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KULE: EXPLORING THE SOCIAL HERITAGE OF THE IJO PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Kule is a medium of ritual entertainment and communication of the philosophical aspiration of individuals and communities through drum lore, among many other indigenous artistic praise drum media in the Ijo society. Kule (drum praise name) is however identified as a driver of the cultural heritage edifice and veritable instrument that promotes honesty, prowess, ideology and thus, most crucially, the embodiment of Ijo traditions. This is especially as the Ijo people expresses identity, courage, as well as dignity of social life; communicating a sense of the history of the great activities of both individuals and communities of their heroism, valor, contribution, among others, in the life of individuals, communities, and intergroup relationships.The study used the historical method and accesses data through primary and secondary sources for analysis. The discussion of finding reveals that kule is central in all the lived experiences of the Ijo society's past and even in contemporary times during their numerous festivities that ranges from masquerade traditions, wrestling, hunting and fishing, and entrepreneurship. The talking drum greets and honors both individuals, communities, and recognizes distant moral communities in this potent ritual language. The significant linguistic rituality of kule has intellectual contents and values that spar studies of the Ijo culturally lived experiences anchored on some recommendations.

Keywords: Kule, Social Heritage, Ijo Culture, Lived Experience, Philosophical Thought, Artistic Praise, Traditions.

Introduction

Kule in its artistic form is a perspective that is more ontological rather than epistemological standpoint among the Ijo people of Nigeria. The expression is that the Ijo (Ijaw) do not as much concern themselves with theoretical or rational knowledge as it is the case with epistemology, as they do things for purposes of and immediate function in its environment which is what an ontology entails (Titus-Green, 2020, p.10). This belief system is also apparent in the ways in which the philosophical idea of communities or individuals are expressed through talking drums. The kule is the drum praise name which relate to the existence of communities or individuals popularized name in drum lore, which expresses the philosophical disposition, valor, and prestige for social relations that spices aesthetics in the life of communities or individual in Ijo traditions. This is because the Ijo society is replete of activities that does drive home the point of function rather than abstraction; is key to understanding the importance of and reason for performance and actions of kule in their worldview.

Of a truth, the philosophy of a people influences and determines their historical memory, collective actions and motives. This is largely condense to mean that attributes of their philosophy, will therefore be seen in whatever action is taken as the end result, is the function of the philosophy influenced stream of consciousness. The influences of a people's philosophy are usually established through their moral or ethical values, culture, politics, socio-economic, religious and any other activity which may affect the society (Titus-Green, 2020, p.11), in context. Asides the more socio-politically inclined cultures, these influences are also seen and expressed through other artistic means and the philosophical underpinnings of certain cultures are more prominent in the artistic forms more than all the other means of expression. This is more dignified when Ato Quayson speaking of African theatre, says that "Theatre in Africa is demonstrably a place of greater vitality than other literary forms. It is the locus of dialogic variations", (Quayson, 2004, p.46), there is a lot to be gleaned from the Ijo traditions and by extension, a lot of African artistic languages and traditions.

Thus many of these forms of philosophical undertones observed are not always recorded for preservation but they are very much present and are compacted in various forms of Ijo artistic performance such as dance. And some of these significances are gradually being lost over time due negligence and globalization processes. Therefore, kule is highly functional only in traditional settings or moral societies as being a social heritage with strong emotional influence as the interactive language, which has tremendous impact on the Ijo culture, especially during festivities such as wrestling, chieftaincy coronation, among others, were the only language known to people is the expression of the talking drum or object while greeting participants, ancestral spirits, as well as recognition of distant kingdoms of great importance. This robust form of the Ijo tradition is historiography in its own right as it tells of the history and philosophical traditions of individuals and communities in the Delta lyrics with corresponding tone of response by participants, is encoding and decoding the literary artistic performance of a dramatic stage (performing art or theatre art) of sort.

Just as it is noticeable in other climes, philosophy deals with identity, and as a way of life, it cannot be isolated merely to contemplations and speech. This is more so, when it affects a group of people who decided to live according to a system of thought. The strong influence of kule in the life of Ijo communities or individuals, is a reflection of socially lived experiences in the dim past, is not only peculiar to the Ijo but many other ethnic groups in Africa such as the Efik, Ibibio and Igbo of Nigeria and the Akan of Ghana for examples, situates the encoding of an African Philosophy. The Niger Delta as elsewhere, kule is central for both the community and individual as a social avenue for the interaction of communal lived experiences, as well as the basis for interpersonal relationships.

