larger villages be maintained. It should be noted that Ebongwu sometime in the past became almost extinct leading to their merger with Ngwuagu (another village) which now resulted in the creation of the villages of Dinigweze and Dinunobe. Ebongwu has now come of age; hence has regained its status as a full, independent Abor village. The story of Ebongwu and reorganisations in Abor is discussed in greater detail in the next subsection.

It is pertinent to mention that the historical **three major zones of Abor** have remained, through these years, now reflecting the current reorganisations:

Ikenge

Ugwunani

Ozala

Amukwu villages;

Ibute

Dinigweze

Dinunobe

Amaezike

Ebongwu

Ubiekpo villages; and

Umuavulu which is alone as one large village/ community.

Umuavulu-Abor, it should be noted, became an Autonomous community following the Enugu State Autonomous Communities (Recognition) Edict of 1999. In the schedule of the Edict, Umuavulu is No. 16.25.

The **four major zones/ quarters of Umuavulu-Abor**, and their constituent villages, include:

Ikenge Uwani

- i. Amogwu
- ii. Umuikwo
- iii. Ohemje

- iv. Umuezike

Emegu

- v. Ezionya
- vi. Nzuko
- vii. Umuoka
- viii. Eziagu
- ix. Uwenu na Uwani

Owuga na Orobo

- x. Umuzozo-Uwani
- xi. Umuzozo Uwenu
- xii. Orobo

Aluagu na Eguma

- xiii. Eguma
- xiv. Alagu

Dinigweze, Dinunobe and Other Village Reorganisations in Abor

There are instances of village reorganisations and migrations in Abor, in the past. Ngwuagu village, for example, at a point, was divided into Dinigweze and Dinunobe villages; hence, Ngwuagu stopped existing as a village. The cause was that Ebongwu village at some point became a victim of an epidemic which reduced its population to near extinction. The survivors of the epidemic could not stand on their own as a village, so they joined Ngwuagu who absorbed them, and then in order not to lose the share of Ebongwu in the larger Abor, Ngwuagu then divided into Dinigweze and Dinunobe. Ebongwu became part of Dinigweze, supplemented by some carve-outs from Ngwuagu. The rest of Ngwuagu became Dinunobe. Anidi (2008), citing her interviews with Chief (Sir) Dominic Ogbologu and Barr. Tony Okolo Okolonkwo, explained that the reorganization – the merging of the Ngwuagu and Ebongwu communities and subsequent invention of Dinigweze and Dinunobe – was done by the Abor Community Council, under the Chairmanship of Chief L. U. Ukwu. Barr. Okolonkwo buttressed that the new communities were created about the year 1973. The names, ‘Dinigweze’ and ‘Dinunobe’, according to Okolonkwo, were sourced from the religious grounds in the communities. Ebongwu, meanwhile, remained a hamlet in Dinigweze village. Another case of reorganization, as reported in Okolo (2000), citing Mazi Nnamani Ike, from Dinunobe village, was the relocation of Akama hamlet from Amezike village, where it had been staying, to Dinunobe, its original kindred. Okolo further revealed that Ogui Nike is purported to have migrated from Amukwu village in Abor, and the area from where they migrated has continued to be reserved for crop cultivation up until the time of his writing the interview (in the year 2000).

Abor in the Colonial Era

On the advent of colonial rule within the geographical territory known today as Nigeria, chiefdoms were created in Igboland as opposed to emirships in Hausa-Fulani lands. Each chiefdom had a warrant chief. Abor was made a chiefdom in the early 1900s when Chief Ozo Ngwunwagu Onodugo (Ozo Nnabuenyi) was conferred with the title of Warrant Chief. To ensure peace and tranquility, he continued to work with Oha-Abor. Later on, Ozo Ukwu N’eje be Eze of Ngwuagu, was appointed to oversee Ibute Abor group of villages, while Agada Ngwu Ochi, was appointed to oversee Ikenge Abor group of villages.

The British Colonial Masters also brought schools and churches. Spearheaded by Warrant Chief Ngwunwagu Onodugo, schools and churches were established in Abor: first in Umuavulu in 1919 and later in Enu-Abor in 1921.

With the establishment of schools, young men were encouraged to enroll in the schools. There was the initial reluctance to send females to school on the wrong notion that women were trained for the benefits of their husband's family. Even some parents refused to send their male children to school for to do that means depriving parents helping hands in farm work. At a point, the male children were conscripted and forced to go to the schools.

In the 1940s, some men of Abor, who had been educated by the Colonial system, formed the 'Abor Development Union' which championed development projects in Abor. Two schools and two churches were built. One of the schools, St Theresa School, Abor, was sited in Umuavulu for girls, and the other school, St Peter School, Abor, was sited in Enu-Abor for boys. This mutual co-operation continued until sometime in the 1940s when certain disagreements arose. The educated men in Umuavulu Abor then formed a body known as and called Abor-1 Town Union.

Abor Leadership in the Post-Colonial Era

In 1976, six years after the Nigeria-Biafra War ended (in January 1970), the then Military Government of Nigeria promulgated a decree which made it mandatory for every autonomous community in Nigeria to have a traditional ruler. In 1977, HRH Igwe P. U. Nnamani of Ubiekpo village, Ibute Quarter, was chosen and later crowned as the Agodom I of Abor. After the demise of Agodom I of Abor, HRH Igwe L. U. Ukwu, from Ngwuagu village, also in Ibute Abor Quarter, was chosen to replace him. He served as Regent in 1989-1993, before being crowned as the Agodom II of Abor in Dec. 1993. After the demise of Agodom II of Abor, HRH Igwe C. Ngwudile, from Ugwunani village, in Ikege Abor Quarter, was chosen to replace him, and he became crowned as the Agodom III of Abor on 22 May, 2015.

In 1998-1999, an autonomous status was granted to Umuavulu Abor, as contained in the Enugu State Autonomous Communities (Recognition) Edict 1999. In the schedule of the Edict, Umuavulu is No. 16.25. By virtue of the autonomous status of Umuavulu village, Abor then became constituted of two autonomous towns, namely Abor and Umuavulu- Abor.

The first traditional ruler of Umuavulu-Abor was HRH C. I. Ike, the Ujaligwa I of Umuavulu, who got his certificate on 12 February 2001. After the demise of Ujaligwa I, HRM Igwe Dr. Callistus Chukwuemeka Njeze (Odalije) was selected (following an election) to replace him as Ujaligwa II of Umuavulu. Dr. Njeze served as Regent in 2011-2015 before being crowned in December 26, 2015. After the demise of Ujaligwa II, HRM Igwe Dr. Chike Paschal Nnabuenyi Onodugo (Ezedinobi) was elected and crowned on 17th December 2022.

References

- Anidi, O. (2008). *Sands of our land: Historical tales of Abor and Umuavulu*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fidgina Global Books.
- Asogwa, J. (1991). C. C. Onoh: Politics & Power in Eastern Nigeria. Enugu, Nigeria: Idika Press (Nigeria).
- Eze, D. (2009). *Enugu: (1909 – 2009): A century in search of identity*. Enugu, Nigeria: Linco Press Nig. Ltd.
- Isichei, E. A (1976). *History of the Igbo people*. London: Macmillan
- Lawton, J. G. (1927). *Intelligence Report Enugu Division, 192.7*
- Okolo, F. M. (2000). *The History and Culture of Abor*. Enugu, Nigeria: Mekanand Publications.
- Onodugo, L. O. (1980). “Chieftaincy music in Abor town.” NCE thesis, Department of Music, Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri.
- Ugwu, C. I. (2022, June 25). “Information and enquiry from Honourable Ugwu Cosmas I. (JP).”

CHAPTER 6: Review of Previous Works on Abor (By Ojel C. Anidi)

Introduction

The works extrapolated here included Festus M. Okolo's (2000) *The History and Culture of Abor*, Lucy O. Onodugo's (1980) "Chieftaincy Music in Abor Town" (NCE thesis), Ojel Anidi's (2008) *Sands of Our Land: Historical Tales of Abor and Umuavulu*, and Ben A. Onodugo's paper, "Abor Iyime Awubu", submitted to the present Abor Iyime Awubu history project research team.

Abor Economy: Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial Era

The Abor people initially mainly relied on medium and large-scale farming for their economic sustenance. Large scale farming helped the people to sustain their many religious rituals which came as feasts and celebrations, and eventually their love and search for education. The inhabitants of Abor town, in those days, as Okolo (2000) observed, carried out most of their agricultural activities on the fertile land that spreads out from the foot of the scarp slope to the Abor boundary with the people of Nike in Enugu-East Local Government Area. Sometimes some Abor people rent more farmlands from the people of Nike, so they could have more available lands to engage in shifting cultivation. The training given to the adolescents in those days in Abor, as Okolo observed, revolved around farming. A boy's father, for instance, might give him a share of his enlarged farmland. The boy might further be advised to offer his labour for sale to others in their farms. He used the money he realized from such services to take care of himself and purchase more seed yams to enlarge his own farms. He thus gradually established his own economic independence from his father's family. His father might also direct him to engage the female child he claimed from birth so both of them could grow to full maturity together and help each other in the farms. The expansion of the boy's farmlands meant the increase in his yam crops which qualified him for initiation into the Fiajioku group of ownership.

Usually, both boys and girls before the age of six years became used to all aspects of farm work by taking part in the farms located at home in their place of residence. As they grew older they travelled out to the farms located on the outskirts of the village where farmlands were owned in common by the villagers. As they grew older still, they accompanied their parents to the more distant farms, the real farmlands spreading out from the foot of the scarp slope to the Abor boundary with Nike. On the issue of the Abor people's long distance farming, Okolo (2000) observed that:

It was a very strenuous activity especially when one had to do the farm work after walking a long distance of about ten kilometers before coming back home almost everyday of the farming season. It made our people look tough and rustic because they walked down some hills and up again carrying loads of water or firewood or foodstuff from the farm. The child was brought up under the harsh economic condition even before he or she attained the age of adolescence and it became part and parcel of him or her. (p. 25)

The Abor people were producers of yams, cocoyams, palm oil and palm nuts, palm wine, pepper, groundnuts, etc. Ede Abor (cocoyams from Abor), for many years, up until a few years ago when the Fulani herders literally drove our people from the farmlands, remained a known

brand in all markets around Enugu (Anidi, 2008). The palm tree, for Okolo, was indeed an all-purpose economic tree for the Abor person:

It yielded palm oil and palm nuts and of course the much loved palm wine useful in most, if not all parties. The leaves provided materials for broom making and the palm fronds for basket making. The same palm fronds were used in the building of houses and barns for the storage of farm products. Both the leaves and palm fronds were also useful as essential materials for the famous and much admired Odo Masquerades. So even the supernatural beings of the time made use of them. The trunk of the palm tree was prepared in a way it would serve as wall plates, rafters, and polines in the house building industry. The roots were useful in making the ornamental baskets called Okpumpku used as Umbrella during the rain or severe sunshine. In short there was no part of the palm tree that was not found useful to an Abor man as well as to the people of Igboland where these palms grow. (Okolo, 2000, p. 209)

Anidi (2008) also emphasized the importance of the palm trees in Abor. She stated that the palm tree was not only the source of the palm oil, palm wine, palm nuts and kernels, which serve as food items, but in many other respects, the palm trees, then, through their by-products “were like today’s crude oil” (p. 13). The dried fibres from the palm nuts, for instance, acted as the kerosene or gas that helped to light the fires for cooking, etc; the branches served as firewood; the ‘uli ogili’ (palm candle sticks) made from the slurry leftovers after palmoil distillation were used for lighting at night; the udeaku, the clean transparent oil got from the palm nuts, served as the major body pomade/ cream. Further, as Anidi stated, palm wine tapping and farming were the major means of livelihood of the Abor people in those days; hence, their usual reference to ‘nkwu na anu’ (palm tree and land) as the mark of wealth. The Abor people also engaged in other economic activities such as blacksmithing, weaving, and trading. The blacksmiths helped to produce the farm implements; the weavers produced superior baskets, and the traders travelled to and from neighbouring communities to sell and buy goods.

The economy of Abor was radically transformed when coal was discovered in Enugu (Enuguwu Ngwo), a near-by community. The nearness of Abor town to Enugu, the Coal City, made it possible for many Abor people to be employed as labourers and other staff at the Enugu coal fields. The Abor man for the first time in his life started enjoying organized paid labour, in the new Coal Corporation. Okolo (2000) revealed that Chief Joseph Okpokwu of Alagu hamlet of Umuavulu Abor helped a lot in the employment of the Abor people at the coal industry, when “he was made the head of the illiterate group of the work force” (p. 212). Initially, the Warrant Chiefs were relied on by the colonial government to provide these labourers for the coal mines (Asogwa, 1991, Anidi, 2008, Eze, 2009). With these developments, the Abor economy rose drastically. Apart from the regular office payments, people could sell their produce and receive more profit, so commerce increased. Before long, all the events and feasts in Abor became super exciting. Where cocks, goats or pigs would have been enough, people went ahead to obtain and use cows of various sizes. Sacrifices used for rituals became blown up with competition. There was also healthy competition in the building of schools and churches. From the early thirties Abor people had started putting up solid concrete school and church buildings. By 1956, Abor had built a Teacher Training College, later converted to a girls’ secondary school, now St Theresa College, Abor; and by 1962, Abor had built a secondary school for the boys, Christ High School, Abor, mainly privately owned by Mr. Louis U. Ukwu (later, the

traditional ruler (Iyime Awubu II) of Abor. Abor people started early to invest in the education industry and training of their children.

Abor Music

Celebrations are an important part of life, for the Igbo, particularly the Abor Igbo people. Such celebrations are usually accompanied by various types of traditional music and dances. Some of the musics, such as the *Ufie*, *Ekwe Ozo*, *Ajuba*, *Igede*, and *Ode*, and the occasions of their use, are discussed.

The *Ufie*:

In Abor, in those days, among the most prominent musics, usually patronized by Ozo titled men was the *Ufie* music (Onodugo, 1980; Okolo, 2000). The name, *Ufie*, is taken from the name of the instrument used for playing the music. Onodugo (1980) revealed that the *Ufie* music was originally court music. It was played in the palace of the Chief or Ozo every morning before he went to take his bath ready for the day's work. It was strictly an instrumental music based on folk tales. The instruments for *Ufie* music comprised: 1. *Ufie* (2 pieces) – a type of wooden drum (*ekwe*) made with *Ngwu* wood or 'Ufie' wood. It is hallowed out through a longitudinal slit so as to give two lips each which are beaten to obtain two distinct notes. It is played with two sticks. There is an *aju* (pillow made of raffia) on which the *Ufie* drum rests. Usually, before the instrument is sounded, a goat is killed and the blood is sprinkled on the instrument. 2. *Oyo* (2 pieces) – the two are played by one man. The *Oyo* is a kind of hand rattle. It is a bell-shaped basket with calabash or wood resonator. Seeds or beads are deposited in the basket. This makes it vibrate. The bell-shaped side is made with the back of a bamboo stick and held together with raffia.

The *Ufie* music was usually played in an open square or market where the audience participated, especially when titled men or Chiefs go to the open square for final title-taking ceremony. The *Ufie* music dancers combined rhythmic dancing with graceful movement to the melody of the music. Elites from the community normally gave money to 'the *Ufie*' or made a traditional salutation with head or hand before engaging in the dance.

The *Ekwe Ozo*

There was also the *Ekwe* music, an extract from the *Ufie* music, beaten by one person whenever the Ozo was eating. The lyrics were "Lihodokwe! Lihodokwe! Na abia abia kwa".

Abor Music Concerts at the Colonial Era

Onodugo (1980) intimated that at the introduction of the Warrant Chief System as a system of local government administration in Southern Nigeria (by 1891-1929), following the principles and practice of local government administration in Northern Nigeria, then, in Abor, Ozo Ngwunwagu Onodugo (Nnabuenyi) became the first Warrant Chief of Abor. During his reign, a number of music makers from Abor and neighbouring towns used to pay homage to him with their musical groups. They used to perform throughout one or two days, and the Chief in turn used to feed them with all sorts of dishes and drinks. Such occasions provided opportunities for the District Commissioners (DC) to visit the Warrant Chief. The white man DC used to donate money to the dancers and also scattered some coins from the Chief's balcony for the enthusiastic audience to scramble for. Dances that featured at such occasions included:

Ogwurogwu Dance from Oghe; Ajuba Music from Abor, Mgbereke (Xylophone) music from Eke, Nkwanwaonu music for virgil keeping during festivities, Farewell music, and Ode music, taught to the Abor people by Ohuru, Nsukka, indigenes (Onodugo, 1980).

The Ajuba Music

The lyrics of the Ajuba music, as given by Onodugo (1980), went as follows:

Odi mma adighi omume, Jie temma gota omume.

Na okpa nani anaghi azogbu irurie n'agu.

Okolobia dinu Emegu

Oduneje Ogu; Ohemje na Ndingwu, Umuikwo na Amaogwu

Ngwunwagu nwaeze nwa Aguivo, deme oo (2 ice) (p. 21)

English Translation

One who is goodlooking but without character, Go and abort the looks and buy character.

Because the feet alone cannot kill the weeds in the farms.

Gallant young men are in Emegu

Odunejeogu; Ohemje and Ndingwu, Umuikwo and Amaogwu

Ngwunwagu son of the king, son of Aguivo, thanks oo (twice)

(English translations by Ojel Anidi, 2024)

Some points to note from the lyrics of the Ajuba music as given above:

*Emegu ('Ama agu', in central Igbo and uncontracted): Emegu literally means 'den of lions'. The Emegu quarter (a group of villages or hamlets) in Umuavulu-Abor include Nzuko, Ezionya, Eziagu, Uwenu Ayigbo, Emegu Uwani, and Umuoka.

*Odunejeogu: Praise name for Emegu quarter in Umuavulu-Abor. Odunejeogu literally means "someone(s) who lead(s) wars home"

*Ohemje: A hamlet in Umuavulu

*Ndingwu: This may be referring to the hamlet of Chief Ngwunwagu – Ngwu, for short; thus, Ndingwu, literally meaning Chief Ngwu's people. Ngwu's hamlet is *Umuoka, as we know it today.

*Umuikwo and Amogwu: They are hamlets in Umuavulu.

*Ngwunwagu: Warrant Chief of Abor

*Aguivo: Ngwu's grandfather's Ozo title, used as praise name for members of his lineage.

Abor Music at the 1977 Chieftaincy Ceremony

Onodugo (1980) also looked at Chieftaincy music in Abor town after the introduction of the traditional rulers – Chiefs – in Igboland in 1976. This was many years after the abolition of the warrant chief system. In the background of her study, she noted that before the 1976 institution of Chieftaincy in Igboland, the military regime of General Ironsi (January 1966 – July 1966) had made moves to accord some recognition to traditional rulers in Igboland, but the moves were very short-lived, owing to the overthrow of the regime. After the Nigeria-Biafra War, under the military regime of Gowon, the government began rethinking the role and place of traditional authorities in local administration and community development. The Udoji Public Service Review Commission, for example, emphasized the importance of traditional rulers continuing to act as "the impartial fathers of their communities and embodiment of local custom" ("Report of the Committee on Chieftaincy Matters in East-Central State of Nigeria,

1976”, p. 6, as cited in Onodugo, 1980, p. 28). Following the Udoji report, it was approved that the term Chief should be defined “as the traditional head of an autonomous community, identified and selected by his people according to their own tradition and usages and recognized as such by the government” (Onodugo, p. 28). With this trend, Abor was privileged to have, once more, a cherished son, His Royal Highness (Iyime Awubu) the Agodom I of Abor, Chief P. U. Nnamani. Some musical presentations took place at the installation ceremony of Chief P. U. Nnamani, which took place on 31st December 1977, at St. Peters Church premises at Abor. Remarkable musical presentations at the ceremony included the Igede, Ode, Igba Eze, and Egwu Umuagboo.

The Igede

The *Igede*, according to Onodugo (1980), is one of the oldest musical institutions in Abor. It is nicknamed “*Eje be onye ubiam*” (That which can never pay a visit to a pauper). Usually, the Igede did not perform unless there was a cow standing for the occasion. The *Igede* therefore signified greatness and richness. Only selected people took part in the *Igede* music. Also, it is regarded as sacred, hence before the music began, the musical instruments must have certain rituals performed on them, one of which must be that a cock will be killed and the blood sprinkled on each of the instruments and the feathers of the cock are attached on the parts of the instruments with the help of the blood on them. This gives the instruments a fearful appearance. The instruments of the Igede consist of one large drum known as *Di Igede* (Husband of *Igede*), and another smaller one called *Nwunye Igede* (Wife of *Igede*). These drums are covered with animal skin and played with hands. Other instruments included one twin metal gong and two vertical flutes (*Opi Igede*). It is believed that these instruments have lasted for centuries without replacement. The *Igede* is mainly instrumental and the big or large drum says “*kputa ehi, kputa ehi*” (Bring cow, bring cow). Late Celestine Ukwu of Abor tried to capture the spirit of the Igede in his music, though his style of the Igede is quite different from the real traditional *Igede* music.

The Igede music started declining in prominence in Abor when it seemed that the music was being used to perpetrate the caste system, and sometimes even unfairly, because the Igede could stop beating at the entrance of someone perceived as not a freeborn – whether or not that was the case. In any case, the issue of people being visitors or migrants to a place, for example, is almost obsolete, for, as seen in our sections/ chapters on origin, migration was a constant among the Igbo and other people.

The Ode

The Ode music is also among the chieftaincy musics described in Onodugo (1980). According to Onodugo, the Ode music performed at chieftaincy and burial ceremonies and was open to all, unlike Igede and Ufie musics. The Ode music originated from Nsukka, and was taught to Abor people by Ohuru indigenes. The music is more of instrumental music with little vocals incorporated. It is different from most dances in Abor. The soloist adds whatever he feels could go into the accepted rhythm, in praise of the chief or the celebrants, or other notable personalities or an outstanding dancer. Instruments for the Ode music include: 1. **Drums made from Ufie or Ube wood**, two in number: one Oke Igba (big drum) and one Agbala Ogwe (long drum). The pieces of wood are hallowed. The tops are covered with animal skin. The master drummer plays the big drum, with both hands and sticks; while the long drum is played with

both hands; 2. **Ekwe (wooden drums)**, two in number: The big one rests on an aju (a little cushion usually made of woven raffia); the small one acts as an accompaniment to the big one and is normally held with one hand. The drums are played with sticks; 3. **Oyo (Hand rattle)**, two in number: played by one person; 4. **Ogene (Metal gong)**, two in one referred to as ogeenjakakpa (twin gong). It is revealed that the Umuozo village in Umuavulu known for their blacksmithing supplied most of the ogene used in those days; 5. **Opi Ode (Horns)**, four in number and were made from the horns of the antelope. They were played by blowing. The chief player of the horns acted as a soloist with the instruments while the others respond. The chief player also indicated to the dancers that the music was coming to its hottest session, so the dancers could get ready for the climax of the dance. It was always wonderful to watch youths engage in this kind of dance. The Ode music in Abor is still waxing strong and can be described as the key traditional music/ dance of the Abor people, today.

Below is a sample of the few vocals in the Ode music, as given by Onodugo (1980):

Soloist secretly (instrumentally):

Agodo m abia n'Ode	(Agodom has come to the Ode dance)
Onye ukwu abia n'Ode	(An important person has come to the Ode)
Chief anyi abia n'Ode	(The king has come to the Ode)
Odogwu anyi ndeje-o.	(Our bigman, welcome o.)

(Repeated by the horizontal flute (opi ode))

2nd Variation:

Egwunukwa agu I kpokoba agbara agba gi	(If you desire to dance, collect together your extras)
Agodo m I nuwo ihe Ode n'ekwu	(Agodom, do you understand what the Ode is saying)
I nuwo ihe Ode n'ekwu	(Do you understand what the Ode is saying?)
Onye Ode bialu be nye inuwo	(The one hosting the Ode, do you understand...)
Ihe Ode n'ekwu	(What the Ode is saying)
Ihe Ode n'ekwu nu-o	(What the Ode is saying o)
Agodom abia n'Ode b'anyi o.	(Agodom has come to our native Ode dance o...)

(Onodugo, 1980, p. 23) (English Translations by Ojel Anidi, 2024)

*Note: Agodom is the official title for the traditional rulers of Abo – Abor n'isato. It has continued to be used by the traditional ruler of the Abor town, without the Umuavulu-Abor, and Amukwu-Abor now Autonomous towns.

It should be noted that Onodugo (1980), as cited here, had hoped to inspire further research on Abor music. It is gladdening, therefore, that one of the chapters in the present work has examined the Abor musical arts.

Some Abor Ceremonies

'Ifie Akpukpo' Ceremony: Ifie akpukpo may be literally translated as 'the tying of dried animal skin'. This was done to welcome the first pregnancy of a young woman. It was believed to have the power to ward off the evil spirits which might be directed by evil men to molest the woman and her pregnancy. In that ceremony, as Okolo explains, the mother of the pregnant young woman would with the aid of a young girl tie a rope made of dried skin of an animal, like an antelope ('ene') to the waist of the pregnant woman. Then she would quickly remove it and replace it with a special cotton thread called *uba* (Okolo, 2000, p. 11). The young woman

had to retain the thread on her waist for the duration of the pregnancy. Attendant in the ceremony were the grandmother of the girl or her representative and the girl's senior sister. These women were usually treated to a heavy meal, consisting of pounded yam and soup with meat and palm wine, and at the end of the ceremony they received gifts, graded accordingly, from the girl's husband. The three women visitors used the opportunity to prepare the young pregnant woman for the pains of childbirth, advising her not to shout or openly express pains during childbirth. For this reason, Abor women were known not to ever cry over labour pains.

'Welele Wee' NewBorn Initiation: 'Welele wee' depicts the sound of the spontaneous music women make when a mother safely gives birth to her child. At the birth of a new child, women who assisted the midwife in the delivery would organize the first initiation of the child into his or her future economic life in a ritual known as 'Welele wee'. If it was a male child, a hoe for farming, and a rope ('agbu') for climbing palm trees and a special knife for tapping of wine ('mma-agu') would be assembled. Where the child was a female, items such as broom, basket and a razor ('mkpisi') were assembled. The ritual was meant to call down God's blessing on the children in their future use of these instruments. Further, God's blessings were invoked on the proper use of the child's sex organs for the purpose of procreation (Okolo, 2000, p. 13).

The 'Omugo' (Post-natal ritual): After the birth of the child, there was the Omugo (post-natal) ritual. This usually began with a formal invitation by the father of the new born child to his mother-in-law to come and stay with his family, specifically, her daughter, to help her as she nursed her new-born child. This period is called the *Omugo* period. This formal invitation was usually accompanied with some wine or drinks with which the mother-in-law in turn informed her nwunye or co-wives that she was going for omugo. This information to the co-wives was necessary because of the services, example, sweeping of the compound, expected from these women in her home during the period of her absence (Okolo, 2000). The Omugo period usually lasted for nine native weeks or 36 days. The counting of the period usually began on the Afor or Eke day, irrespective of the actual day of the birth, even if it was on Nkwo or Orie day. Food items taken at this period were basically yams, meat and palm wine or beer drink. Relations, friends and well wishers usually formed a kind of welfare system to render assistance to one another at this period; hence they presented food items such as baskets of yam tubers, jars of palm wine or cartons of beer, live animals or large quantities of meat to the family of the new-born baby at this period.

The Naming Ceremony ('Ito Nwa na Ani'): This came with its own ritual, in those days. After the naming ceremony the young mother could then begin to enter the kitchen and touch the vessels which she could not touch during the Omugo because she was considered not purified at that time (Okolo, 2000). There was also a final purification ceremony expected of the young mother on an Eke day following her Omugo. In the evening of that day, the young mother would take off her clothes and walk to the Eke market naked being led by a boy or a girl who would be shouting "Ene – O Ene – O" at the top of their voice to alert people of her being on the way. At the Eke shrine, the shrine would be worshipped with food and wine. There would also be a mock marketing transaction between the young mother and the young girl or boy which accompanied the mother. HRH Nono Felicia Ukwu and Nneokwukwe Mrs Florence Oliaku Njeze whom the present researcher interviewed corroborated and elaborated on this Eke day cleansing for the young mother. According to them, before the young mother set off for

the Eke shrine, she would perform an initial ritual by using an antelope bone (*okpukpu achu*) to strike around her living quarters and her kitchen, as part of her purification process. The last ceremony for the Omugo involved presentation of clothes and money gifts to the mother-in-law, elder sister and grandmother of the young mother for their services during the Omugo period. Usually, the father of the child would invite and entertain his family friends on this day, and with a goat or pig he would make a special offering to his Chi.

Ritual for Seeking a new Child: Usually, in those days, when a new child was needed, permission was formally sought by the man from his wife, his mother-in-law, the baby nurse and the man's mother (Okolo, 2000). This application for permission to seek for this child usually came in the form of a small feast for these people. In this feast the man would inform the gathering (his wife, his mother-in-law, the baby nurse and the man's mother) that their baby had grown. If they agreed, then the man would buy clothes for his wife and those who would help to take care of the baby, depending on his capacity. There would be another ceremony or ritual after the woman's menstrual period. She would report to her husband who would purify her with the application of *odo* (yellow chalk) on the forehead in the early morning. At night they would conduct a special worship of their legs with a cock and then began to engage in sexual relationship in an effort to have another baby. It was an act always kept secret from the children.

The Initiation of the Male Child into the Odo Cult: This usually was organised when the child had become inquisitive about happenings around him. The initiation ceremonies, according to Okolo (2000), involved an elaborate expenditure, where both the father and mother of the child were expected to perform a ceremony of Ama Odo to the different groups they belonged. The initiation ceremony entailed killing an animal ranging from a cock to a fat cow, heaps of large yam tubers, jars of palm wine, tins of palm oil, etc., in addition to the Ama Odo.

There was also **the dedication of the male child to the chief deity of Abor, Ohune**. This usually required a young fowl, some yam tubers and a calabash of palm wine. This dedication was believed to protect the child from harm and evil spirits. After the dedication, the child would then be able to participate in the wrestling contests and other activities organized annually in respect of the deity.

The Initiation of the Female Child into the Umuada Shrine: The Umuada (alternatively referred to as 'Ada Ndiomu') is an active social union of the female siblings of a particular family or kindred. Most members of the Umuada union are married and live in their own husbands' homesteads. Okolo (2000) reveals that female children were initiated into the Umuada shrine in those days. The initiation was organized by the oldest member of the Umuada who would invite the rest of the Umuada to the Umuada shrine located at a corner in the middle of the family square (the 'aba'). The indication of the shrine among other things includes a big stand of a plant called Ogilisi. On the initiation day, the young girl's mother would present to the Umuada a hen, yams, and pot of palm wine. The hen would be killed and its blood poured on the Ogilisi plant followed by libations with the wine. Then the Umuada would drink the wine, cook the yams and the hen together and eat at this shrine. Thus, the girl became initiated as a full member of the Umuada.

Female children were also presented to the Ohune diety for protection, as done with the male children. The initiation also qualified the children to share in the joy of Ohune festivals.

Betrothal of the Female Baby-Child: Sometimes, female children were engaged as from birth if a friend of her family put a palm kernel nut in the pot used to keep her drinking water warm during her Omugo period to indicate his interest in her as a wife (Okolo, 2000). Thus, she would be made to regard the boy as her husband as she grew up. The boy in turn would be helping the girl's family as a son in law. He would endeavor to maintain his interest in the girl by offering a pot of palm wine to the girl's family at the sixth month of every year. This ceremony was referred to as Manya Onwa Ishuu. The girl would be meticulously trained by her mother – to learn how to rise early in the morning, sweep the household compound, and cook all types of food. She would also begin early to participate in the female aspect of the farm work. She would regard her bethrothed's farm as her own and she would as well receive training from his mother, because she belonged to the two homes. She would help both women in nursing their babies too. Generally, the girl-child bethrothed at infancy grew up learning to see herself as belonging to her parents and her would-be parents-in-law's homes, and to live up to expectations. One of the remarkable things expected of the girl at that time, according to Nneoma Lucy Onodugo in an interview with Ojel Anidi, was that she should learn to control her hunger and appetite while staying in her bethrothed's household. If they ever saw her as having a voracious appetite, then her bethrothed and his people might consider not marrying her again. Things were so difficult in those days that no husband or family would enjoy having a glutton as a wife.

The Igbu Agha (Adulthood Initiation Rites for Youngmen): According to Okolo (2000), there were several rites through which a young Abor man should pass before he joined the rank of adulthood in the traditional Abor society. One of such rites was the Igbu agha ceremony which marked the coming of age of a male youth into adulthood. The dead body of a leopard or a lion if available was used for the ceremony. If not available, the skin of either would be bought and used. All the male adolescents who had reached adulthood in one village used to perform the ceremony together in their village square. They would consult and agree on a date for the ceremony, and about three months before the day, they would begin to prepare for the ceremony. The preparation involved taking nourishing food and rubbing cam-wood on their bodies constantly in order to get refreshed for the ceremony. Few days before the date, they could rest from hardwork and decorate their bodies with all available make-ups and hair-dos. Their bodies would be embellished with the traditional cam-wood and uli. All the relations would be alerted to get ready for their support and encouragement on the D-day. It was an occasion for merriment. All the guests would be treated to a feast at home before the ceremony at the village square. The famous Ikpa dance/ drummers usually performed. As the Ikpa played, the villagers including men, women and children were alerted that the ceremony was about to begin and they would troop out to watch the performance. At one end of the village square, the dead body or skin of the lion or leopard would be tied to the stake. When an old man from one of the hamlets came out in front to the Ikpa drummers to dance, all the young initiates from his hamlet would come out, rub their bodies on the body of the old man and then make their debuts dashing off with their knives to the body or skin of the animal on the stake. There, they would make a show of cutting the animal/skin with the knives, and then return to the dance with

something representing the animal each of them had killed. They would then dramatize in their dance how they had killed the animal. When one hamlet ended their own dance, another hamlet took up the floor until all the hamlets performed their own dances. At the end of the ceremony, all the initiates who participated in the ceremony were taken as full grown adults qualified to get married to women. The invited guests make their presentations such as guns, clothes, special knives, live animals – cocks, goats, etc, to the celebrants before leaving the village square.

