



Traditional Music Performance of Egwu-Ede in Ovoko Community, Enugu State of Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the traditional music in Enugu State that teaches moral and educate both the young and old in Egwu-Ede music. The people of Ovoko in Enugu State Nigeria are known for their traditional music of Egwu-Ede and its traditional performance which always project the image and culture of Ovoko people. However, in a bid to avoid extinction of the performance and culture to contemporary music or modernization. This research employed the use of ethnographic method to which require field work and desk work in Ovoko community. Content in African music are designed to communicate issues about the society to audience or listeners. As a medium of documentation of events in the life of people, its performance, owe it a responsibility to repay societal issues through a platform that can best be understood by listener. The necessity of this research therefore, is to document the traditional music and performance of Egwu-Ede in Ovoko and give a scholarly approach to the various musical instruments used in its performance.

Key words: Traditional, Music, Egwu-Ede, and Instruments

Introduction: Odogwu Music

According to Ugwu, F.A (2021), in the discus of Egwu-Ede and its social-cultural implication in Ovoko community, Enugu State, Nigeria, she expressed that:

“Ovoko people are well known for their traditional music of different categories that vary in quality to suit various occasions. The selection of membership and instruments also varies from one music to another. These different types of music are made to suit occasions like title-taking, funeral ceremonies, cultural festivals, traditional wedding ceremonies, masquerade, cults, and initiation into adulthood, to mention but a few” (p2).

There are step-by-step process in Ovoko towards the tradition and performance of egwu-ede. Odogwu music is another step towards *ede* title-taking in Ovoko. It comes after Umuayalagi. Odogwu is performed every year and takes place during the second week of the second month of the year. Like ayalagi, it tells the initiate that he is a man in the making. The odogwu aspirant is bound to stay indoors. He is attended by a servant whose duty is to decorate and beautify the aspirant and the surrounding. Nzu and odo are mainly used for these decorations. The aspirant cooks and entertains his guest, while the initiated stay in the obi (palace) where unclean things are never kept. After twelve days of practice, he dances to the public glare in the village square. Two boys play the music for him.

Socio-Cultural Implications of Egwu-EdeInOvoko Community

Egwu-ede is highly regarded in Ovoko community. It is a symbol of dignity, prestige, nobility and class. *Egwu-ede* is a ceremonial music meant strictly for the *ede* titled-men and the traditional ruler (igwe of Ovoko). It has some socio-cultural implications. Time and occasion determines who takes part in *egwu-ede*. It is an esoteric but instrumental music used to praise the Igwe, oshioko and *ede* men in Ovoko. *Ede* title taking in Ovoko is a prerequisite for one being made an oshioko, odo or Igwe in Ovoko. These calibers of people understood and interpret the language of the drum.

Apart from the musical functions, instruments that constitute the *egwu-ede* also serve extra-musical functions. The wooden slit drums serve as a medium for information and communication. It informs the *ede* titled men of any initiation into the *ede* institution in Ovoko. During the investiture of an *ede* initiate, the Igba communicates with the *ede* aspirant and even the *ede* titled men. It makes calls and warning signals. In some of the examples, the Igba calls the *ede* titled men in Ovoko to come together. Again, it equally calls an *ede* man to order, especially when he starts making promises he could not fulfil by saying “*ekwelenkwaigemetugi*”.

The instruments could also be used for symbolic representations. The male and female Igba, for example, are used to give signals and for directing the *ede* man during performance, while the oyo and the *oja* acts as accompaniments to the Igba. The oyo is also used in attracting attention during ceremonies. *Egwu-ede* drums are generally regarded sacred in the sense that before and after use, certain rites must be performed. For instance, before the Igba are brought out, a cock, a keg of palm wine, four igbo kola nuts and three tubers of yam are presented *foreja* (rituals) to appease the deities and the ancestors and to request for a successful performance. The blood of the cock is sprinkled at the head of the drums and some feathers stuck to them. After the performance, a chick (*uyriomokuko*) is also used for purification against any evil act during the performance.

