

An Analysis of Objects in Emohua Royal Palace: A Clan in Ikwerre Ethnic Extraction.

By

Charity Chinnah

Department of Fine and Applied Arts

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt Nigeria

Email: charitypc09@gmail.com

&

Pamela .I. Cyril-Egware (PhD)

Department of Fine Arts and Design, University of Port Harcourt

Email: pamekgallery@blogspot.com

Abstract.

Culture is dynamic and influential and should be handled with care from one generation to another. Culture is the entire way of life of a people hence, the need to document culture becomes imperative. The objects and symbols found in Emohua royal palace need to be documented for the interest of the current and future generation. They are passed on from one generation to the other as part of their cultural heritage. The objects are Eji, Igele, Ekere-Ogwu, Ogbudu, Nfuonuhia, Ngadah-Eze. to mention but few. They are used as regalia, for ancestral worship, cultural dances, wrestling contests and for information dissemination. They represent authority used among the kings to maintain law and order in the kingdom. Art practitioners have produced paintings and Sculptural pieces. Walls have been decorated with photographs of people especially the king and his chiefs, other academic scholars have written extensively on the history of Emohua and their culture. However, none have documented the royal objects used by the king in Emohua community. . This study used expression theory as the theoretical framework. Primary and secondary data was used to obtain data while, content analysis was adapted .The study will show in clear detailed the symbolic and significance meanings of the objects seen and used in the palace of a king in Emohua clan. The study advocates for safekeeping of our culture and tradition in an artistic form

Keywords, royal, object, palace, Emohua, ikwerre

Introduction

Emohua as a community in Emohua local government of area of Rivers State is rich in culture and the royal objects used in the king's palace are symbols of authority given to a king during his coronation while some of them are kept in the palace for preservation. Some are used during specific occasions and celebrations. The objects are very important to Emohua kingdom because, they signify divine authority and power which is passed on from one generation to the other as part of their cultural heritage. During traditional ceremonies like wrestling context, traditional marriages, new yam festival and coronations of a king, the objects are used to add colours to the ceremonies and to appease the gods of the land. Burke (1981), states that the origin of royal object's can be traced to the creation of works for primitive magical and religious purposes. The objects, haven been handed over from one generation to the other have been of great help to the royalty and the entire kingdom.

The tradition of Emohua people is never complete without using the royal object as part of their cultural heritage. Egonwa. (2005), States that Ikwerre belongs to the world of creativity and a visual image belongs to creative world with its laws according to man's desire. Emohua people are brought up under a social and cultural life which is also part of their heritage. Onyima (2016) explained that, the heritage of a people are cherished characteristics of features passed on from one generation to the other through conscious preservation .The objects that are used among the royal class during ceremonies in Emohua land are *Eji* -Cola Nut, *Nfu Onuohia*-Animal Horn, *Olah* -Bangle, *Owhor*-Sceptre, *Nkpara*-Royal staff, *Igele*-Metal Gung, *OkpuEze*-Crown, *Nkalari*- beads, *Nkonwo* – marchet, *UsehEji*-Aligeter pepper. These objects plays important roles in Emohua culture and they are part of the organizational structure of Emohua people, The objects are not just simple by product Of Organization, but elements that structure people's active construction of sense., knowledge, and behavior.

Objects as regards this research are the utilitarian instruments by the royalties within and outside the palace. The people's love for beauty is seen in aesthetically designed land scapes which adorn their environment. The rich cultural heritage justifies the choice of Emohua as an area of study. Anigbogu. (2022), Asserts that considering the benefits that could be derived from our cultural heritage, there is

need for a clarion call to consciously preserve the cultural heritage as a significant aspect of their culture.

Emohua chieftaincy title is called Eze. Eze is classified according to their levels and grades. The *Nnewe-Eli, Eze-Mgbu, and Nnneru-Urie Ezezi*. Bonner. (1983), explained that culture is a transfer of information. Traditionally, the major domains of human culture are considered to be ideas, norms and material.