Puberty Rites/ Coming of Age of the Female Youth: This event came naturally for the girl with her attainment of puberty. At her first menstruation, as Okolo intimates, the girl would run to her elder sister or aunt who would then send message to inform her mother and husband, if she is already betrothed. The sister or aunt would then invite the lady's husband on a fixed day, where she would present a dog, goat, ram, or cock, according to her means, to both the lady and her husband. The animal would be killed and taken by the husband and his relations. On another day, the husband would go to his wife's elder sister with some yam tubers and palm wine for entertainment. He would go home with his wife after the entertainment and the following day he would take her to a place where some scarification marks (mbu) would be made on the girl's abdomen. As the girl's family got set for her fattening period when she would be kept indoors, her husband as well would be getting ready to settle her bride price, if he had not done so already. A fat goat, palm wine and some money might be used in the settlement of the bride price. The girl's fattening and confinement was usually done in her father's house. She would hide herself from outside people, would be well-fed and she had to wash her body clean, rub cam-wood on her body as well as decorate her body with uli every day to get enough store of blood in her body in preparation for the tasks ahead of her as a woman. At the end of the confinement period a goat was also killed and shared out to relations and friends to announce the end of the confinement and invite them to the feast of her marriage known as *Ifu Uba*.

Ifu Uba (Marriage Rites): On the day of young woman's Ifu Uba (her outing ceremony after her confinement/fattening), the young woman would be led to the Orie Abor market square by her age-grade when the market would be in full-swing. The lady would show herself to the public as fully matured but still kept her virginity. If the woman had become pregnant she must not be allowed to parade herself in the Orie market square or else, as it was believed, the child in her womb must surely die due to the ritual involved in the exercise, as Okolo (2000) narrates. It must be noted that sometimes, the girl who performed the Ifu Uba was not engaged to be married. So after the celebration she would return to her father's house ready for any man who cared to take her as his wife. For Okolo, the custom of Ifu Uba worked perfectly in Abor in the olden days and should not have been allowed to become obsolete. As Okolo puts it,

I have to warn that Igba Nkwu is not a substitute. The people of the old who introduced Ifu Uba in our culture had used wine no matter the quantity to indicate their interest in their wives and ended up with Ifu Uba or marriage.

Therefore no amount of palm wine used in showing interest in a woman would substitute for Ifu Uba or marriage in the church by Christian or marriage by the traditionalists with Ifu Uba. (p. 30)

Okolo is not alone in this idea that the custom of Ifu Uba seems a better alternative than the so-called Igba Nkwu ceremony involving the presentation of huge numbers of jars of palm wine

and cartons of other alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, as practiced today. Nneokwukwe Mrs Florence Oliaku Njeze, for example, in my interview of her, opined that the Igba Nkwu which is now the custom has made marriages to become more expensive. Okolo however still itemizes the required wine-carrying stages of a successful marriage proposal, which include: 1. Manya Ajuju which is taken to the bride's family so that the formal inquiries about possibilities of marriage can begin; 2. Mmanya Nne-na-Nna, meant for the bride's parents; 3. Mmanya Umunna, meant for the wider circle of the girls' relations; and 4. Mmanya Gidi Gidi for the family, friends, and well wishers of the couple. These wine carrying stages as itemized are now the requirements of a traditional marriage. The issue now is whether the quantity of drinks required for the different stages need to be moderate or much.

Remarriage of Widows: According to Okolo, prior to the advent of Christianity in Abor, very few women were left to continue to live as widows after the death of their husbands. Most of the widows became reengaged in marriage within the extended family circle of their deceased husbands. If a woman was known to be industrious as well as of good character in her former home she was re-married immediately she finished her mourning period. She was not left to suffer as a widow. However, if the widow "had been blessed with a number of male children she would be reluctant to leave her home for another. The love of her children who had inherited her husband's lands and property would compel her to remain a widow for the rest of her life. She would prefer to remain and protect, guard and manage the property of her late husband in the interest of her children. (p. 103)

Okolo's (2000) study on Abor history and culture indicates that Abor was a land with many occasions requiring rites and feasts, as seen above. There were also occasions for bigger feasts and festivals. There were the Igodo, Idu-nwa-Odo, Akani, Ohune, Igwansi, Fiajioku (New Yam festival), Igba Aba (in respect of dieties such as Ohune, Ugwu Ozalla, Afa-bi-n'agu, etc), and so many other big feasts. Each village, even hamlet, has a special festival for her deities. Sometimes a special festival is organized at emergency situations; for example, during the Echi eteka or Yellow Fever epidemic, a special Odo masquerade was made to appear outside the usual Odo season. The title-taking ceremonies, including the deaths of such titled men, provided further occasions for feasts and festivals. Okolo gave a detailed description of the different titles taken at Abor. Most of these titles were aimed at getting the ultimate title of 'Ozo'. Concerning the Ozo title, Okolo has this to say:

The major aspiration of an Abor man is the attainment of a special station in life known as Ozo title. Consequently all junior ranks in the society are geared towards its attainment. It is a very expensive process, which often takes several years to conclude." (p. 71)

This position corroborates Onodugo's (1980) description of what the Ozo title meant to the average Abor man, as earlier discussed in this chapter.

Religion and the Introduction of Formal Education in Abor, as portrayed in Okolo (2000)

Apart from the numerous rites and festivals in Abor in those days, Okolo (2000) also unveiled the way the people of Abor Ojebeogene worshipped God in those days, before the coming of the white men. The head of each household had the shrine of the household god called Chi in his Nkolo, the man's residence, at a prominent place called Ofiani. As soon as the man woke up from the bed in the early morning, he had to engage in a ritual which begins with washing

his hands and face to get himself purified, the wife also washed her hands, face and legs to avoid desecration of any vessel or materials used in the worship of the gods. If water was not readily available, the leaves of an Ogilisi plant were used for the purification. He might further purify himself with alligator pepper. He would chew the pepper into pulp and with his two palms joined, spray some of it into his palms and rub it on his face, some of it on each of his shoulders, some on his knee caps and on the elbow of his hands and the rest on his feet. This was a ritual for the kick-off of his psychic powers necessary for his day's activities: mutual co-existence with his neighbour and his own survival. Continuing with a kola-nut in his hands he had to call on his ancestors and the various gods known to him to come and assist him and his household members. As he made cantations, he would break the kolanut into lobes, from each lobe he would cut out the 'eye' and drop into his Ofor permanently placed in his shrine as a sacrifice to propitiate the gods. He would then give out the lobes of the kolanuts to each member of his household as a holy communion. He would then take one for himself and eat with relish. These religious practices, according to Okolo, continued in Abor until the year 1919, when the Christian missionaries arrived and provided an alternative way of praying to God for the Abor people.

Concerning the introduction of Christianity in Abor, in 1919, Okolo reveals as follows:

The Catholic priest Rev. Fr. Joachim Coneia (Cssp), a Portuguese who was responsible for the spread of his church from his residence at Eke sent in a catechist to Chief Ozor Ngwunwau Onodugo of Abor. Then in 1921 Chief Ozor Ukwu Anikagu and Chief Ozor Agadangwu Ochi jointly requested Rev. Fr. Marcel Grandin who succeeded Rev. Fr. Coneia to send a Catechist to them for church services. (p. 122)

On developments in the St Theresa Primary School, Abor, Okolo revealed that a more permanent structure for the school was put up at the present site of St Theresa College; hence the school moved from its temporary site at Ozo Ngwunwagu's compound to the new site. Several teachers had worked in the school including Mr. Mark Orakwudo and Mr. Christopher Udi both from Obosi, and Mr John from Oghe, etc. However, unfortunately, according to Okolo, the building had been consistently attacked by termites and the efforts made to repair the damage had not kept pace with the rate of the damage. With the destruction of the building, the school lingered on for a few more years as a junior primary school. A decision was finally taken by the Abor people to unite all their efforts in one school, the St Peter's School Abor, to rival the St. Paul's School Eke. The school was thus closed down. At that time, according to Okolo, the people of Abor were working as one whole, and not as sections. The need for a church building made it possible for the Abor Christians to put up a stone building in the present site of St Theresa Church to check the attack of the destructive termites.

There was a compromise arrangement among the villages in Abor to establish a special school for the girls in the St Theresa Church compound, following the policy of the Roman Catholic Church authorities on the need for separate schools for girls and for boys. It was also agreed that all girls in St Peter's School Abor should be withdrawn in favour of the new school at Umuavulu. In view of this, an additional building was raised near the stone building for the use of the girls as a dormitory to accommodate certain class of pupils in the school, particularly those non-indigenes whose parents lived in Enugu Township or outside Abor. The girls' school was opened in 1953 and it attracted girls from Ojebeogene towns and other neighbouring towns.

Abor became popular in matters of female education. The first set of Abor girls who graduated from the school enjoyed some sort of scholarship from the people of Abor community. This was to serve as encouragement for both the girls and their uneducated parents who preferred early marriage for their girl children. The school was managed initially by Reverend Sisters residing in Enugu Township, and later by the Rev. Fathers of Eke Parish whom the community requested to take over. Later, when the school became a mixed school, accommodating both the girls and the boys, in 1962, Ichie Maurice Ukwu of Abor became its first male headmaster. He took up the administration of the school in January 1962 and carried it into exile during the 1967-1970 Biafran War. He reopened the school in 1970, but by then the government of East Central State headed by Chief Asika, took over the school and ordered the change of its name to Community Primary School, Abor. Other schools which later developed in Abor, as mentioned by Okolo, include: (1). St Theresa's Girls Elementary Teacher Training College, Abor, now St Theresa College, Abor, founded by Umuavulu Progressive Union under the leadership of Chief Joseph Okpokwu, in Dec. 1955-Jan. 1956; (2). Christ High School, Abor, founded by Chief L. U. Ukwu (later, the traditional ruler of Abor, HRM Igwe L. U. Ukwu), in 1962; (3). Afor-Abor Primary School, Abor, originally a nursery school managed by F. M. Okolo (Nze Chinelugo), founded in 1962; was upgraded to primary school in 1974; (4). Charles Memorial Primary School, Abor; and (5). Girls Secondary (Technical) School, Abor.

Ozo Abor

Concerning the Ozo title and its relationship to chieftaincy in Igbo communities, particularly in Abor town, Onodugo defines Ozo title as the highest achievement any free born male of a community could aspire to, as a mark of social, economic and political distinction, prior to the advent of Western civilization. This agrees with other literature on Ozo title, as seen in earlier chapters here. For Onodugo, people consciously struggled to attain the heights of an Ozo, because it was neither politically effected nor craftily contrived. It was only achieved by dint of hard work. In traditional Abor society, the candidate for the Ozo title was required to provide several barns of yams, huge bags of grains or other crops, goats and rams, cocks and hens, so many cows and big pots of palmwine. It would normally "cost him the bulk of the fruit of his consistent labour from adolescence to the time he accomplished the title, which for the man running the cost for himself was often towards the evening time of his life" (Onodugo, 1980, p. 6). Some of the title names of the Ozo often reflected his occupation or means of income, through which he had financed the title. If he was a successful farmer, he would take the name "Ogu na amu ego" ("Hoe that gives birth to money"); if a successful palm-wine tapper, "Enu di ulu" ("Tree top that is profitable"); if a coalminer, "Unyi na amu ego" ("Charcoal that gives birth to money").

For Onodugo, the Ozo title in its traditional sense is akin to kingship. A king or chief is not expected to be a pauper; neither was he expected to be a person of low morals. Although the Ozo title is an investment cum development source, its importance lies more on justice and equity which the title diffuses in the communities. The title also confers on the titleholder immunity from assault and exempted him from manual or menial labour in the town. Above all, the Ozo title played some functions of government. At the introduction of chieftaincy in Abor, the Ozo title was one of the preconditions to be met by contestants, which points to the fact that the Ozo title and chieftaincy have many things in common. This justified the appointment of Native court members by the colonial administrators from the rank of Ozo titled

men. Some communities up until now puts it down as a condition that any member of the chief's council must be an Ozo titled man.

The 'Ozo' title was the most prestigious title preserved for 'Umu-amu', not necessarily for the rich. The 'Ozo' title originated from Igala people of Kogi State, and Nri of Anambra State. It is rigorous to take the 'Ozo' title. It is also rigorous to bury the 'Ozo' titled man.

Before taking the 'Ozo' title, there was another title known as 'Igbo-ichi' which an 'Ozo' aspirant must perform before taking the Ozo title. It is less cumbersome and was open for every one who was capable of footing the bill.

Though the 'Ozo' and 'Igbo-ichi' are part of our custom and tradition, not many people are eager to take the titles because of ill-feeling and jealousy the Ozo attracted from the people regarded as "undeserving" of the title, and who itched to do harm to the 'Ozo' through charms, witch craft, poisoning or the use of other devilish or diabolic schemes. For this reason, Abor had been without any Ozo titled man for a very long time until 1980s when a man from Ubiekpo named Ngwunweani Ugwudi took the title of "Ozo Ihelozolu Atumba".

Also in 1988, Udenweogu Patrick Onodugo from Umuoka Umuavulu took the Ozo title of "Ozo Akwulu Ahaluko". He was followed in 1990 by Chiwetalu Ojiwe from Ohemje Umuavulu, who took his Ozo title of "Ozo Maduwenyete Onu". These Ozo men lived longer than estimated after their coronation, and Ozo Maduwenyete Onu died in 2020. Their successes cleared all the misgivings and doubt about Abor and Ozo title. The coast is now clear for any illustrious son of Abor who wishes to take the Ozo title. The title is for married men who take the title with their wife/wives, who is/are known as "Nono", not "Lolo" which may be called a wife of a Chief who is given chieftaincy title by a traditional ruler.

Abor was rich with customs, traditions, beliefs, feasts and ceremonies. Custom and tradition are often used interchangeably. Specifically, custom is accepted practices of doings things, while tradition is inherited pattern of thought or action. All these are interlinked with beliefs and ceremonies performed on special occasions such as:

1. **'Ekuneete Odo':** This practice is carried out, every even year. This period marks the appearance of the "dead ancestors" in the land of the living, in Abor. They appear in forms of Amadi Odo, Ebune Odo and Evayiki Odo. They operate for fun especially on feast days. It is usually a busy and enjoyable period especially for men who use it to intimidate and extort money and materials from women (Onodugo, B. "Abor Iyime Awubu"). 'Odomagana' also gives a sense of security during this period. It is also used as identity. The 'Odo' of an Ozo titled man comes out as 'Amadi Odo'. Other 'dead men' who are not Ozo come out in any form of the Odo. However, some 'Amadi Odo' are not Ozo titled men.
2. **Marriage Feasts:** These are feasts and ceremonies associated with marriages in Abor. They include:

- a. **‘Manyà gidi-gidi’**, which marks the end of various marriage visits to the family of a woman being approached for marriage. Manyà gidi-gidi is also called “Igba Nkwu” (wine carrying).
 - b. **‘Iza Ezi’** ceremony admits newly married woman to belong wittingly and seamlessly with other women already married in the family/hamlet.
 - c. **‘Ino Uba’** when a newly married woman is confined in the house for fattening process.
 - d. **‘Ifu Uba’** when newly married woman comes out of the fattening room. She would be decorated in different attires and taken round a market on a market day.
 - e. **‘Nnalù’** is a feast or ceremony during which the husband of the newly married woman and his relatives decorate the new wife with various gifts. Gifts are also given to her parents. The next day she carries the gifts to her parents and stays with them for about one native week (4) days before carrying those gifts that belong to her back to her husband’s place. Her coming back means that she has accepted to marry her new husband. If she fails to come back, that is the end of the marriage. Later, the gift items to her will be returned to the husband that never was.
3. **‘Ine Omugo’** is the period the mother goes to stay with her daughter who has just given birth in her husband’s house, to help her daughter to take care of her new baby and as she recovers from childbirth. This is the period of puerperium for the young mother. The period varies but by tradition it lasts nine (9) native weeks. At the end of her stay, the mother-in-law is presented with some gifts, as a show of appreciation, by her son-in-law and daughter.

4. Other Ceremonies

- a. **‘Ino Ekwa’** is the period of mourning for the dead. Traditionally, it lasted for seven (7) native weeks (28 days) for ordinary married man or woman. There is no period for unmarried man or woman. It lasted nine (9) native weeks (36) days for the Ozo titled man or woman (wife of an Ozo); women took the ‘Ozo’ title with their husband. The ‘Mgbulichi’ man (little less than the Ozo titled man – still in the process of becoming an Ozo) could merit nine native weeks depending on the resources of his survivors for the maintenance of the Umuada who in each case stay day and night for the “Ino Ekwa”. Now the period of mourning has been reduced to eight days or less.
- b. **‘Nchifu Ekwa’** marks the end of mourning period. It is a ceremony which is accompanied with eating and drinking.

There were numerous other feasts, these include but not limited to “Olili Iyaje Okuko”, “Olili Ekpulu Akidi”, feasts to adore the deities in the town; Ohune, for example. These feasts were abound and were very enjoyable in Odo season.

- c. **‘Ichu Onwu’** was a day set aside for the process of driving away death and occasions of death in Abor. On this day, every man, especially the youths, gather at a particular place armed with palm fronds and sticks. After performing certain practices, they moved in a warlike wave pursuing enemy (death). In Umuavulu, for example, the men moved from the starting place, like a wave, to Orie Abor Market Square. From the market they moved through Uwenu n’ Uwani to the boundary of Abor and Eke. Here they dropped all they had and went back home without looking back. It is done in the first or second month of every year. That time, deaths were not rampant as it is in the present time.

Abor Belief System

Generally, Abor people believed in a supreme being which is known as and called **‘Chi-Ukwu’** or **‘Eze Chite Okike Obiaoma’**. Subsumed into this are also numerous **‘Chi’s’**. Abor people believed that each individual person had his/her own **‘chi’**, and each **“chi”** had different powers and influences.

Abor people believed in **re-incarnation**, being a process by which a dead person came back to life as another person. In re-incarnation, a dead person can re-incarnate several times as different individuals. The belief is still strong in Abor.

In their belief, Abor people built deities, of different sizes and shapes, to represent **‘Chi-Ukwu’**. These serve as mediums or intermediaries between man and **‘Chi-Ukwu’** (the Almighty God). The deities were too numerous to name, suffice it to name **“Dikwufi”** in Ngwuagu village, and **“Afabunagu”** in Umuavulu village.

‘Odomagana’ is a special diety representing the spiritual aspect of the unseen **‘Odomagana’**. The visible **‘Odo’** are those seen on the road interacting with people on certain native days. Generally, they do not operate on Orie market day. The unseen **‘Odomagana’** represents what are done in secrecy in their shrines called **‘Onu Odo’**.

The **‘Onu Odo’** is mostly located in slightly bushy or hidden places. Here, the Odo worshippers (men) do many things such as making beautiful art works, and production of instrumental music. Sacrifices are also offered to **“Odomagana”** there. It was here that young men were initiated into the Odo cult. It was believed that if any Odo touched the un-initiated person or made physical contact with him, the un-initiated will die. It is a taboo for a woman to see Odo at night. It is also a taboo for a woman to see or attempt to see any flesh body of Odo in Abor. Indeed, women have several restrictions relating to the Odo.

Another belief concerns **positioning of one’s bed in the bedroom**. It is believed that a person should arrange his/her bed in his/her room in such a way that the head of the bed is towards the east while the tail is towards west. The head of the bed must not be southwards which is the partway to perdition. The north is only tolerated.

Abor people **do not give any respect to a dead baby**. It is buried without any covering. It is buried bare. There is no **“Ino Ekwa”** and the mother will not sleep in her house on the night of

that particular day. They believe that the dead baby would come back at night to re-enter the mother's womb to be re-born. This reborn child is "Ogbanje". This phenomenon is different from re-incarnation. In re-incarnation the dead man or dead woman goes to any member of his/her family while re-birth of a dead baby can only happen with its own mother.

The aforementioned beliefs and systems have waned considerably in Abor as a result of Christianity and education which have enhanced knowledge of God and our fundamental human rights.

CHAPTER 7: Traditional Political Structures in Abor (By Ugonne Frances Onuoha)

Introduction

Abor communities under Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State are governed by articulated political structures. Government is an essential aspect of every society since it determines to a greater extent the actualization of the common goals of the Abor society. The survival as well as, the totality of the existence of every community is critically dependent on the quality of the political structures. Politics and government are age-old phenomenon which can be dated back to the periods of civilization. The major reason for embracing civilization is to cure such postulations of the Hobbesian theory. Hobbes (1986), on the crude nature of man, states that, “*the nature of man is a state of war in which life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short*” (p. 186), cited from the Leviathan translation. It is in line with this submission that such philosophers like John Locke and Jean Jacques Rosseau (1895) theorized a social contract. The social contract entails that to cure the crude nature of man, people vested authority and power on a sovereign king who is obliged to use this authority for the actualization of the common goals of the people. What are these common goals? They are encapsulated in Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, under the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State policy which include: security/welfare, education, health, politics, foreign relations, culture, environment, media, economics, etc. According to Okere (2008), the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State policy as contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, embodies the philosophy that animates a new political contract. All these are the expectations of the people from the constituted authority. As politics is viewed as the equitable distribution of resources, the socio-political contract therefore necessitated the existence of political structures of which the rationale for its creation is never an opportunity for self aggrandizement or egocentric interests.

These explanations on the need for a political structure in a given society gives insight on how Abor communities have existed with a well-defined political structures for the maintenance of peace and order and ultimately for the welfare of the people of Abor.

There are several political systems peculiar to a given society. These systems include: unitary system, parliamentary system, presidential system, monarchical system, federal system, confederal system, republican system, etc. The unitary system depicts a system of government whereby power is vested in the center with the fusion of all the powers of government. In a unitary system the centre is very strong; the subjects are vulnerable to the whims and caprices of the sovereign. The parliamentary system is where the representatives of the people form a constituent assembly and they are known as the parliament. Every command and enactment emanates from the parliament. The parliament is supreme, and there is fusion of powers. The presidential system connotes a situation where an elected individual known as the President is vested with executive powers and other elected persons are vested with legislative powers, while the president is constitutionally empowered to appoint persons vested with judicial powers. In a presidential system, the Constitution is supreme and there is separation of powers. In a republican system, the people are vested with the power and authority to appoint their

rulers, who acts in accordance with the totality of the will of the people. In most communities or sovereign states, one may find a combination of these systems of government. They all have their merits and demerits; therefore, the suitability of any of the system, depends on the effectiveness of its applicability in a given society. No society is designed to practice a particular system of government. Government is a dynamic venture. This study therefore examined the traditional political structures in Abor in two phases: the olden (pre-colonial) era and the modern era.

Traditional Political Structures in Ebo N’isato (The Pre Colonial Era)

Originally, Abor community had eight (8) villages. In order of seniority, they were; Ugwunani, Ozala, Amukwu, Ebongwu, Ngwuegu, Ubiekpo, Amezhike and Umuavulu. These were grouped into three main divisions: Ikenge, Ibute and Umuavulu (Anidi, 2008). The political structure was a combination of the republican and parliamentary systems of government. This political structure supported and promoted the bottom-top approach to sustainable development. There was an upward and downward flow of decisions and communication. On this, Ifemesia (1979) noted that there was a centralization of authority at each level of political organization from the family through the lineage to the village.

Abor had the following political units: families (Nkolo), Kindreds (Umunna), Quarters/ Hamlets (Onukulu), Village Assembly, and Peoples’ Assembly. Hierarchically it can be presented as follows:

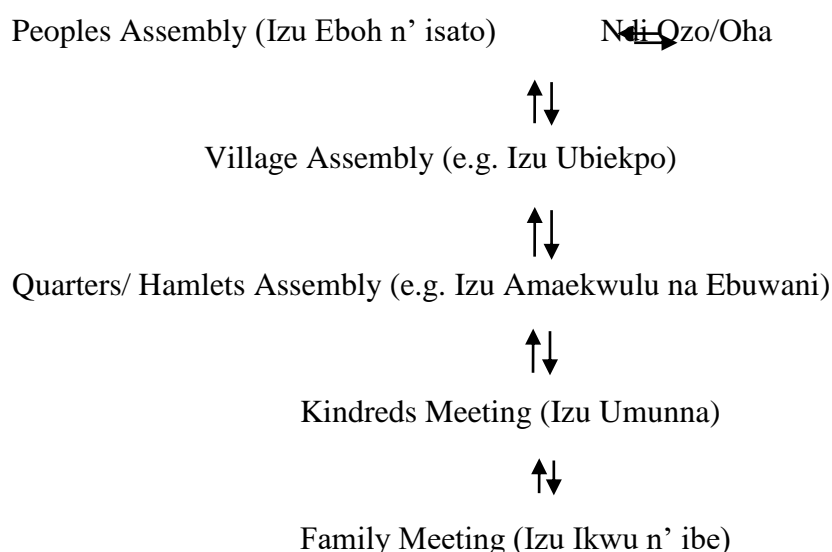


Fig 1: Abor Pre-Colonial Political Units (Source: Field Survey 2022)

- a. **Family (Izu Ikwu n’ ibe):** At the family level also known as *Nkolo* in Abor dialect, decisions are taken by the male adults. The eldest male in the family is the leader. The leader must be a married male adult. In the traditional Igbo setting, before colonialism, only married males had leadership personalities. One of the characteristics of this unit is that they might bear a common surname. They entertain every issue bothering on the totality of the development of the immediate family. There is fusion of powers. They undertake executive, legislative and judicial functions. Every family then had an ancestral altar (onu maa), where religious services were performed by a chief priest from the family. Where necessary the services of the chief priest might be required in the performance of

certain executive and judicial functions, as court of first instance. The major responsibility of members at this unit is to maintain and sustain the legacy of their ancestry and also protect their family territorial boundaries against conquest and extinction. Any matter which is beyond the control of the leadership at the family level would be presented in the higher level of the hierarchy. There are also certain issues that must require the involvement of the higher unit, e.g. marriage/burial rites.

- b. **Kindred (Umunna):** This comprises different families laying claim to a common ancestry. All the members of each family as discussed above, are automatically members of the kindred (umunna). It is a conglomeration of different families with the same ancestor. They may have different surnames but can trace their existence to a common family name. The eldest of the males becomes the head of the kindred. This is also known as the ‘meeting/izu umunna’. Powers are also fused. They equally perform judicial functions on issues emanating from different pressure groups, e.g. the age grade, the women quarters (umuada (daughters) and ndiomu (wives) who are subjects of umunna). Their major role is to facilitate socio economic and cultural developments in clusters. They are used as agents for the enforcement of decisions taken at the village or the people’s assembly. They also maintain peace and order. In the execution of their decisions and policies, they proactively involve the influencers (pressure groups) at the village level. The influencers include: the Age grade, the Odo society, Women groups (Umuada and Ndiomu), Chief priests, Elders in Council, etc.

- c. **Quarters/ Hamlets** (e.g. Izu Amaekwulu na Ebuwani): This is a comity of several kindreds. The economic system existing in this period was a communal system where the means of production were shared communally. To achieve equitable distribution of resources, kindred were shared into quarters. A quarter may be equated to as hamlet, and this is called ‘*Onunkolo*’ in Abor dialect. Every member of the umunna is also a member of the ‘*Onunkolo*’. All the leaders of the different kindreds form an assembly of elders where decisions are taken. Decisions at this level are taken on a representative capacity. The major responsibilities at this level are to ensure compliance of the lower units with customary orders and directives and to facilitate equitable distribution of common goods. The quarters or hamlets (Onunkolo) make up a village. Below are the quarters / hamlets in each of the eight (8) villages in Abor:
 1. Ugwunani: *Umudinugwu, Ogwube, Obeagu Ofufe, Umu Owagu, Ihekwe, Onuodoagu, Umuohagu and Umunama.*
 2. Ozalla: *Okunito, Ishi Ameke and Amaukwa*
 3. Amukwu : *Obodo Akpaka, Etiti and Ezi-Amukwu*
 4. Ebongwu :
 5. Ngwuagu: *Dinigweze, Dinunobe*
 6. Ubiekpo: *Etiti, Onuodoegu, Umudioka, Umuozihi, Amaekwulu na Ebuwani and Emegu.*
 7. Amaezike: *Izizi, Ogwofia (Ama ogwugwu and Amaugwu).*
 8. Umuavulu: *Amogwu, Umuikwo, Ohemje, Uwenu Ayigbo, Emegu Uwani, Ezhionya, Nzuko, Ezhiagu, Umuoka, Eguma, Umuozi, Aluagu and Orhobo.*

These quarters organize their meetings monthly, quarterly and annually as the case may be. They also have emergency meetings as the need arises. There are procedures for their

meetings. Notification(s) for the special issue(s) to be discussed at the meetings must be given within a specified time frame along with kolanuts and palmwine. Due processes are observed while carrying out certain duties and responsibilities at this level. There are executive offices occupied by appointed officers (appointment was strictly based on the character, conduct and integrity of the appointee). These officers were appointed by the council of elders. Qualification for membership is a male adult who is an indigene of the hamlet paternally. There is a collective responsibility for every decision. There is fusion of power (executive, legislature and the judiciary); they also serve as the court of appeal. Their responsibilities are to initiate micro scale programmes and facilitate the actualization of such projects, e.g. olu uzo (maintenance of roads), sharing of farmlands, etc. They maintain peace and order in the community. They have appellate jurisdiction on unresolved matters from the family level.

- d. **Village Assembly** (e.g. Izu Ubiekpo): This level comprises of the male adults in the villages. The town crier announces the date and time for such meetings, informing every member to attend as absence amounts to violation with penalty. It consists of the council of elders, who are the executives and the male adults who are indigene of the village by birth (paternity). This assembly is a law making body with a clearly defined political outlook. They have the powers to enact new laws, repeal obsolete laws or amend existing laws. They act as the interface between the people's assembly which was the highest body and the people. They initiate projects at the village level and share development levies for the actualization of macro projects. They embark on large scale projects e.g. ikwa uzo (road construction), construction of markets, layout of community land, procurement of arms for security, etc. They also perform judicial functions as court of appeal. They organize socio cultural activities e.g. music/dance troupes (Ilagba, Ode, etc), Odo festivals, etc. They organize and coordinate socio-cultural groups for political, religious, economic and socio-cultural participation. Such social-cultural and pressure groups include: Umuada (daughters), Ndiomu (wives), age grades (youths), masquerades (Odomagana), clubs (Otu Chi Azo Onye Okelu), etc.
- e. **The People's Assembly (Izu Ebo n' isato)**: This is the highest political unit. Matters discussed at this level are final. Members are representatives of every village, council of elders and titled men. These titled men were 'Ndi Oha na Ozo'. There was also fusion of powers at this level. They serve as the Supreme Court where decisions taken were final. They discuss carefully development issues especially those that bothered on security, traditions and customs of the Abor community, cross-border affairs, etc. Where there is conflict of laws with the lower units that of the People's Assembly prevails. They enjoyed unlimited jurisdiction and unfettered powers in carrying out their functions. There is significant reverence for the members of the peoples' assembly. The title holders command respect from the people because of their character traits and behavioral conducts. A short x-ray of the titled persons' initiation processes and procedures is very necessary at this point.

Ndi Ozo

There are claims that Nri, believed to be the original homeland of the Igbo people, is the originator of the Ozo title-taking in Igboland (Nwokolo & Chukwurah, 2021). They further

state that Nri priests attend Ozo title initiation of many towns that owe allegiance to Nri, and officiate in bestowing the Ozo title to their deserving candidates.

Ozoship as a culture element is associated with leadership. In an interview with Chief Arc Ralph Anidi (2022), he opined that the Ozo title is related to modern day stock market. It is a title taken by well deserving personalities who in turn receive dividends from new entrants and the society at large. His view is supported by the position of Nwokoye and Chukwurah (2021) that our forefathers designed the Ozo title to be a stock or shareholding venture. It has retirement benefits. Furthermore, in the words of Bishop G. M. P. Okoye cited in Omeayo (2012), an Ozo title holder is assured of a constant source of revenue, which he compared to the shares in a company.