Egwu-ede features in social occasions like the coronation of the Igwe of Ovoko and during festival which is a bi-annual event. The music gladdens the occasions, gives information about the Igwe and reminds him of his achievements and that of the town. At burial ceremonies of *ede* titled-men, the music features for 28 days during which time it acts as a means of communications between the living and the dead. It is generally said that the drum beckons on a man twice-at his initiation into *ede* and at his death. It is believed that the lyrics directs the spirit of the dead peacefully to the spirit world. Two wooden sticks instead of the usual sticks from the mid rib of palm fronds are used to beat the Igba at the burial because, after the burial, the sticks are being buried with the dead and it signify mourning. The wooden sticks are cast away after the man’s burial. Then the usual sticks from the mid rib of palm fronds are finally used to beat the drums to purify the household of the deceased.

Instruments, Music and Costume

The instruments used in odogwu music are Ikoru and Igba. The Music is purely instrumental. The odogwu aspirant is almost stark naked except for the small pant that barely covers his private part. He puts on a necklace made of cowrie shells, a hat made of cowrie shells, beads on his legs and an oxtail and a walking stick.

odogwu music



Other Minor Title S Associated with Ede Odo

This is the only minor title not accompanied with music. It is completely no-musical. The ceremony comes after odogwu. The duration of odo is determined by the *ede* aspirant who presents five thousand Naira (5,000), a cock, three tubers of yam, and a kola nut for the ceremony.

Oshioko

Oshioko, literally meaning 'leader', symbolically tells the aspirants that it is time to lead and to face the realities of his marriage on one hand and the society on the other hand. For Oshioko, marriage is a prerequisite. Like the other minor titles, it is performed exclusively for the aspirant's kin's men (umunna). But unlike other titles, it introduces the initiates to some minor priestly functions and family obligations.

Performance of Egwu-Ede Instruments that Constitute the Egwu-Ede Orchestra

Africans attach great importance to instruments in accompanying their music. Various types of instruments exist in Africa and one of the characteristics of African music is its enormous varieties of musical instruments. *Egwu-ede* is one of the African music in which traditional musical instruments are used.

The instruments that constitute the *egwu-ede* orchestra are some instruments of idiophone and aerophone families. They are made of a pair of medium wooden slit drums, a pair of basket rattle known as oyo and a flute known as *oja*. The *egwu-ede* orchestra comprises instruments from struck and shaken idiophone families. The wooden slit drums belong to the struck idiophone while oyo belongs to the shaken idiophone. Two drums that are used in the music are classified as male and female. The male is bigger than the female. The male is known as *Igba* which is always in the right-hand side of the player. The female is known as *NwunyeIgba*, and is always at the left-hand side of the player.

The two drums are played by one performer with two sticks made from the mid-rib of palm fronds. The sticks called 'beaters' are used simultaneously. The hands cross each other while playing. The male usually calls or start the music while the female responds. The female has a deeper tone than the male.

Physical Description of Egwu-Ede Instruments

Egwu-ede instruments are a pair of slit wooden drum, a pair of rattle and a flute as shown in plate 6. *Igba* comprising two medium wooden slit drums of about two feet long and ten inches in diameter are usually placed on pads, which are round woven materials made from dried raffia. The pads not only help to keep the instruments in balance but provide a good resonator for them. Each drum has two resonating lips about a tonal interval of a third apart. This represents a transposition of three primary speech tone levels in Igbo language, which gives about a third above and below a middle pivot tone. The wooden slit drum is made from the bore of cam wood tree (*oshishiobara*). The back of the cam- wood log is removed and the inside is scraped out to have a uniform wall of about half a centimeter, all round each side of the wooden drum. The Oyo (basket rattle) is calabash based, with basketry upper part, covered with raffia fringes. It is cone shaped and the handle is made of cane covered with raffia. The basket is filled with apple seeds or pebbles. The *oja* (flute) is a product of wood technology based on the discovery by the Igbo through oral tradition and advanced by traditional craftsmen. The Igbo word, *oja*, refers to an end blown wooden aero- phone.