Statement of the Problem

Kule is originally a common philosophical expression of the lived experiences of an individual, community or group's ideological framework for existence for which in most cases, a reflection or identity of the worldview of such people concerned. The Ijo are known fishers' folk and seafarers who have been determined to conquer and tame their environmental hazards for advantage and have lived in the Niger Delta region for more than seven millennia. This social heritage of the Ijo that defines both personal and group relations has not been properly documented for analysis. Although the doyen of Niger Delta oral traditions, Professor Ebiegberi Alagoa, has remarkably set the standards, for this all important

ritual drum language, but its heritage has not caught the attention and fancy of historians to widen its scope addressing its contemporary usages, in the Ijo society. And this historical gap needs to be filled of the people and communities, which characterizes the social heritage of theIjo traditions. The understanding of kule as a social entrepreneur, communication influencer that surpasses the mere given names in social lives that facilitates social interaction, is a key element of the people's history stored in drum ritual language can be preserve for uses through the multidisciplinary study between history and the new media, digital history methodologies. This near absence account of this significant cultural heritage has to be investigated, described and analyzed to address the seeming salient moral value, objective, and philosophy, of the Ijo people, is the centrality of this study.

Ijo: Anthropological and Historical Analysis

There is a plethora of scholarly studies on the Ijo people of Nigeria, with a high degree of consensus of its antiquity, but wholly disagree on the origin of the Ijo. The origin of Ijo has elicited two broad theories (external and internal origins). The first school of thought propounds that the ancestors of Ijo migrated from Palestine. These Judo-Christian historiographers based their view on the similarity between the name "Ijo" of Nigeria's Niger Delta and that of the ancient city "Ijon" of Palestine, with claims of similarity in the cultural practices of Ijo and the Jews such as ritual laws, male circumcision, and others, difficult to prove. Aside the reference to the city of Ijon, there is no direct evidence to corroborate this weighty claim of a Middle East origin of Ijo. Importantly, the ritual traditions aforementioned, amongst others, are learnt from other civilizations especially from the Ancient Egyptians (Okorobia, 2009, p.361).

Also, Amoury Percy Talbot speculated the Ijo language antiquity and saw the Niger Delta inhospitable, concluded that the Ijo might have originally lived in the highland parts of northern Nigeria, but as new and larger Nigerian groups entered, they were forced to migrate into the marshy Niger Delta (Talbot, 1932, p.5), without concrete evidence. Side by side is Kenneth Onwuka Dike who claimed the Ijo and by extension the Niger Delta was settled by "three waves of migration from the tribal hinterland". Accordingly, the first wave came from Benin (Bini), second from "all the tribes to the Delta hinterland", the third was a wave of slaves brought into the delta against their will, in the course of the slave trade (Dike, 1956, p.24). Though the third "wave" is significant in the eastern Ijo city states of Nembe, Bonny, Kalabari, Okrika, and Opobo, but not definitely significant among other groups, particularly those of the Central and Western Delta, as he painted the whole picture. These Ijo city states developed the institution of the House System for absorbing the slave population into their lineage system. The first or Benin "wave" also glean in some Ijo groups and is contestable. It is views like this contemplates an Igbo origin of Ijo generally are sometimes expressed.

While Samuel Owonaro sees Ile-Ife as the ancestral home of the Ijo. He submits that Ijo was the first son of Oduduwa, the Yoruba hero, where they lived at Ile-Ife. According to this account, Ijo left his fatherland after picking quarrels with kinsmen, where his descendant spread across the entire Niger Delta (Owonaro, 1949). This is contentious as no Ijo group had previously been known to claim Ile-Ife as their place of origin. The point is that, Owonaro was familiar with Samuel Johnson's History of the Yoruba and thus, the fact that even Benin had traditions tracing its kingship institutions and arts to Ile-Ife might have informed his choice

of Ile-Ife as Ijo ancestral home, but definitely not without swipe from academic historians and other public commentators.