Chief Menakaya J.C, Igwe of Umunya, in a paper presented in 1977 at a seminar on Ozo title submitted that the Ozo title was the highest achievement any free born male of a community would aspire to as a mark of distinction, socially, economically and politically. He further posits that in many Igbo speaking areas, important political decisions and traditional arbitrations are made by the members of the Ozo society. As titled men, they are highly revered and seen as the highest decision makers in the community. This lay credence to the fact that the initiation into the Ozo society is a herculean task characterized by several ethical considerations and material requirements. The inability of the Ozo titled person to conform to the stipulated ethical obligations may attract the anger of the gods upon the entire community. Consequently, the inability of the entire community to accord stipulated respects and reverence to an Ozo titled person may also attract the punishment of the gods to the person(s) involved or the entire community as the case may be. The codes of conduct of an Ozo title holder include: generosity, honesty, non discrimination, must not eat or drink in the public. According to Nwokoye and Chukwurah (2021), it is forbidden for an Ozo man to do the following: carry a corpse, steal, lie, be without a wife, cut his ankle thread, be in close contact or have sexual intercourse, or even eat food prepared by a menstruating woman, meet defiled persons, cannot shed blood of fellow human being. Anidi (2008) also enumerated the code of conducts for Ozo titled person peculiar to Ojebe Ogene and Abor communities. In summary of the political symbolism of the Ozo title, Egudu (1977) captures the fact that the Ozo title is a symbol of truth, humaneness, social justice and uprightness. Chief Arc Ralph Anidi (2022) clearly stated during an interview that the modern Ozo, as practiced today, is devoid of certain traditional virtues and ethics with which the institution is known. According to him, for example, “*Ozo adiro ashi ashi*”, that is, “It is a taboo for an Ozo to tell lies”. For Egudu (1977), “the over modernization of Ozo tends to strip it of those virtues and full humane relevance by which it has always been characterized, and to reduce it to a mere opportunistic economic and political venture for the purpose of oppressing and muzzling the less fortunate members of the society” (p. 13).

Ndi Oha

This is a politically structured group of individuals who are indigenes of Abor communities. About Ndi Oha, Sir Josephat Okamkpa (KSJI) said “*Imegbutekwe ama ha, na isolu na Oha*”, that is “If you can accomplish all the stipulated demands, then you join the Oha membership”. There are several stipulated requirements which a person must complete to be entitled as a member of Oha. These requirements are known as ‘Ama Oha’ in Ebo dialect. They have their meetings occasionally. They play advisory role in the communities. They are also members of

the jury in the settlement of disputes especially land disputes in Abor communities. They also uphold and preserve the customs and traditions of the people of Abor. At this level members are nurtured and groomed to exhibit quality and concrete leadership qualities.

Traditional Political Structures in Abor (the Modern Era)

The modern era consists of the colonial and the post colonial periods. The colonial period was experienced in the 19th-20th century as a result of the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885, which gave rise to the balkanization of Africa and subsequently scrambling for sphere of influence in Africa by the Western countries. Britain colonized Nigeria and the first 'government' with specific Constitution was introduced in 1914, with Lord Fredrick Lugard as the Governor General. The main feature of the 1914 Constitution was the amalgamation of Nigeria for ease of governance and administration as well as for cost benefits. Uzoigwe (2009) argues that the towns were brought under the control of the British imperial power, to facilitate both administrative and imperial necessity. 'Politically, economically and socially, they were progressively integrated into the larger Nigerian State (Uzoigwe, 2004). This government introduced the indirect rule system to enable them penetrate the hinterlands without the colonialists' physical presence. The indirect rule system of administration established the warrant chief administrative system. This government with the amalgamation strategy created a country called Nigeria. It was further divided into Northern and Southern Protectorates. In the administration of these Protectorates they created Regions, Divisions and Native Authorities. Several communities found themselves under a division. Ebo n'isato was under the Udi Division and the colonial masters altered, ignorantly, the community name as Abor. Though the name changed, it continued to house eight villages as it was under the pre colonial era. The influx of the indirect rule system usurped the traditional political structures and brought about the imposition of an individual as a warrant chief of the whole community. The warrant chief was a creation of the colonial administration. Their major role was to take decisions in line with British colonial policies and ensure the implementation of such policies. The warrant chief passed bye-laws, maintained law and order, supervised communal labour and projects.

Subsequently, the postcolonial period started with the actualization of Independence in 1960. The 1963 Republican Constitution ushered the traditional rulers into the macro political structure with the creation of the bicameral legislature which gave rise to the emergence of the house of chiefs as part of the regional House of Assembly. There was a truncation of democratic government by the military government. In 1976, the state military administrators promulgated an edict which made provisions for autonomous communities and further provided that autonomous community must present a head (King/Igwe) which must be certified by the state administrator. This gave rise to the emergence of several autonomous communities in Igbo land and rule by an individual known as Igwe. It also introduced the politics of rancor in the choice of Igwe in several communities. As observed from relevant studies, some of the governors imposed their preferred candidates on people and issued them with certificate as traditional ruler. Currently in some states, the governors included them in the payroll of the state and they are paid monthly. This unwarranted romance between state governors and traditional rulers distort the natural traditional structures in the grassroots communities thereby affecting the easy flow of the communication process already existing in the primordial communities. In the long run, this depletes sustainable development. With such cases of interference, the government

which did not make any significant provisions for the powers and functions of the traditional rulers in the Constitution has through residual powers co-opted the traditional rulers in the macro political structure without making any effort to integrate the micro institutions. This makes such traditional rulers stand alone in the comity of political juggernauts, hence they are in the minority in the decision making cycle of the state.

The Warrant Chief System in Abor Community (Colonial Period)

The British government in 1900 introduced the warrant chief system. The British Colonial Administration enacted the Native Courts Proclamation No.9 of 1900 which introduced the warrant chief system of administration and creation of native courts. The warrant chief system was novel to several Igbo communities. It forcefully placed one individual as the leader of the community. This individual was appointed and given authority (warrant) solely by the British to rule other members of the community. Eze (2016) contends that the British arbitrarily chose their preferred candidates, and gave them warrants as members of the native courts. He further cited Harneit-Sievers (1999) who claimed that in appointing the warrant chiefs, the colonialists looked for their lackeys, those who could be referred to as stooges or errand boys, people whose main qualification was their readiness to unquestionably obey the orders of the colonial masters. The warrant chief was given enormous and unfettered powers. He was only subject to the native court headed by the District/Resident officer who was a British. Most of these warrant chiefs were educated elites or merchants in their communities. Some were not even indigenes of the said communities but merely allies of the British government who effectively perpetuated the colonial agenda (Eze, 2016). Several authors in this regard posit that warrant chiefs used their powers arbitrarily, yet, as Eze concedes though many of the warrant chiefs were said to be corrupt, dictatorial and ruled atrociously, nevertheless, some others had provided courageous and progressive leadership, judging by the climate of the time.

Fortunately, Abor as a community under Chief Ngwu-nwa-Agu Onodugo as a warrant chief, fell was lucky because Chief Ngwu-nwa-Agu provided constructive and proactive leadership attributes. The warrant chief of Abor was among the revered group of the Ozo titled men, he was groomed as a member of the peoples' assembly in the primordial community. Anidi (2008) asserts that many chiefs abused their offices but this was not so with Chief Ngwu-nwa-Agu who was a lover of his people (p. 135). She further states that under Ngwu nwa Agu's able leadership as head chief, Abor experienced a peaceful transition in that complex era between the old tradition and the whiteman's civilization. Under the warrant chief, power shifted arbitrarily from the primitive traditional structure to the warrant chief system of administration. The Warrant Chief exercised fused powers. It is worthy of note that this new system did not erode the traditional political structures. This particular Warrant Chief in his wisdom worked in tandem with the pre existing traditional institutions. He effectively applied the integration theory which yielded synergistic approach to structural developments in Abor.

The introduction of the taxation system exposed extremely the arbitrary nature of the Warrant Chief system. This resulted in several protests and riots such as the 1929 Aba women riot. The outcome of this riot was the introduction of Native Authority administration which replaced the Warrant Chief system. The native authority administration recognized the existing traditional structures but they continued to be spearheaded by the Warrant Chief. Under this newly recommended system judicial power resided in the members of the native courts. This

new administration led to the emergence of more warrant chiefs in Abor. In Anidi O.A (2008, pg. 138), these personalities included Ozo Ukwu nwa Anukagu of Ngwuagu village and Ozo Agada Ngwu Ochi of Amukwu village. With the establishment of native courts at the clan levels, more Warrant Chiefs were included, in Abor. As stated in the gazette for Native Court Warrant (Warrant Establishing the Ebe [Umu Ojebe Ogene] native court in the province of Onitsha dated 27th October 1930 (cited in Anidi, O.A 2008, pg 139-142), Amupieluoku of Ugwunani village was added. With all these restructuring of Abor community by the colonial masters, the villages that made up the community were also restructured as follows:

1. Ugwunanai- *Umudinugwu, Ogwube, Obeagu Ofufe, Umu Owagu, Ihekwe, Onuodo agu.*
2. Ozalla: *Okuito, Ishi Ameke and Amaukwa*
3. Amukwu : *Obodo Akpaka, Etiti and Ezi-Amukwu*
4. Dunnobe: *Amufi, Akama, Umuokwesi and Umuakaghehu*
5. Dunigweze: *Ebongwu, Ekpoma and Umani* (Umani Uwenu and Umani Uwani)
6. Ubiekpo: *Etiti, Onuodoegu, Umudioka, Emegu, Umuozhi and Amaekwulu na Ebuwani*
7. Amaezike: *Izizi, Ogwofia* (*Ama ogwugwu and Amaugwu*)
8. Umuavulu: *Amogwu, Umuikwo, Ohemje, Uwenu Ayigbo, Emegu Uwani, Ezhionya, Nzuko, Ezhiagu, Umuoka, Eguma, Umuozo, Aluagu and Orhobo.*

From the above analysis the political structure existing in Abor community brought about significant restructuring of Abor which metamorphosed into Abor as was represented by the colonial masters. The executive, legislative and judicial powers were fused but resided with the warrant chiefs. As noted above the Warrant Chiefs in Abor continued to involve the primordial political structures in the decision making process. The structure therefore can be represented as follows:

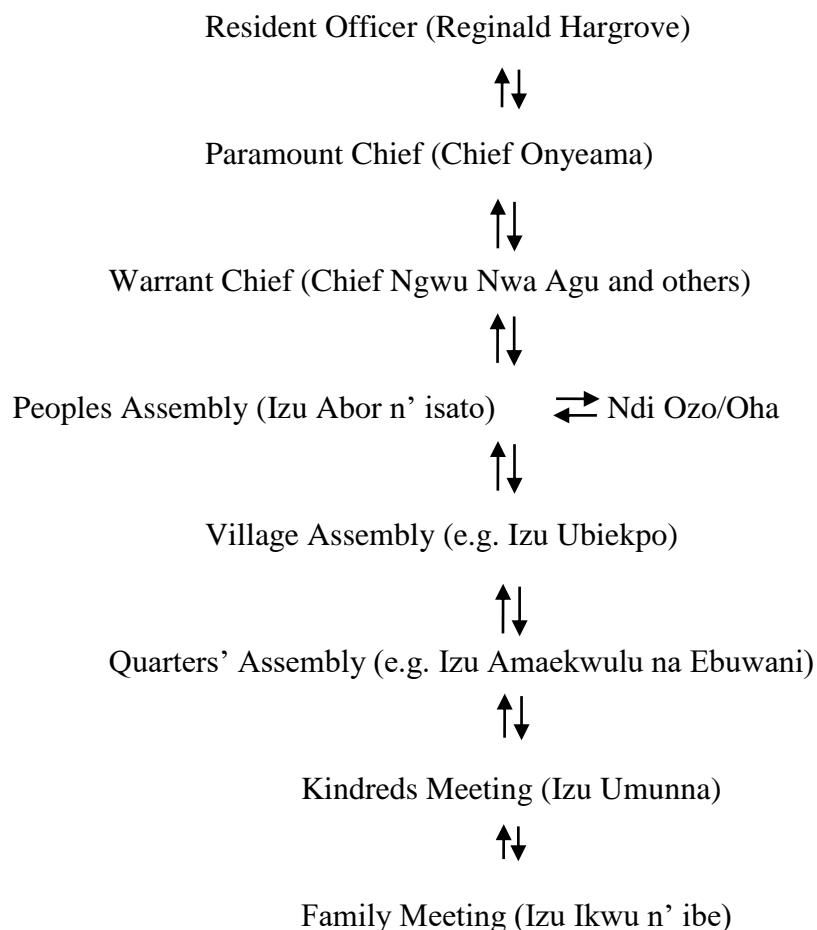


Fig 2: Abor Colonial Political Units (Source: Field Survey 2022)

The Warrant Chiefs took control of all the socio political activities in Abor. They fostered development and also facilitated the conversion of indigenes from traditional religious practices to the western Christianity. Their efforts led to the establishment of Catholic churches and basic schools in Abor. As noted in Anidi O.A (2008, pg 151),

The primordial political structures maintained their primitive functions. They were to an extent infused into the new system, but subject to the authority of the Warrant chiefs Chiefs. The Warrant chiefs Chiefs were subject to the whims and caprices of the paramount chief, Onyeama na Eke who reported to the British resident officer.

The Igwe and Igwe-in-Council (Post Colonial Era in the Modern Period)

The emergence and surge of educated elites as well as Christianity, brought about institutional and ideological conflicts in Abor. Such conflicts gained support after independence where the Westminster 1963 Republican constitution established a bicameral legislature in the Eastern region which created a second chamber, the House of Chiefs. In the words of (Pearce, 1982), this time it was no longer the Colonialists imposing their will on the people, but Nigerians deciding what they thought would be good for them. This development sparked the official recognition of Chiefs by government as well as payment of salaries to the recognized traditional rulers. It also introduced the classification of Chiefs into first class and second class. This arrangement elapsed with the emergence of the Nigeria Biafra civil war. In 1976 the military government was concerned about the 3R policy (Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reintegration). These post war policies provided the need for grassroots development. The recommendations of relevant committees led to the creation of more States, at this time Anambra state was divided into Anambra and Imo States. The recommendations also paved way for the enactment of the Chieftaincy Edict No. 8, 1976. This edict defined a traditional ruler and gave rise to the emergence of autonomous communities. Under this edict, the traditional ruler required the recognition of the government in power as well as popular support. Eze, D. (2016) observes that with criteria for the selection and recognition of traditional ruler clearly defined a floodgate of requests for recognition of traditional rulers by government opened in various parts of Anambra State. This was the case in Abor, as was experienced in several attempts of the Umuavulu village to secede from Abor as an autonomous community. This gave rise to such issues like identifying Umuavulu as Abor-1 and the other villages popularly known as Enu Abor as Abor 2. It is worthy of note at this point that Abor-1 or 2 never existed officially. They were aborted applications of the opposition political class in Abor, at that time.

Traditional Rulers (Igweship) in Abor Communities

In line with the Chieftaincy Edict, Abor had a Chief from the Ubiekpo village, Igwe P. U. Nnamani, who was recognized by the Government as the Igwe (Agodom I) of the eight villages in Abor in 1977. The Igwe was the highest authority, but ruled in conjunction with the primordial traditional structures. There were philosophical conflicts between the educated elites, Christians and core traditionalists in maintaining the fabrics of the origin of Abor communities. This new trend gave rise to the emergence of town union and Igwe's Cabinet.

Decisions were taken by the Executive Council (Igwe's cabinet). This development brought about the erosion of some of the age long traditional institutions.

At this time Igwe P.U. Nnamani an educated elite from Ubiekpo village, worked hard to harmonize all the existing traditional political structures. Each village had representatives as members of the Igwe's Cabinet as well as members of Abor Improvement Union. It was under his administration that the issue of autonomous community became a tense issue. Under his administration the traditional political structures had a semblance of the common law and equity which runs through the same channel but never meet in application of their principles.

In 1989, the demise of Igwe P.U. Nnamani necessitated a replacement. Abor community had another traditional ruler, Igwe L.U Ukwu. His appointment was based on the constructive achievements he made. As Anidi (2008) observes, Igwe Louis Ude Ukwu played a great role in the development of Abor (p. 189). He founded Christ High School Abor along with other co-founders. He was also a philanthropist. During his reign, there was obvious erosion of some of the traditional institutions which were part of the political structure, e.g the Ozo title institution. Omeayo (2011) observes that as regards Ozo institution, there seems not to be prospects in Abor (p. 38). He further noted that in the alternative his team was told that Igwe L.U Ukwu got some people and made them Nzes following the pattern in some parts of Anambra State. Igwe L.U Ukwu in his wisdom bridged the gaps created by the metamorphoses of traditional structures following the principles of change in a given society. The traditional structure had an articulated hierarchical structure. The Igwe's cabinet consists of Igwe, Onowu, Cabinet Secretary, Ndi Nze, Chiefs and equal representatives of the villages.

The issue of autonomous community was revisited and followed up by the Umuavulu Progressive Union and other stakeholders. Their objective agitations led to the approval of Umuavulu Abor as an autonomous community on the 25th June 1998. From this date Abor town then consisted of seven villages (Abor n'isaa). Most recently, another autonomous community has been created out of Abor; that is Amukwu village. However, the seven villages of Abor town and their hamlets as at then were as follows:

1. Ugwunanai: *Umudinugwu, Ogwube, Obeagu Ofufe, Umu Owagu, Ihekwe, Onuodo agu.*
2. Ozalla: *Okuito, Ishi Ameke and Amaukwa*
3. Amukwu: *Obodo Akpaka, Etiti and Ezi-Amukwu*
4. Dunnobe: *Amufi, Akama, Umuokwesi and Umuakaghehu*
5. Dunigweze: *Ebongwu, Ekpoma and Umani (Umani Uwenu and Umani Uwani)*
6. Ubiekpo: *Etiti, Onuodoegu, Umudioka, Emegu, Umuozihi and Amaekwulu na Ebuwani*
7. Amaezike: *Izizi, Ogwofia (Ama ogwugwu and Amaugwu)*

HRH Igwe L. U. Ukwu (Agodom II) was left with the reign of the seven villages. Upon his death, HRH Igwe Chukwudi Ngwudile (Agodom III) was elected as the Igwe in line with the zoning principle of the Abor community which was based on the seniority of the villages.

Umuavulu Abor autonomous community from the date of the approval for autonomy consists of the following villages:

Umuavulu:

1. Amogwu

2. Umuikwo
3. Ohemje
4. Uwenu Ayigbo
5. Emegu Uwani
6. Ezhionya
7. Nzuko
8. Ezhiagu
9. Umuoka
10. Eguma,
11. Umuozo
12. Aluagu
13. Orhobo.

At this point, the old Abor had two communities which are Abor and Umuavulu-Abor autonomous community. The approval of the autonomous community led to the appointment of HRH Igwe Chief Christopher Ike (Ujaligwa I) as the Igwe of Umuavulu Abor autonomous community. After his demise, the Ujaligwa II was appointed in the name of HRH Callistus Chukwuemeka Njeze, Odalije n' Abor. HRM Igwe Dr. C. C. Njeze vibrantly and constructively ruled Umuavulu Abor.. His administration projected the aesthetics of Umuavulu Abor traditional activities and culture e.g. Igodo, Abor cuisines, etc. At the moment Igwe HRM Igwe Dr. C. C. Njeze has been replaced as a result of his death.

At the time of this study, HRM Igwe Dr. Chike P. Onodugo (Ezedinobi) is the traditional ruler (Ujaligwa III) of Umuavulu Abor Community.

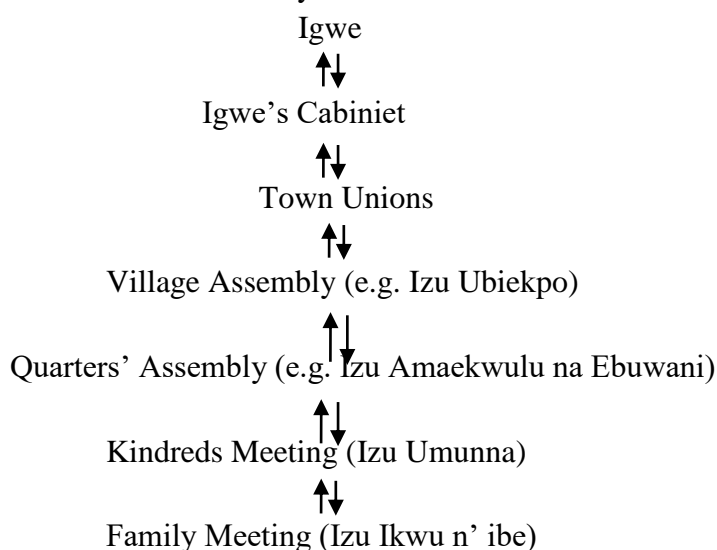


Fig 3: Abor Modern Political Units, Post Colonial era (Source: Field Survey 2022)

The modern traditional political structure has the Igwe who spearheads the affairs of the community. The Igwe's cabinet serves as the executive council which consists of the onowu, the cabinet secretary, ndi Oha, ndi Nze/Chief, the Council of elders. According to Ozonwedu, G (2022), the members of the council of elders are two (2) representatives of every village. The Igwe's Cabinet retained the element of fusion of powers. But where there is conflict in their decisions, the parties are constitutionally empowered to approach the courts for redress. The current traditional structures with legal backing from the traditional council's laws of Enugu state have empowered the town unions and the village assemblies to have a political outlook

with their written constitutions. These town unions and village assemblies have the resemblance of the national political structure. In other words, the happenings in the macro political spheres influence to a greater extent the nature of the modern political structures at the community level.

Bibliography

- Anidi A. O. (2008), *Sands of Our Land Historical Tales of Abor and Umuavulu*. Enugu: Fidgina Global Books.
- Anidi, R.C (2022), An Architect, indigene of Umuavulu Abor interviewed on the Ozo Title in Abor and other traditional political structures on July 2022 in his residence at Savage Crescent GRA Enugu,
- Basden, G.T. (1966). Among the Ibos of Nigeria. London: Frank Cass and Co.
- Edict No 8 1976, Official Gazzette No. 31, Volume 1 of 25th November 176.
- Egudu, R.N (1977), The Socio, Ethical and Philosophical Significance of the Ozo Title Institution among Igbo People. A paper presented at the Seminar on Ozo Title in Igbo Land, conducted by Anambra State Ministry of Education and Information on the 19th October 1977, held at Enugu.
- Eze, D (2016), A Critical Review of the Evolution of Kingship System among the Igbo Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 8(1) pp 1-7. DOI.org/10.5897/IJSA 20150607, retrieved 18/9/22.
- Harneit-Sievers, A. 1999), 'Igbo 'Traditional Rulers': Chieftaincy and the State in Southeastern Nigeria,' *Africa Spectrum* 33 (1):57-79.
- Ifemesia C.C (1979). Traditional Human Living Among Igbo: An Igbo Historical perspective. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Menakaya, J.C (1977), The Place of Ozo Title in Igbo Land. A paper presented at the Seminar on Ozo Title in Igbo Land, conducted by Anambra State Ministry of Education and Information on the 19th October 1977, held at Enugu.
- Meredith M. (2011). The State of Africa. London: Simon and Schuster.
- Nwabunani, E. (2006). Igbo Political System. DOI: 10.4314/Inr.v12i1.46479. Vol.12. <http://www.ajol.info> retrieved 23/08/22.
- Nwokoye, C and Chukwurah, C (2001), *Omenala na Odinala Nri (A Compendium of Nri Cultures, Customs & Traditions)*. Awka::Scoa Heritage Publishers
- Okamkpa, J.O (2022), A Retiree, indigene of Abor interviewed on the political traditional structures from the pre-colonial period to date on May 2022 in his residence at Green Lake Kporoko Layout New GRA Enugu.
- Okere, B.O (2008), Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy Under the Nigerian Constitution. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly, Volume 32, Issue 1*, pp.214-228. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/iciqaj/32.1.214>. Retrieved from cambridge.org on 20/07/2022.
- Omeayo A.S (2011), Ozo Social Institution in Ojebe Ogene: The Old and The New. *Ojebe Ogene Search Light*, Vol. 1 No 1pg 38, December 2011-December 2012.
- Orjiobasi, M.E. (2019) The Ezeanu People of Enugu State, 1908-1976. MA Project Delta State University, Abraka.
- Ozonwedu, G (2022), A Businessman, indigene of Abor and member of the Igwe in Council interviewed on the current traditional political structure in Abor and the composition of the

- members. The interview took place during a meeting of the Iyime Awubu Club members at Dr. Chike Okamkpa's residence on 6th August 2022.
- Pedler, F.J. (1959). *West Africa*. London: Willmers Brothers and Haram.
- Rousseau, J.J (1762). *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right (Du Contract Social ou Principes du DroitPolitique)*. Amsterdam: Penguin.
- Uzoigwe, G. N. (2009), 'Evolution and Relevance of Autonomous Communities in Contemporary Igboland: An Essay in Local Governance,' *The Journal of Third World Studies*, Fall.
- Uzoigwe, G. N. (2004) 'Evolution and Relevance of Autonomous Communities in Pre-Colonial Igboland: An Essay in Local Governance,' *Journal of Third World Studies - Spring*.

CHAPTER 8: Technology, Blacksmithing, Architecture, Arts and Crafts in Abor (Ogochukwu Ani)

Blacksmithing Technology in Abor

Blacksmithing is the art of working and forging iron or metals into any desired shape or form. Blacksmithing workshops in Abor were usually rectangular in shape with the sides open. These workshops were roofed with grasses and later replaced with zinc and were usually located near people's homes.



An abandoned blacksmithing site located at Nzuko Village, Umuavulu Abor. (Photo by Ogochukwu Ani)

According to Okpoko and Ibeanu (1999) who studied early metal-working in Nigeria, the blacksmith's workshops were usually characterized with:

1. **A forge:** This is the fire point that was always filled with lighted or unlighted charcoal.
2. **An Anvil:** This acts as platform or support upon which the red-hot iron is fashioned to the desired shape. An anvil can be made of stone or iron. The iron anvil is usually preferable.



An Iron Anvil (Photo by Ogochukwu Ani)

3. **Bellows:** This is the controlling factor in fire making. Bellows are designed to pump air into the clay cylindrical tuyere. Bellows which were made of hollowed wood contain a tunnel which narrows down gradually towards the tails end.
4. **A mud wall:** This was constructed in front of the fire point and behind the tuyere to prevent flying chunks of burning charcoal or palm kernel from hitting the blacksmith.
5. **Tuyere:** This was a nozzle through which gust of wind is delivered to the interior of a forge.
6. **Tongs (pincers):** This was what the blacksmith used to pick the iron out from fire without touching them. It was an iron instrument, scissor-like in nature.
7. **Chisels:** This was used to cut metal and also helped in shaping them.
8. **Hammers:** This was used in shaping and forging metals to get desired shape. Hammers were of two types: Sledge hammer and flattening hammer. While sledge hammer was used to beat the red hot iron to the desired shape or thickness, the flattening hammers gave smooth surface finish to the object produced.
9. **Clay pot bowl:** This was used in storing water into which the red hot finished products were dipped immediately after production. The tools produced by Abor blacksmiths include spears, guns, knives axes, hammers, chisels, hoes, cutlasses, diggers, etc.

Blacksmithing in Abor was mainly done by Umuozo village in Umuavulu, Abor. Blacksmithing sites were located at different places within Umuozo village. People from other villages in Abor, such as Ifemakwulu Onunkpu family in Ubiekpo, Ogbozor Agidi family in Amukwu, Aninweze Ogbu and Maneme Ogbu in Nzuko Umuavulu, Ashuke family from Amankpume Ngwuagu were also Blacksmiths, but were not as efficient as Umuozo village from Umuavulu. These other people could make small implements like nko (small hoe for weeding), small knife, etc. Blacksmithing technology was held in high esteem among the people of Abor.

According to John Ogbozor (04 January 2012), blacksmiths believed that charms and witchcrafts could not affect them because of the residues from blacksmithing called 'ekputekpu' which is abound in the village till today. They also gave some to individuals who

did not want to be caught by charms, to put in their pockets. Also, when one stepped on charms the person was brought to the blacksmithing site / shop to be healed.

Moreso, in the olden days when blacksmithing was held at high esteem by the Abor people, any group of dancers and musicians that were passing by the blacksmithing site or workshop must stop and perform briefly, in reverence to the site before continuing to their venue.

As with other places, blacksmithing in Abor started declining with the importation of the same product from Europe and other parts of the Western world. The imported products had better finishing and was more attractive and demand from urban dwellers began to dwindle. The blacksmith products were superior and this made them last for years which made the customers not to come frequently. Today, the number of people that are engaged in farmin in Abor are fewer than they were before the Colonial period, thereby resulting in low patronage of Abor blacksmiths. Consequently, the blacksmith trade could no longer be passed on to younger generations.

The raw materials used in blacksmithing was obtained from Smelters who underwent process to produce iron from the ore. The iron was then used by blacksmiths to produce different products. With the onset of colonisation, the blacksmiths, started using what they called railway 'slippers' and car scraps as their raw materials, as was informed by a well known blacksmith from Amukwu, Abor, in the person of John Ogbozor (04 January, 2012). Some well-known blacksmiths in Abor were Late Madukaka Ozougwu "Megida", Late Gregory Uzuka, Emmanuel Okorie (present blacksmith).

Architecture in Abor

Our focus here is on the traditional architecture predominant in Abor. Traditional architecture refers to a given process of building technology in which building materials derived from the surrounding environment are transformed through skillful manipulation into three-dimensional structures (Okpoko and Ekechukwu, 1999). Generally, in every society, architecture is a function of a number of factors. The first is natural environmental condition to which the society is exposed to. In places with cold climates, the type of architecture found there would not be the same as places with hot climates.

Secondly, the social and political demands also influence the architecture of a given society, such as Abor. Prior to the Colonial period in Abor, a ploygamous man was expected to erect many houses of various shapes and sizes in his compound in order to accommodate members of his family. Ozor Agunachuenyi of Amukwu village of Abor erected nine Uwota and Uwekwu for his wives. Moreso, Late Ozo Ngwunwagu Onodugo, the traditional ruler of Abor of old, then erected many of such Uwota and Uwekwu in his compound to accommodate his sixteen wives and his large family.

Okpoko and Ekechukwu (1999) in this regard identified a common feature in traditional architecture in Nigeria and Africa in general. This is the issue of 'centre'. The centre provides the design clue to the layout of human settlements and contains the most important symbols that unite the town or village. It is the rallying point of the town. Where the centre usually

actually exists, if not conceptual, all the pathways in the villages or town radiate from the centre and end up in the farmland.

In Abor, the centre or the rallying point which was the Orie market was not actually located at the centre of Abor town. Orie was located at Umuavulu which was chosen after Umuavulu, after Abor won the war with the Nsude Community. According to history all the villages in Abor agreed to locate the centre at Umuavulu, after the Nsude war.

Types of Historical Houses in Abor

The historical houses built in Abor were rectangular or square types, as Aniakor (1995) who studied houses types in Udi, has also observed. The rectangular house-type has rectangular walls underneath a gable roof held by wood posts. The roof which has very low eaves is thatched with grass. The low eaves protect the wall from heat of the sun, consequently making the interior of the building cool.

Another way of studying the social value, artistic and aesthetic dimension of a given society like Abor, is through their house types. This was shown through the different designs the people used in building and designing the interior and exterior walls in Abor.



A mud house located at Ugwunani Abor (Photo by Ogochukwu Ani)

In those days, men kept or hung the heads (skulls) of cattles, lions, elephants, leopards or other big animals they killed in their houses to show their strength, prowess and bravely and achievements in life. Each head of an animal, hide and skin hung on the wall of an Abor man had a story accompanying it. As was told by Sunday Obodechi (12 April, 2023), Nwobodo Uba kept some heads of animals he killed in many hunting he participated.

Most of the times, the men built the houses with the help of their kinsmen and in-laws. The man who has been thus helped always entertained his helper during and after the building construction. In essence, able-bodied men usually went into the thick forests with their cutting

tools and choose any or some big tree(s) which resisted water deterioration and termites. Mostly, the chosen trees were 'akpaka' (oil bean) and iroko trees. The trees were cut down into timbers and allowed to dry; then, they would be moved to the building site. They were used mostly for the standing pillars called 'azi', which is the central pillar holding the roof. 'Azi' was used for supporting the thatch roof. They were made of long straight wooden timbers used in making thatched houses. Some of the woods were cut into pieces, called 'mkpo'. They were nailed to the walls at the time when the mud walls were still wet and soft. They were used in hanging claypots, clay-bowels (oku), plate, ololo (calabash cups) baskets, etc.

In making the walls a site where red soil could be found was located. After removing the top soil, the next type of soil was the one used in building. The red soil was collected and kneaded for a long time via marching by not less than two people. This kneading would continue until the red soil became elastic. It was then moved to the masons at the building site who were specialists in moulding houses with mud. Sometimes, with the kneaded red soil a bed was formed which projected out from the room. Strong palm fronds (opupe) or bamboo (achara) would be used as floor of the bed while an isologo was placed on the palm fronds / bamboo to serve as mattress. Sometimes, chicken were allowed to sleep under the bed, while the owner slept on top of the bed. When the fowls were infected with lice, the 'anwushi' leaves were burnt under the bed to drive the lice away. During the cold weather, fire was put under the bed with the help of firewood, to keep warm.

The Homestead, sometimes referred to as Nkolo

Three major house-types were found in most homesteads – the *Nkolo*, *Uwekwu* and *Uwota*. *Nwufu* is another house type but was often found only on the homestead of an Ozo title holder.

Nkolo

Nkolo as in the other architectural house designs was rectangular or square in shape. There was usually a door for entrance called 'Onuzo' and 'Mpio' which served as window and 'Nwa Mpio' through which fowls could enter beneath the bed. The *Nkolo* is the main building in a family usually occupied by the father of the house. Depending on how famous the man was, it had a sitting room/palour also called 'Nkolo', bedroom (*Ntibu*) and a smaller room where his valuables were kept also called 'Ntibu'. The bed 'Ogo' at the *Nkolo* was rectangular in shape. At the *Nkolo* the man usually had privacy and welcomed his visitors without interference from his wife and children. *Nkolo* also housed objects that showed what the man had achieved. For instance, as mentioned earlier, a man that had killed a lion, leopard, tiger or the likes usually hung the skin or the head on the wall each with their accompanying story. *Nkolo*, in Abor then, served as a reception house located at the forefront of the compound.