Constructions and Roles of The Instruments In The Ensemble

Africans make their music with materials they find around them. it is said that environment is a determinant factor in people's music. It is a natural tendency in man to make use of the resources around him to satisfy his needs. Ede music originated from Amaja and the people had no alternative than to make use of cam wood available to them for the construction of *Igba*, and palm fronds for the beater and rattle (*ishaka*) and (*Mbeyi*) tree for the flute.

Construction of The Igba

The *Igba* is constructed from the bore of cam wood tree (*oshishiobara*). The cam wood tree is cut down in the forest with extreme care, with the axe and cutlass. The main three trunks is then cut into logs of desired length, sun-dried and preserved until ready for use. The logs are thereafter cuts into approximate key sizes, followed simultaneously by the scrapping, scooping, trimming and tuning process. A simple short handled axe is the main tool used by the craftsman, though the carpenters' plane could be used for smoothing and a sharp scrapping knife for fine tuning.

The inside of the log is scooped out to obtain a uniform wall of about half a centimeter around each side of the wooden drum. The makers ensure the production of both high and low pitches during the construction. They affect this through the thickness of the two lips of the instrument. The thicker lip produces low pitch while the thinner lip produces high pitch.

The drum sticks (beaters) are fashioned from the mid-rib of the palm fronds. The principle governing this choice is that beaters made of hard wood would produce sharp, harsh tones and would also crack and break the thin resonating lips of a slit drum.

It is constructed by master craftsmen and sculptor who may not be musicians. They either work according to the musician's prescription regarding the size and species needed or musicians could select and buy from finished specifications. When not satisfactory, the musician could request for amendment or carry out such amendment by himself to tune and harmonizes the drum timbre with the other instruments of the ensemble.

The drum plays the role of master instruments in the ensemble. Under such circumstances, it could play a rhythm of dance role. It constitutes a complete orchestra requiring only the phrasing referent accompaniments of a pair of rattles. It is a mellow-rhythmic instrument it can stimulate spoken language and other lingual expressions as well as perform an intrinsic musical function.

Apart from having musical roles, instruments that constitutes the ensemble serve extra musical functions. The slit wooden drums serve as medium for information dissemination in the community. They can be used for calls on the *ede* titled men and inform them of the goings on in a particular occasion, shower praises and encomiums and rebuke them when in default.

The instrument can be used for decoration in a titled man's palace (*obi*). They can be used for symbolic representations. The male is used to give signals and for directing other instrumentalist during performance. The rattles and the *oja* are used for assembling people and attracting their attention during ceremonies. The instruments are generally regarded as sacred object in the sense that before and after use, certain rites must be performed. For example, before the instruments are brought out for performance, a cock, three tubers of yam and four kola nuts will be sacrificed to appease the ancestors and god of the land for successful outing. The blood of the cock is sprinkled on the top of the drums and feathers gummed to it. After the performance, a chick (*uyriomokuko*) is used to purify the instruments because so many hands must have touched the instruments during the performance. People usually drop money on the drum during performance. These attributes are paid as part of the living culture of Ovoko people.

Construction of the Oyo

Oyo is a pair of rattles played by a performer. It serves as an accompaniment to the drum and the flute. It is designed in form of a basket with calabash base. The main material for its construction is obtained from the part of palm fronds. It is woven like basket and contains pebbles. The top is sealed strongly with raffia to serve as the handle. Oyo is used in pairs as metronome instruments.

Construction Of the Oja

Oja is an instrument carved from one piece of wood. The blowing end is like an oval or egg shape whose base has been truncated to merge into the top of a small bowl shape. A convex piece is carved from the top of the oval side to form a mouthpiece. The third carving is the longest part of the *oja* and presents the hands holds of the instrument. A hole is drilled vertically from the mouthpiece through the whole length to the base of the instrument to form the bore. The side view shows that a hole is drilled through the middle horizontally from right to left to form the side holes. "The normal *oja* ranges from between 15 centimeters to 20 centimeters in length and measures about 4 centimeters horizontally. The bottom and side orifices or holes are used to activate the air columns to produce musical sounds or tones.