What is more reasonable to circumvent in the whole analysis is to turn to the migration school of thought within the Niger Delta championed by Ebiegberi Alagoa. This is owing to the fact that migration is the only record of origin that man can account for to a large extent as participant. This is so especially as man is the major actor in this exercise. This is essentially about how man had moved from one place to another due to multiple factors ranges from demographic, religious, and political, among others, while these took place in the dim past and without records, is lost into oblivion. This is the theoretical basis of Professor Ebiegberi Alagoa that, Ijo have lost all remembrance of a time before they entered the Niger Delta. The question is, are the Ijo autochthonous to the Niger Delta? Taking the geological time scale for which the Ijo have been in the Niger Delta is beyond human comprehension is used to justify such claims. The point is that traditions of Ijo origins and migrations, generally tells of movements within the delta and outwards to the delta fringes, and not usually from the hinterland into the Niger Delta. We thus present Alagoa's synopsis, defining three categories of Ijo traditions of migration:

- Migration within the Niger Delta from Ijo territory (mainly central delta to another);
- Migration from one part of the Ijo delta to another, but first passing through the non-Ijo homeland; and
- Migration from the delta northwards to western and eastern fringes (Alagoa, 1972).
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Adding credence to the Alagoa's migration theory within the Niger Delta Eferebo and Eweke expanded the scope of this never ending debate of Ijo origins to three basic schools of thought such as the creation, evolution, and migration. The duo ascribed Ijo like the Yoruba, Jewish, and Chinese creation myths that it was Tamarau or Ogina who created Ijo, the father and progenitor at Isomobau in Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State that all Ijos migrated from to outlying territories of the Niger Delta and even beyond (Eferebo&Eweke, 2018, p.5-8). Taking together Charles Darwin's evolutionary and Alagoa's migration theories (combination of science and oral traditions) brings more questions begging for answers more than ever. The blush is that Ijocannot be older than the geological Aptian times (120 million years ago) of land formation of the Niger Deltathat is linked to the opening of the Atlantic Ocean. According to the Plate Tectonics theory, a triple rift junction (RRr) occurred at the position of the present Niger Delta during the Cretaceous times. Two arms of the rift (RR) representing the North and South of the Atlantic Ocean and the third rift (r) initiated a split of the African Plate, through the Benue trough (Burke, 1972).

The interaction of the trio-rift creates a formation of the two main trunks of the Niger and Benue Rivers form a single trunk, the River Niger, which at its apex just after Onya or Samabiri, bifurcates into the Forcados and Nun Rivers (Alagoa, 1972, p.11). The two rivers eventually midwifed some twenty other rivers that fan out into a lobate structure from here gradually slopes and spreads southwards in a triangular shape towards the Mahin and Cross River estuaries flowing into the Gulf of Guinea, which is an Arm of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, the channels the River Niger creates and smaller rivers that radiates from it kept the coastline irregular and broken into rivers, creeks, islands, and rivulets, among others, interrupts the

endless stretch of mangrove greatest in the world, is synonymous with the Ijo but not limited to it, as the region is home to many minority groups such as the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ndokwa, Ekpeye, Abua, Ikwere, and Ogoni, among others, with seventeen major languages and about three hundred dialects are accordingly spoken in the region (Willink Commission Report, 1958). This is home to Nigeria's oil and gas which accounted for about 80 percent of exporting earnings, 36 percent of GDP of the country.