Uwekwu

Uwekwu belonged to the woman, that is, the wife or mother. The number of wives married by a man determined the number of Uwekwu in a family. Uwekwu is the kitchen where food was prepared. Its architectural design was rectangular or square in shape. At the walls of the Uwekwu, usually, wooden plates (okwa), baskets, cups, ololo for drinking wine, cow horns, earthen bowls, calabash, among others, would be hung. Inside the Uwekwu were four posts of bamboo sticks made in rectangular form called 'uko'. On top of it was placed palm fronds

(opupe) carrying flat basket called 'nkata', in Abor, where certain things like pepper, dried cocoyam 'achicha', melon, or anything dryable can be placed to ensure their preservation.

A calabash called 'agbugba' which looked like a bowl with cover was where women put 'fufu' or 'akpu', already prepared food which was kept in the uwekwu. 'Oku', an earthen ware, was used in mixing food. There was smaller 'oku' called 'oku aracha' used for soup.

Uwota

Uwota was the woman's homestead. This was where everything that belongs to the woman was kept. It also had an entrance door and 'mpio' which served as window. The bed (ogo) similar to the one at *Nkolo* was housed here, for the woman's own resting and sleeping. The man also came to the 'uwota' whenever he needed intimacy with the woman. The bed here was the same type which also accommodated the fowls under it. While the woman lay on top, the fowls were kept beneath. As stated earlier, sometimes, the fowls were infected with lice called 'igwu okuko' which also disturbed the woman. A type of leaves called 'anwushi' were put inside fire beneath the bed to drive away the lice. The number of wives married also determined the number of *Uwota* in a family.

Nwufu

Nwufu was the homestead for an Ozo titled man. This was where he usually had privacy. It also had a square or rectangular architectural shape. Depending on choice, it could be one or two rooms having entrance door 'onuzo' and window (mpio). Every property attributed to his Ozo title-taking was kept here including the wooden gong (ekwe) that was played whenever he was taking his meals. His meals were also prepared here.

Aba (Village Square)

Aba in Abor was where the Ozo title-taking ceremony was held. It was a place where everything concerning the Ozo title taking was done – before, during and after Ozo title taking activities. Every Ozo had an *Aba*, according to all the research informants interviewed. Ichie Anthony Ikpa revealed during the interview with him (11 April, 2022) that if there was no *Aba* or an Ozo in a lineage and the need to have them arose, a cow would be killed to create a new *Aba*. The activities for opening the *Aba* were called 'ntufu oboli'. Before the creation of *aba*, a tree called '*Ogbu*' would be planted round the *Aba*. None must die. Abor people went to the extent of hiring guards to secure the '*ogbu*' at night to avert an enemy from removing them. About a year after taking the title, the '*ogbu*' will be removed. People will say that the Ozo did not die during his testing time "na onwughu n'ebene ozo".

. Currently, since Ozo's in Abor are not as many as they used to be in the past, the *Aba* is now used as village square where ceremonies such as marriage, launchings, meetings, etc., are held. The married women take care of the place by sweeping them regularly. *Aba* is still being recognized today as an indication that the owners are of good lineage because bad lineage did not take the Ozo title.

Some of the *aba* that are still in use today in Abor as village square include

1. *Aba Ozoagu* (Eziagu, Umuavulu)
2. *Aba Ozoagu* (Alagu, Umuavulu-Abor), co-incidentally these two villages have same *Aba* names.
3. *Aba Eluke* (Ohemuje, Umavulu)
4. *Aba Onodugo*

(Umuoka, Umuavulu) 5. Aba Odakoro (Umuozo Uwenu, Umuavulu. 6. Aba Ekuvuo (Etiti, Amukwu) 7. Aba, Enudiewa (Amaebo, Amukwu) 8. Aba Igwe (Ubiekpo) 9. Aba Ohune (Alagu, Umuavulu) 10. Aba Madukwe Ogbozo (Orobo Umuavulu) 11. Aba Ndibeagu (Ngwuagu) 12. Aba Nwaeziobodo (Ubiekpo), among others.

Market Places and Days

As in other parts of Igbo land, Abor people had their markets where they bought and sold in the olden days. Out of the four market days collectively called 'izu', one native week, they chose their own which was Orie and Afor. The four market days, Orie, Afor, Nkwo, and Eke, were very important in Igboland. They distinguished one day from another. The four market days also had religious meanings. When an Igbo man was praying, he must invite the four market days to come and partake in the kola (Anigbo, 1992).

The market days varied from town to town. The different neighbouring towns instituted different market days to avoid clashes of market days with immediate neighbouring towns, especially when there was no refrigerator or canning facilities in a society. For instance, Orie was chosen as the market day for Abor, while their neighbouring town Ebe chose Afor; Okpatu chose Eke, while Awhum chose Nkwo, etc. On Orie day, all the surrounding towns, like Ukana, Ebe, Ngwo, came to Orie Abor to buy and sell and that was how they went to theirs too.

Abor na-asato, that is, the eight villages that made up Abor, situated their market at Orie Abor at Umuavulu Abor. Afor Abor was also a market place though smaller than the Orie Abor. It functioned only on Afor day. Orie Ogbobo at Ugwunani was also functional for those who couldn't reach Orie Abor at Umuavulu for buying and selling. One would ask why Umuavulu was chosen to be the place where the market, Orie, was situated. It was revealed by Anthony Ikpa during my interview with him that Umuavulu was the largest and most populous of the other villages in those days. Also, they usually volunteered themselves, more than the other villages in times of war. They also won many wars without the help of the other seven villages. Moreso, they were one village which earned the status of a zone or quarter out of the three zones/quarters in Abor. The three quarters are:

1. Ikenge Abor which comprises Ugwunani, Ozalla and Amukwu
2. Ibute Abor which comprises Amaezike, Ubiekpo, Ngwagu and Ebongwu;
3. Umuavulu (standing alone.)

Mr. Jerome Osondu also revealed that before Orie came into existence, there was a small market called 'Eke-Ugwu' at the back of the Onodugo compound in Umuoka, Umuavulu. It was used by Umuavulu people for buying and selling.

It should be noted that ordinary brooms made from palm fronds were not used to sweep the Orie Market. It was only the wild broom called 'aziza offia' that was used.

Orie was also called 'Obodo Imo'. It was a place where Abor n'asato gathered to take decisions concerning their customs and tradition. 'Igbafu akwa' (end of one's funeral activities, usually marked by some celebration) also took place at the Orie square.

The Orie Market Architecture

Orie square was rounded with architectural structures divided among the recognized quarters/zones of Umuavulu, namely Ikenge, Ibute and Emegu, and the biggest part was for the whole Abor n'asaa bu n'ugwu, making the entire sections four in number.

It sections had platforms or sit-outs which were roofed with thatch. Each platform is called 'Igbudu' Orie. Recently the structure has been modernized to zinc roofs and cement floor, with the edges made for sitting down. Typically, the Igbudu has no walls, but an open space. Recently and the Igbudus have been further modified, to include shops and offices. Igbudu Ibute is still under construction, while Igbudu Abor n'asaa currently houses some fully-built shops. Abor N'asaa no longer come to Orie Umuavulu for trading activities, as such.

The Orie Abor Market square used to be and still is where each quarter gathered and still gather to deliberate and display their cultural activities, like the *Igodo*. If there is an activity involving the whole Abor people each quarter stay in their own Igbudu. The centre was where goods are exhibited on the ground for buying and selling.

Interior and Exterior Decorations of Houses in Abor

The Abor people beautified their houses greatly in the past. Thatched houses were decorated with much enthusiasm especially during festivals. Red soil was mixed with water, after which they rubbed on the walls both inside and outside, as decoration. Charcoal was used to beautify the upper part of the houses with drawings on the walls. Drawings of lizards, snakes, wall geckos, etc, were made on the walls of the houses. The lower part of the exterior was usually decorated with a mixture of cow dung which later turned black, after the beautification process. They sourced the cow dung from Onyene Oriekubulu from Nzuko village who was a great cattle rearer in the past.

At the 'Uwota' and 'Uwekwu', the women's bedroom and kitchen, respectively, the women adorned their houses with calabashes, that is, 'agbugba'. The calabash was taken to artists who carved and designed them and they would be kept or hung on the walls for interior decoration. Big earthen ware dishes, the oku, were also hung on the walls for decoration. On the other hand, men also adorned their own houses, the 'nkolo', in the inside (interior decoration) with hides and skins of animals they had killed while the heads of these animals were hung outside on the walls of the houses. As has been mentioned before, each animal head hung on the wall had its accompanying stories. Peter Obodoechi (12 April 2022) informed that Nwobodo Uba's house from Umuavulu was a typical example of such houses decorated with animal heads.

Craft

Abor people in the past had the ability and skillfulness to make things that were useful to them and which helped them to conquer their environment.

Wood Carving: They were able to make different types of seat that they sat on from logs of woods. They made 'oche ufie' for children by simply flattening the upper and lower sections of the wood. While the lower section was shaped to prop the seat, the upper side was where they sat on. 'Oche ogodo' was for adults. Special oche ogodo was fabricated for Ozo's. Oche ogodo was carved in a way that it had hands and back where one can relax. Another type of chair, 'oche agada', was for relaxation. Both 'oche ogodo' and 'oche agada' were carved from wood.

Abor people carved so many things from wood. All musical instruments like wooden gong (ekwe), Igba (drum), flute (opi), etc., were crafted and carved by their craftsmen. There were also the wooden handles for hoe, axe, pick, machetes, etc. made by the carvers. Additionally, the people crafted the mortar and pestle, for pounding food items. The biggest of such carved wood was the 'Ikwe ekwu' (long wooden trunk) used for palm oil processing.



Ikwe Ekwu – Long wooden mortar for palm oil processing

Someone well known for carving 'Ikwe ekwu' was Ukwuani Otinga from Eziagu, Umuavulu-Abor. For religious purposes, Abor craftsmen and sculptors carved staff, stools, idols, masks, bowl (okwa). They also produced the strong wild ropes (agbu nkwu) used for climbing palm trees, to tap palm wine or collect palm fruits.

Basket Making

This was also prevalent in the past. Abor people skilled in the art of weaving, made baskets called 'Oda' of different sizes from material gotten from palm fronds. They also made 'nduchi', a local basket with cover where food items were kept /preserved by keeping it on top of the kitchen fire-place, to ensure food preservation via grilling. The flat basket called 'nkata' which was for drying things under the sun were also made. They also made isologo. Isologo was put on top of the floor of the bed as mattress.

Producing the Isologo required a special skill. First, strong palm fronds would be collected. The leaves cut off while the thick outer parts of the frond were removed systematically to avoid breakages. The removed substance called 'ekpele' would be smoothened using sharp small knives. Then, the 'ekpele' will be cut according to the length of the mattress needed. All the ekpele would be perforated at some spots from top to bottom where the binding ropes would pass in order to join them together to get a flat surface to lay on. All of the ekpele would be linked through the perforated spots using the rope until the desired width of the Isologo was achieved. When achieved the binding ropes were tied very well at every end to ensure it did not get loose easily. The rope for binding was gotten from 'Uvuku' tree. After removing the first layer of the bark (outer skin) of the Uvuku tree, the second layer would be collected and twisted. This served as the binding rope to form Isologo.

Local Cloth Weaving

This was not prevalent then in Abor. Abor people bought local cloth from *Akagbe* people of *Nkanu*. Later, when cotton began to be planted (*owu* in Abor language) it was sold to *Akagbe* people who in turn used it to produce what Abor people called *Eket* (towel). The *Eket* was used to cover private parts only. During wrestling or '*Oso ikpa*', men wore it in form of '*ogoku*' to prevent their private parts from dangling. '*Ogbuaji*' was beaten and the chaff was also used to cover private parts. Much later, Abor people learnt the trade and they started making *ekete* (towel) by themselves.

Fashion – Uli and Ufie Body Decoration and Hairstyle

Uli was a wild plant that its fruit was used to by women to decorate the body. After collecting the fruit the liquid content inside it when squeezed was called '*uli*'. After being rubbed or used to design the body, everywhere it touched turned pure black. It was widely used in the past.

Before the use of '*uli*' in the olden days, there was '*ufie*' which was of high value. '*Ufie*' otherwise called camwood in English was bought from the market. It usually came in big lump. It was ground using local grinder to ensure it becomes smooth for use. Little palm oil was dropped on it before use. A special cloth or wrapper was used for '*ufie*' as it stains cloth so quickly. So, after rubbing '*ufie*' on the whole body, '*uli*' would then be used to design some specific parts of the body.

It was revealed that these *ufie* and *uli* as a form of fashion was prevalent during festivals such as Ohune Festival, 'Ihuru Orie mmanya', 'Igo Orie' (veneration of Orie) and in many other festivals celebrated in the past. It was also believed that *ufie*, apart from fashion, was a source of blood for those that were ill. They rubbed *ufie* (camwood) all over the body and it was believed that it replenished their bodies then.

Hair Style

Generally, in the past, there was no time for hair making due to the fact that the people spent their time either planting or harvesting crops. The period they brought out time to make hair was during festival times, like the 'Ohune, Ekani, Igo Orie, Igba aba Orie, etc. The most common hair style for women then was achieved by dividing the natural hair into four parts and tying each up with *owu* (thread), made from *Akagbe* wool, usually bought from *Akagbe* town near Enugu, in *Nkanu* Local Government Area.

Local Fashion Items

There were lots of other items used historically for fashion. First was the *ekete* (towel) they bought from *Akagbe* people at *Ogbete*, Enugu, which was to cover private parts. It was too expensive for them that they used every means to preserve it. *Eket* was used by women too to cover private parts. They tied it at one end of their waist. There was *ekete* used when *ufie* was rubbed on the body. *Jigida* which came much later was for the rich then. It was worn on top of the *ekete*. '*Oduna*' was a bangle gotten from the elephant. *Ozo* title holders used '*akachi*' as necklace. The *akachi* was reserved for the *Ozo*. '*Oduna*' was for both great men and women. '*Akali Ozo*' was also a fashion item for *Ozo*. They were worn around the ankle up to 3 or 4 in number. '*Lolo Ozo*' that is *Ozo*'s wife also wore '*akali*' on the ankle. The '*Ububa*' tree

produced a fruit that was bold and strong and its bark was used to produce slippers. It was perforated and in it was put banana/plantain or 'uvuku' rope to make slippers. There was 'Ikpu' worn on the neck by a woman on 'ifu uba' day. It was borrowed if one could not afford it.

Another local cloth item was hides of big animals like lion, tiger, and their likes. People that have killed them used to hang them on their bodies during public gathering to signify fame. The 'aka' was another fashion item used in the past. It served as a necklace worn by elders for occasions. It was also worn during funeral ceremonies. If one did not have it they borrowed from people known for lending 'aka'. 'Nzo inyaya' was in vogue and still in vogue in Abor.. 'Nzo inyanya' was the tail whisk of a horse well treated and the handle well tied to last long. In the past, if one could not afford to buy and present a horse during a funeral, he was not permitted to use Nzo inyanya. People taking traditional titles also made use of Nzo inyanya especially their wives and daughters. Nzo inyanya is of different sizes and colours. The white ones are usually more expensive. *Nzo efi* (cow tail) was also used in the past as well.

Reference

- Aniakor, C. C. (1995). The adaptive potentials of Nigerian indigenous architecture and building technology. In *USO: Nigerian Journal of Art, 1*(1) Dike (ed.). Lagos: Learson Printer Ltd.
- Anigbo, O. A. C. (1992). *Igbo elites and Western Europe*. Uyo: African-Feb. Publishers Limited, Okpoko A. I., & Ekechukwu, L. C. (1999). Nigerian traditional Architecture: An overview of settlement layouts and house types in A. I. Okpoko (ed.), *African indigenous technology with reference to Nigeria*. Ibadan: Wisdom Pub.
- Okpoko, A. I., & Ibeanu, A. M. (1999). Early metal-working in Nigeria in A.I. Okpoko (ed.), *Africa's indigenous technology with reference to Nigeria*. Ibadan: Wisdom Pub.
- Okpoko, A. I., & Okpoko, P. U. (1999). Traditional farming practices in Nigeria in A. I. Okpoko (ed.), *Africa's indigenous technology with reference to Nigeria*. Ibadan: Wisdom Pub.

CHAPTER 9: Forms of Folklore in Abor: Folktales (Akuko Iho), Praise Poetry (Igbo Evu), and Proverbs (Inu-okwu) (Ojel Clara Anidi, & Obiora Innocent Anidi)

Introduction

There were and still are diverse forms of folklore practised and performed in Abor – folktales, praise poetry, proverbs, idioms, folk songs, myths, legends, riddles, tongue twisters, etc. This chapter shall focus on folktales (akuko iho), praise poetry (igbu evu), and proverbs (ilu). Some of these oral traditions are fading away; necessitating their being discussed here, to portray their intrinsic values, thematic content and artistic appeal. Further, it is argued that the neglect of the oral traditions may be directly and indirectly related to the current socio-cultural degeneration and values disorientation manifest in the many forms of irregularities, malpractices and profanities in Nigeria today. In the indigenous Nigerian, African, folklore, character traits such as integrity, respect (for self and others), wisdom, hardwork, and self-sufficiency are extolled; while greed, avarice, laziness and stupidity are disparaged; hence, while the former set of qualities are fostered, the latter set are discouraged among the citizenry. Below is an attempt to discuss the place of the folklore in the education of the Nigerian child.

Place of Folklore in the Education of the Igbo Nigerian Child

In the traditional Igbo, Nigerian, African society, the indigenous folklore, which includes folktales, praise poems, and proverbs, used to be a major education and entertainment resource. Through the folklore, values of character, respect, hardwork, and industry, as well as the appreciation of the indigenous oral arts and knowledge, are inculcated in the child. Today, it has become increasingly difficult to sustain these indigenous oral traditions in Nigeria, particularly, among the Igbo, the focus of this research. The reasons include: (1) More than eighty percent of Igbo Nigerian parents and elders who used to be the main conveyors of the folklore and oral traditions now stay for long hours at work, most times, outside their homes, leaving little or no room for them to share the indigenous Igbo folklore with their children; (2) Many young Igbo parents today may not have been exposed much to the indigenous folklore themselves and so cannot transmit what they do not know; (3) Many schools in Nigeria today, particularly the nursery and primary, molding the young, impressionable, children, do not seem to have enough teaching content and resources on the Igbo and other Nigerian, African folklore; and (4) Due to globalization and attraction to Western countries and values, the majority of Igbo Nigerian parents and educators now pay less attention to the indigenous folklore.

In view of all the listed points, above, the average Igbo Nigerian child today has little or no knowledge of the fundamental values and artistic pleasures inherent in the indigenous Igbo Nigerian folklore. This situation, as a number of authors tend to believe, lies at the foundation of the moral decadence, values disorientation, and social cultural degeneration seen today in Nigeria, the Igbo area inclusive. One can therefore assert that the neglect of the oral traditions may be directly and indirectly related to the countless issues of examination malpractice, certificate forgery, drug abuse, sexual abuse, prostitution, violence, cultism, banditry, kidnapping, ritual killing, get-rich-quick syndrome, corruption and religious bigotry, witnessed in many parts of Nigeria today, the Igbo area inclusive. The need then arises to showcase some

of the indigenous Nigerian folklore as education resource and instrument of values orientation in Nigeria.

In this regard, the objective of this paper is to compile some selected indigenous Igbo folklore as told/performed in Abor as an education resource, particularly in early childhood education, in Nigeria. Three folktales, one sample praise poem, and a number of proverbs are compiled in the study Igbo to English translations, of the songs used in the folktales, the praise poem and the proverbs are presented. Key moral lessons of the folktales and explanations of necessary concepts in the praise poem and proverbs are also presented.

The study will contribute to the documentation of and sensitization on Igbo folklore education as a necessary requirement for the Nigerian children, and to inspire other works in this area. In this regard, childhood educators, parents, nursery and primary school teachers, curriculum designers, education ministries, particularly in the Igbo speaking areas, will find this paper useful. The use of the Abor and Agbaja area dialect in rendering some of the Igbo texts will be appealing to the Abor, Ojebeogene, Agbaja, and Enugu State person reading this book.

A number of writers have discussed the importance of the folklore, folktales and oral literature in the education of children in the 21st Century. Sone (2018), for example, posits that the absence of oral literature, including folktales, in the school curriculum is a negation to national sustainable development. For Sone, oral literature has been used in the past to teach the importance of togetherness and group solidarity; to inculcate the necessity for mutual respect, tolerance and moderation; to reiterate the need for appropriate action; to ensure compliance with religious norms; to remind the people of the necessity of circumspection, and the importance of recognizing and accepting one's limitations. Amali (2014), writing about the folktales of the Idoma people of Nigeria advocates an interface between the folktale genre and the media where the latter intervenes in the promotion of the genre for its sustenance in society. For Amali, such issues which direct the mind for good and acceptable societal lifestyles and behaviour are contained and demonstrated in the folktales; hence, "exposing children to these tales should educate them in what the society expects of its members" (p. 89). Further on the importance of the African folklore, Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations Organization, states as follows: "We have African traditions we can draw on – traditions that teach us the values of democracy based on consensus.... Our traditions teach us to respect each other; to share power; to give every man his say and every woman hers. Consent and consensus achieved through long and patient discussion are at the heart of many of these traditions" (p. 158). For Ezeigbo (2022), no other aspect of the Nigerian cultural tradition can help in laying a solid foundation in the upbringing and education of the Nigerian youths, inculcating the culture of decency, integrity, hardwork and creativity and tolerance in the youths, and restoring the disorientation and deviance exhibited by many young people more than the folklore.

Folktales in Abor

Folktales are imaginary stories used for family entertainment for young and old alike. In the past, in Abor, some people were gifted in the art of folktales while some learnt from others. The tales were used to learn about the past, to entertain, and train children to be intelligent and wise. Women after cooking food in the evenings usually came to the nkolo (the homestead

sitting room) with the children for folktales. While the women would be grating and processing the cassava noodles, commonly known as abacha or ogodo (some of which would be prepared the following morning for breakfast), the telling of folktales would go on. The family usually took turns among themselves to tell the stories. The style of telling the story including the music/lyrics that were used to tell some parts of the story, as the case may be, all added to the entertainment. After each story, the morals of the story would follow. Everybody participated in pointing out the morals. The young and old learnt a lot from the stories and their morals. The researcher below attempts to capture some of the folktales she learnt as a child, and to show their key moral lessons. The songs used in the tales are rendered in their original Igbo Abor dialect and also translated.

Folktale 1:

Kingship Tussle between Agu (Leopard) and Mbe (Tortoise)

Once upon a time, in those days, in the world of the animals, Agu (the leopard) and Mbe (the tortoise) were both interested in becoming the king of all the animals. So, all the animals assembled to consider the matter and to decide on who would become their king, between Agu (Leopard) and Mbe (Tortoise). After a long deliberation, the animals agreed to conduct a cooking contest between Agu and Mbe. The cooking would be in the form of a feast for the animals, and whoever was the first to conclude his cooking and serve the food to the animals, shall be made the king of the animals. It was all agreed that the feast competition day shall be the following day, and everyone dispersed.

Mbe was full of thought as he went home that evening after the meeting. He knew that feasts require preparation. On getting home, he invited his entire household and told them what transpired in their meeting. The tortoise's wife, children and relatives living with him all declared their support. Everyone then swung into action. But Mbe warned them to move quietly so as not to attract the attention of their neighbours, who might take the message to Agu who would start preparing too, and so ruin their chances of winning the feast competition. Mbe and his family were lucky that there was a half-moon in the sky which gave them light that evening and night as they worked. As there was not much to be done without water, and the streams were some distance away, some of Mbe's children and family members tiptoed out from their family compound and went down to the streams. They did not wait until morning to fetch the water. Before long they came back with the water.

As Mbe and his family members were busy cooking at home, he thought out another plan. Just before day break, the day of the contest, Mbe invited a melodious music/dance group and took them to the pathway leading to the stream where they pitched their tents with their melodious performances.

Meanwhile, Agu had told his household that they would begin their cooking at dawn on the day of the contest. On waking up that morning, he sent his son (Okpala-agu) to the stream to fetch water as they realized there was not enough water in their house with which to start the cooking. Agu waited and waited for his son to come back. As he was taking too long, Agu also asked his daughter (Ada-agu) to suspend the melon she was grating for the soup and to go and fetch water, complaining that Okpala-agu, his first son, was never a serious-minded person. Ada-agu took three moderate-sized calabashes placing them in one of the wide baskets she used

in fetching water and hurriedly left. Agu's wife (Iyom-agu) desperately needed water with which to begin her cooking. She had finished picking the vegetables she harvested from the farm within their compound, but there was no water with which to wash them before cutting them up for the soup. Agu and wife were helpless. Neither their son nor daughter was back yet from the stream.

Unknown to Agu, it was Mbe and his music entertainers that had held Okpala-agu and Ada-agu spellbound with their Abia music drums and performances on the path to the stream. Mbe, seeing Agu's son walking briskly down the pathway, merrily hailed him, inviting him to dance to the melodious drums:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Nwa enyi m, agu! (Child of my friend, Leopard!)</i>	<i>Ndegene (Refrain)</i>
<i>Okpala enyi m, agu! (First Son of my friend, Leopard!)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba ite (Keep aside your (water) pot)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba aju (Keep aside the headcushion, for bearing heavy objects)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Tewe Abia (Dance to the tune of the Abia drums)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Abia mpitimpa (Abia sounds, beating of the drums)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Abia kacha uso (Abia that is the most melodius)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Kpowa ige (Start to summersault/ dance cheerfully)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Kpokpowa ige-ge (Summersault and summersault, in joy)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>

Mbe and his friends, the music/dance group, were expert drummers and performers. Okpala-agu, at first, was reluctant to stop, but before long he started to dance to the melodious music. Seeing the tortoise dancing away without showing any sign of anxiety or haste over the cooking contest, as his father is showing, Okpala-agu then threw away all reluctance and started dancing to the melodious Abia drums. As leopard's daughter, Ada-agu, was sighted, hurrying along on the path to the stream, where the dancers were performing, Mbe also started hailing her, inviting her to join the dance:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Nwa enyi m, agu! (Child of my friend, Leopard!)</i>	<i>Ndegene (Refrain)</i>
<i>Ada enyi m, agu! (Daughter of my friend, Leopard!)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba udu (Keep aside your [water] calabashes)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba oda (Keep aside your basket [of calabashes])</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba aju (Keep aside the headcushion, for bearing heavy objects)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Tewe Abia (Dance to the tune of the Abia drums)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Abia mpitimpa (Abia sounds, beating of the drums)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Abia kacha uso (Abia that is the most melodius)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Kpowa ige (Start to summersault/ dance cheerfully)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Kpokpowa ige-ge (Summersault and summersault, in joy)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>

Ada-agu, like her brother, had her reservations, initially, but, eventually, fell for the trick. She dropped everything she was carrying and joined the dancers.

At home, Agu was getting frustrated by the delay in his children's return with the water which they badly needed for the cooking and kingship contest. He now asked his younger brother, living with him, to go and fetch the water and check out what the problem was with the children. The relative took a machete together with his water jars as he left the house, just in case. The story was the same, when he got there.

Not seeing any of his family members that had gone to fetch water, Agu and his wife (Iyom-agu) became anxious. They both were ready to run along to the stream to find out what had gone wrong with their children and the water they had gone to fetch. Agu however asked his wife to stay back, so that he alone could go confront whatever it was that was the matter. Agu took his water pot and also some war implements, machetes, bows and arrows, and left the house. As he was getting closer to the scene of the music and dance, he started wondering what feast was being celebrated, for it was one of the best Abia drums in their village. He became calmer as over his fears of danger and war, as he approached the source of the music. Immediately, tortoise caught sight of him, the drummers changed to the most melodious, mellifluous rhythm as the tortoise started hailing him:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Enyi m, agu! (My friend, Leopard!)</i>	<i>Ndegene (Refrain)</i>
<i>Ezi enyi m, agu! (My good friend, Leopard!)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba ite (Keep aside your (water) pot)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba aju (Keep aside the headcushion, for bearing heavy objects)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba mma (Keep aside your matchete)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba egbe (Keep aside your gun)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Togba ube (Keep away your spear)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Tewe Abia (Dance to the tune of the Abia drums)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Abia mpitimpa (Abia sounds, beating of the drums)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Abia kacha uso (Abia that is the most melodius)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Kpowa ige (Start to summersault/ dance cheerfully)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>
<i>Kpokpowa ige-ge (Summersault and summersault, in joy)</i>	<i>Ndegene</i>

Agu, feeling real good at seeing his children and brother safe and sound, and, what was more, seeing his opponent and contestant, Mbe, there, relaxed, not showing any sign of worry over their cooking contest, and dancing away, dropped all he was carrying – his water pot, and all his war instruments – and now led the dancing. That was the climax! For a brief moment he felt that the tortoise had let go the idea of the competition and had decided to allow him have the kingship.

Before long, however, one of Mbe's children, Nwa-mbe, arrived at the scene went and whispered to his father that the food was ready. Mbe was overjoyed and called on the towncrier to take the message round. All the animals knew that the day was feast day for them, and so most of them were in their homes eagerly waiting for the town crier to announce to whose house they would be going. The town crier's voice came like a chill down Agu's throat, as he was still dancing. He was completely thrown off-balance. Mbe had fooled him and the shame was irredeemable. They left to their house in shame as the rest of the animals trooped to the house of their new king, Mbe the tortoise, to be entertained. The Abia drummers accompanied

the new king home. Mbe was then crowned the King of the animals. That brought an end to the leadership tussle between the leopard and the tortoise.

Morals of the story:

1. It is better to begin whatever job one has to do in time, rather than procrastinate.
2. Hardwork pays.
3. One should never lose focus of one's goal at every moment, no matter the distractions.
4. Politics is a game of wits; be wary of your opponent's plan to outwit you.
5. An easily deceived person cannot be a leader, but a wise person can.

Folktale 2:

The Orphan Boy, Ofo-Oragu

Once upon a time, there was a couple who lived with two children. One of them, named Ogbara-aji, was the child of the couple. The other, named Ofo-Oragu, was an orphan living with them. The mother of the house usually asked Ofo-Oragu, the orphan, to do all the chores in the house, which the boy usually carried out ungrudgingly. However, the mother would never ask her own son, Ogbara-aji, to lift a pin. Meanwhile, all the provisions meant for the children living in the house, went to Ogbara-aji, while Ofo-Oragu received only the barest necessities. One day, their mother bought some udala (star apple) fruits from the market and when she came back she gave all the fruits to her own child, Ogbara-aji, without giving any to Ofo-Oragu. Ofo-Oragu wished very much to have a taste of the udala; so when their mother was not looking, he begged Ogbara-aji for some. But Ogbara-aji refused to give him, rather went to report him to their mother, for not allowing him to eat his udala in peace. Of course, the mother could not take such nonsense from the orphan-boy; she cut a sizeable stick/cane from a nearby tree and gave Ofo-Oragu's several strokes of the cane. The boy cried, miserably, remembering his mother and father and those happier, earlier, days of his life when his parents were alive. There were several of such episodes, when Ofo-Oragu was chased away and not allowed to have even a little of the provisions, meant for the children. At such occasions, he would usually remember his mother and he would retreat to the backyard and cry, praying to his mother to help him from the land of the spirits.

One day, Ofo-Oragu picked up one of the udala seeds where they were thrown away and decided to plant it at one quiet corner in the backyard. Whenever Ofo-Oragu was feeling blue, he would go to the place where he planted the seed and start singing to it, the following song:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Udala mu fuwelu mu (My star-apple, germinate for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda (Refrain)</i>
<i>Fuwelu mu, fuwelu mu (Germinate for me, germinate for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na eliwewe ihe (When it is time for food)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ogbara-aji (They would call Ogbara-aji)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na enyeweke ozi (When it is time for work)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ofo-Oragu (They would call Ofo-Oragu)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo-Oragu</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo welu udala kuo (Ofo picked up and planted the udala seed)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Okpoko bu oli eze njina (The hornbill that eats the king snail)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Dolimelimee!</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>

Ofo-Oragu's prayer here was for his udala plant to germinate for him. And, to his surprise and excitement, the seed did just that. It germinated and brought out two fresh buds. Ofo-Oragu's wish and prayer including his hardwork in tending the udala were working. He was sure his mother was intervening for him from the spirit world. After the udala has sprouted, Ofo-Oragu started begging the udala to grow:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Udala mu towelu mu (My star-apple, grow for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda (Refrain)</i>
<i>Towelu mu, Towelu mu (Grow for me, grow for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na eliwekwe ihe (When it is time for food)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ogbara-aji (They would call Ogbara-aji)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na enyewekwe ozi (When it is time for work)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ofo-Oragu (They would call Ofo-Oragu)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo-Oragu</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo welu udala kuo (Ofo picked up and planted the udala seed)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Okpoko bu oli eze njina (The hornbill that eats the king snail)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Dolimelimee!</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>

The song above was for his udala to grow. Surprisingly, like magic, Ofo-Oragu's udala plant started growing day and night, as the poor boy sang to it. The boy kept at it, until the udala grew tall and was ready to fruit. Ofo-Oragu continued to sing for it, this time begging it to fruit:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Udala mu miwalu mu (My star-apple, fruit for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda (Refrain)</i>
<i>Miwalu mu, Miwalu mu (Fruit for me, fruit for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na eliwekwe ihe (When it is time for food)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ogbara-aji (They would call Ogbara-aji)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na enyewekwe ozi (When it is time for work)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ofo-Oragu (They would call Ofo-Oragu)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo-Oragu</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo welu udala kuo (Ofo picked up and planted the udala seed)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Okpoko bu oli eze njina (The hornbill that eats the king snail)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Dolimelimee!</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>

After the song, like magic, again, the udala tree started fruiting in large numbers – fresh green bulbs. Then, Ofo-Oragu started singing for it to ripen:

Song accompanying the story

<i>Udala mu chawalu mu (My star-apple, ripen for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda (Refrain)</i>
<i>Chawalu mu, Chawalu mu (Ripen for me, ripen for me)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na eliwekwe ihe (When it is time for food)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ogbara-aji (They would call Ogbara-aji)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na enyewekwe ozi (When it is time for work)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ofo-Oragu (They would call Ofo-Oragu)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo-Oragu</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>

<i>Ofo welu udala kuo (Ofo picked up and planted the udala seed)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Okpoko bu oli eze njina (The hornbill that eats the king snail)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Dolimelimee!</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>

The udala also listened to the poor boy's prayer in this song, and started ripening in beautiful orange colours. It was unbelievable! A sight to behold! At this stage, the udala became attractive to all. Ogbara-aji, now, was eager to pluck some of the udala fruits; he felt he should be the first person to eat the fruits.