Care of the Instruments

The slit drums are rubbed with cow dung after playing to protect them from attack of termites and prevent them from cracking. They are kept in an airy place and usually on top of the upper chamber of the house (*uko*) to prevent dampness and insects attack. Since any crack on them will affect the tone, the wooden drums are kept warm in the *uko* so as to maintain the pitch and the tone. Exposure to diverse weather conditions can seriously affect the pitch and tonal qualities of the Igba. During the harmer tan, when the instruments are affected, they are soaked in water and allowed to dry up. When the instruments are wet, they are kept under the sun and watched closely for the normal sound to be restored.

Dance Techniques and The Implications

The drummer is the master instrumentalist who controls the dance, introduces the various rhythmic patterns, improvises and changes the rhythm of the music. Other performers like the oyo, Oja players and the dancers depend solely on the drummer. The oyo player responds to each new change where necessary. The dancers need no basic dance formation or style. One dances to the rhythm and tempo of the music as best as one could interpret the music. The music is a sort of free medley dance type, where the motif has to be established by the players, and the dancers dance freely. The music like any other traditional music is organized in the context of the culture of the society. Membership is strictly reserved for the *ede* titled-men. In other words, the only people eligible to dance the music in Ovoko are Ndi eze, Ndi Igwe and Ndi ede (i.e., the traditional rulers, the high chiefs and the *ede* titled men).

The wives of these people are permitted to do the dance with their husbands only during their initiation into *ede* and during the outing ceremony. At other occasions, as the husbands dance, the wives would follow them at the back for protection. During the dance, the performers dance and talk with joy as well as praising their ancestors and the gods of the land as follows:

Chukwu chegideanyi god protect us
 Chegide ala anyi protect our land
 Me chedorendibuneya and protect those that live on it

The master drummer communicates with *ede* titled men in their various title names recounting their achievements and contributions to the growth and developments of Ovoko community. Women and other observers who may not be allowed to dance could nod their heads, make rhythmic sounds and give out cash to the performers.

patterns of music and its variations example 1

The musical notation consists of five systems, each representing a different variation of the music. Each system has three staves: igba1 (top), igba2 (middle), and oyo (bottom). The notation uses various rhythmic symbols such as vertical lines, beams, and flags to represent notes and rests. The systems are numbered 1, 8, 15, 22, and 28, indicating the starting measure of each variation. The first system (measures 1-7) shows a complex interplay between the instruments. The second system (measures 8-14) features a more active role for the oyo player. The third system (measures 15-21) shows a change in the igba1 pattern. The fourth system (measures 22-27) has a more active role for the igba2 player. The fifth system (measures 28-34) shows a final variation with a different rhythmic structure.

2

35

igb1
igba2
oyo

This system contains measures 35 through 41. It features three staves: igb1, igba2, and oyo. The igb1 staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The igba2 staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The oyo staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music consists of rhythmic patterns with various note values and rests, including some beamed eighth notes and quarter notes.

42

igb1
igba2
oyo

This system contains measures 42 through 48. It features three staves: igb1, igba2, and oyo. The igb1 staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The igba2 staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The oyo staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music continues with rhythmic patterns, including some notes with accents and beamed eighth notes.

49

igb1
igba2
oyo

This system contains measures 49 through 54. It features three staves: igb1, igba2, and oyo. The igb1 staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The igba2 staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The oyo staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music continues with rhythmic patterns, including some notes with accents and beamed eighth notes.

55

igb1
igba2
oyo

This system contains measures 55 through 58. It features three staves: igb1, igba2, and oyo. The igb1 staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The igba2 staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The oyo staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music continues with rhythmic patterns, including some notes with accents and beamed eighth notes.