What is important is to synthesize the existing theories of the Ijo origins, to further provoke a discourse on the Black race (Negroes) for a wider scope and comprehension of this longstanding debate, as more evidences are available, shaping the direction of the Ijo migratory history. Any ways the ancillary discipline of Archaeology provides the lens that the first known man exist in East Africa, and spread to other parts of the globe, is a historical fact. It's also a fact that the mass movement of Negroes out of their ancestral homeland and spread to the entire African continent no longer requires prove, as the Negro elements are very present on the African continent. Although scholars like Professor Brunet differed on the general notion of the East maintains that, the origin or cradle of mankind was in the Sahel region (Erim, 2017, p.22). Thus, Brunet challenges an earlier theory which has traced the origin of man to East Africa. Much as the Negroes is the largest race, they are found south of the Sahara Desert. And as Akani Aznuna Anele rightly observed, "it is believed that in the past, they equally inhabited Ethiopia, northern Sudan and Sahara" (Anele, 2003, p.41). But, agreed that, all man's ancestors were born in Africa, no longer require proof, unless in the near future. The racial migrations in Africa took different directions point to the probability that the Negroes passed across the continent from east to west. The racial movement of the Negroes, occasioned westward certainly by racial pressure had passed across the continent about 15^0, north of the equator that is, owing to pressure from new entrants such as the Fulani, Arabs, Aryans, Caucasoid, and Mongoloids, the Negroes had move southward into the coastal regions of the territory from Liberia to the mouth of Niger (Hambly, 2009, p.659). Of a fact, the Ijo as well as the Edo, Yoruba, Igbo of Nigeria, the Akan, Fante, and Ashanti of Ghana are good examples of the racial movement out of the Lake region of East Africa where religion played a fundamental role, in keeping alive the identity of the race. Like the migratory history of the Israelites religion and culture formed the foundation of the racial movement, and there is tendency to believe they kept their belief system as a sacrosanct duty to perform for their survival through several directions into the present Niger Delta. This religious evidence is very strong among Ijo groups, especially the Meinsuch as Dirimoagbeya (the black cobra), Ogidiga (python), Ikuba (monitor lizard), and Egbesu, among other ancient practices of the Ijo, are very much in the present.

And, especially the python worship makes this fact of the Ijo origin, clearer as its worship is wide spread across continents, as well as it origin is African. Much as many West Africans such as the Benin (Dahomey), parts of Igbo land especially in the Idemili territory (python or eke), Kru of Liberia, Benin (Edo) and the Nembe-Ijo of the Niger Delta, among other groups, attests to the python worship. The point here is that the wide spread notwithstanding, but where is the nucleus of the Ijo of Nigeria? Taking several viewpoints into consideration, there is tendency to believe, as social anthropologists and historical linguists agree with Percy Amoury Talbot that Ijo is distinct from all other Nigerian languages, separation for about 7,000 years distant from Edo (the language of Benin) and Igbo. The account emphasized that Yoruba, Edo and Igbo are more closely related to each other than any of them is to Ijo,

confirming the long separation of Ijo language from all these languages, suggests they had once share lived experiences before the Negroes racial dispersal from the ancestral homeland. The remarkably feasible wide spread of the Negro Race in the African continent is pointing at the East (especially Lakes Tanganyika or Victoria region) as the probable home of the Ijo of Nigeria, using the River Niger and other adjoining rivers settled in the Niger Delta (Ejituwu&Okoroafor, 2009, p.19-20). Drawing from the wealth of hindsight of the python worship in West Africa the clan of Budu, South Uganda, where the python worship is strongest, provide glimpses of relatives of the Ijo of Nigeria. And as many scholarly digests on python worship of West Africans have been shown by scholars such as Canon Roscoe (1909 & 1923), Major Arthur Glyn Leonard (1906:329), Amoury Percy Talbot (1932), and G. T. Basden (1921), and N.W. Thomas (1914) clarified what may be described as very strong belief systems of the python worship among the Igbo people and other Southern Nigerians. The evidences provided by these scholars strongly suggest that practices and beliefs prevailing in Nigeria are residual from a major flourishing python worship. This is expressing that, in East Africa, as in West Africa, many scattered beliefs suggest themselves as survivals of a more widespread belief, in the dim past.Relying on these viewpoints, given the racial migration points to the probability that the Negroes took different routes, and wherever they migrate to, they carry with them their ancestral belief systems. Keeping this mode of worship is a pointer that the Ijo, in particular, was part of this historical migration to the Niger Delta.

A further clarification is that in precolonial times what we now know as the Ijo was segmented, this is a clear historical fact as they were being referred to as Debe-owei or Debe-out (Nembeperson), Agianma-owei, Kolokuma-owei (Otu a variance), it was the colonial consciousness and regionalism that drives ethnic sentiments of majority and minority parlances, justifies as it is known today. What is more reasonable to comprehend, perhaps, is this long walk of the Ijo of Nigeria that many historians, public commentators sighed away fromto adumbrate migration within the Niger Delta theory of the Ijo traditions of origin.