So one day, unknown to Ofo-Oragu, Ogbara-aji started climbing the udala tree so he could get some fruits. He was mid way to the top when Ofo-Oragu saw him. Ofo-Oragu now started to sing to the udala tree to cover up this youngman under its stem.

Song accompanying the story

<i>Udala mu vuchikwu o (My star-apple, cover him up)</i>	<i>Dolinda (Refrain)</i>
<i>Vuchikwu o, vuchikwu o (cover him up; cover him up)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na eliwewe ihe (When it is time for food)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ogbara-aji (They would call Ogbara-aji)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na enyeweke ozi (When it is time for work)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Na ekuwe Ofo-Oragu (They would call Ofo-Oragu)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo-Oragu</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Ofo welu udala kuo (Ofo planted the udala)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Okpoko bu oli eze njina (The hornbill that eats the king snail)</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>
<i>Dolimelimee!</i>	<i>Dolinda</i>

The udala had always listened to Ofo-Oragu's prayer. It would not refuse this one, particularly regarding the spoilt child, Ogbara-aji, who believed that everything good was created for him and him alone, while everything work was for others. Behold, the udala tree extended its stem and grew to cover up Ogbara-aji inside itself. Alas, Ogbara-aji lost his life that day! That was the end.

Morals of the story:

1. Parents, particularly mothers, should not spoil their children.
2. Parents, particularly mothers, should not maltreat other children that live with them; they should not be treated as slaves.
3. Hardwork pays; it leads to riches. If Ofo-Oragu had not planted his udala tree, he would have remained a poor beggar and would not have secured his reward.
4. Laziness is wrong.
5. Stealing or taking by force what does not belong to one, can lead to instant death.

Folktale 3:

The Tortoise who accompanied the Birds to a Feast

The birds were invited to a feast in the sky. It was a time of a great famine in the world of the animals. As the birds were getting ready, excitedly, Tortoise approached one of them and pretended to be a friend, so it could attend the feast, as a bird. In the process, he begged the

bird to appeal to the other birds to allow him go with them. The bird informed the tortoise that it would be difficult for the tortoise to go with them, because he could not fly. Tortoise begged further that the birds might lend him some wings with which to fly with them. Anyway, the bird went and discussed with his brothers (the other birds), begging on behalf of Tortoise that he be allowed to attend the feast, and be loaned a few wings by some of them, so he could fly to the feast venue, in the sky like the rest of the birds. Eventually, the birds agreed to accommodate the tortoise, and they gave him enough wings with which to fly.

On the day of the feast, they all gathered together at the agreed time, before take off. Tortoise thanked them for allowing him to attend the feast with them. He also informed them that it would be great if they could take new names for the occasion – a kind of nicknames or aliases, great names which will reveal their individual philosophies and greatness. The birds all agreed; they all chose their different names, aliases, with which they would be addressed at the feast. They asked the tortoise to take his own name. Tortoise pretended at first that there was no need for him to take a nickname, since he was not among the formally invited guests, but later he informed the birds that they could address him by the name “Everybody”, which would be his own nickname, by which he would be addressed at the feast. The birds all agreed.

At the feast, their hosts were wonderful, bringing out assorted, well-prepared dishes and drinks of high quality for them. The hosts happily presented the dishes, and as they were about to withdraw to their own chambers, so their guests could enjoy their feasting in peace, without much interference from the household, Tortoise stopped them and asked, “Please for whom are these things you set before us meant?” The hosts simply replied, “All these are for everybody”. Tortoise needed a confirmation. “You mean it is for Everybody?” Tortoise asked. “Of course,” the hosts answered, innocently. The tortoise then looked at the birds, reminding them of their new names, the aliases they have taken.

All the birds were astonished and angry as they watched Tortoise alone enjoying everything that was meant for all of them. They could not fathom how an uninvited guest among them could outwit all of them in this manner. But they stayed mute until it was time to leave the event. Each bird which loaned a wing to Tortoise went and took back its wing. Tortoise needed to be punished for his tricks and greed. So, in the end, Tortoise had more than enough to eat and drink and even take home, but he had no more wings with which to fly back home. All the birds abandoned him in the sky, which was the venue of the feast. As it was getting darker, Tortoise had no other option but to fall down from the sky, in a bid to get back to the ground. Tortoise’s wife, on seeing her husband dropping from the sky, quickly went and brought out a few clothes to cushion the effect of the fall. But for the soft clothes on which tortoise landed, the tortoise would have broken into irredeemable pieces, and died from the fall. But Tortoise was lucky, his hard shell was broken at several spots, but they could be treated and re-assembled. It took several weeks before tortoise recovered from the treatment. However, to this day, the marks on tortoise’s shell remain to tell the story of his greed when he accompanied the birds to a feast in the sky.

Morals of the story:

1. Greed is a vice that people should be ashamed of.

2. Be wary of who you call ‘friends’. Do not be quick in accepting friendship from people who may turn out dubious.
3. People should take action and not sit back when others exploit them. It is true that the birds later punished Tortoise, but if the birds had all stopped tortoise, he alone would not have taken all the food prepared for them all.
4. Pleasure is always short-lived. As tortoise was enjoying his ill-gotten food/drinks, he did not realize that very soon, it would be time to go home, and he might have no wings with which to fly.
5. One invariably pays/ suffers for every bad deed.

Praise Poetry (Igbu Evu) in Abor

Praise poetry, according to Akubiro (2021), is a form of poetry written or performed in reverence of a person, a thing or a god. The Encyclopaedia Britannica also defines praise song (which is praise poetry) as a series of laudatory epithets applied to gods, men, animals, plants, and towns that capture the essence of the object being praised. For Mphande (1993), praise poetry applies to the personal set of praise names of individuals, comprising cumulative series of praises and epithets bestowed on them by their associates, from childhood onwards, interspersed with narrative passages or comments. These praises, as Mphande further writes, often embody concise allusions to historical incidents and memorable achievements or characteristics connected with each family, and may amount to verses of considerable length and excellence. Mphande’s observation here that the verses of praise poetry can be of “considerable length” is quite remarkable, considering that the sample Abor praise poem shown in this discussion is quite lengthy.

From literature seen on this subject, it is observed that praise poetry has endured as one of the most widely used poetic forms in Africa. ‘Izibongo’, for example, is a genre of praise poetry in Zululand of South Africa. It deploys imagery, storytelling, and the history surrounding the person being praised and celebrated. Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, the ‘Oriki’, is a type of praise poetry used during individual or communal ceremonies. It tells of nobility, origin, fame, profession, accomplishments, beliefs, eating habits and discipline about the individual or objects the Oriki is addressing (Akubiro, 2021). The Hausas also have the ‘All Wak’ok’i’ type of oral presentation and composition following strict metrical patterns. In the opinion of Boadi (1989), writing about the Akan people of Ghana, praise abounds in various forms of the Akan poetry; examples, the hunters’ songs (abofodwom) and the dirges (kwadwom).

In Abor as well as other communities in the Ojebeogene, Agbaja, Enugu, area of Igboland, the *evu*, praise poem, remains an exciting aspect of family festivals such as funerals or title-taking events. Usually, at such occasions, the female members of the family (the Umune ndiomu or Umuada), particularly, the older ones or the ones gifted in the poetic arts, render poetic praises of the person being celebrated, either in death (through funeral) or alive (through title-taking). The *evu* is delivered like a direct address, apostrophe, to the persons concerned, whether dead or life, and is meant to remind the celebrants, alive, of their family name, lineages, and the notable heroic deeds of their ancestors. Such praise songs serve as a great inspiration not just to the person being celebrated, alive, but to the family members present and the other audience members who may not be members of the family, so being extolled. The audience is captivated by the histories being given as well as the poetic delivery.

In Abor town depending on the type of ceremony; funerals or family festivals, it is mainly the Umuada (daughters of a family or kindred), particularly those gifted in such arts, that are the composers, conveyors, and custodians of such poetic compositions and traditions. Much of the lines of the *evu* (praise poems) particularly those concerning family lineages are transmitted by word of mouth through the generations. Additional information, updated histories, and creative usages are often added to the old lines by the poet/ performer presenting. However, there are other forms of the praise poem in Abor. According to Mr. Anthony Ikpa of Ngwuagu village, while women specialize in **igbu evu**, men specialize in **ngene ayi**. Men use *ngene ayi* to raise the morale of men on duty, for instance, during *olu igidi* (free work organized by a group to support one another whenever the need arises).

According to Mr. Paulinus Ugwuagu of Ugwunani village also states that *igbu evu* is used in praising the dead, mostly, during funerals. It usually takes the form of direct addresses to the dead, telling the dead about their achievements and goodness. During the Ozo titled man's burial, according to Mr. Ugwuagu, one of the Umu-Ada (daughters) from his kindred gifted with the art, or who have learnt the art would be doing the *igbu evu* every morning, until seven weeks (*izu asaa*). She would continue with this act, until the day of the 'itichi egbe onu', that is the day she stopped pouring hot water into the pipe put on Ozo's mouth after the burial. The Ada who would be performing this function usually rubbed *ufhie* on her body and wore a particular cloth, while praising the Ozo with his names, good deeds, and predictions for his future reincarnation. She would not eat before performing the *evu*. She was served with special food by a particular person to avoid the food being touched by many hands.

The *igbu evu*, however, is not reserved for burials alone, as Mr. Anthony Ikpa of Ngwuagu village points out. During Ozo title-taking, chieftaincy, or other important community ceremonies *igbu evu* was also required. It is also used to praise God almighty.

Below is a sample 'evu' (praise poem) in honour of His Royal Majesty (Igwe) Dr. Chike Paschal Nnabuenyi Onodugo presented at his Coronation as Ujaligwa III and Traditional Ruler of Umuavulu-Abor Community in Enugu State, Nigeria, on 17th December, 2022, as compiled, and performed by Ojel Clara Anidi (Sister/Nwa-ada to the Igwe), in company of all the other Onodugo sisters or daughters (Umuada Onodugo). Note that Ojel Anidi has further translated the poem into English here.

HRM Eze Chike Onodugo, Ujaligwa III

(Abor Oral Composition)

(English Translation)

Ezedununkolo! Ezedinobi!

'Royalty in the homestead!' *'Royalty in the homestead! (Chieftaincy titles of HRM)¹*

Ujaligwaaa!!!

	<i>The barking that incapacitates the ambusher!!! (Title of the traditional ruler of Umuavulu)²</i>
<i>O bu ka odu</i>	<i>That is how it is!</i>
<i>Ihenwa a na eche abuwa kwa o!</i>	<i>What has long occupied the mind is now happening, live!</i>
<i>Eeyioo! Owojaa! Owojaa!! Owojaa!!!</i>	<i>Yesssoo! Owojaa! Owojaa!! Owojaa!!! [Vocalized sounds of a dance performance with ankle rattles]</i>
<i>Umunu ghu ndiomu shili ghu jewe!</i>	<i>Your kinswomen say you should go ahead!</i>
<i>Igweee!</i>	<i>Heavenly clouds! (Formal title used for some Igbo traditional rulers)³</i>
<i>Ujaligwa nke ito du be Umuavulu-Abor!</i>	<i>Ujaligwa, the third, of Umuavulu-Abor!</i>
<i>Chinweike Nnabuenyi – Ogbonnanya,</i>	<i>‘Power belongs to God’, ‘Father is an elephant’ – ‘His father’s namesake’ (HRM’s names),⁴</i>
<i>Nwa Onodugo Onodugo – Dona Ogbonnanya,</i>	<i>Son of Onodugo Onodugo – Dona Ogbonnanya,⁵</i>
<i>Nwa Ngwunwagu – Ozo Nnabuenyi, Ozo Akunnenye</i>	<i>Son of Ngwunwagu – Ozo Nnabuenyi, Ozo Akunnenye,⁶</i>
<i>Nwa Ishiofia – Ozo Onodugo,</i>	<i>Son of Ishiofia – Ozo Onodugo,⁷</i>
<i>Nwa Ngwumaahalu – Ozo Aguivo,</i>	<i>Son of Ngwumaahalu – Ozo Aguivo,⁸</i>
<i>Nwa Ochete Anaobu, Udeji!!!</i>	<i>Son of Ochete Anuobu, the famous one in yam cultivation!!!⁹</i>
<i>Nwa Adukwuru Onyejelubechionye nwa Okpokwu,</i>	<i>Son of Adukwuru Onyejelubechionye daughter of Okpokwu (HRM’s mother’s informal title, first name and father’s surname),¹⁰</i>
<i>Ochiliozuo! Nwa Anuekwe, Nwa Ozo Ekuhelu-ngene,</i>	<i>The one who gathers and trains the children (HRM’s mother’s title)! Daughter of Anuekwe, son of Ozo Ekuhelu-ngene¹¹</i>

<i>Nwa Okpokwu, na Aluagu du be Umuavulu – amu amu!</i>	<i>Daughter of Okpokwu, in Aluagu village of Umuavulu – nobility upon nobility!</i>
<i>Amu na echi eze!</i>	<i>The noble from whom kings are crowned</i>
<i>Ezedununkolo!</i>	<i>‘Royalty in the homestead!’¹</i>
<i>Nwa Dona Ogbonnanya – Onodugo nwa Onodugo,</i>	<i>Son of Dona Ogbonnanya (His father’s namesake) – Onodugo nwa Onodugo,</i>
<i>Nwa Nono Igbo nwa Eze nwa Ochu nwa Ebeke nu ‘mulumgbe,</i>	<i>Son of Her Highness (wife of an Ozo) daughter of HRM (Warrant Chief) Ochu son of Ebeke of Umulumgbe,¹²</i>
<i>Ada eze bu be eze; Nnaanya Chieфу, dionye Chieфу!</i>	<i>A king’s daughter married to a king; Her father a Chief, her husband a Chief!</i>
<i>Dana Ogbonnanya, O ji nwayoo eje.</i>	<i>Dana (fond name for Dona) His father’s namesake, He who walks gently.</i>
<i>Ezedununkolo!</i>	<i>‘Royalty in the homestead!’¹</i>
<i>Nwa Ozo nwa Nnabuenyi,</i>	<i>Son of the Ozo son of Nnabuenyi,</i>
<i>Nwa Nono Igbo nwa Uzungwa nwa Eze akawaa mu ibe.</i>	<i>Son of Her Highness (wife of an Ozo) daughter of Uzungwa, one whom a king has cut into two parts (She re-produced herself in a king).¹³</i>
<i>Oshishi du nganaba na eche ndo!</i>	<i>Big tree with extended branches that gives shade.</i>
<i>Nono nwa ogoli Ozo nwa agamara</i>	<i>Her Highness, fine wife of the Ozo, son of the noble one!</i>
<i>Nwa Ozo Nnabuenyi nwa Ozo nwa Onodugo</i>	<i>Son of Ozo Nnabuenyi son of the Ozo son of Onodugo</i>
<i>Nwa ogbunyiwe ijiji anu!</i>	<i>Son of the one who suffocates houseflies with meat!</i>
<i>Nwa Eze abu m oyi Abor!</i>	<i>Son of The King the friend of Abor community!</i>
<i>Nwa Eze Abu m okwulu Emegu</i>	<i>Son of The King the speaker for Emegu community’!</i>

<i>Onu na ekwulu Emegu okwu!</i>	<i>The mouth that speaks for Emegu community!</i>
<i>Nwa onu bukwe okwu oha kpulu oche na wa!</i>	<i>Son of the mouth that ends the discussion and then everyone goes home, carrying their seats</i>
<i>Nwa onye nwe Orie!</i>	<i>Son of the one that owns the Orie market place!</i>
<i>Oshishi du nganaba, nwata ji mua ili enu.</i>	<i>A tree with extended branches which the young lad used to learn to climb.</i>
<i>Ezedununkolo!</i>	<i>'Royalty in the homestead' ¹</i>
<i>Nwa Ozo Onodugo, Ishiofia, Ozo nwa Aguivo</i>	<i>Son of Ozo Onodugo, head of the forest, Ozo son of Aguivo</i>
<i>Onodugo na adighu egbe mma.</i>	<i>The eagle's position which is worrisome to the kite.</i>
<i>Nwa nkwu daawalu eze, O di onye ilo ufhu.</i>	<i>Son of the palm fruits that when falling for the king pains the enemy.</i>
<i>Nwa ilo gbuo ngwu, anyaghu nku o nyaa.</i>	<i>Son of the ngwu tree which if the enemy kills still cannot be used for firewood.</i>
<i>Umu oshishi adughu na ofia akili ko na anu.</i>	<i>Children of The trees which lacking in the forest the plant tendrils would all be lying on the ground, uncared for.</i>
<i>Akwukwo du udoghudo a na atuya na-nya!</i>	<i>Deep green leaves used for eye-drops!</i>
<i>Ezedununkolo!</i>	<i>'Royalty in the homestead' ¹</i>
<i>Nwa Onodugo Aguivo gochelu inyinya</i>	<i>Son of Onodugo Aguivo who after buying a horse,</i>
<i>I'nya nwa kwu na Ugwu Ikom</i>	<i>The horse stood at Ikom Hill</i>
<i>Ubi du ulu na agu onye ukpa!</i>	<i>The fertile rich farm that tempts the scavenger!</i>
<i>Ezedinunkolo!</i>	<i>'Royalty in the homestead' ¹</i>
<i>Nwa Ngwumaahalu – O bu maa na emee!</i>	<i>Son of the ngwu tree preserved by God – It is the work of God!</i>

*Ozo Aguivo adaghu na-anu
gbal'eka naa,*

Kamakwaanya o chili eja!

Nwa Ochete Anuobu Udeji!

Nwa Eze abu m Udeji!

*Nwa O vu ekwu ibere ju anuobu
Udeji!*

Ibere ju anuobu, O vu ekwu!

Ishi akwu anughu ebe na igu.

*Umu oshishi adughu na ofia akili ko
na anu*

*Owojaa! Owojaajaa!!
Owojaajaajaa!!!*

*Ike gwu ogaranya, O panyilu ohfo
nya na eka!*

*Ezedinobii! Ezedununkolo!!
Igweeee!!! Ujaligwaaa!!!*

*Nnabuenyi, Ogonnanyaa, nwa
Onodugo,*

*Ogonnanyaa, nwa Nnabuenyi,
nwa Aguivo,*

*Nwa Ochete anuobu Udeji! O ji
nwayo eje!*

*The Ozo, the tiger hawk that cannot land on
the ground without catching a prey,*

At worst, it would catch some sand!

*Son of Ochete Anuobu, the famous one in yam
cultivation!⁹*

*Son of The king, I am the famous one in yam
cultivation!*

*Son of the carrier of palm fruits, palm fronds
filling the ancestral land, the famous one in
yam cultivation!*

*Palm fronds filling the ancestral land, the
carrier of palm fruits!*

*The palm head does not sprout on the palm
leaves.*

*Children of trees which lacking in the forest
the plant tendrils would be lying on the
ground, uncared for.*

*Owojaa! Owojaajaa!! Owojaajaajaa!!!
[Vocalized sounds of a dance performance
with ankle rattles]*

*When the old man gets tired, he carries his
staff by the hand!*

*Ezedinobii! Ezedununkolo!! Igweeee!!!
Ujaligwaaa!!!*

*'Father is an elephant', His father's
namesake, son of Onodugo,*

*His father's namesake, son of Nnabuenyi, son
of Aguivo.*

*Son of Ochete (one who remembers/protects
his ancestral piece of land), the famous one in
yam cultivation! One who walks gently!*

*Ojeko ka o kughu elu; olukwee na
ovulu ikwe vulu odju*

*One who works as if he would never get to his
destination; yet when he gets there, he carries
the mortar and carries the pestle.*

*Chukwu nwe ike n'ine! Efwa ghu bu
obu!*

All power belongs to God! That is your name!

*Owojaa!
Owojaajaajaa!!!*

Owojaajaa!!

*Owojaa! Owojaajaa!! Owojaajaajaa!!!
[Vocalized sounds of a dance performance
with ankle rattles]*

Credits: Ojel Anidi is grateful to Adukwulu Ezinne Okwukwe Florence Oliaku Njeze (Ishiada Umu Onodugo), and Ezinne Okwukwe Benedeatte Agu, her aunties, older Umuada (daughters) of the Onodugo family, who gave her some of the materials used for this praise poem (evu).

Analysis of Language

The language and style of praise poetry is usually highly elevated, the aim being to magnify, to extol, to celebrate, and to give tribute to the addressee and also glorify God Almighty, the Supreme Being, who gave all the glory. The figure of speech, apostrophe, is put to great effect in the poem. By directly addressing the person, HRM, calling his full names and title names; and addressing his grandfather, great grandfather, and great-great-grandfather in their full names and titles; as well as addressing the king's mother and lineage, his paternal grandmother and lineage, and also his paternal grandfather's mother and her lineage, the speaker here reveals she is closely related to the king; hence, her knowledge of the family histories. Yet, a folk, heroic, praise poet may not necessarily be a close relation of the addressee of her poem; some research into the background of the addressee can always be conducted before the performance.

This poem contains very many metaphors as well as imageries, repetitions, assonances, alliterations, and rhythm. Most of the people's names here, including the titles and achievements, are all stated in metaphors, idioms, imageries. The beauty of the metaphors used in the poem suffices the intellect and emotions with pleasures, undescribable.

Though the praise poem is primarily an oral art/ performance; the researcher and compiler here believe that it is necessary to document this art in written form, and even in electronic form, to prevent it from fading away and to use it as historical, educational and entertainment resource for the present and future generation.

Proverbs

Proverbs are wise sayings which summarize the philosophies of a people. Among the Igbo, proverbs are called “ilu” or “ilu okwu”. Proverbs as a concept are similar to idioms, though the two are not quite the same. Both the proverbs and the idioms communicate ideas indirectly, but while idioms may not necessarily be wise sayings, proverbs on the other hand are wise sayings – concentrated wisdom of a people. In proverbs, objects and situations familiar to a people are exploited to give strong pictorial impressions of the ideas being conveyed. Thus, proverb is culture-based. Examples of English proverbs: *Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown*; *Birds of the same feather flock together*; *He who laughs last, laughs best*; *Half a loaf is better than no bread*; *Don’t bite the hand that feeds you*.

Many proverbs exist in more than one language, sometimes with the same pictorial impressions, at other times, in different styles of presentation. Example, the English proverb, “*A stitch in time saves nine*” is expressed in the Igbo proverb, “*I mee ngwangwa I meghalu odachi*”, though they have each used different images. One can literally translate this Igbo proverb (“*I mee ngwangwa I meghalu odachi*”) to English (“*If you do it fast, you will forestall any tragedy*”), and still get the same meaning. Also, the English proverb, “Everything that has a beginning must have an end”, exists the same way, if literally translated, in the Igbo proverb, “*The obuna nwere isi mbidi ga enwe isi njedebe*”.

An idiom, called “akpala okwu” in Igbo language, is a more-or-less fixed expression whose meaning is not the sum of its constituents and is usually non-literal; that means, the idiom is figurative or metaphorical (Anidi, 2013, p. 97). Idioms of a language may not be properly interpreted when translated (literally) into another language, unless it is a transparent idiom (Anidi, 2013). Examples of transparent English idioms include ‘*lay one’s card on the table*’, meaning ‘to reveal a secret’; ‘*keep one’s nose clean*’, meaning ‘to avoid getting into trouble’, etc. An idiom is said to be opaque, on the other hand, when one is unable to deduce the true meaning of the expression, unless one has previously learnt that idiom: “*kick the bucket*” – to die, “*pick a bone*” – discuss issues, “*feather your nests*” – enrich yourself, etc. Examples of Abor idioms:

1. “*O bu edi*”: Literal translation – “He is the animal, edi (Edi is African civet)”. This Abor idiom means “*He is always sleepy*”.
2. *Ma onye elu ma onye ala*: Literal translation – The person at the top and the person at the bottom. The Abor idiom means “Everybody”.
3. *O turu ha n’onu*: Literal translation – It hit them in the mouth. It means “They were astonished”.

An attempt is made below to compile a few Igbo, Abor, proverbs and idioms, and their English translations. As mentioned before, sometimes, the proverbs and the idioms are taken as the same. They all contain deep meaning.

Some Igbo Proverbs/Idioms as Used in Abor and English Meanings

S/N	Proverbs in Igbo (Abor dialect)	English Translations
1	Afwu ihe ka ubi elee oba	If something bigger than the farm is seen, you sell the barn.

2	Afhughu ka emelu, emee ka afhulu	If you can't get any, then manage any that you see.
3	Agbachaa egwu, o naa na ukwu	After the dance, then hip problem begins.
4	Agbanwo dike izu, agbagharia ya	If the great man was not consulted during the deliberations; then, the deliberations would be repeated.
5	Agwakwa ogbenye ka esi aba ogalanya, O si ku nya ha ku nya ha	When the poor person discovers the path to wealth, he rather opts to remain where he is.
6	Aka nri kwoo aka egbe; aka ekpe akwoo aka nri.	When the right hand washes the left; the left in turn washes the right.
7	Atufhuo aziza uno, ututu na acho waa	If the house broom is thrown away, in the morning, you start looking for it
8	Ebe nwa na ebe akwa na alu eka, nnenye anoghulio nu nnanya a nolaa.	When the child is crying and pointing at a direction, it is either his father or his mother is at that direction.
9	Eje agha bu isi ije	Going and returning is the main point of a trip.
10	Eji ishishi a ma na nkakwu abatago n'ulo	The smell is what tells you that a shrew has entered the house.
11	Ejighi akpata atufuo a ba ogaranya	You cannot be wealthy, if you're always throwing away what you have saved.
12	Ejighi ututu ama njo ahia	You cannot tell how the day's business would go when it is still morning.
13	Elelie nwa ite, ogbonyuo oku	If you take the small pot for granted, it will boil over and put off the fire.
14	Ezi okwu bu ndu	Truth is Life.
15	Ezi okwu na ahwuhwu na nti	Truth is bitter to the ears.
16	Gidigidi bu ugwu eze	Pomp and peagantry is the king's prestige.
17	Ihe amuru amu ka ihe agworo agwo	What one takes the time to learn is better than any concoction on the matter.
18	Ihe na ato uto na egbu egbu; ihe na egbu egbu na ato uto	Whatever is sweet kills; and whatever kills is sweet
19	Ihe nwoke nyere ibe ya bu ngoo jidere m	Whatever a man gives to his fellow man is for temporal keeping; for sooner or later he would ask for it.
20	Ikerike ejune, ndee nneghu	Snail shell, where is your mother (content)? Used for someone who has failed on a promise – empty promises
21	Manya nukwa atu na o na atunye na onu onye ka anu o	As the palm wine is dropping (being tapped) from the tree, it will be dropping into the mouth of the person who would eventually drink it.
22	Nwayo nwayo bu ije	To walk is to move slowly (Easy does it)

23	Mkpughari nwa mkpi ka eji ere e	As a goat is being taking around, a buyer soon comes for it.
24	Obialu be onye abiagbu nee; O nawakwa mkpunkpu afunaya na azu.	Let not a guest bring harm to his host/ So that on his departure no haunch will grow (on his back)
25	Okwu eji na elo, O nughu ese okwu.	Whatever is mutually deliberated/ agreed upon produces no wrangling.
26	Onye aghugho nwuo, onye aghugho enyie ya	When a cunning person dies, a cunning person buries him.
27	Ugba dukwa ka ishionye	(Transliteration: let the oil bean be as good as its promising smell) Meaning One needs to live up to one's promises
28	Afwo ekweghi ukwu zuri ike.	The stomach would not allow the legs to rest.
29	Onodugo adighu egbe mma	The eagle's position is worrisome to the kite.
30	Afhia oma na ele onwonye.	A good market sells itself.
31	Ekuhelu-ngene, na o dojukweye.	The 'ngene' spring never runs dry. When you think you have taken the last drop, it fills up again.
32	Amahalu igwulube, aghalu ufwo nya	There is no limit to wealth or acquisitions, so, just take the much you can and leave the rest. Igwulube is a swarm of locusts. It is impossible to carry all of them home; even if it is, you cannot cosume all.
33	Ihe agwo muru aghaghi idu ogonogo	A snake's offspring must be long, like the snake.
34	Manya nukwa atu na o na atunye na onu onye ka anu o	When the palm wine is dropping into the calabash, the person that will eventually drink it has been predestined.
35	Uka akpara akpa na eji isi ekwe e	Whatever is mutually agreed upon is accepted with a nod
36	Tim bu efhi na ehu	The cow that is constantly beaten to guide its movement feels the pain, regardless.
37	Abudu talu ji na oso na eme	A monkey that ate raw yam is restless
38	Uche na awa awa na obughu ebu	Inspiration comes; it is not resident.
39	A na eshi na uno malu mma fuwa ifheezi	Charity begins at home.
40	Nwata akwo na azu amaghu na ije du afhufhu	A child on someone's back does not appreciate the challenges of the journey.
	Idioms	
1	Akwulu ahalu uko.	Unequal situations always exist
2	Anu na efu ngwu, na anughu efu otulu	A land where the 'ngwu' tree grows, but not the 'otulu' tree. Ngwu is the tree that produces strong timbre/ wood for

		building houses, but the ‘otulu’ is a tree with soft wood, easily eaten by termites.
3	Chinaahaeñe	God has proved me innocent
4	Eghu ataa mu igu na isi	A goat has eaten palm fronds from my head.
5	Egwu mkpofu enya	The matter has become serious business.
6	O bialu atakpo okwu ntchuchu	He came to eat up the cork (stopper) of the calabash. (‘Ntchuchu’ is a special calabash used to keep quantities of palm oil in the kitchen). Meaning: His mission is to destroy.
7	O di nke nke na eme ire	S/he is small but mighty.
8	Okpa na ike-ogwu	Someone who operates where there are tough thorns. Also, there is the ikeogwu plant, with thorns on its leaves. When the ikeogwu plant or weed flourishes in one’s home or plot of land, then one can take the nickname.
9	“eze akawaa mu ibe” (as used in the praise poem, “HRM Eze Chike Onodugo, Ujaligwa III”	The expression “eze akawaa mu ibe” is an idiomatic expression. Its literal translation is “a king has cut me into two parts”. This actually means “to birth a king”. It is reproduction that makes it possible for one to be cut in two or many parts. So, the contextual meaning of “nwa eze akawaa mu ibe” is “one who reproduced (from whose body) a king came”. This is a strong metaphor, with a vivid imagery.
10	Anughu ebebe The full expression: “Anughu ebe ebe ebere okwuru oyii taa”.	It is an idiomatic expression which can be used to draw one’s attention to something important, life-saving instructions, etc. It can be an introductory or concluding remark. It implies “caution”, “take care” or “just in case”. The literal translation is “just in case, (be careful), so you don’t mistakenly cut and eat raw okro” The beauty of the expression is expressed in the use of alliteration and assonance (repetitive consonant and vowel sounds) “ebe ebe ebere” which creates some music to the ears, almost like a tongue twister.

References

- Akubuiro, H. (2021, April 30). Praise poetry in contemporary Nigeria: Songs for Bukar Usman. *The Sun Newspaper*. Retrieved September 23, 2023, from <https://sunnewsonlinecom.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/sunnewsonline.com/praise-poetry-in-contemporary-nigeria/>.
- Amali, H. I. (2014). The function of folktales as a process of educating children in the 21st century: A case study of Idoma folktales.
- Anidi, O. C. (2013). A stylistic-linguistic study of selected Nigeria-Biafra war novels.” (Ph.D thesis submitted to the Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. March 2013).
- Annan, K. (2015). “We the peoples: A UN for the Twenty-First Century.” Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://books.google.com.ng>.
- Boadi, L. A. (1989). Praise poetry in Akan. *Research in African literatures*, 20 (2), Special Issue on Popular Culture (Summer, 1989), 181-193. Retrieved September 25, 2023, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4618227>
- Coronation Ceremony (2022, December 17): HRM Igwe Dr. Chike P. N. Onodugo: The Ujaligwa III of Umuavulu Abor, Orie Market Square.
- Egudu, R. N. (1992). *African poetry of the living dead: Igbo masquerade poetry*. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Egudu, R. N. (1972). Social values and thought in traditional literature: The case of the Igbo proverb and poetry. *Nigerian Libraries*, 8(2), 63-84.
- Egudu, R. N. (1981). Anglophone poetry and vernacular rhetoric: The example of Okigbo. In Ayo Banjo et al. (eds.), *West African Studies in Modern Language Teaching and Research*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education.
- Emenanjo, E. N. (1972). Phonological repetition in Igbo proverbs: An aspect of traditional African poetry. *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities*, 3.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, Praise song. Retrieved September 3, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/art/praise-song>.
- Ezeigbo, A. T. (2022). “The Relevance of oral tradition: Folklore and the education of Nigerian youths”. Retrieved 10 April from <https://contemporary-experiences.scholasticahq.com/article/128.pdf>.
- Mphande, L. (1993). Ngoni Praise Poetry and the Ngoni Diaspora. *Research in African Literatures*, 24 (4) Special issue in Memory of Josephat Bekunuru Kubayanda 9Winter, 1993), 99-122.
- Nwachukwu-Agbada, J. O. J. (1994). The proverb in the Igbo Milleu. *Anthropos* 89, 194-200. Retrieved September, 20, 2023, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40463852>
- Owomoyela, O. (1984). Proverbs – Exploration of an African Philosophy of Social communication. *Ba Shiru*, 12(1).
- Raum, O. F. (1940). *Chaga childhood*. London: Oxford University Press
- Sone, E. M. 2018. African oral literature and the humanities: Challenges and prospects. *Humanities* 7, 30. Retrieved from doi:10.3390/h7020030.