59

igb1
igba2
oyo

This system contains measures 59 through 62. It features three staves: igb1, igba2, and oyo. The igb1 staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The igba2 staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The oyo staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music continues with rhythmic patterns, including some notes with accents and beamed eighth notes.

Example 2

igba1

igba2

oyo

IN A FREE OR SPEECH RHYTHM STYLE

7

igba1

igba2

oyo

14

igba1

igba2

oyo

21

igba1

igba2

oyo

27

igba1

igba2

oyo

33

igba1
igba2
oyo

This system contains six measures of music. The first staff (igba1) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them. The second staff (igba2) has a similar pattern with '7' marks above. The third staff (oyo) shows a bass line with eighth notes and rests.

39

igba1
igba2
oyo

This system contains seven measures of music. The first staff (igba1) continues the rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks. The second staff (igba2) has a pattern with '7' marks. The third staff (oyo) shows a consistent bass line.

46

igba1
igba2
oyo

This system contains seven measures of music. The first staff (igba1) continues the rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks. The second staff (igba2) has a pattern with '7' marks. The third staff (oyo) shows a consistent bass line.

53

igba1
igba2
oyo

This system contains seven measures of music. The first staff (igba1) continues the rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks. The second staff (igba2) has a pattern with '7' marks. The third staff (oyo) shows a consistent bass line.

60

igba1
igba2
oyo

This system contains six measures of music. The first staff (igba1) continues the rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks. The second staff (igba2) has a pattern with '7' marks. The third staff (oyo) shows a consistent bass line.

Decoding The Language of The Instrumental Music

Egwu-edemusic has its own way of communication which is mainly understood by its player and *ede* titled-men. During the investiture of *ede* aspirant, the Igba summons the *ede* titled men in Ovoko to the aspirants house for the celebration, with the tune that says *ogerenyigbakotereno* in example1 below.

EXAMPLE

OGERENYI GBAKOTERENOO

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The rich men come together, may the rich men come together. The hour has come. The rich men come together. The Igba also portrays the strength of *ede* aspirant as shown in example 2.

EXAMPLE 2: GBASHIKE GBURU EMURU GBASHIKE

English Translation: Be strong, be strong, strength is greater than beauty. You are not strong among your age mates in Ovoko.

The igba also portrays the text which suggest that *ede* man is not a poor man but rather is well off in the society. In this example, the text is indicating that an *ede* man is always capable of handling any situation, or solving any problems that comes his way, no matter how sudden it may be, whether financial, social, spiritual or otherwise.

Example 3

ICHORM BIA NEBEM NEM NO

English Translation: Whenever you look for me in the house, I am around in my house. The igba also advices the *ede* aspirant to be diligent in order to succeed in life as shown below.

Example 4

igbagi oso



English Translation: If you do not run fast, you will not meet up and you will not reach. DC During the *ede* title investiture, as the hot and captivating rhythm of the Igba goes on, the *ede* aspirant could start making some proclamations which are not humanly possible. At this point, the drum player calls them back to order with the music below.

English Translation: Do not make a promise that you cannot fulfill.

The Igba player thanks and appreciates the *ede* man through the drum as shown below. The player uses the pattern to thank and appreciates the *ede* man especially when they are well fed and when the *ede* aspirant meets up with the demands of *ede* title-taking.

From the above musical examples, one can see that Igba serves as a medium for information and communication. It can be used for calls, warning, signals, greetings, advice, praise and encouragements. Igba has various mellow-rhythmic patterns which when decoded, minister to the ordinary mind.

Conclusion

Egwu-ede music in ovoko has over the years preserved the culture and of the community and despite the influence of modernity or contemporary issues facing traditional music of various community in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu, yet Ugwu-Ede maintained the tradition in performance and other cultural / traditional rights. The rhythm and the various musical instruments distinguished it from other traditional musical performance in its environment. The instruments, though not particular for egwu-ede but play a very significant role in the cultural development of the egwu-ede musical performances. The musical rhythm gotten and noted were for prosperity and as well an archive for researcher in ethnomusicology / African music for consultation in the future.

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