Social Heritage: A Conceptual Digest

The idea of social heritage is a connection between periods of the lived experience. It is some sort of knowledge and expedients and habits, which are socially, not biologically transmitted, being handed down from one generation to another through social participation and education (Wallas, 1921, p.14). The viewpoint expresses something that is handed down from ages and the virtue of being a participant in the society. Social heritage is a passport of living together in communities. Thus by virtue of that passport we engage in meaningful interaction with others, in the affairs of the social community, we came to share some values in common with others. This is so as it is only human societies that meaningful social exchange takes place while it is blush in the animal kingdom (Olurode&Olusanya, 2011, p.9). Social heritage is that aspect of learned experiences that are inherited from the past virtually unchanged.

It is however the culturally learned customs, norms, codes, and rules of behavior that are constant across generations such as giving of gifts during festivities, exchanging pleasantries with people such as hand shaking. Social heritage is the whole inherited pattern of cultural activity present in a social environment. This is, of course, all the accumulated wisdom of society that usually motivates participants to cultivate the culture of protecting and promoting these as community's commonwealth (Greater Kashmir, 2018). This is as the Ijo has the distinctiveness of a unique cultural blend, which differentiates it from other ethnic groups in

Nigeria. Precisely, the Ijo is a spectrum of variance and variation. Although with diverse religion and dialects, they constantly interfuse with each other reflecting a spectrum of unity in diversity in real sense. The various lived experiences such as art and architecture, fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, languages and landscapes, reflect uniformity and diversity, and is unprecedented. The rich social heritage, despite the hit of globalization the Ijo still worked out ways to protect, preserve and promote their rich social heritage (tangible as well as intangible). It consists of a peoples' culture, their distinctive technology and inventions for adaptation to the physical environment and for social order. It's a combination of material and non-material culture that constitute the characterization and the identity of particular people. A peoples' heritage therefore, is the totality of their life ranging from politics, religion, worldview, and economy, among others (Girigiri, 2011, p.11).

The social heritage consists of non-physical aspects of the lived experiences, involving the customs, ways, and means of culturally learned behavior in a social setting. The social heritage has everything precious such as peace, tolerance and devotion to spiritual pursuits remained the hallmark of society. These are "cherished characteristic features of a society handed down as a gift from one generation to another through conscious preservation" (Eferebo, 2019, p.36). Social heritage are rich values of extinct and extant societies which are of recreational, educational and historical importance, preserved and passed on to future generations. These are essentially significant endowment emanating from man. Social heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a society inherited from past generations, preserve in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. As such, it is "the entirety of the peoples' cherished arts, customs, festivals, sacred or worship sites, norms, values, ideologies, dress and dress code, memorabilia, and architecture, conserved for historical, educational, political, recreational and religious significance among others" (Onyima, 2016, p.275).

Social heritages are, therefore, values and cosmology, of a particular society transmitted across generations. Social heritage in itself is "both physical and non-physical in character" (Ogundele, 2014, p.12). They are movable (artefacts) and immovable heritage (monuments) grouped based on their portability. Kule is a non-physical heritage that is a veritable mine among the Ijo of Nigeria as a social heritage of the past for the present and future usages in drum lore collections are exhibited in the peoples' memories (as museums and galleries) and consciously preserved. The drum lore (lyrics) is the preservation of kule for the promotion of cultural property past or present, written or oral traditions, which involves the identification, documentation and proper storage of kule to promote past ways that are useful to contemporary society, despite globalization waves invading African traditional societies, as elsewhere around the globe.

Kule: Pride of the Ijo Society

Heritage is the embodiment of a people's culture, which made them distinct in dealing with life and social order. The both material and non-material culture consummates the identity of a people. A people's heritage is the entirety of their life, it manifests in their existentiality such as religion, politics, cosmology and so forth. Documentation processes are myriad in oral societies for its survival and daily activities. Kule is one methodological perspectives of keeping records in oral societies, especially the Ijo people of Nigeria. But we have not known much about the origin of kule. As there are traditions of a prehistoric people who settled in

the territories presently occupied by the Ijo communities? However, kule's wide spread connectivity makes it difficult to assigned it to any particular place of origin. The Ijo thrived in Kule as a document on aspects of the way of life of the people of what is more likely an individual, community or group has been identified. There is the possibility that kule cultivate the whole essence, philosophy, ideology of a society in contexts, as well as their conception of the universe. This includes their belief system, understanding and explanation of the origin of the universe that is special to a particular society at a given historical point (Girigiri, 2011, p.15). These thoughts which they advocate are adapted to their social and natural environment are core ingredients of kuleamong the Ijo people of Nigeria.