CHAPTER 10 Personhood Ceremonies in Abor (By Ogochukwu Ani)

Personhood in Abor begins immediately a child is born. He or she is considered to be a person in a society with certain rights and privileges. From birth there are initiations, ceremonies, festivals and fulfillments, the parents of the child is expected to perform for the child or on the child, in order to be accorded a full member of Abor as a society.

1. Childbirth

Childbirth is challenging and never an easy one. It is a process women undergo to bring about a new individual in Abor and throughout the world. Sometimes, complication may occur. During this period, the woman is well taken care of by her husband, the immediate family and the society at large. In the past, vaginal birth or delivery is the only type of birth. During the nine months of pregnancy, women specialized in antenatal care will be invited to come and examine the progress of the pregnancy. This examination involves rubbing oil on the protruding stomach of the pregnant woman, to ascertain the condition of the baby.

If the expectant mother experiences stretch marks on her belly which causes itching, she goes to Odigbo Akpudiogwu from Ubiekpo to get some pounded local herbs to help in that condition. This was as explained by Anthony Ikpa The stomach stretch mark is called 'egbeke' in Abor. Mrs. Aniagba Anthonia also affirmed that if the woman presents with Oedema, she will be advised to stop eating pumpkin (a vegetable fruit called *anyu* commonly planted in Abor). She will not be allowed to do some tedious work that demands a lot of physical exercise.

When the time for delivery finally arrives, the Care Giver rubs oil on the extended stomach as mentioned before and keeps on the process with gentle pressure on the womb, if need be, until the baby comes out. A portion of fallen mud wall called *ikpokporo* serves as blood soaker. An *ugba* leaf is placed on it and the woman sits on top. If considered fully soaked, it will be thrown into a trench dug specially for the *Omugo* period. This process of blood soaking continues until nine Igbo weeks, *izu iteghuna*, of *omugo*. After this period the woman's under bed will be swept and cleaned and the dirt will be put inside the trench with everything pertaining to the *Omugo*. The trench is closed marking the end of the *Omugo* which ushers in *Itonwa na ani*. It should be noted that during *Omugo*, the woman must not cook or touch any food items belonging to her husband. The husband does not come close to her because it is believed she is unclean.

2. Itonwa Na Ani (Child's Naming Ceremony)

Ito nwa na ani is a special day for the parents and the new born child in Abor tradition. On that day which is usually on Afor day, the kinsmen (umunna) gather at the compound of the man who's wife gave birth. Food will be served and for the first time, the child is presented in public.

The ceremony commences with the arrival of women specialized in *ito nwa na ani*. They enter into the mother's *Uwota* and standing beside the bed they give the child a name.). A girl child is instructed by the women specialised in *ito nwa na ani* , to collect a portion of the bone of antelope called 'Atu', part a broom into two, and fix the bone in between the parted broom. A

portion of the horn of antelope can also be used to part the broom. Thereafter the parted broom will be used in touching the head of the woman and child, to signify that they are now clean and can mingle with others. This activity is called '*iju okpukpu atu*'.

Subsequently, the child is taken to the family shrine (onu maa) usually located within the family compound. The eldest man in the family carries the child and gives him/her a bit of bitter kola and alligator pepper.. Sometime he uses alligator pepper and places it on the child's cheeks four times instead on putting it in the mouth of the child.

Fufu and soup brought to the elders at shrine will be molded into 8 portions. 4 of the fufu portions will be given to the men at the family shrine while the remaining 4 portions go to the women.. The 4 portions of fufu represent Orie, Afor, Nkwo and Eke.

On the Eke day after the *ito nwa na ani* held on the Afor day, the woman goes to the market specially to announce that Omugo is over and she is now clean. A small boy or girl goes with her but gives her a little distance because she goes naked or hides will be tied to cover private parts. Much later Eketé (towel) was used to cover private parts. The boy announces her coming by saying, "Enee! Enee!" until she reaches the market. This is so that men will not meet her unannounced. The boy carries on his hands a calabash of water and African border tree leaves (*ogilisi leaves*). After working some distance, the boy pours some water inside a folded ogilisi leaf and pours it away. This continues until they reach the market. At the market, the woman buys something, keeps it in her basket, covers the basket and sets for home immediately.

On reaching home, she cooks yam and also prepares Ihuneji and eats with her husband. She first collects the food and eats and her husband does the same until the food finishes. This marks their first closeness, which certifies that they can now sleep and do other things together as couples. Before the '*itonwa na ani*' or any day from the birth of the child, there is an important activity that normally takes place in Abor. The activity is called *Werere wee*.

The *Werere wee* can take place any day that is not *Nkwo* but preferably *Orie* market day. This event is strictly carried out by the co-wives (ndi omu) of the kindred in question. They come together to decree success and favour upon the child as he/she journeys through life. If the born child is a boy, the parents provides the following items: ogbu nkwo (palm tree climbing rope), big hoe (ogu), matchet (big knife), etc. If the child is a girl the parents provide oku (earthen bowls for preparation of food), broom (aziza), nko (small hoe for weeding), etc. Recently, since Western education was included in the activities of the Abor people, school bag for both the male and female child is included. When all are provided, the co-wives (ndi omu) in unison start singing the following song for the baby:

Refrain: *Wererewee, wererewee ooo, wererewee*

Agbu nkwo gi chugi ura wererewee

Oku gi chugi ura wererewee

Mma gi chu gi ura wererewee

Akpa akwukwo gi chugi ura wererewee

Jekwelu nne gi ozi wererewee

Jekwelu nna gi ozi wererewee
Mekwa igaliga wererewee
n' obu gi mekwe ohu k' echie ghi ehue wererewee

For female child:

Oku gi chu gi ura wererewee
Aziza gi chu gi ura wererewee
Nko gi chu gi ura wererewee
Akpa akwukwo gi chu gi ura wererewee

The above song simply enumerates the activities the child is expected to carry out in the future and the decree that the child will be dedicated to them and will be successful individual in the future.

After singing the song, the parent provides kola-nuts, four tubers of yam and a gallon (or more) of palm wine for the *Ndi Omu*. One of the yam tubers will be given to the eldest of the co-wives (*Ndi Omu*) while the rest of them share the remaining 3 tubers of yam.

3. Ikuje Nwa Ikwune (Child Visit to the Maternal Home)

Ikuje nwa ikwune is another significant activity in the life of a baby in Abor town.. The wealth of the man, will determine the gift items to taken to the baby's *Ikwune* (his maternal home). A wealthy man is expected to visit with a cow, ten (10) tubers of yam, a jar of palm wine and kola-nuts. The cow can be replaced with a goat, if one cannot afford a cow. However, only plan wine will be accepted, if that is what the parents can afford. It is expected that the baby's *Ikwune* will prepare food for the child and those accompaning him/her for the visit. From the wine brought, the child will be given a significant sip, which offers the child the privilege to eat and drink freely with his maternal people all the days of his/her life. The maternal people offer the child gift of money or any other valuables to welcome him. This way, they appreciate God for giving them a grandchild, because not all families have the privilege of getting a grandchild.

4. Idunwa na Odo (Odo Cult Initiation) Festival

This festival is necessary because it was believed in the past, that if *Odo* masquerade touches a male child who is not initiated, the child stands the risk of losing his life.

The festival involves an elaborate expenditure, which begins with the fulfillment of certain condition known as *Ama-Odo*. This is done by the fathers of the initiates. It involves the presentation of heaps of big yam tubers and jars of palm wine to the *Onu-Odo*. After that, each father kills an animal ranging from a cock to a cow as sacrifice on the *Nkwo* day. The mother of the child, on the other hand, has to fulfill her own conditions to her own *Ndiom* (co-wives). This entails tins of palm oil, some quantities of yam tubers and kegs of palm wine after which she makes a sacrifice of an animal ranging from a cock to a pig on the same *Nkwo* day. Any woman who can afford to present a pig gained the title *Odagbulu Ezi*. If the man can afford it, he may extend the sacrifice of animal to the child's grandfather. All the *Umunna* or *Onu-Odos* that are involved receive these gifts with the playing of their music known as *Ekwe Odo*. They begin the music in the mid-night of the *Orie* day; continue it on *Afor* day until the real *Nkwo*

day. The celebrants (parents of the initiates) release gun shots and take yam tubers, money and palm wine to the *Onu-Odo* shrine in appreciation of the *Ekwe Odo* music.

The actual ceremony normally begins on an *Nkwo* day with *Ighu Ewa* (cooking a kind of food) early in the morning in front of the man's house. The men of the *Onu-Odo* (*umunna*) would assemble at the celebrant's compound to peel and cook some quantity of yam tubers with some cocoyams. While the pot is on fire, one special *Odo* masquerade known as *Odo ogbugbo* would take off from *Onu-Odo* shrine well equipped with materials for ritual transformation of the yam pieces in the pot on fire into *ewa*. It will be making noise to scare away women on his track because women are forbidden from seeing it. After the ritual women will no longer eat it because it has become *ewa*. All the initiates both old and new enjoy the *ewa*. Then the new initiates will have clean-shaven heads for the ceremony. After this, they must have no hair cut again until the end of the *Odo* season.

While this ceremony is taking place in-front of the man's house, the *Ndiom* (co-wives) will be cooking their own *ewa* for the enjoyment of the females at the back yard. These women will be singing and dancing and making merry till noon. This time they use a hen and other condiments to prepare a soup known as *Ite-okufefe*. Here they perform a certain ritual in which they require the two celebrants (man and woman) to dance round the pot on fire carrying the child who is being initiated. After all the activities at home, the initiates are carried to the *Onu-Odo* shrine for the remaining initiation activities.

5. Ino Uba na Ifu Uba (for Young Women)

Ino uba is a period in Abor during which a young woman stays in a fattening room for some period. A young prospective bride is expected then in Abor to stay in the house for at least one month before proceeding to the husband's house. According to Mr. Osondu Jerome,, some prospective brides commence their stay with the family she will be married into, before she starts seeing her mensural cycle. The *Ino uba* for such girls will commence as soon as they start their mensural cycle. For such prospective brides, a goat is often killed by the family of the prospective husband, if they can afford it, prior to the commencement of *Ino uba*.

. Typically, the fattening room (*ino-uba*) is in her house of the father of the prospective bride and can be in husband house on some rare instances.

During this period she can be fed by both the father and the intending husband for at least one month. According to Mr. Osondu Jerome, the woman is well-fed. To ensure that she is well-fed,, a ring like material will be worn on her upper arm to ensure that she adds weight.. The prospective bride does not do any task, except decorating her body with *Ufie* (cam wood) and *Uli* to look very beautiful. Her intending husband visits to bring food and leaves without any form of intimacy with her. Moreso, her female relatives and friends also visit her to undertake light tasks, like grating of cassava (*ikwo ogo*) or shelling melon seeds (*igbacha egwusi*) to keep her company. If she is observing the *ino-uba* in her husband's house, some of her husbands can visit and she will play *une* (harp), for them while the intending husband entertains them with palm wine. The end of the *ino-uba* ushers in the *ifu-uba* day.

Ifu-uba is a special day in the life of a prospective bride in Abor. Different beautifying materials will be provided for her on that day such as *ikpu* (a special necklace), *Oduna* (a bangle), *aka* (necklace), *nche anwu* (umbrella), *ihe ukwu* (shoes), *jigida* (waist beads), different colours of wrappers, and other items. *Eket* was used, before wrapper came into existence.

Ifu uba is a great outing day. Before putting on the beautifying items, the young woman first of all rubs *ufie* on her body and using *uli*, she draws some decorations on her body. The friends and relative will be entertained with food and drinks in preparation for the outing ceremony.

With all her adornment, and her umbrella spread out, she will be led to the Orie market square (Obodo Imo), accompanied by music. For instance, ‘*Shakpara*’ music was well used in the past for *ifu-uba*... The prospective bride, then dances round the Orie market in admiration of everybody. The people will be singing:

O naa..... O naa be ya

O naa..... o naa be ya

From there, she walks to her husband’s house to live with him permanently.

6. Ibu Mbu (for Young Women)

Mbu is a body decoration or tattoo meant for only women in Abor. It stands as a tribal mark for Abor people and Ojebe-Ogene in general. In the ancient days, it was a special mark designed on the lady’s abdomen at puberty in preparation for her maturity, into womanhood. In recent years, it has become a decoration meant for women at their first pregnancy, at about the third month of the pregnancy.

According to Mrs. Elizabeth Ugwuozor, , who happens to be the only *Mbu* tattoo artist, presently, in the Abor neighbourhood, the decoration has many styles; it is left for the woman to make her choice of style. A complete tattoo looks like bold asterisk marks in the center of the abdomen, moving in a vertical line until it reaches in between the two breasts. If one cannot bear the pains or does not want people to notice the complete *Mbu* decoration , can be given a little mark in her abdomen.

Anyone coming for *Mbu* decoration, brings a keg of palm wine, kola nut, etc., as a requirement for the decoration. However, in these days, money can be used to replace palm wine. If a lady touches the hands of the Mbu tattoo artist, in unconscious reaction to the pain during the Mbu decoration marking, a fowl is presented, as appeasement.

To the people of Abor, the *Mbu* decoration has several uses. First, it makes the stomach not to stretch after child bearing age. Secondly, any woman who does not have the *Mbu* decoration tattoo before giving birth to a girl, makes it difficult for her daughter to get married, because she was born with a bare stomach. If a woman does not have the opportunity of marking her stomach before delivering a boy, she can do so during or before the initiation of her son into the *Odo* cult. If she fails at this point, she will not be allowed to do so again. Thirdly, it is belived that any woman who can bear the pain of the tattoo during her early pregnancy will automatically feel less pain during delivery.

In Abor the tattoo (mbu) is a sign of fruitfulness.. Men who desire to have the body tattoo receive their own on their arms. A woman going to have tattoo always goes with her co-wife or her dear sister who can also have the tattoo on her arms if she so desires. Though there are a lot of changes in this practice, the tattoo artist confirmed that a good number of people still come to have it.

7. Iba Ogbo (Joining One's Age Grade)

Iba ogbo, which means, joining one's age-grade, in the past was well accepted in Abor. It is also called *ogba* in Abor. People born within a range of about five years, come together to form an association in order to promote some certain interests that can benefit the Abor town. Some age grades that existed in Abor, according to Mr. Ikpa Anthony, include *Ogba Obejili*, *Ogba Okpu-mgbulu*, *Akpatuluagu*, etc. The *Ogba Obejili* as the name implies is an *ogba* that promoted every member to have *obejili* in their custody. *Obejili* means sword. *Ogba Okpu-mgbulu* caused their members to possess a walking stick. This shows that an age grade has something that identifies it and distinguishes it from another.

Age-grades also formed music groups and composed songs. Some of the songs they formed in the past included the *Amakekwu*, *Kokoma*, *Mambo*, *Shakpara* (for women), etc. The music groups performed during marriage and other ceremonies.

Age-grades perform many functions in Abor society to ensure peace and order. They create new roads. For instance, Okporo James Attah in Ngwuagu was created by age-grade. They as well clear or clean the paths that lead to the Iyi (rivers), and agu (village farm lands).

Age-grades ensure discipline and correct the wrong doings by their members.. This is carried out by using different means, such as 'iti ido'. (Ido is asoldier ant). They do this by tying the culprit to a tree and spreading the ants on the person's body. They also use '*inu oguru*' as a punishment to avoid future wrong doing by a member. '*Inu oguru*' is mandating a culprit to drink the liquid waste. produced from processing palm fruit. They come together with canes and surround the person in question. If the person refuses to drink it, then the person is flogged. These acts are carried out are to ensure peace and order in the society.

Furthermore, some of the younger age grades perform charitable works for the Abor community, by farming for the elderly people and also helping their members in building their houses. Concerning the women age grades (*ogba*) in Abor, they take nicknames among themselves such as *Achara ugo*, *Akpulu uli*, and many other attractive names that portray the group's character.

8. Ime-ama

In Abor, there are certain obligations stipulated by a group or class of people before allowing a new individual to become one of them. Therefore, the process of fulfilling this obligation is called *ime-ama* in Abor. Anthony Ikpa enumerated some of the different Ama done in Abor in the past as follows: Ama Ozo, Ama Ichi, Ama Igede, Ama Ji Eguani, Ama Odo, Ama Idunwa na Odo, etc.

The obligations for these groups vary. Some require killing of cow, goat or pig and provision of about 10 big tubers of yam, including jars of palm wine and kola nuts. Sometimes these provisions are supervised to ensure that the requirements are well met. If any of the requirements are not complete the person stands the chance of being disqualified. In the days past, Ama ozo, Ama ichi and Ama igede do not accept an outcast as one of their members.

There is another type of Ama, according to Aniagba Anthonia, that is done in Abor. This type is in form of thanksgiving organized by a man at the birth of his first child. The man kills a cow for his kinsmen and also gave them 10 big tubers of yam. Food will be cooked for everyone. A big container called nshi will be filled with palm wine. The nshi contains 4 gallons of palm wine. For the co-wives called ndiom the man will fill their own nshi which is lesser than the men's own. There will be merriment for everyone on that day marking the thanksgiving for the gift of a child. On the other hand, the wife of the man can as well kill pig for her co-wives at the same time after which she is qualified to belong to the class called Odazulu or Odagbulu ezi.

CHAPTER 11

Indigenous Crops and Cuisines of Abor

Ogochukwu Ani and Ojel Anidi, Ph. D

Historically, the indigens of Abor were predominantly farmers. For their general wellbeing, they took advantage of their environment by planting different types of crops. It was subsistence farming that dominated the agricultural system. They also engaged in livestock keeping and rearing like goats, sheep, fowls, cows etc. Some of the crops they planted were yam, (ji), cassava (akpu), cocoyam (ede) groundnut (apapa), black beans (akidi), agbugbu (pigeon peas), ozoaki, edu, enyewo (bitter beans), ololo (calabash cup), agbugba (calabash), ahahara (drawing vegetable), ighuneji (wild bitter yam) among others. Yam was first to be planted around December/January, while other crops followed around April. Ede (cocoyam) was planted in a well-fallowed land.



Ona (wild bitter yam) grated to arrive at *ighuneji*



Enyawo (Bitter beans)

There were styles and methods of preparing these crops to make them palatable for eating. The Abor indigens, then, had a characteristic style of cooking for which they were exclusively known. To a great extent, the people of Abor have retained their craft of cooking up to the present day.

Era

There was an object or system the people used to ensure great harvest in the past. It was called 'Era'. Era was usually done around November before the farming season started. Special people /family did give it to others. Ugwuobia and Okolocha family from Amogwu Umuavulu gave to Umuavulu people, while Chiwetalu Nshi from Amukwu village took care of Enu-Abor people.

The era was special leaves that were usually squeezed and one must not talk during 'era' preparation (A. Aniagba, personal communication, March 18, 2022). While spreading the 'era' at certain spots of the land to be cultivated, the person must not talk. The era was also used by individuals during food preparation to ensure that small portion of food brought full satisfaction (A. Ikpa, personal communication, 11 April, 2022). The era, from the foregoing explanation, seems to be used as an article of faith, a kind of superstitious belief. Another of such beliefs concerns the groundnut barks (outer part), which were usually spread on the road with the belief that after many people marched on them it would cause a great yield of groundnut.

Abor Indigenous Cuisines

1. Okpa na Ede (Cow Pea and Cocoyam): Though 'okpa' was not one of the main crops cultivated in Abor, yet it was and is still widely eaten by the people of Abor. In fact, in the past okpa was regarded as a ceremonial food. The combination of 'okpa' and 'ede' was a special meal eaten in every household..

The okpa (cow pea) itself ab-initio undergoes some process of being ground and sieved as part of its preparation prior to being served as a meal.



Nkpekwa Okpa (leaves of the ogbu tree used in wrapping the okpa)

In Abor, usually, the small measured containers used to cook the okpa are made from the leaves of the ogbu tree. The ogbu leaves are artistically joined together with broom sticks to form lovely cups with hollows. These locally designed cups used in cooking okpa in Abor remains

one of the wonders of the Abor kitchen craft and reveals the artistic and graceful nature of the people. The craft that goes into each piece of the okpa being cooked is simply amazing.

2. Ighuneji na Enyewo (Wild Bitter Yam Flakes and Wild Bitter Beans)

Ighuneji and enyewo remains a very delicious meal for the Abor people. In those days it was one of the ceremonial dishes of the Abor people..

Ighuneji is got from the wild bitter yam plant called ‘ona’. The ona used for making ighuneji is got from the farm after deliberate farming or from a fallowing farm land where it is not deliberately planted. It usually undergoes a process before it becomes a meal. The ona (ighuneji) is peeled and cooked until it gets done. It is sliced using a grater meant especially for it. It should be noted that ‘ighune’ (short for ighuneji) as food is of two types. The one called ‘ntucha’ will be washed immediately after grating by putting it inside water and washing it intermittently for about 2 days. The water is changed every 2 to 3 hours until the bitter content was completely washed away. The bitter content is very dangerous to health. After this, the sliced/ grated and washed ighuneji will be spread under the sun to dry. This type called ‘ntucha’, in those days, was kept aside to be eaten, in case hunger came and there was nothing left in the house. The other called ‘Ighune turu egbo’ was kept for months unwashed until the dangerous bitter content became powerless. Then, when the need to eat this type, arose, it was taken to Iyi Ohune, that is, Ohune stream, and kept there for about twenty-four where the flowing water of the stream would wash out whatever dirt or unwanted elements remaining inside the ighune, and also remove the dryness in the Ighune and make it fresh again, before consumption. People that have water washed theirs at home frequently.

‘Enyewo’ as well usually went through a process before it became a meal. It was usually planted in the same farm where yam was planted and staked together with the yam. It is important to note here that enyewo is wild bitter beans. It had the same characteristics with other beans when planted. Just like species of black beans (akidi) that have to be staked in the farm for it to do well, enyewo also needs even higher stakes – tall sticks – as required for yam to produce bountifully. Harvested before the seeds start dispersing, enyewo has two colours of red and brown.

These days, due to the scarcity of enyewo and the difficulty involved in cooking it, mkpulu akidi (black beans) serves as very good alternative to combine with ighuneji.

3. Ogodo/ Abacha na Mkpuru Akidi (Cassava Flakes and Black Beans)

‘Abacha’, traditionally referred to as ‘ogodo’, in Abor, is a product of cassava, with botanical name, *Manihot esculenta*. Today, abacha has become a more commonly used name, rather than ogodo, throughout Igbo land. In the course of this research, it was discovered that cassava was not one of the main crops in Abor in those days. It came much later. Many trials were given to it on how to consume it, which resulted in the death of many people, before eventually it became acceptable as a consumable. Subsequently, the people succeeded in discovering ways of consuming it.

Alternatively, the wet abacha may not be prepared immediately as a meal, but can be dried under sun so it becomes ‘abacha okponku’, often called “aturatu”. The advantage of the dried

abacha is that it can easily be preserved and transported from place to place and prepared at will, whenever the occasion arises. The process of preparing the dried abacha meal is the same as that used for abacha mmiri

4. Achicha na Agbugbu/Fiofio (Cocoyam and Pigeon Peas)

Achicha is dried cocoyam, one of the main crops cultivated in Abor. Even today, if you come to new market, Enugu, the largest grocery market in the city, each trader there selling cocoyam (*ede*) would try to convince you to patronize their own type of *ede*, claiming it is the original one from Abor – *Ede Abor*. *Ede* (Cocoyam) have different species but the botanical name of the *ede* used in making achicha is called, *Colocasia Esculenta*.

The beans is called Agbugbu in Abor, while it is called *fio-fio*, in other parts of Igbo land. *Agbugbu* belongs to a species of beans referred to as pigeon peas. Depending on the specie of the *agbugbu*, it is usually white or red in colour.

5. Ofe Mpoto (Cocoyam Leaves Soup) and Akpu Mmanu (Fufu)

Ofe Mpoto

Mpoto is dried leaves of the main cocoyam (*ede*) plant collected fresh from the plant before they were harvested from the soil. *Mpoto* is harvested around November usually during harmattan. They are spread under the sun for drying for several days to ensure they dried adequately. After it must have dried, the mpoto is steamed inside a pot. The dried leaves were put on top of a prop called ‘asisa’, in Abor language, to prevent them from getting immersed in water. After thorough boiling of the water the leaves are removed and spread under the sun for drying again. Then, the leaves would be stored in a cool and dry place of the house to be used for soup when necessary.

During soup preparation, some mpoto leaves would be collected and spread under the sun for some hours. Then, they would be crushed by hand and smoked a little in a frying pan (*ibeju*) to bring out its aroma making sure they do not burn. Mortar and pestle will be used to pound them into a powdered form as much as possible. This powder would be poured into a sieve to remove the chaff. The powdered substance would be poured into water to be washed and to be free from every form of stone it might have gathered during drying. After washing, the ‘mpoto’ will be put in a pot with reasonable quantity of water for cooking. Cocoyam which would be used as thickener would be cooked, and outer cover peeled off and pounded. While the ‘mpoto’ would be already boiling, the cocoyam in a paste form would be added into it. A good quantity of palm oil would be added followed by crayfish, pepper, ‘azu mangala’ (dried fish), ‘okporoko’ (stock fish), bush meat, local cow meat, salt and seasoning agent locally called ‘ugba’ (not akpaka) or the ‘ogili’ could be added if available. The ‘akpu mmanu’ and the ‘mpoto’ soup used to be the most delicious swallow meals for the people under study.

Akpu Mmanu (Yellow Cassava Fufu)

Akpu just like the ogoto/ abacha discussed earlier, is a by-product of the cassava plant. To obtain akpu from cassava, our people usually begin by peeling off the outer back of the cassava,

and then they wash and soak the cassava in water for about three to four days, depending on the specie of the cassava. For best result, the soaked cassava should be kept under the heat of the sun. When the cassava must have fermented, the cassava is softly disintegrated into a pulp in a sieve inside a basin of water. The essence of the sieve is to remove the chaff. The main content would be put in a sack bag so that the water will drain fast from the cassava pulp, leaving more solid sediment – akpu. It is usually white in colour.

To make akpu mmanu (cassava fufu coloured with palm oil), a desired quantity of akpu is collected and is mixed with a considerable quantity of palm oil. This is portioned and tied inside Uvuku leaves or banana/plantain leaves for cooking. It is cooked for about an hour. When considered done, it is put inside mortar for pounding. This is pounded vigorously to make it very smooth for swallowing. Abor people prefer ‘akpu mmanu’ oil to the ordinary white cassava fufu because they believe that the oil makes the food palatable/tolerable to the stomach. In the past, this food was usually kept in a container called ‘agbugba’ (calabash) where it could last for some days without getting spoilt. To Abor people, ‘akpu mmanu’ and ‘ofe mpoto’ are the best match, out of all the other combination of soups and fufu.

In conclusion, the indigenous crops and cuisines of Abor people are well selected by nature for them. The people’s cuisines are well balanced in diet to give the body what it needs for good health. They combine protein, carbohydrate, fat and oil, minerals, with vitamins in almost all their meals. The meals are combined in so many different ways to achieve great delicacies. Ighuneji and abacha, respectively, can be prepared together with akidi, agbugbu, ozoaki, or enyewo, according to choice. They are not restricted according to how we discussed them here. Achicha, on the other hand, can be cooked together with agbugbu, vegetables or akidi. Akpu mmanu also can be eaten with any soup of choice like ofe ahaharaa (vegetable soup), onugbu (bitter leaves soup), among others.

CHAPTER 12: Abor Traditional Worship and Festivals (by Cajethan Ikechukwu Ikpa - Uzodigwe na Abor)

Introduction: The Belief in the Spremacry of God

The Supreme God in Igbo life worship (Abor, in reference) is recognized by the Abor people as " Chi-Ukwu," rightly called "Eze-Chite-Okike-abiam" or Chi-Ukwu, the Supreme God. In Igboland and Abor, Chi-Ukwu has no shrine or stupa and is the Creator (Okike), whose influence takes preeminence and supernaturally controls everything on earth.

Understanding the Mystery of God, the fear of direct interaction, and absolute respect for the supremacy of God (Chi-Ukwu), the Abor men and women in the past preferred to seek God's favors, blessings, or interventions indirectly through other forms of intercession. They believed that such channels would afford them the boldness and courage to make requests and prayers in their chosen manner. These channels include, but are not limited to, special trees, the Sun, the Moon, and other recognized deities.

However, whenever kola nut is presented, prayers must be directed to God Almighty. Items such as kola nut (oji), palm wine, and more are involved in these rituals.

Ikpere-mete n'mbalmeja (continuous prayers and demands, backed or supported with acceptable sacrifices)

- a. Eja: Sacrifice to the *gods* or to God
- b. Mbal'meja: Acceptable Sacrifice
- c. Uhfeke-Eja: Unacceptable sacrifice

The traditional worship system in Abor also has a gender dimension relating to symbols, such as:

Men - Titled and Non-Titled

Title: Ozo, Nze, Ichie, etc.

Women - Titled and Non-Titled

Title: Lolo, Odagburu-eshii, Omen'manu, etc.

For Ozo titled men, regular sacrifices are made to Chi-Ukwu (Chukwu), the Supreme God. These regular sacrifices could involve kola nut, palm wine, food, live animals, etc.

Ogbu-Enyanwu: This is a tree planted by an Ozo-titled man or any traditionalist for the purpose of worship, prayers, and sacrifices to *Chi*. It is also a regular practice. In the morning, the man prays to his *Chi* using available materials for cleansing and worship, such as Ogilishi leaves and kolanut. He sits or stands before the Ogbu-enyanwu or symbol of his Chi (Onu-chi). The man calls on his *Chi*, seeking long life, protection, wealth, and peace among his neighbourhood. Prayer points are tailored to suit the particular occasion or event.

Onu-Chi: This is a sacred place or corner in the house where the man or woman keeps special items like the ofo stick, bones of some animals, feathers of some birds, etc., just to symbolize the altar where worship can take place regularly or intermittently within the home.

The woman would have her *Onuchi* in the corridor or inside *Uwota* for regular prayers and worship to her *Chi* and God. (Chukwu).

Traditional worship/ religion in Abor also places special recognition on particular events and occasions, such as the New Yam Festivals, marking the beginning of the farming season. These festivals involve notable incantations as a form of communication to the spirits believed to have control over the success or failure of such traditional activities. In an incantation, all words stand for something and are meaningful, e.g.:

1. *Ogbu-n'agodo*
2. *Ogenyi*
3. *Akodi*
4. *Ega-oseli*
5. *Utumegenegé*
6. *Ikperemeta-n'mbalmeji*
7. *Ekani*
8. *Eja-Olu*
9. *Onu-ani*

In Igbo land, Abor, in particular, the worship trajectory recognizes natural creations by Chukwu, such as the river (*iyi*), the mountains (*ugwu*), the land (*ani*), the sun (*anyanwu*), the moon (*onwa*), etc. Certain mystical manifestations, at times, inject some revelations that could hinge reconciliation to items, animals, mountains, rivers, or even masquerades in some climes. Certainly, when something that is difficult or impossible to understand happens, it is usually attributed to God Almighty (Chukwu). Therefore, such mysteries of God are spiritual truths known only by revelation. God reveals His mysteries to those who are obedient and clean. Some of those mystic items form religious objects.

Religious Objects

Religious objects refer to items and articles with religious significance. Major world religions typically have recognizable symbols that represent them. Traditions, customs, and beliefs are often long-standing and enduring. In this context, here are some of the religious objects known to the Abor people:

- i. *Ikenga*
- ii. *Oji*
- iii. *Ogu*
- iv. *Offo (owho)*
- v. *Uno Odo*
- vi. *Mgburu-oju (tree).*
- vii. *Aziza Ojukwu*

Ikenga

Ikenga, with its Igbo literal meaning "strength of movement", is a *horned Alusi* found among the Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria. It is one of the most powerful symbols of the Igbo people and most common cultural artifact. The right hand is also referred to as *Aka-Ikenga*. In Abor native culture, it symbolizes the strength of the right hand and is represented by a carved wooden figure kept by every man in his shrine. The horns in some Ikenga figures physically represent power and strength. In essence, Ikenga is a male altar or shrine dedicated to a person's right arm and hand, considered instrumental to their personal power and accomplishments.

Oji (Kolanut):

In Igbo land, the kola nut primarily symbolizes peace, unity, reconciliation, integrity, life, fraternity, hospitality, goodwill, and kindness. Some people fondly define it as "*Omenala-Jikoro-Igbo-onu*." There are different types of kola nuts, including:

1. Oji-Igbo
2. Oji- Awusa (Gworo)

Kola nuts are presented to visitors as a warm welcome gesture. They are used in prayers and communion with ancestors, invoking benevolent spirits to bless occasions and protect people from unforeseen dangers.