Lo-Bamijoko (2009), states that the essence of culture is for preservation, promotion, presentation and to establish an administrative structure. The Eze seats in council with his elders, all clothed in Ikwerre traditional apparel on appointed days to preside over the cases that concern the wellbeing of the communities, such as land dispute, family matters, as well as the swearing in ceremonies of a new paramount rulers. The mode of adjudication of cases reveals the beauty of democracy where every participating chief or elder is given the opportunity to express his opinion. The final decision is announced by the king after the council had arrived at a consensus. The judicial system is replicated in the divisions, towns and villages.

Emohua people speaks Iwheruohna dialect, with great desire to preserve their culture, including the Emohua symbols which are remarkably depicted on a special Orohgbaka (Native building), Ruwhuagbara (shrine) and *OviriOhna* (paramount ruler's chamber) or *OviriEze* (palace hall). The kings are parts and parcel of the numerous ceremonies and festivals in Emohua land. Their arts and craft include wood carving, body painting, weaving and wall painting. The aforementioned arts and craft tradition of Emohua people are highly represented with motifs, symbols or patterns plants, animals, aquatic and geometric shapes. The symbols reflect the people's cultural heritage and value. Among the various art of the Emohua people, sculpture is predominant and all the motif and symbols are used to enrich other art and craft in their inherent sculpture. This study therefore, seeks to analyze the Royal objects for proper documentation and for prosperity.

Statement of Problem

There are communities and villages in ikwerre land that have lost completely her cultural traditional institutions and cultural heritages including original spoken language. The ugly development has left the current generation in dilemma of cultural antagonism and inferiority. Extinction and negative cultural influence has been a problem facing the current generation mostly by modernization, western education and foreign religious domination. Emohua people are not excluded from these current waves as the royal objects are majorly kept for utilitarian purpose. The dynamics in nature is a welcome development if harmoniously and rationally done to blend both cultures for the betterment of humanity, hence the documentation of the Emohua royal objects becomes imperatives.

On this back drop the study is carried out to examine, analyze and document Emohua royal objects on black and white to .save guide and immortalize the Emohua cultural heritage as well as the royal objects, the connotative and denotative meanings as applied in the society. The survey is to protect our progressive culture and tradition, the administrative political structures and institutions in the era of modernization and strict religions influence on Emohua cultural heritages.

The study aimed at analyzing the meaning of objects found in the palace and the regalia used by the king at all seasons and its implications to the culture and lives of the people.

The aesthetic functions and meaning of royal objects will also be explained as used in Emohua traditional royal stool

Objective of the study

The objectives of this study are to:

Examine the Emohua royal objects and their usage. Provide literature on the royal objects in Emohua and give a conceptual analyses and its symbolic meanings to the royal objects and

The use of royal objects to create understanding and communication in clear terms

Significance of the study

This study is significant in the following ways.

It will contribute to the existing literature on arts and art history of Emohua people and the society at large, and a reference point for other scholars.

Conceptually, it is focused on the conceptual analysis of Emohua royal objects for in the king's palace and outside.

The use of royal objects as an effective means of communication and positive promotion of Emohua culture and tradition to the outside world.

It will establish cultural values, orientation and preservation of Emohua culture

The scope of the study

The study will focus on using some selected Emohua royal objects to define, signs, signals and symbolic, meaning..

Conceptualization: Ikwerre people and culture

The history of Ikwerre people, which predated the advent of the white men and the amalgamation of Nigerian in 1914 has namely *Elelegroup* (Ishimbam), *Esila* group (Ishiali), *Reo* group *Risimini* and *OPA* group (Obio / Port Harcourt / Akpor) (Chinda 2017). The Ikwerre people, who were in the old Port Harcourt province of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, lived in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. The Ikwerre people now live in four local Government Areas of Emohua, Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City of Rivers State. The Ikwerre culture is visible and audible in the following towns and villages: *Ndele, Emohua, Odegu, Ogbakiri, Akpor, Obio, Igwuruta, Omagwa, Isiokpo, Aluu, Ibaa-Obele, Elele, Omerelu, Apani, Egbeda, Omademe, Ozuaha, Ipo, Omuanwa, Omudioga, Akpabu, Ubima, Ubimini, and Rumuekpe*. The Ikwerre people with a population of 800,000 (Provisional Census figures 1991) live within 4°, 50'N, 5°, 15'N, 6°, 30'E and 7°, 15'E (Achinewhu 1994) in the tropical rain forest where: annual rainfall is 2000-2800 mm in two seasons, temperature, on the average, is around 20-32°C centigrade and the relative humidity is more than 65%. The Ikwerre people, who own more than 20% of the arable lands of Rivers State, are traditionally, farmers, fishermen and traders (Kinakon *etal.* 1989).