Breasted drum, Akan, Ashanti, Ghana for example. Traditionally, the drum was the heartbeat, the soul of most African communities.

Oral evidence of one informant subscribes the potency of drum praise name that all types of artists are engage in the process calling both death and living ancestors as invites to attend a ceremony while dancers rhythms to the drum masters recounting all his great exploits, is being dramatize by kule adherence responding to those glorious moments adds intellectual value to public history making (personal communications with Chief Azaka, 20/11/2023). This aspect of kule tells of the history of that participant written in drum lyrics read out for public utility is a form of Ijo genre. There are no instruments for records as it is in Western tradition of writing before colonialism, some people have taken more than one drum names, giving room for versatility. Values associated with kule are stored in the various files of the drum

lyrics of the oral database. The literature of lyrics are understood and appreciated only by them and transmitted by kule traditions, reflecting the cultural history of the people.



An African talking drum: the Ijo example

One of the most important cultural commons in the African World regardless of regions is the kule phenomenon. The master drummer is a form of database to encode kule celebrating and immortalizing individuals and communities (personal communications with Christopher Enumini, 20/12/2023),and thus produced a body of genre reflective of African values, philosophies and ideologies as well, by respondents in keeping alive the memories through kule series to decode this ritual language downloaded by drum lyrics. As a form of oral tradition the drum praise poem of the Nembe-Ijo represents thus:

> "Kala Ekulema Nembe (2X), Amadokodokobiokpo(2X). This simply means the small but brave city.

While "Kaliye Opuye, Opuyekaliye", meaning "Little things are great things, Great things are little things". The opening expression is adapted from the poetic expression of the long traditional declamation delivered by leaders to rouse the people to action. To the Nembe-Ijo people therefore, "A little thing can be turned into a great thing, and a great thing into a little thing" (Alagoa, 2018, p1).They are, accordingly, capable of dealing with the most formidable challenges as if they were of little account, whereas they can treat a matter of seeming insignificance with great detailed attention, exacting a mighty redress. It is, indeed, a declaration of absolute freedom of action and independence of judgment. It is more than a mere boast, and carry's a philosophical and moral message of the English maxim, "Little things are little things, but faithfulness in little things is a great thing".

What is more significant was the adoption of kule as lingua franca in Ijo and much of Africa far more deeply and permanently influenced throughout the African world. And because it was the holy language in which Woyengi (the creator) is believed to have given them to express their innate existence in philosophical perspectives, and appreciative of, the ritual language remained the official link for interpersonal or collective interaction as well. It embodies the lifelines of individual, community, and group in the furtherance of intergroup relations to which the drum tradition works for accurate record keeping in Ijo societies of Nigeria. And the historian has benefited from the availability of these records. Through the drum lyrics, the historian has been able to transmit the events and actions of the past to the present (personal communications with Dr. Numa Theophilus, 28/11/ 2023).

Equally important was that kule adherents had produced a class of cultural historians for the interpretation of the customary laws, religious scholars, among others who are prized academics for secular learning in the Ijo traditions (personal communications with Chief Y.D. Theo-Iruo, 17/8/2023). This appears to have opens new chapter of, and the way to literate bureaucracy, to effective diplomatic links with distant moral communities or powers, and to inner reorganization of power and authority along lines which cuts across the separatist loyalties of the Ijo traditional settings as there were no formal educational institutions of learning in precolonial Ijo society. Aside its ability to record or content analysis, kule is the only way participants are been recognized during festivities and other ritual ceremonies (personal communications with Israel Fufuyen, 12/1/2024). The point to emphasize is that kule is a personality game (who is who) as the contributions of both individuals and community are of great concern, with great learning and scholarships, appears on the ritual map whose contour lines enable historians to navigate Ijo traditions in many ways, especially aspects of the social history.