Kola nut plays a significant role in Abor gatherings; no event begins without the ritual of "*iwa-oji*" or "*igo-oji*" (breaking of kola nut). A common saying is "*onye wetara-oji, wetera ndu*" (he who brings kola nut brings life) because kola nuts are used for peacekeeping and settling disputes. Furthermore, the kola nut tree (Ukwu Oji) is renowned for its longevity.

Breaking of Kola nut

According to our tradition (Omenani Abor), women are not allowed to break kola nuts. If there is no elderly man available, then women must find a young man to break it for them. The honour of breaking the kola nut usually goes to the oldest man in a gathering. In one's own home, the host (the man of the house) can break kola nut in the morning, regardless of his age. It is important to note that not all kola nuts are eaten after breaking, both in Abor.

- i. If a kola nut has 3 cotyledons (Oji-gbara-ito), it is called Oji Ikenga or *Oji Nze* or *Aike*, and it is traditionally reserved for titled men in Igbo land. However, in other regions, non-titled men can also eat it, though it is seen as a sign of hardship.
- ii. Kola nuts with 2 cotyledons (Oji-gbara-ibe abuo) are not eaten, and they are also seen as a sign of hardship.
- iii. *Oji-gbara ano* (4 cotyledons) represents the four native days, indicating good luck and favorable market days. It is usually preferred by traditional priests for presentation to the Gods: Eke-Nkwo-Orie-Afo.
- iv. *Oji-gbara ise bu oji omumu* (child-bearing blessings). It is celebrated in some parts of Igbo land.
- v. Kola nuts with six or seven cotyledons (*Oji-gbara isii ma obu assa*) symbolize good luck, good fortune, and blessings.
- vi. *Oji-gbara asaa* (7 cotyledons) is very rare to come across. In this case, both the presenter and the receiver are regarded as highly favoured. It is not eaten immediately; instead, it is kept for special days of celebration. Friends and well-wishers are invited, food and drinks are provided abundantly, and prayers and favors are requested from

Almighty God (Chukwu) through incantations like "*ikperemete-n'mbarm-eja*" (continuous prayers) backed with acceptable and suitable sacrifices. It is worth noting that presenting kola nut (Oji) is 'a must' at any ceremony or occasion among the Igbo people, including Abor.

Ofo-na-Ogu

These symbols stand for innocence. Ofo is represented by a short stick with natural joints that separate on its own when matured and drop for people to pick from the main ofo tree. The ofo signifies authority, the right to command, administrative command, the staff of office, and the conferment of leadership and power bestowed by the gods (Wikipedia).

In Abor, the ofo is regarded as a sacred article made from the branch of the ofo tree (*detarium senegalense*) or other sacred trees like Ogilishi (*newbouldia laevis*), upon which sacrifices can be made to the gods.

Ogu, on the other hand, is a symbol of a clear conscience and truth. Ogu activates and reactivates the ofo, which everyone is entitled to use. However, not everyone carries the ofo. The Ofo is a physical stick typically carried by old titled elders of the Igbo community. Ofo and Ogu are cultural concepts symbolizing righteousness, uprightness, truth, justice, law, and authority in Igbo sociocultural and religious discourse.

Reincarnation

The concept of reincarnation refers to the rebirth of a soul in another body (Iwa madu). In Igbo land and particularly in Abor, it is believed that when a person is born, it is the reincarnation of a specific soul. Reincarnation is a philosophical belief that after biological death, the soul or spirit begins a new life in a new body, which can be human or spiritual, depending on the moral quality of the previous life's actions. It is believed that the soul upon death of the body comes back to earth in another body or form, that is, rebirth of a soul in a new body.

In Abor of the past, when a person is born, the gods would be consulted (*igba afa*) to identify and ascertain the person from whose soul the newborn has reincarnated. This identification often relies on similarities in gestures, body language, laughter, and physical expressions. Personality traits may carry over as well, like stubbornness, boldness, curiosity, or other distinct qualities of the late person. Stating a personal experience, I have witnessed someone born with a scar on his back and it is an indication that the soul from whom he was reincarnated had a scar as a result of a spear attack wound before he died.

Soulmates

In reality, a soulmate is someone who belongs to the same soul group or has been part of your spiritual journey throughout your various lifetimes. In the Abor community, it is believed that one soul can reincarnate in two or more people, and these individuals are regarded as soulmates. Additionally, it is believed that elderly people can reincarnate while still alive.

When it comes to the death of soulmates, in Abor, particularly in the *Ojebeogene* clan, soulmates do not attend or participate in any way during the burial ceremony of another soulmate, nor do they see the corpse of one another. Violating this practice is believed to have

severe consequences, even resulting in death. However, there are traditional rites and sacrifices that can be performed to sever the spiritual relationship between soulmates, enabling one to partially participate in the burial of the other.

Shrines/Deities: (Onu-ani, Ohune, Usala, Ugwu, Ngene, Ngwu, etc.)

Deity: This is anything revered as divine god or goddess, divinity, idol, immortal, creator, godhead, celestial, Supreme Being. Deities symbolize humanity's struggle to understand its identity within the limits of the universe, representing what is hidden most deeply within. It is one that possesses at least three necessary properties which include:

1. Omniscience (all knowing)
2. Omnipotence (all powerful)
3. Ominibenevolence (supremely good)

In Abor, it is believed that natural creatures serve as avenues through which humans can seek divine intervention; e.g. ani, iyi, ugwu, etc. Ani (the Land) is appeased at Onu-ani shrine, where favor is solicited for bumper harvest and spiritual protection. Iyi Ohune, Usala, represented by streams and rivers, have dedicated traditional priests who worship and attend to the spiritual needs of the people. These deities have special celebration days that attract people from afar, as they are believed to possess superpowers that can cure illnesses and solve problems for individuals, groups, and communities.

Festivals in Abor

A festival is an event ordinarily celebrated by a community, focusing on specific aspects of the community, its religion, or its culture. It is often marked as a local holiday. In Abor community, several festivals are celebrated. Here are a few among many others:

- a. Eka-Ani
- b. Iri-Ji/ Ife-Ji-Oku/ Iri-Ji-Ofuu
- c. Oyiya Okuko
- d. Igodo Festival
- e. Oji-Ama (Ngwuegu)

Eka-Ani Festival

Eka-ani, literally meaning "the hand of the soil/land," is a festival that celebrates the bountiful harvest from the land. Before cultivation begins, the land is appeased through sacrifices, such as *Eja-olu* and *Igo-ani*, as well as libations and prayers. These rituals are performed to seek protection for farmers and hunters from injuries and to request a rich harvest from the land.

Eka-ani ceremonies prominently showcase bumper harvests and expressions of gratitude to the gods of the land for answered prayers. During the celebrations, families visit their in-laws, and newly married men visit the families of their wives. They bring along large tubers of yam (Ji-Eka-ani) and gallons of the finest palm wine. The newlyweds are gorgeously dressed and adorned with calabash wood and henna/tattoo (ufie and uli), symbolizing the husband's care for his wife. On the other hand, the host, typically the father-in-law and his family, prepare a variety of delicious food and an abundance of meat to entertain their son-in-law and daughter. After the feasting and celebration, as the couple prepares to leave, the host provides them with cooked food and meat as a take-away. This gesture signifies that the family has ample food and

wealth to support their daughter in case of any separation or ill treatment that might necessitate her return to her father's house. This is how the Ekani Festival is celebrated in the Abor community.

Iri-Ji/ Iwa-Ji (New Yam Festival)

Ji (yam) is regarded as the king of all crops and is celebrated as the New Yam Festival (*Iri-ji*) in Igbo land. This festival typically takes place at the end of the rainy season, often in early August. The New Yam Festival is a celebration that highlights the significance of yam in the social and cultural life of the Igbo people.

In Abor community, the New Yam Festival is celebrated by all, especially by prominent yam farmers known as "*Di-Ji*" families. They usually invite relatives and friends from far and near to partake in the festivities.

The festival is heralded with the sounds of gunshots on the designated day. Everyone heads to the village square or market square, whichever destination is agreed upon. The titled men assemble with their wives, and the traditional ruler (Igwe) is in attendance. Every village is expected to bring baskets of roasted yam, fresh palm oil garnished with "*akpaka*", pepper and salt in wooden plates called "*okwa*" for serving the delicacy. Kola nuts are presented and passed around for the Ozo titled men, traditional chiefs, and the Igwe to offer special prayers to the gods of the land for life and prosperity. The Igwe is presented with a few tubers of roasted yam and a knife to cut the yam into small slices (*Iwa-ji*). He dips a slice into the palm oil and eats it before everyone, and the crowd applauds the Igwe accordingly. This marks the official start of the new yam eating. During the festival, dance groups from villages demonstrate and entertain the people, adding to the celebratory atmosphere.

Oyiya Okuko (Oriri-Nwane-Malu-Nwanne)

The name "*Oyiya-okuko*" literally means dissecting a roasted chicken with bare hands. In the past, everyone in Abor performed a sacrifice to the gods using a roasted chicken on the day of *Oyiya Okuko*. During this ritual, one of the wings of the chicken is removed with bare hands and sacrificed to the gods of fertility in preparation for *Eka-Ani*, the main feast dedicated to the goddess of fertility, *Ani*.

On this day, children are expected to visit their maternal homes accompanied by their mothers, carrying kegs of palm wine. In the evening, all the children from common maternal homes are assembled by their grandfathers in the compound. Each family is given the opportunity to introduce themselves, fostering a sense of kinship among cousins and relations from different maternal homes. This tradition is known as "*Nwanne-Malu-Nwanne*," which means "know your blood relations." The Nwanne-Malu-Nwanne feast plays a vital role in the proper identification of cousins and relations from shared maternal backgrounds.

Igodo Festival

The Igodo festival is a bi-annual celebration that marks the Odo season. Odo is the collective term for various types of messengers of the Odo diety in the Ojebe-Ogene clan, encompassing towns such as Ebe, Abor, Ukana, Awhum, Okpatu, Umulumbe, and Ukehe. The Odo masquerades also extend beyond Ojebe-Ogene to Igbo-etiti, Aku, and even Isi-Uzo (Neke).

One prominent masquerade is Odo-ma-agana, which combines three aspects: Odo (physical aspect), Maa (spiritual aspect), and Agana (mystical aspect). During Igodo, people invite in-laws and relatives to join in the festivities. Groups and families participate by sacrificing various animals such as cows, goats, and pigs. In the past, both Christians and non-Christians took part in Igodo celebrations in Abor. Contributions from both Christian and traditionalist communities were used to purchase cows, and the meat was shared in order of seniority among the male participants. This aspect of the ceremony assists the people to know the order of seniority within the Umunna or the Onu-odo.

In the evening, a special dance took place at Ani-Igodo, where traditional music was accompanied by the display of animal heads used in the celebration, such as cow heads and pig heads. Sometimes, the animal heads would be cooked and while dancing with the cooked head of the animals, one may be eating out of it if they choose to, hence the wordings, "... Ishi-efi, Ishi-Ebune Tabulu sokwu... Haa-haa-haa". Different groups would take turns to dance the traditional music displaying whatever they have in the form of heads of different animals. At the end, people would disperse to their various homes. That night, the masquerades would be playing the *Ekwe-Odo* till day break and the traditionalist would be presenting drinks and gifts to the masquerade.

In recent years, some Christians withdrew from Igodo celebrations due to their faith, but this did not hinder the continuation of the festival. Igodo has since been reformed; hence, people now invite in-laws, friends, and well-wishers to the feast and in the evening, masquerades parade in the market square, entertaining both men and women.

Today, contemporary Igodo is celebrated by both Christians and traditionalists, involving men and women alike.

Oji-Ama (Ngwuagu) Festival

The Oji-Ama Festival is an annual celebration observed by the Ngwuagu people of Abor town. It marks the sixth month of the Igbo traditional calendar, which falls in August of the Gregorian calendar. This period signifies the early harvest and serves as a prelude to the *Eka-Ani*, the main New Yam Festival, which has already been discussed in this paper.

On the day of *Oji-Ama*, both traditional men and women offer sacrifices to the almighty God and prayers to various gods associated with fertility, protection, and providence. These prayers are offered to thank these deities for continually safeguarding them and their people. These prayers are often accompanied by appeals and requests (*Ikperemete n'mbalemeja*) backed by suitable sacrifices.

Younger men, in groups of four to five or even eight, carry musical instruments such as gongs, both wooden and metal. They play tunes of praise while visiting men and seeking gifts of farm produce, cash, and even palm wine. These musical performances are sometimes accompanied by gunshots to announce the arrival of the group, especially when they are accompanied by a masquerade. In the afternoon, through the evening, until night time, masquerades move around visiting families, providing entertainment, melodious voices, and words of wisdom and prophecies, as directed by the gods. Gifts like yams, cash, cockerels, and even goats are presented to masquerades and visitors, as appropriate.

CHAPTER 13: Traditional Abor HealthCare System and Longevity: A Pre-colonial Perspective. (by Dr. Francisca Okolo Mgbodile)

Introduction

Traditional Medicine, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), encompasses the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement of Health.

Traditional Medicine refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being (Nkongemeneck et al., 2007). Abor Traditional Medicine has been, is and continues to be part of Abor Health care system.

This chapter, will focus on traditional medicine practices in Abor during the pre-colonial era, which has been carried over to the modern-day practices. Traditional medicine in pre-colonial Abor focused more on primary health care and how to prevent diseases through a holistic approach to total well-being, covering physical, mental, social, societal, and psychological aspects. Preventing and healing minor ailments was a shared responsibility within families. Minor illnesses are handled by certain people in the family; only severe cases require the intervention of a medicine man or woman.

Traditional Abor healthcare employed various modalities, both medicinal and non-medicinal, to achieve its objectives. Some examples of these modalities include:

1. Inye Ogwu (Medication): This involved the use of herbal remedies and medications.
2. Iku Ume Ndu (Healing by Breath of Life - Breathwork): A practice focusing on the breath and its role in healing.
3. Igba Okpukpu (Surgery and Orthopedics): Surgical and orthopedic procedures.
4. Ichi Mpu (Cupping Method): A technique involving cupping for therapeutic purposes.
5. Igo Chi (Appeasing and Appealing to One's Chi): Seeking the favor and redress from an individual's Chi through words and offerings, among others.

This chapter will primarily focus on '*inye ogwu*' (medication) and the different kinds of *ogwu* (medicine), with brief mentions of the other modalities. Traditional precolonial Abor people firmly held the belief that they were spiritual beings having a physical experience; hence, a person is called *madu* (poetic), *maa di ndu* being the whole expression.

Due to their belief system, traditional Abor people possessed a profound awareness of the interconnectedness of all things in the universe, embracing the concept of universal consciousness. They acknowledge the unity of all elements in existence and recognize their collective responsibility to account to the one source, Chukwu, who created everything. In contrast to the misconceptions held by some Europeans that traditional Abor practices are rooted in animism or idol worship, a precolonial Abor individual, deeply grounded in their Igbo heritage, does not venerate idols or trees. Instead, they held firmly to the belief in a singular

God, a sole Source, the Creator of all, who reveals The Self to both living and non-living entities through one's Chi, contingent upon one's merits. This enduring belief continues to resonate with the Abor people, albeit in a somewhat diluted form. This foundational philosophy forms the bedrock of an Abor individual's worldview.

Based on this premise, traditional Abor people held a steadfast belief in the imperative of doing good. They understand that their actions have far-reaching consequences on their overall health and longevity. This belief is deeply embedded in their language through idiomatic expressions, maxims, proverbs, etc. They also believe in prevention being better than cure; hence, the saying “*Mgbochi oya ka ogwugwo ya*”, loosely translated as, “Prevention is better than cure”, but it is deeper than that.

Other phrases go thus:

<i>Onu ghu egbugh ghu</i>	If your mouth does not kill you
<i>Ekpili ghu egbuh ghu</i>	If your throat does not kill you
<i>Agada ghu egbugh ghu</i>	If your sexual organ does not kill you
<i>I malu na I jiko adu ndu kaa nka</i>	You are sure to achieve longevity
<i>Kpuo aku enya</i>	Attain very old age and grow cataract

Onu ghu stands for what you eat/drink; what you say and the manner you eat/drink or say them. *Ekpili ghu* stands for what you acquire, possess, or gather, especially greed. *Agada ghu* stands for your sexual organs, whether male or female.

Abor person believed that what they consume might be physically, psychologically, or spiritually polluted and may consequently affect your overall health. As a result, Abor people, paid close attention to what they consumed and how their food was prepared. This is further enforced by the fact that Ozo's in Abor are meticulous about what they eat, say, or with whom they associate. (For details of Ozo Abor practices, refer to chapter-).

Ozo Eneje and his wives were aware of the consequences of serving Ozo, polluted food. My maternal aunt, Amunagbaogwu nwa Ubanze Mgbako, was his youngest wife, and when I stayed with them, I participated in the preparation of Ozo's food. He did not eat certain food like cassava and cassava products. He did not eat any food cooked outside his sacred hut (mkpo). A woman in her monthly cycle was not allowed to prepare his meals, and he never finished any food served to him. Thinking aloud now, I wonder what would have happened to Ozo if he had followed the one-man, one-wife rule! ...Story for another day. While Ozo ate his food, somebody must beat the Ekwe, a wooden musical instrument, until he finished. If the music was interrupted by any means, he had to stop eating, and he would never eat that food again. When he had finished, he would share the remaining food amongst all the children gathered at the sound of the Ekwe. If it was pounded yam, he would make a big Mosel, dip it in the soup, and give a Mosel to each child in attendance. I recall how he would watch and mentally count the number of children present to determine how much food he would consume to ensure there was enough for the children gathered in his mkpo. I will never forget how mischievous I was by beating the Ekwe lightly whenever Amunagbaogwu had prepared delicious meals with anu nchi (bush meat), so that neighboring children would not come to partake in the leftovers. I recall asking questions about why my aunt always served him large

portions of food when it was obvious that he wouldn't finish them. The Ozo practice and self-denial as narrated above were some of the symbolic purifications and sacrifices he had to make for his health and that of the community.

A traditional Abor man or woman who keeps themselves pure can detect immediately when they mistakenly ingest something unclean. In such cases, they proceed to purify themselves by applying one of the redress medicines to neutralize the effect.

There are many folklores, proverbs, and myths to emphasize the trouble one can get into or cause, due to unguarded utterances.. It was about a little girl who was unable to read the nonverbal communication of her father, and it went like this in Abor dialect:

*"Òzó nwa nnáá, I fūlū ébuné m
A na m achó ebune m ōhū unyá
Wáá! āfulu m Ébuné
Nna m, n' ishi ebune efeteghi n'ité
Bia sobe há n'ugwó ébuné."*

Literally, it translates as:

*"Ozo, my kinsman, did you see my ram?
I have been looking for it since yesterday.
No, I did not see any ram.
Father, the ram's head will not fit into the pot.
Come and follow them as ransom for the ram."*

This story portrays a man who stole his neighbor's ram, slaughtered it, and gave it to his daughter to prepare for the family to eat. The owner of the ram came to the man's house to inquire about his missing ram, as is customary in traditional Abor community when something is lost. The thief denied seeing the ram. Immediately after his denial, and before the owner of the ram departed, the man's daughter came and complained to her father that the ram's head he asked her to cook would not fit into the pot. Both men knew that the thief never owned a ram. The thief, aware of the consequences of stealing in traditional Abor society, decided to save face and gave the girl up as ransom for the ram. The "*Nna Nya n'ishi ebune efeteghi n'ite*," is a popular saying in Abor, to remind people of the need to guard against unguarded utterances.

Guarding one's *ekpili*, or throat, as mentioned earlier, refers to one's desires, greed, and quest for satisfaction or lust. The effects of not guarding one's *ekpili* can be significant, to the extent that it can destroy an entire nation.

Agada/Utu/Atu refers to one's genital organs as well as sexual greed, lust, and physical pleasures, regardless of gender. A traditional Abor person firmly believes that unless these are placed under strict control through committed discipline, they can directly or indirectly shorten one's life, ruin one's life, dilute one's creative power and achievements, and affect overall health and longevity. This is why some powerful *dibias* (adepts) fast often, eat bland food, and abstain from sexual activities at certain times in their work.

Story had it that in pre-colonial Abor society and by extension, Igbo society, that if a Dibia indulged in making dangerous medicine for people, his act can wipe out his family or put him and his generations to come under a curse. Because of this, some wicked dibias will opt not to marry or have sexual relationships that could lead to getting an offspring, in order to be able to perform some dangerous and wicked feats. In Abor and some other Igbo communities, it is called 'Isu utu n'ana' (making love with Ana- the earth goddess) to obtain extraordinary power in exchange for procreation abilities .

It is important to note that in the precolonial era, young men and women walked about, played together, and engaged in social, economic, and cultural events naked or half-clothed. Despite this, they maintained the highest level of innocence matched with the greatest virginity and chastity. This was achieved by adherence to the above stated measures.

Components of Abor traditional Medicare and Longevity

Traditional Abor healthcare was a combination of different modalities of treatments, much like Western Medicine today. However, while Western Medicine primarily relies on synthetic medications, Traditional Abor healthcare used a blend of medication and non-medication modalities with its own set of rules and regulations tailored to the needs of the people.

Our healthcare involved the use of water, herbs, plants, trees, soil, rocks, energies of the moon, sun, and stars, as well as vibrational energies of songs, chants, dances, vocal instruments, whistling, humming, breathing, and tapping into the energetic forces of the Universal/alchemic elements associated with the Eke, Orie, Afor, Nkwo market days in Igbo land. These modalities were used either alone or in combination. Each modality is discussed below, separately for clarity, bearing in mind that each therapeutic modality could be used alone, but most of the time, they were used in combination for their synergistic effects.

Inye Ogwu or Ime ogwu - Using Herbs, Plants, and Tree Components for Healing

Herbs/ Mgbalogwu na Mkpa Ekwukwo

A traditional Abor person believed that there is no disease or ill health that Chukwu Okike Abiama (The supreme creator that reveals knowledge and wisdom) has not provided a solution for in plants, herbs, animals, etc. The problem is the availability of people who know which one to use for which disease or ailment. This belief is not limited to Abor but extends to all Igbo communities and has survived to this day. This belief is encapsulated in the assertion that: "*Onwegh oya na enwegh mgbalogwu n'efhifha eji agwo nya b'oya mana, amagh ohu bu ohu eji agwo nya bu oya bu k'nsogbu du*".

Translated in English as, "*There is no sickness that does not have a plant or herbs for its cure, but the problem is knowing which herb to use to cure which illness.*"

With this belief, Ndi Abor (Abor people) and Ndi Igbo (Igbo People) believe that all ailments have herbal remedies provided by God for their cure. The limitations or challenges lie in the availability of knowledgeable and experienced people adept at tapping into this hidden knowledge from nature. A famous Igbo Dibia, Professor Anaenechukwu Umeh, put it beautifully in central Igbo: "*Oya nine nwere mkpologwu na ahiha eji agwo ya ma na ndi madu*

aghotagi bu nsogbu", translated in English, "There are roots and herbs for every illness, but man may not have the knowledge to harness them from these natural sources.

What do we mean by herbs, herbal remedies, and ill health?

Herb:

Any plant with roots, leaves, seeds, or flowers used for flavouring food, medicine, etc.

Herbal Remedy: The use of herbs for medicine or treatment for disease or injury.

As Professor Umeh elegantly summarized, "Herbal remedies refer to the use of relevant parts of plants, grass, and trees and/or their relevant parts for the cure of diseases, healing, medicine, or treatment or for removing, counteracting, or relieving any evil, or to obtain relevant redress, reparation, or resolve."

Ill health/ Ailment: Not in full health, sick, whether physically or mentally.

Health: Being in equilibrium, where your inner self and outer self, your *muo/ma* (spirit/mind), and *madu* (body) are in balance.

Dibia/Òmé Ògwu (herbalist) - These are the primary practitioners of Abor traditional medicine.

The Importance and Role of Herbs in Abor Traditional Medicine

I would like to begin this discussion with an excerpt from Rev. Dr. R. E. Metuh's book on *God and Man in African Religion*. He stated, and I quote:

They would argue that *Ogwu* basically comes from herbs; meaning that medicine is only tapping the power which God put into things. It is African science and follows its own laws. For example, they will refer to a famous electric tree called *Anunuebe*, literally a bird cannot perch; as the name implies because it kills any living thing that comes in contact with it. But by some means, the Igbos have managed to collect parts of this plant and transformed it into very powerful protective and offensive medicines.

This he said, proves that "*Ògwu* is science".

This argument aligns with the Igbo maxim and Abor popular saying: "*Ihe n'achucho n'ewu iwu or Ihe n'azo madu nihukwa egbu madu*". This means that what is sweet can equally be bitter, and what heals can also kill, pointing to the duality of things in Igbo cosmology.

It is essential to note that herbs can also cause disequilibrium in health and even cause harm, including death, especially when used by malevolent individuals. Herbs play mystical and cosmological roles in Abor traditional medicine. They are not only used in curing ailments, whether physical or mental, but also serve as sources of nutrients and facilitate mystic/magical feats.

Understanding the traditional healthcare practices of our ancestors is crucial, and further research can help improve, demystify, and promote these natural healthcare practices. Additionally, it is important to cite examples of other uses of herbs aside from medicine. For instance, *Ituwa Anya*, literally, "breaking open the eye", refers to the opening of the third eye of the Dibia to gain insight beyond the ordinary. This practice is essential in divination and prophecy. Similarly, *Ituwa Nti*, or "breaking open the third ear", enables the Dibia to hear beyond the ordinary, including messages from the spirits, ancestors, herbs, animals, and minerals, among others. These abilities are necessary as the herbalist or Dibia may receive information directly from plants or trees about illnesses that can be cured using specific plants.

Herbs and their derivatives are directly or indirectly used in various modalities of Abor Traditional medicine. Examples will be based on the author's experience in helping her paternal grandmother, Nneji Nwa Njeze from Ama ofüü in Ngwuagu village, Abor, and her male counterpart, Ozo Emechima, of the same village, in preparing herbs for healing seizures, respiratory diseases, and other ailments. Her knowledge also draws from discussions and reading of the work of a well-known Igbo Dibia, Professor Umeh.

The fact that herbs can be used both as stand-alone remedies and in combination to enhance the effects of other modalities of treatment cannot be overstated. Herbs can enhance the effects of breathwork, which forms the basis of the *Iku Ume Ndu* modality of treatment. *Iku Ume Ndu* is a healing system without medicine, invented and practiced by Igbos from time immemorial and was practiced in Abor in the precolonial era. It is unfortunate that breathwork, recognized as a healing method in the Western world today, was practiced and then forgotten in the Abor health system hundreds of years ago.

Additionally, herbs also served as the main source of food, providing nutrients for a healthy body and spirit. They offer vitamins and minerals that help prevent diseases and promote a long and healthy life. A particular plant used specifically in treating mental health and mental disorders called *Akanta* (*Rauvolfia Vomitoria*) is emphasized. *Akanta* is a tree whose appropriate part, when prepared with *Nkwu Enu* (palm wine), can effectively and rapidly restore essential links of the mind/intellect and wholeness, (also called the Divine Mind or Universal Consciousness.) It is disheartening that this tree is now near extinction in Abor.

In his book, "God and Man in African Religion: A case study of Igbo of Nigeria," Rev. Dr. E.I Metuh, a Roman Catholic priest, scholar, and university don, asserts:

"All medicine is made from herbs; hence the Igbo proverb *Ogwu á gwú n'ofia, makana afifia ka ejí aku Ogwu*, the medicine in the bush can never be exhausted, because medicine is extracted from herbs. Different herbs produce different medicines, and successful Igbo herbalists can cure many bodily ailments by their use. Some medicinal herbs, for example, those for the cure of malaria, snake bites, and convulsions, are commonly known.

But the medicine prepared by Dibia is powerful not just because he is an expert but because he is in possession of *Agwunsi*, a deity for medicine, whom he or she can invoke to give power to the medicine. So *Ògwú* is not just herbs; it must be charged with spiritual power using rites,

spells, and invocations. Thus processed *Ogwu* can be made to serve any need by the kind of power transmuted to it by invocation using words or vibrational energy or elemental energy.

Water (Mmili or Mii in Abor dialect) as Medicine

The Abor people, along with other Igbo communities, regard water as the first and best medicine given to any human being. In both precolonial Abor and recent history, when an Abor person welcomes a guest with an embrace (*ibi oma*), a handshake, or simply utters the word "Deje", they traditionally offer the visitor a cup of water to drink and wash their hands. This gesture serves both physical and spiritual purification purposes, embodying the belief that "*Mii bu ndu*," meaning "water is life".

Abor people, in their Igboness, follow three fundamental traditional Igbo concept of water that guides the framework and use of water in health care and beyond. These principles are:

1. **Mmadu bu Oku na Mii (A person is water and fire):** This concept views water as representative of all liquids, while fire symbolizes energy. Imbalance in these two components, whether in the physical or spiritual realm, is believed to lead to disequilibrium, resulting in physical or mental disturbances. Scientifically, we now know that over 70% of our body consists of water, further underscoring the importance of water for our well-being.
2. **Mmadu bu Okala Mmuo Okala Mmadu (A human being is half spirit and half human):** This principle emphasizes the need for equilibrium at all times to maintain good health and longevity. Any imbalances, whether physical, spiritual, or both, must be promptly restored for optimal health.
3. **Mii bu Nri Mbu Elili n'Onu (Water is the first edible food by mouth):** In traditional Abor society, when a child is born, the first food offered is *mii otokono* (water from a stream or river) or *mii idenyi* (floodwater). To understand this tradition, consider that when a woman becomes pregnant, she is said to be "on the sky" (*O no n'enu*). When she gives birth, she is referred to as '*Olidatawo n'enu*' (She has come down from the sky), symbolizing a journey that takes about 9-10 months. When the child comes out, he/she is expected to cry with or without stimulation, "*Uwa aa! Uwa aa!!*" This literally means "This world! This world!!"

As narrated by Chief Elias Eruchie, from Ozalla Abor (2023), , water is regarded as the first proof that a newborn is human, not monster or nondescript being known as *Uruchi* or *ishiriishi*. In traditional Igbo society, after the cry of *Uwaa!* the newborn is given the first edible food, *mii ogwugwo/mii idenyi/mii otokono* to drink. Both the mother and the newborn are bathed or cleaned up with the same water. This is both internal and external cleansing and also a welcome gesture to the family. It is important to note that the water used is flood water, collected in a clay pot (*ite otokono*). This kind of water incorporates all impurities from the atmosphere, the ground level of human, animal, vegetable, bacterial, viral, mineral and excreta, pollutants, new and old. This also serves as inoculation/vaccination as the flood water contained all germs particular to that community. If the child survives after seven Igbo weeks (*izu isaa/ asaa*) known as *Omugo*, then it means he/she has come to stay in this dimension of consciousness.

In so doing, the child has also been immunized and able to fight the common pathogens in the area due to the inoculation.

Giving the new baby that first water is also a test for fitness to dwell in the land as humans. If the child drinks the water without choking, the child is said to have passed the first test of being human and is then, taken into the house and placed on *Ogwe* (traditional wooden bed).. Breadfruit tree (*nku ukwa*) was used to keep both child and mother warm and comfortable for one Igbo month (*Izu Asaa*) or 28 days. If the child survived, then he/she has passed the second test of being human and naming ceremony and other outing performances then commence. Further details on this can be found in other chapters.

It is important to note that, a traditional Abor person believes that a person has four names: one given by their Chi (personal god) at birth, one based on the market day they were born (Eke, Orie, Afo, or Nkwo), the second given by the paternal grandfather or their representative, the third by the father during the naming ceremony, and the fourth given by the maternal grandfather or their representative.

Water is employed by every Abor person for cleansing and purifying objects to prevent physical germs and ward off negative spiritual forces. This is reflected in two axioms: "*Mii bu eji asa ihe*" (Water is used for cleaning things) and "*Ejighi ihe asa mii*" (nothing is used in cleaning water).

This is part of the reasons why in the past, an Abor person will commence the day by taking a cold bath in the morning or by washing their hands, feet and mouth with water. After that, he will proceed to clean his teeth with chewing sticks which could be from *Abosi*, *Ugogolo*, *Ujulu* or *Anyasi* trees. Following this purification ritual, they will proceed to say their prayers, starting with breaking of kolanut (*oji*) to start the day. Additionally, the house and compound are swept clean as a symbolic act of purification. The nutritional and spiritual significance of kola nut and the choice of chewing sticks may be found in other chapters.

Mii/, (water) also has spiritual implications in Abor cosmology beyond the purifying effect. It is used to cleanse a deceased relative, performed by *Umunne ndiom* (female relatives irrespective of age or marital status), to assist the deceased member in their transition to the ancestral world. Symbolically, the tears of *Umunne ndiom* and others signify the washing and cleansing of the deceased, considered the greatest gift to the departed. Hence, phrases like "*Ada bu ishi, Otukwu n'ishi ogo*" acknowledge the importance of female relatives in these ceremonies.

Sources of Water used in Traditional Abor Healthcare.

1. **Mii Otokono (Rivers and Streams):** As previously discussed, water from rivers and streams plays a vital role in traditional Abor healthcare. It serves as a crucial element in cleansing, purification, and various medicinal preparations. Clean, flowing water from these natural sources is highly esteemed in the traditional healing practices of Abor.