The Ikwerre people worship ancestors (*Ndichie*), traditional gods (*OjukwuDiobu, Amadioha, gods of the land, gods of the sea, mami water, gods of the evil forest, gods of the seas and streams..*) and recently many have become Christians or Muslims, etc. They worship indoors (*Obiri, Rukani*), sacred groves, natural forms such as the *Owhor* trees (*Datariunmicrocarpum*), hills, etc, in village shrines (*Ruwahu-Eli*), aquatic spirit bodies (*Owumini*) Churches, Mosques, etc.

The Ikwerre people practice democracy under the rule of kings (*Eze*) and gerontocracy, that is, leadership by the elders (*Nnenwe-Eli*), under the auspices of various traditional institutions: age groups, first married wives (*Ogbotu*), firstborn sons (*opara*), firstborn daughters (*Adna*), and traditional priesthood (*Nnengwugwu-Owhor / Nne-Ohna, Nneru-urie*). These cultural and traditional institutions involve a continuous state of flux, but reflect fixedly in Ikwerre folk architecture. Chinda (2017), Ikwerre is one of the major ethnic groups in rivers state, Ikwerre people enjoys their coastal neighbors and culture as they had mutual understanding.

Emohua People and Culture

Emohua community is one of the clans in Ikwerre ethnic group, Emohua is the Headquarter of Emohua local government area of Rivers State of Nigeria. It is made up of eight (8) villages namely. Isiodu, Oduoha, Elibrada, Rumuche, Rumuakunde, Mgbueto, Mguitanwo, and Rumuohia. The Emohua kingdom is situated at the eastern part of Ikwerre, which has boundaries with Ikwerre local Government Area on the west, Ahoada East Local Government Area on the south, Obio/ Akpor Local Government Area on the West and Asari Toru local Government Area on the East. Emohua falls under Rumuji, Emohua, Ogakiri (REO) district of Ikwerre geo-political zone. Emohua is regarded as Rmuenyi. Based on history, there is a strong evidence in support of the view that, Emohua Oru, Isiokpo, Abua and Aluu were blood relations. There is also a claim that the people of Emohua migrated from an east-westerly direction which is Odegu and Ndele. Uchendu.(2003), States that stories have been told on how the name Emohua come to be, but claim that there is neither precedence nor antecedent to support them. However, there are two possible ways the name Emohua could have arisen. One of them may be from Ollo who happens to be one of the heroes in Emohua community. Uchendu (2003), went further to state that Rumuche, Rumuohia and Mgbuitanwo, or what is popularly known as Rumuollo migrated

from Abua with Essor his brother. There is a place known as Emoghan in Abua which may have been of interest to him. He therefore, gave the entire community the name to sustain his interest. The name Emoghan was modified by Ollo to Emohua in the pre –colonial era, before the introduction of trade in the forest product.

The people engaged in various economic activities such as, farming, palm produce, processing and raffia palm tapping, fishing, hunting and trading. The major food crops in Emohua as prioritized by the farmers are; Yam, cassava, cocoyam, and maize. Several vegetables are produced; groundnuts are cultivated to smother weeds in cassava and maize plots and melon used for the same purpose in other clans in Ikwerre. According to Omodu (2021) wrestling is a very vital cultural activity in Emohua land which attracts love, togetherness and friendship within and other neighboring communities like Odegu, Ndele, Rumuekpe and Aluu.