And as it became trending, it spread throughout the African continent, and thus, became established as the dominant and eventually as the only elitist education of the Ijo traditions. And, it is one way of rousing the zeal of individuals reminiscent of the past in present circumstance. This is how they preserve the cultural or social heritage from one generation to another. Understanding this tradition, it is perform on stage with unique, stylistic dance rhythm to the drumbeat for performance to the admiration of audience with gyrations. As such, kule is a specialized way of expressing and celebrating the deep-felt cultural heritages of the past given in public performance (personal communications with Champion Macaulay Appah, 12/10/2023). The Ijo lyrics rely on instrumentation because, through it, the conversation grew between the drummer and kule adherents. The drum talks and kule bearer understands and reacts correspondingly. This is so as the drum speaks the Ijo ritual language and the drummer encodes the language with the drum and kule bearer decodes this on the spur of the movement, is a memorable sight of traditions, in action.

The progressive dispersion of the Mein is told in the kule of the Ibenana-owei of Ogobiri kingdom, the ancestral home of this sub-group in Bayelsa state stretch territorially to Gbekebo in Delta state as well as the Egbedani in Kolokuma, some Urhobo elements and Kalabari in Rivers state emerging from this ibe. The kuleof the Ibenana-owei of Ogobiri-Mein Kingdom tells of this fact when he is greeted in the ritual language of the drum, "Mein-ibenama mu Gbekebodou" meaning that Mein-Ijo traverses the entire delta (Alagoa, 1972). This is so because the sub-group had broken up to various parts and is widely dispersed, yet, their

dispersal is stored in their kule database; as a historical memory. Despite noticeable differences in the Mein sub-groups they are bound by the affinity of having a common ancestor, for example. And like many Africans throughout the Niger Delta, kule is said to have kept alive the civilization and prosperity of Ijo, regarded as the most settled valuable of the oral database. Thus, it accomplished the ritual linguistic dramatization of Ijo and a great deal of the Delta region.

Meanwhile, as it spread, kule became established as a potential factor in the political and trading systems of most of the major players during the precolonial period. And throughout the region, it also made striking progress, becoming the language of theology and higher learning in the traditions. During the pre and colonial eras, people moved from place to place in small or large numbers for a variety of reasons. Among other things, local drought conditions, political marginalization, outbreak of epidemics, population explosions, and the search for new opportunities. Also, there were forced migrations of people, especially during the time of the slave trade, when captives were taken far away from their homeland and sold several miles away, kept its vitality, as well as the treatment of slaves. King Mingi of Nembe participation in the slave trade and treatment is confirmed by the kule, that he took, "Omonimangiapele" meaning, he who executes the runaway slave. That is, confirming Mingi's reputation for ruthlessness, that he never forgave a runaway slave, but invariably carried out execution without mercy (Alagoa, 2018, p.75), tells a great deal of Ijo history through lyrics for example.

Of particular significant was the adoption of the ritual language, kule, and traditions are extremely valuable in engaging the development of religious and legal thought into contemporary times. This is especially that, kule, on its part, not only deals with ritual and worship, but attempt to regulate the social systems, the behavior of members of a family and a society and as citizens of a state. Thus relationship between individuals when it occasioned adultery as Chief Igoma eulogized in his kule:

"Kala Ekuma NembenaamaIguangi Perebotugu (2X), Ikologo BarabuKurogha, Korokoro a fi" (2X)

This means wealth is essential for leadership, the easy winner of the military prize, and penalize the adulterous (personal communications with Hon. Egbemini Yousuo, 9/1/2024). While King Ockiya summarized his drum praise name, being a philosophical observation on the attitude, behavior and life style of beautiful women;

"Fubaraebi ere, Obudikidiki Biokpo, Fubaraebi ere, Dibonamanama"

The above refers to fair ladies look backwards in pride; fair ladies are the curse of their parents (Alagoa, 2018, p.87). These lyrics vividly summarize and recognize that identities are created through history, culture, and common interests, but above all, through self-identification and a will to conform to societal values. Conscious choice, then, plays a great part in the ways in which individuals and communities identify themselves through time. The social functions of kule, therefore, must be considered in a flexible historical, and therefore, dynamic ways.