2. **Mii Mgbana or Mii Ozizo Aghotalu n'Enu or n'Igwe (Water from the Sky or Heaven):** This refers to water collected directly from the sky or heaven, often during rainfall. Some specific medicines require this source of water for their potency. Additionally, it is used for cleansing in a process known as "*ite egwu mii*," which translates to "dancing the rain music." As children we used to dance and bathe outside the compound when the rain was falling without collecting it in a container. Parents even encourage their children to go and dance to the rain music. As my grandmother, Egbeocha Okpokwu, would say, "*Jewe solu ibe gh tewe egwu mii*." Little did I understand at that time the full meaning of that statement. To be honest, some of us children, at that time, did not like the idea of *ite egwu mii*.

3. **Mii Uji Oshishi or Mii Mkpulu Osis (Tree Hollows and Fruit Water):** This category encompasses water collected from the natural hollows or holes of trees and water contained inside fruits. For instance, coconut water is known for its medicinal properties, particularly as an antidote for poison. It is also a good source of vitamins for good health. Water found in banana trunks (*mii okpolo ji n'enu*), sugar cane (*mii ohu okpete*), cocoyam leaves (*mii mpoto ede*), and other similar sources fall into this group. *Mii ohu okpete*, for instance, is used in making charms for longevity, as ohu okpete is never without water.

A sub-type of this *mmili uji oshishi* is *mmanya nkwu enu* (palm wine): This needs special mention due to its various uses. Palm wine is usually collected from the tree by a vessel or container known as "*di oti*," the wine tapper. When it is kept without touching the ground, it is called "*mmanya ohu esu Ani*" or "*mmanya ohu elu Ani*." This kind of palm wine is very important in certain medicine preparations and in the ritual choice of candidates for certain important traditional posts. It is also used in preparing poultices for measles (*Elubala*). Additionally, various wines have their social, political, economic, ritual, rites, and magical roles and functions and usages, covered by other chapters of this book...

4. **Mii Igiligi Onu Ututu (Morning Dew):** Early morning dew collected from the tips of grass and tree leaves serves a particular purpose in treating aspects of poison resulting from snakebites or scorpion stings.

5. **Mii Iyi (Freshwater from Springs and Streams):** "*Mii Iyi*" refers to freshwater sourced from springs and streams. The source, known as "*Ishi mii*," plays a vital role in preparing traditional medicine and is involved in various religious rituals. This type of water serves as the primary sustenance, cleanser, and healer for various ailments in precolonial Abor. For those that had bathed in *Iyi Ohune* or *Iyi Ofie* (the two main streams in Abor), the healing experience is beyond words, and the health implications of *ighune ogo* (peeled cassava) or *ighune eji* washed in both streams are indescribable.

Till date, water remains the best medicine in Abor traditional healthcare. Water is used in welcoming a new baby in Abor, sustaining all and used in sending forth a deceased Abor person to his or her ancestral land. This means that, in the world view of an Abor person, water, plays an important role in the beginning and the end of life in this physical realm.

Igba Okpukpu - Orthopedic Healthcare

Igba Okpukpu, bone setting, played a significant role in traditional Abor healthcare. An unnamed Abor man from history was renowned as an exceptional bone setter during this era. Interestingly, he chose not to share his bone-setting secrets with others, keeping his methods closely guarded. His decision to withhold this knowledge earned him both envy and enemies, ultimately leading to his untimely demise. Reportedly, his skills surpassed even those of *Okwa k'maa* (known as "fixer like the spirits") from Okpatu town in Ojebeogene.

The techniques employed by this enigmatic bone setter were said to involve a combination of poultices crafted from various herbs and plants, which acted as natural antibiotics. Additionally, extracts from palm fronds were utilized as bandages in his treatments. Sadly, with his passing, Abor lost this undocumented modality of orthopedic medicine, and his secret remained forever concealed.

Historical accounts reveal that water, herbs, and even soil were fundamental components incorporated by Abor bone setters in the preparation of their casts. Remarkably, during the colonial era under Onyeama, some Abor men were reported to have performed surgical procedures using topical anesthetics derived from herbs. They also employed ropes made from palm fronds (known as "*elili igu nkwu*") to prevent wound dehiscence. Mr. Elias Eruchie (2023) shared a remarkable tale of one such surgery, performed on Akpatulu Ukam's mother, a woman from Ngwuagu Abor. Her abdomen had been grievously cut open with a cutlass during a heated argument, and this innovative method successfully saved her life. This account exemplifies the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Abor healthcare practitioners in the face of adversity.

Sound Medicine and Vibrational Healing in Precolonial Abor

In accordance with the profound wisdom encapsulated in the Hermetic principle that "Nothing rests; everything moves," traditional Abor people understood that spirits communicate not through language but through vibration. This concept resonates with the wisdom of Ndugu Imani Nassor, who articulated, "Spirits don't speak a language, it's a Vibration".

Ndi Igbo, including ndi Abor, had recognized the healing power of music from time immemorial. This insight prompted them to incorporate various musical instruments into their cultural fabric, with a special emphasis on drums such as the Ekwe, Udu, and Ogene. These instruments were integral to ancestral gatherings, whether they were occasions of joy or sorrow. Regrettably, for many contemporary individuals, centuries of historical erasure have obscured the intricacies of this cultural heritage.

In the precolonial era of Abor, the profound impact of music on the human spirit and its connection to ancestral vibrations were fundamental aspects of their culture. Vibrations emanating from various musical instruments served as a means to invoke ancestral spirits, and when finely tuned, these vibrations could elicit extraordinary performances from individuals. The source of this power lay in the ability of these vibrations to awaken certain feelings, connecting individuals to the ancestral resonance that existed long before their own conception.

To truly grasp the significance of this phenomenon and the profound relationship it shares with our ancestral heritage through music and dance, one must recognize that it extends far beyond

mere entertainment. In the precolonial era, our ancestors understood the inherent healing power embedded within these vibrations. It wasn't merely a form of amusement; it was a spiritual and therapeutic practice deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. As we reflect on these age-old practices and their implications for modern times, it becomes evident that we have the potential to elevate our healing practices, particularly in the realm of mental health. The wisdom of our ancestors, who harnessed sound as a means to invoke spirits, raise vibrational energy, promote positivity, and boost self-esteem, holds invaluable lessons for us today.

Different types of music, encompassing chants, dances, vocals, incantations, whistling, and humming, have played a pivotal role in the traditional healing practices of Abor's medicine men and herbalists. These musical expressions were not only therapeutic but also served as a bridge connecting healthcare professionals to a spiritual realm through their *Agwu Nsi*, the universal conscious mind for healing.

In the precolonial era, music held a multifaceted role, functioning not only as a direct curative agent but also as a conduit for healthcare practitioners to access a spiritual plane unavailable to contemporary healers. This profound connection with the spiritual dimension is reflected in the Abor expression, "*Egwu (Agwu) o na evu gi?*" which translates to "Has spirit taken hold of you?" In contemporary Christian terms, this might be likened to speaking in tongues. Within Igbo spirituality, *Agwu* operates in conjunction with *Akpa Uche*, the universal mind, to influence the human psyche. This spiritual synergy forms the basis of musical therapy employed in managing mental health disorders.

The author of this work has personally witnessed the transformative effects of music therapy, particularly when administered at a specific vibrational frequency, on individuals grappling with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression. An illustrative example from the 1980s highlights the efficacy of this approach, where a group of approximately twenty individuals with severe mental illness, guided by just one or two therapists, engaged in a therapeutic journey. They embarked on a remarkable expedition, walking miles around Enugu metropolis while playing melodious and soothing music. This achievement would have been a formidable challenge without the therapeutic power of music, even when supplemented with the most potent psychotropic medications.

During the author's psychiatric rotation as a medical student at the Enugu Psychiatric Hospital in New Haven, Enugu, Nigeria, Late Dr. Ferdinand Nnadi, the hospital's Chief Medical Officer and an Abor first-born Psychiatrist from Ngwuagu village, elucidated the therapeutic benefits of music therapy. Dr. Nnadi emphasized that "Music therapy also potentiates the effects of the oral or intravenous medicine that we give patients. This modality has been practiced by my people from time immemorial".

Another esteemed figure in Abor's traditional healing heritage, Ibekwe Mba Nwa Anika, was renowned for incorporating music into the treatment of severe mental illnesses. Patients from far and wide sought his expertise at his treatment center in Amukwu village, where they would stay for weeks or months until their mental health was fully restored. His holistic approach combined herbs, roots, animal parts, and music therapy, resulting in profound healing

experiences. Tragically, this gifted native psychiatrist departed from this world without passing on his knowledge to any of his family members or any known successor.

A range of musical instruments, including Ogene, Ekwe, Oyo, Mgbilingba, Udu, and others, were integral to music therapy. Each instrument vibrated at distinct frequencies, drawing upon energies from the universe at various levels. When a specific frequency aligned with an individual's vibrational energy, a transformation occurred, facilitating healing and restoration. Also, the combination of different instruments could produce frequencies unattainable by any single instrument. This principle justified the use of ensembles in traditional musical therapy. Vibration represents the energy of the spirit, affirming the notion that we are spiritual beings undergoing a physical experience. Many physical ailments stem from spiritual or psychological imbalances. When the vibrational frequency emitted by music resonated with the disharmony on the psychological or spiritual plane, a redress unfolded, resulting in restoration and healing.

Intriguingly, some traditional healers enlisted their own musicians to accompany them during their Ogwu ceremonies, known as Ime Ogwu. Others incorporated chants and incantations to infuse potency into their Ogwu before administering it to their clients. Prior to initiating healing sessions in other towns, some healers would perform salutations and pay respects to the spirits and ancestors of the host town. This recognition of the vibrational power of words underscored the belief that if the spirits and ancestors did not welcome the visiting Dibia, their efforts would be in vain.

Furthermore, appropriate music could effectively alleviate negative emotions, including sadness, envy, jealousy, stress, anxiety, and grief. Many have witnessed the healing power of music during the loss of loved ones, especially during *Uno ekwa* (wake-keeping) and funeral ceremonies. It is almost magical to observe bereaved individuals experiencing moments of relief and joy, even if only for a fleeting minute, as they resonate with a specific vibrational frequency. These profound experiences, among others, underscore why *Umunne Ndiomu* Abor continues the tradition of playing music throughout the night for days during the mourning of their beloved siblings. This practice embodies the belief in music's extraordinary ability to heal and console, even in the darkest hours.

Ichi Mpu (Healing with heat/pressure)

The application of heat at different temperatures and by various methods has been a time-honored healing practice in Abor. One particular method enumerated below, is the technique of *Ichi Mpu*, which has been given the name Cupping Therapy in Western medicine.

Cupping therapy is an ancient form of alternative medicine wherein the therapist or healer places special cups on the patient's skin for a few minutes, creating suction. This therapeutic approach serves various purposes, including pain management, inflammation reduction, improved blood flow, stress relief, relaxation, and deep-tissue massage. Traditionally, the cups used for this therapy were made of clay.

I vividly recall witnessing Ngwu Nwa Obodo of Ngwuagu village in Abor using this method to heal my brother, Christopher, when he had suffered a head injury and developed hematoma as an infant. I remember how Ngwu Nwa Obodo heated the clay cup, made a small incision,

and applied it to the affected area. After a few cupping sessions, the swelling subsided. Upon learning about cupping therapy as practiced in the USA, I conducted research and realized that it was the exact same method as *Ichi Mpu* that I had observed in Abor during my childhood.

Today, in Hollywood, California, USA, this method has gained popularity. While the cups used there may be made of glass, bamboo, earthenware, silicone, or other materials instead of our traditional clay cups, the technique remains unchanged. It's worth noting that cupping therapy dates back to the ancient Egyptians in 1,550 BC.

Iku Ume Ndu (Breath Healing/Breath Work)

This therapeutic modality involves healing through words and breaths, primarily used by our traditional Abor people, to treat mental and psychological illnesses that manifested as physical ailments. This practice is akin to the contemporary Breath Work treatment modality now prevalent in the Western world. Over centuries, Iku Ume Ndu has been employed to boost energy, enhance immunity, and alleviate stress.

Onu Atu (Healing by words – a special kind of vibrational healing by words and herbs)

Throughout history, the practices of *Iku Ume Ndu* and *Onu Atu* have been employed by Abor traditional people to heal various illnesses. A particular tree known as *Akanta*, when properly prepared with *Nkwu Enu*, was used for the effective and swift restoration of an individual's wholeness, by restoring the essential connection between the mind/intellect (*ako na uche*) and *Agwu* or *Uche Chukwu* (Universal conscious mind). Specific parts of the *Akanta* tree, when combined with other ingredients and mystically fashioned around an appropriate needle, (*aga* or *ntutu*) by a powerful medicine man or woman, could confer the user temporal potent mouth of *onu Atu* (One Source words). With this *Onu Atu*, the practitioner calls the disequilibrium to balance thereby healing the disorder.

Traditional Abor Preventive Health Care

Traditional preventive measures practiced in Abor took the form of food, charms, adherence to the laws of the land (*nso ani* or *iwu ani*), and leading a spiritually guided life that is clean and pure.

Food as a Preventive Measure for Health Care and Longevity

Traditional Abor health practitioners recognized the importance of vitamins and elements found in plants, trees, animal products, and minerals. They consumed these elements in appropriate doses to maintain good health, prevent illnesses, enhance immunity, and promote longevity. With this knowledge, they ensured that the community incorporated these herbs into their daily diets. Here are some examples of plants, herbs, animal products, and their nutritional benefits, providing valuable sources of calories, fats, proteins, and more:

Animal Products in general can provide a variety of micronutrients that are difficult to obtain in adequate quantities from plant source food alone. Animal food products are also rich in calories, protein, iron, vitamins, and minerals. They are part and parcel of Abor nutritional,

preventive and curative Traditional Health system, in the precolonial era. Details of the plants, herbs and trees are summarise below:

Akidi (black beans) – served as ½ cup contains about 8 grams of protein, 6 grams of fibre, 1 gram of fat, 21 grams of carbohydrate and significant mount t of iron, potassium, and other antioxidants. Unlike other substances that contain carbohydrates, akidi does not spike the blood sugar and it is said that when eaten with high spike sugar foods like rice, it minimizes the spike.

Bitter leaf – Good source of vitamins A, E, B2, B1 , Zinc, manganese, iron. Potassium and calcium. When eaten raw, it is a good remedy for stomach upset. Good for organ health.

Ogilishi (*Newbouldia laevis*) – used for fertility and purification. The leaves were used by the pre-colonial Abor people to enhance dreams, according to your channeled desire.. It is also an antidote for venomous stings and bites. The bark and roots are good remedies for seizures, spasms etc.

Ogili/ ugba ishi or okpei (castor seed, Locus beans) are some of the names of ogili/ogiri- in addition to being a good spice, a good source of nutrients that supports immune health.

Tomato and Red pepper – Rich in vitamins C and K, antioxidants, pain reliever, supports heart and prostate health.

Onion, Garlic – great source of antioxidants, helps to decrease the effects of common cold and flu, high blood pressure, blurry vision.

Cassava (*Akpu*) – Red stem- good for prostate health

Nsikala – Local Yellow plum, yellow mbebe. This is used by traditional midwives to hasten the detachment of placenta during delivery.

Akanta tree (*Rauvolfia Vomitoria*) – parts of this tree when combined with Nkwu enu is used to restore the disequilibrium in mental health disorders, especially psychotic disorders. It also contains chemicals that lower blood pressure, kill bacteria and cancer cells.

Spider silk- Good at controlling bleeding from a cut or puncture wound.

Ebube Agu plant (*Sansevieria Trifasciata*) – snake plant- juice from it used for dysentery. If you notice, the white part makes the plant look like the inside of a snake's mouth. When crushed with salt and water, it acts as good antimicrobial agents, and when massaged on the bite area of snake, the embedded teeth will come out.

Akpaka (Oil Bean - *Pentaclethra Macrophylla*): Rich in amino acids, minerals, and fatty acids, *akpaka* can fortify animal feed and has antibacterial and antimicrobial properties. It is also known to improve fertility.

Salt water – rich in minerals like magnesium, zinc, iron. Used for sore throat, help reduce inflammation, heal any scrapes.

Warm water – helps in wound healing, especially vaginal tear episiotomy after childbirth, it is a good vasodilator and helps to improve circulation.

Sage plant (*Salvia Officinalis*) – helps with memory, ease menopause symptoms, reduce blood pressure and cholesterol.

Cow manure – athlete feet, (*idide okpa*)

Honey – a good anti-inflammatory, an antioxidant and antibacterial agent. Used to treat cough, topically used to treat burns and promote wound healing.

Inine ojii (specie of spinach) – rich in iron (ferrous phosphate) improves obstetrics and gynecology health, blood tonic effect, reduces blood pressure, has anti-inflammatory properties.

Uhfie (Camwood - *Baphia Nitida*): Uhfie is used for skincare and rheumatoid arthritis.

Nzu – source of numerous minerals

Uda (*Xylopia aethiopica*) **and Uziza** – womb health, helps in inducing oxytocin, needed for lactation and bonding, treatment of menstrual issues, used for respiratory disease, asthma , bronchitis, digestive system.

Okpa (cowpea) – reduces LDL and total cholesterol, reduces spikes in blood sugar hence helps to control diabetes, rich in protein, fibre, digestible carbohydrates, potassium with low sodium content. May reduce hunger hormones and enhance weight loss.

Ede/Agbakata (*Cococasia Esculenta* -Taro): It is rich in fibre, has anticancer properties, low in calories when compared to other tubers like yam and cassava, good for heart health. It is also an antidote to so many food poisons. It is believed to drive away negative energies.

Ji/ Yam (*Dioscorea*) – In addition to being a good source of potassium, manganese, copper and antioxidants, yam may boost brain health, reducing inflammation. Very rich in calorie.

Palm Oil – Apart from giving a vibrant colour to food, palm oil provide's protection against heart disease. It is a good source of saturated and unsaturated fat. Unrefined palm oil may help to improve brain health, reduce heart disease risk factors. Palm oil is a good source of vitamin A.

Nkwu Enu (palm wine) – Post natal and lactation use (reference to an article by one of us, Dr. Chike Okamkpa). Palm wine is rich in vitamins A, C, and E as well as phosphorus, a good remedy for malaria, measles, and chicken pox.

In addition to preventive care, Pre colonial Abor people used plants, trees, and grass to constitute sacred instruments of the Spirits and Goddesses. These plants were regarded as the very symbols or visible manifestations of those spirits and Goddesses. They believe that those trees contribute to their wellness, prevention of diseases and spiritual protection. Some examples of those trees are:

1. **Ôgilisi** bu Ukwu Agwu. Ogilisi sacred tree, ritually planted to that effect, constitutes the visible altar of the Holy Spirit, Agwu, or the temple of God of Light (Agwu/Atu/Anyanwu). As a result, Ogilisi was used in building the family altar.
2. **Ogbu**: This is another sacred tree used in building the altar of the God of light known as Ogbu Anyanwu.
3. **Ôji Agwu**: Staff (the rod of Power or the sacred rattling staff of power held by Agwu and through Agwu by the Dibia). It is a sacred cactus which the ancient Egyptians described in the very manner the knowledgeable Igbo Dibia still describes, namely "Plant of the region where nothing sprouted, the blossom of hidden horizon."
4. **Akpü**: The sacred cotton tree is another important plant used in herbal remedies as well as in Odinani practice of spirituality.
5. **The Sacred Ngwu tree**: This is the very embodiment of male powers of the god of light or sun god. In Abor, till date, its masculine power is encapsulated in the maxim; *Ani n'efu Ngwu anagh efu Otulu*.
6. **Anunuebe/ Enunuebene**, the Igbo mystic plant, is an embodiment of the supremacy of God of Light or the Sun God at its peak. Akuebilisi, the Divine mystic wife of the Sun God's creative force symbolized by Anunuebe also known as Okwulu Okalicha the tallest tree, is **regarded as both the physical and spiritual statute of potency**.
7. **Oji Uloko (baptized Iroko)**: Uloko, also known as Iroko, is praised as *Oji Chukwu* and *Onye Ukwu Akwukwo Obala*—the Great-Mighty One, the Nest of the Blood of the God of Light. Even in present-day Dinigweze Village in Abor, there exists a family bearing the name *Umu Obala Ani*, a testament to the significance of this tree.

This reverence for trees and nature is encapsulated in the Igbo saying:

"Chukwu no n'osisi
O burugodi na o nogho ya, O no n'Akanta"

Which can be literally translated as:

"God is in the trees.
Even if He is not, He surely is in Akanta (the small God).

This saying reflects the profound understanding that the plant kingdom supplies the oxygen necessary for our breath, sustaining our very lives. Without oxygen, our cells would wither and die, underscoring the vital role of nature in our existence.

As previously mentioned, healthcare and longevity in precolonial and post-colonial Abor society result from a combination of diverse treatment modalities that encompass the use of herbs, plants, animals, water, music, chants, and other vibrational energies, either individually or in synergy. Abor, and by extension, Igbo, healthcare is founded on a science with its own rules and laws, adherence to which is crucial. This forms the essence of Odinani—living in harmony with the land.

References

- Oral interviews with individuals such as my mother, Nwadinume Uba Okolo, my aunt Amunagbaògwú Eneje, Ozo Eneje, Nze Elias Eruchie, and Professor Anenechukwu Umeh, as well as Reverend Father Austin Emeh.
- Experiential knowledge gained from participating in herbal practices with my grandmother Nneji Nwa Njeze Okolo and engaging in ritual cleansing with Ozo Emechima.
- J. A Umeh, "After God is Dibia."
- E. I Metuh, "God and Man in African Religion."
- Bannerman, R. H., "Traditional Medicine in Modern Health Care," WHO forum.
- Iwu, M.M., "Traditional Igbo Medicine," a report sponsored by the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria.
- Lecture by Dr. Boyd on "African American Remedies and Practical Applications," published by the University of New Orleans.
- Local TV interview by Reverend Father Anselm Adodo, a Catholic priest and traditional medicine practitioner at Pax Herbal Clinic in Lagos, Nigeria.
- Njenje Media TV host, Dr. Flora Ilouzo.

CHAPTER 14: Migrations from Abor: A Focus on Our Relatives in Diaspora (Dr. Chike Okamkpa)

Introduction

Migration is a universal phenomenon in the history of mankind as people have continued to move from one place to another perhaps for some socio-political and economic reasons. Fundamentally, it is a part of human nature. Since the earliest times, humanity has been on the move. No one really knows exactly when relocation began, but biblically the first recorded migration occurred when Cain slew his brother, Abel, and became a sojourner or rather a wanderer. Since then, migrations had taken place throughout human history, including the movement of the first human groups from their origins in East Africa to their current location in the world.

It may appear on the surface that the search for explanations of migration, as a social process, is a search for the obvious, yet historians and scholars of migration studies are still struggling to arrive at a consensus on the explanation of this concept and its changing dimensions. As a social process, migration discourse requires more than just a peripheral examination. There is then a need to look at the various dimensions and trends associated with this phenomenon.

According to research, people embark on migration for various reasons. It is apparent that most migrations in Africa and, to an extent the world, are usually explained on economic and political forces, yet there are other dimensions and reasons why people leave their homes for another. People migrate in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, religious, educational, social, financial, economic or other environmental factors, while others move to escape conflict, persecution, terrorism, or human rights violations. Some others moved in search of open land for settlement and space. There were those that moved away because of persecution from one traditional challenge or the other. The nature of mobility appeared to have depended on much in response to the need to satisfy insatiable human wants and to bridge the gap nature created in the unequal distribution of natural resources.

Lack of Detailed Migration Histories in Abor

Like other African peoples and indeed, Igbo people, much of the traditions of origin of the Abor people in present Udi Local Government of Enugu State have not been committed to detailed historical research over time. The histories of the Abor origin, migration, dispersal and settlement exist mainly in oral forms. Therefore, reconstructing the history of Abor with respect to migration depends largely on oral tradition and suffers from defects usually encountered in using oral traditions as a source of history. However, certain factor account for the migration of people from one geographical location to another, especially in the pre-colonial era.

This Chapter will discuss migration dimensions from Abor in historical perspective. Issues of origin, migration and settlement occupy a central place in the history of any human society. People understand their history by first understanding their roots, and the trajectories of their migration and settlements. Far from being merely of historical significance, some of these narratives of migration would appear to have strong resonance up to the present time and have

over time and context become part of ethnic identities and of mythico-historical narratives of migration in Africa.

Many preliterate societies find it difficult to reconstruct their history from the real origin. The history of the Abor in southeast Nigeria is an example of such a society. This history is shrouded with the problem regarding family migrations out of Abor and trace of original identity of our brothers in diaspora.

Meaning of Diaspora

The term diaspora finds its root in the Greek language and is based on a translation of the Hebrew word, Galut. In the Ancient Greece, the word referred to migration and colonization while in Hebrew, “the term initially referred to the setting of colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile and has assumed a more general connotation of people settled away from their ancestral homelands. Generally speaking, the term diaspora describes a group of migrants who live physically dispersed within the boundaries of many other communities but remain socially, politically, culturally and often economically part of the community of their ancestors. In some cases, they maintain their ethnic tradition with a strong feeling of collectiveness. Thus Abor people in diaspora here does not necessarily refer to the Abor people recently living in various parts of the world, who regularly or intermittently come back home to Abor, rather the Abor indigenes that have migrated and resettled in other neighbouring communities and might now be regarded as people of these other places.

One of the engaging findings of this study about the migrations of some Abor people concerns the Umuebo kindred in Akpuoga-Nike, presently in Enugu East LGA, whose ancestral origin has been traced to Abor. Originally, it is legendary that Nike was biologically related to Egede and Affa. As a matter of fact, they were assumed to come from the same mother, Ugwunye. According to historians and anthropologists, Nike is a confederation of 24 village-groups and , some of these villages have boundaries with communities in Ojebeogene clan. Ugwunani and Ozalla communities in Abor share boundaries with Ezicama and Nokpa, Alulu Nike.

Among the Kindred that made up the Akpuoga-Nike community, Umuebo family, through oral tradition, traced their ancestral origin to the Ikeaduba kindred of Umudioku clan in Ubiekpo village, Udi local Government Area of Enugu State. The Igbo society in the pre-colonial period was not at all times peaceful. There were moments, as we witness today, when tensions and open physical conflicts ensued. In the words of Ugwu Nwannaji Nwa Alum Nwaike, an elderly man from Umuebo, who was interviewed for this work, “interactions among human beings are most times characterized by intolerance which in turn engenders tensions and conflicts”. In other words, as long as human beings exist and interact, conflicts are bound to ensue amongst them. He reiterated that disagreements and disenchantments generated a lot of bad feelings amongst member families of the Ikeaduba family. The skirmishes eventually progressed into an unresolved conflict which prompted some member families to flee their home.

Put so tersely, the history of migration leaves out a number of variants. For instance, one tradition claims that Ogbu a son of Ikeaduba and his household fled Ubiekpo, Abor, in search of peace while the other version claims that *Ogbu nwa Ikeaduba* the ancestral father of Umuebo Akpuoga Nike died in Ubiekpo village Abor. This version, according to Ugwu Nwannaji Nwa Alum Nwaike, asserted that the erupted conflict spurred some members of the Ikeaduba family mostly the sons of Ogbu and their family members to flee their ancestral home in search of peaceful fortune elsewhere. From all indications, the Umuebo family never had any particular place in mind to which they were migrating to, and their migration was not accomplished in one swoop. The migration on foot involved men, women, children, and infants. The long journey was made on foot and took the form of stage by stage (long trekking) movement. Several personalities who led the journey included *Oko nwa Ogbuene nwa Ikeaduba*, *Okoji nwa Ogbuene nwa Ikeaduba*, *Alum nwa Nnaji*, *nwaogbuene nwa Ikeaduba*, *Ngwaanome*, *Nnaji nwa Alum Nike*, to mention but a few.

Their new settlement was largely endowed with natural resources and rich soil that favoured agricultural production. The availability of enormous resources attracted more migrants. The people of Umuebo were as at that time the only group of migrants around the settlement that knew of their precise place of origin. **Chief Jerome Agbo Ugwu Nwanomah Nwaogbuene, son of late Chief Elias Agbougwu Nwanomah Nwaogbuene Nwaikeaduba, the first onowu of Mbulujodo-Nike autonomous community, an elder and traditionalist from Umuebo kindred of Akpuoga-Nike** informed the researchers that his grandfather used to tell him that the Umuebo family migrated from somewhere in Abor a very long time ago; and that he was equally told that the migration was not smooth but fraught with difficulties and challenges posed by some other inhabitants of their present day abode. He claimed that their ancestors were very boastful of the fact that they are very much aware of their place of origin and thus kept on passing it down from generation to generation.

Similar to the migration theory of Umuebo kindred, oral tradition identified the ancestral home of Mr Ben Igwe, whose ancestral children presently bear the family name Iffi in Amokwe Udi, Udi local government area of Enugu State. The kindred are of the lineage of Ozoukwuani of the Igwe Umuamadiugo, Umuozor, Ubiekpo Abor. The family has since reintegrated as it was alleged that Mr Ben Igwe contributed financially in the construction of Obunenu (Masquerade abode) in Obodo Ubiekpo. The funeral rites of Mr Ben Igwe, were also held many years after his death at the his ancestral home.

Also of note is the ancestral ties between the kindred of Umuagu in Uwenu, Amukwu Village Abor and the Amukwu Ogui Nike Enugu.

It is worthy of note that human migration is an innate part of civilization and we believe that oral history can play a very important role in helping to document and preserve these important oral history testimonies.

According to Bachelet, we as a people need stories that show that the values we hold in common are stronger than what divides us. Stories that inspire and connect us, rather than tearing us further apart; stories that paint a hopeful picture of the future we share bearing in mind that we are all migrants.



Dr. Chike Okamkpa with an oral educator Mrs Eucharia Nwigbo Ikogwu nee Ikeaduba

Sir Joseph Ogbu nwa Nnaji nwa
Ogbuene nwa Ikeaduba, Onye - ishi
[Oha] Akpuoga-Nike

Bibliography

- Anidi A.O. (2008), *Sands of Our Land Historical Tales of Abor and Umuavulu*. Enugu: Fidgina Global Books.
- Anidi, R.C (2022), An Architect, indigene of Umuavulu Abor interviewed on the Ozo Title in Abor and other traditional political structures on July 2022 in his residence at Savage Crescent GRA Enugu,
- Basden, G.T. (1966). Among the Ibos of Nigeria. London: Frank Cass and Co.
- Edict No 8 1976, Official Gazzette No. 31, Volume 1 of 25th November 176.
- Egudu, R.N (1977), The Socio, Ethical and Philosophical Significance of the Ozo Title Institution among Igbo People. A paper presented at the Seminar on Ozo Title in Igbo Land, conducted by Anambra State Ministry of Education and Information on the 19th October 1977, held at Enugu.
- Eze, D (2016), A Critical Review of the Evolution of Kingship System among the Igbo Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 8(1) pp 1-7. DOI.org/10.5897/IJSA 20150607, retrieved 18/9/22.
- Harneit-Sievers, A.(1999), 'Igbo 'Traditional Rulers': Chieftaincy and the State in Southeastern Nigeria,' *Africa Spectrum* 33 (1):57-79.
- Ifemesia C.C (1979). Traditional Human Living Among Igbo: An Igbo Historical perspective. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Menakaya, J.C (1977), The Place of Ozo Title in Igbo Land. A paper presented at the Seminar on Ozo Title in Igbo Land, conducted by Anambra State Ministry of Education and Information on the 19th October 1977, held at Enugu.
- Meredith M. (2011). The State of Africa. London: Simon and Schuster.
- Nwabunani, E. (2006). Igbo Political System. DOI: 10.4314/Inr.v12i1.46479. Vol.12. <http://www.ajol.info> retrieved 23/08/22.
- Nwokoye, C and Chukwurah, C (2001), *Omenala na Odinala Nri (A Compendium of Nri Cultures, Customs & Traditions)*. Awka::Scoa Heritage Publishers
- Okamkpa, J.O (2022), A Retiree, indigene of Abor interviewed on the political traditional structures from the pre-colonial period to date on May 2022 in his residence at Green Lake Kporoko Layout New GRA Enugu.
- Okere, B.O (2008), Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy Under the Nigerian Constitution. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, Volume 32, Issue 1, pp.214-228. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/iciqaj/32.1.214>. Retrieved from [cambridge.org](https://www.cambridge.org) on 20/07/2022.
- Omeayo A.S (2011), Ozo Social Institution in Ojebe Ogene: The Old and The New. *Ojebe Ogene Search Light*, Vol. 1 No 1pg 38, December 2011-December 2012.
- Orjiobasi, M.E. (2019) The Ezeanu People of Enugu State, 1908-1976. MA Project Delta State University, Abraka.
- Ozonwedu, G (2022), A Businessman, indigene of Abor and member of the Igwe in Council interviewed on the current traditional political structure in Abor and the composition of the members. The interview took place during a meeting of the Iyime Awubu Club members at Dr. Chike Okamkpa's residence on 6th August 2022.
- Pedler, F.J. (1959). *West Africa*. London: Willmers Brothers and Haram.

- Rousseau, J.J (1762). *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right (Du Contract Social ou Principes du DroitPolitique)*. Amsterdam: Penguin.
- Uzoigwe, G. N. (2009), 'Evolution and Relevance of Autonomous Communities in Contemporary Igboland: An Essay in Local Governance,' *The Journal of Third World Studies*, Fall.
- Uzoigwe, G.N. (2004),), 'Evolution and Relevance of Autonomous Communities in Pre-Colonial Igboland: An Essay in Local Governance,' *Journal of Third World Studies - Spring*.