The administrative and judicial system of Emohua governance starts with the Eze, he seats in his council with other Elders. They are always in Ikwerre traditional apparel on any fixed date to discuss issues of common interest to the community and to settle cases brought before them, Such as land disputes, family matters, as well as the swearing in of a new paramount ruler. The mode of adjudication of cases reveals the beauty of democracy where every participating chief or elder is given the opportunity to express his opinion. The final decision is announced by the Eze after the council had arrived at a consensus verdict or decision. There are some issues that are resolved by juju priest and swearing of oaths for a specific period of time which is determined by the juju priest and parties concern. There are terms and conditions stated that shows someone guilty or otherwise. The Emohua cultural dance like oregbu, ovum and wayamma are not left out in Emohua culture.

Royal Objects

Royal object has been used across ages to give history of the past. It is important to note that the archaeologist depends much on the use of art works such as left behind by our past generations for their source of information. From the biblical point of view, royal object is as old as mankind since God model man out of dust

before he breathed into him to make him a living being. Artists, scholars and historians also trace royal object to the prehistoric time. The history of royal object, according to Offei (2002), can be traced to the prehistoric era where the early man shaped stones, wood, bones and other materials into weapons and flint tools for self-defense and hunting. These people who were hunters and gatherers were exposed to many dangers; hence the need for these tools and weapons for defense. In addition, the prehistoric man needed to create containers to store fats and other forms of liquids (Witcombe, 1995). Today the craftsmen and sculptors still produce weapons which are used for protection. This means that royal object has been in existence since creation. Janson (1994) asserts that in the Paleolithic time images of animals were made by incisions, painting and sculpting on the cave walls and rock surfaces. These images might have served a purpose beyond mere decoration. Burke (1981) had earlier on this when he indicated that just like painting; royal object's origin can be traced to the creation of works for primitive magical and for religious purposes. It is believed that man worshipped the royal objects before they embarked on any hunting expedition. Laurie (1999) adds that the development of royal object started through religious and magical practice among the prehistoric people.

The design of cultural and creative products is to re-examine and reflect on the cultural factors contained in the objects themselves, and to seek to present their cultural factors with a new modern outlook through applique technique (Ho et al., 1996). When designing cultural and creative products, designers must understand the interdependence and interactive relationship between products and cultures: products are the physical manifestations of culture, while cultures are attached to products, and form communication between symbols and meanings (Chen et al., 2008). The emphasis of the design of cultural and creative products lies in attracting consumers to understand the connotation conveyed by the design through the designed appearance of the products, which allows consumers to form quality perceptions according to the cultural attribute characteristics of the product's design, and then, generate their overall evaluation. The performance of the cultural attribute characteristics of the products has a significant influence on consumers' willingness to purchase cultural and creative products. Before designing cultural and creative products, designers should have insight into the value of local culture, understand its inherent spirit and meaning, and reinterpret

the existing culture and tradition with modern and innovative thinking (Tsai, 2007).

Expression theory: This is one of the theories of art, the theory asserts that expression can be attributed to art works only where there is the discharge of feelings, and because of it; art works are expressive because they stand in relation to artist concurrent emotions as do tears to sadness, as both arising from and revealing the feeling, Davies (1983) It refers to arts expressiveness as arising from artists expressing their concurrent emotions or feelings in the production of art work.

From the above definition this work is anchored on the fact that, the artist will rationally analysis art work from the existing royal objects seen in the king palace in Emohua.

Method of Data collection. To investigate the perspectives of respondents on the analysis of royal objects in Emohua royal palace, the study used ethnographic and case study techniques.

Qualitative research, a scientific approach that aims to uncover answers, collect data, create results, and comprehend an issue from the locals' point of view, was used to shape the design Patton & Cochram, (2002)

Presentation and Discursion of Data.

The royal objects, its symbols and meaning will be explained and analyzed here below



The objects will be analyzed below with its meanings and symbols. IGELE: Igele is one of the royal objects inherited and used by the king in Emohua land. This metal is constructed by the local smith and they come in different shapes and sizes. Igele in Emohua is a long hollow metal gong which is kept for the Eze in the palace and it is used for traditional music, for eulogies and to disseminate i.

Figure .1: *Igele*

Source: Charity Chinnah

Year: 2023

IGELE: *Igele* is one of the royal objects inherited and used by the king in Emohua land. The metal is constructed by the local smith and they come in different shapes and sizes. The Igele used by the Emohua royalty is the long hollow metal gong which is kept for the Eze (king) in the palace and it is used for traditional music, for eulogies and to disseminate information in the community. The gong is struck at various harmonic points along its length using a rubber wrapped handle. The sound effects depends on the particular event or ceremony it's being played or used.



Figure 2: *Eji* (Cola nut)

Source: Charity Chinnah

Year: 2023

EJI in English translation is cola nut. Kola nut is the fruit gotten from cola tree. This tree in Emohua community is seen in the forest or a plantation where their four fathers had lived to farm and do their fishing. History has it and it is also believed that, Cola nut holds a great social significance, which is hospitality, friendship and respect. Same value is applicable in Emohua tradition during a traditional ceremonies such as Traditional marriage, Burial ceremony, wrestling context and for sacrifice to their gods. Cola nut is always offered as the first thing to make welcome to the visitors, indigenes and to the gods of the land as an adage says, he who brings cola bring peace. Based on this, Cola in Emohua symbolizes peace.



Figure 3: *Nfu Anuohia* (Animal Hon)

Source: Charity Chinnah

Year: 2023

Horns have always been a popular object used by the royalties in Ikwerreland, Though so many people use it with different notions. it's symbolic meaning in Emohua and Ikwerre as a whole is very significant. Horn is gotten from bull and cow, horn represents masculine, strength and power. The king use it for libation and as cup to drink palm wine during their traditional meetings Its an object for oaths taking to ascertain truth in some cases during settlement.



Figure 4: *Ogbudu* (Drum)

Source: Charity Chinnah

Year: 2023

OGBUDO. In English translation is called wooden drum, Ogbudo is made from wood and animal skin. This traditional instrument has so many functions in Emohuaculture, It is played during cultural activities such as wrestling context, cultural dance and to eulogize the king. The wooden drum is the main instrument for summoning people or spirits, either for ritual activities or war. As the drum is played the soldiers respond appropriately to the message which the sound disseminates. The *ogbudo* does same function in Emohua culture and in Ikwerre Land as a whole.



Figure 5: *Ikoro* (wooden gong)

Source: Charity Chinnah

Year: 2023

IKORO/ EKEREOGU: Is a hard wood constructed out from a mahogany tree. This instrument is widely use in Nigeria based on the purpose and the particular culture. *EkereOgu* is one of the objects found in Emohua king's palace Which is also used for the dissemination of information. The instrument is mostly played when a strange thing has happened in the land, the sound is a sign of emergency that needs an immediate attention such as, Strange death of someone, missing of an indigene in his or her farm or seeing of strange faces in their farm land. The sound of *Ikoro/ EkereOgu* symbolizes urgency or emergency.



Figure . 6: *Ngadah Eze, Iweh Eze Nu Nkpara Eze. (Royal stool)*

Source: Charity Chinnah

Year: 2023

The chair above is the type of chairs and wears used by traditional rulers in Emohua. The chair is symbol of royalty and authority attached to the crowned Eze of the community. Nobody dears seats on that seat so long as the chief is alive.

The staff in his hand is a symbol of authority representing the dead and the living with spiritual powers attached to it.

Findings from the study revealed that Emohua clan has a very strong traditional institution with all arms of government properly represented. The Royal Highness

as the head with other village, community and family chiefs form the cabinet. Saddled with the responsibility of rulership and headship. This includes legislation, execution and adjudication of justice.

The chieftaincy title and stool is a representation of the gods and goddess of the community who mediates between the living and the dead.

There are so numerous symbols found in the palace of the king and all them are regarded as royal objects, each with its unique distinctive role and function. Highly respected and reverence in the community.

Conclusion and recommendation

Conclusively the survey examined royal objects used in Emohua traditional stool both in the palace and outside the palace to promote law and order the objects are many but the study focused on few and most vital ones. their names, symbols and their functions explained. Emohua have a very rich cultural heritage thus, the study recommends for the documentation of the existing traditional institution, with cultural symbols properly analyzed.

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