These realities of the past had flowered into a major social identity, the achievements and inheritance of this grand culture had fed and given vigor in countless ways to the onward movement of other aspects of the Ijo society. And in recent times, it detectable significant benefits to the Ijo in general, have remained memorable. Thus, many political figures have

taking to drum praise names, as the equivalent of past achievements, ingrains their political greatness or radiates power and influence in the twenty-first century. Most key Ijo politicians like Chief D. S. P. Alamieyeseigha took the titles of "Owei-pepe" and "Governor General of Ijo", unrivalled by any other in Bayelsa politics, weighing his political and economic affluence. While governors Timipre Sylva and Henry Seriake Dickson took "Opu-Abadi" and "Ofirima-pepe" (Big Sea and White Shark) respectively, as their political vigor reached a new crescendo of considerable depth and range of political culture (personal communications with Professor Atei Mark Okorobia, 31/10/2023). Kule, as already indicated, became very much vigorous to absorb new ideas and techniques from earlier traditions.

As noted elsewhere, it was through kule traditions that knowledge of individuals and communities actions and achievements are always reiterated for social uses, and therefore, becomes the foundation of philosophical and moral lessons for the society concerned. With a flourishing culture, the inscription of kule tells of their various exploits in all facets of life, in the most exalted circles. Enriched by this significant Ijo culture deep in the heart was particularly well placed to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by digital humanities. Because of the transient nature of life, many Ijo adherents retained the faith to contemporary times, as splendid monuments, some of which, notably the strong belief, has shaped the Ijo worldview, survived to this day (personal communications with Mrs. Otelima Fiberesima, 9/1/2024). As of the ancient or contemporary Ijo society, within it extending borders locals have accept the social customs, ritual language as a communicative genre. Hence, kule is regarded as one of the greatest archives, monuments of the Ijo civilization of all times. The diffusion of this genre presents a much more complex forms of record keeping systems among oral societies generally, and Ijo in particular.

Much as the Ijo society is specialized in the transmission of knowledge by drum-lore and lyrics. Drum beats are philosophical expression, and thus, have components of musical and linguistic importance in the understanding of kule. This is especially that talking drums or instrumentations also need to be understood and decoded by a non-literate audience to comprehend the tradition which they would pass on to future generations. Achieving these new trends is to represent the past that works with informatics systems such that, digitization is transforming cultures and historical scholarship. Digital history is technology and computational driven knowledge that engages the use of database and archives, interdisciplinary and public engagement of textual and virtual knowledge to format interdisciplinary collaboration among different professionals to explore scholarly techniques and means of communication (Seefeld& Thomas, 2009, p.2), for researching, indexing, and retrieving for future uses. Thus, the creation and use of digital visual such as YouTube, the online videos, television and radio are examples of digital platforms that serve as agencies of public history.

This is because the Internet allows more people to talk about history without professional training and this is bringing oral societies live and direct to the global audiences and providing platforms for these marginal cultures to have a place in the new media. Thus the new media, make people to be culturally aware of their lived traditions, thereby, evoking public consciousness among the masses of the globe, in ways not possible in the past through open sources such as Wikipedia, resonate, e-mails, blogs, doc files, pdfs, digital videos, podcasts, and so forth, as "Internet truth or oral history truth", in new ways. Because the Internet is the

largest library on planet Earth, preserving everything in the human record of all times. What is more deserving is the essence to migrate from print and oral to "digital text", with new techniques and changes to articulate the range of digital media that are becoming daily activities of life, because the new media documentation remains forever.

Conclusion

This paper has established the importance and many roles of kule in the life of Ijo societies of Nigeria. And drawing from the historiographical traditions of the people reveals that in every tradition, whether written or oral, there are ways of recording events and how to report those events for future use. And that the kule tradition, is one way of recording the people's past. As oral historiography, it encodes the traditions through the instrumentation of drums or any other drum systems with corresponding emotional rigor decodes the ritual drum language handed down from many generations of the people's lived experiences. Kule tradition, is a multidisciplinary approach in the study of society, were different experts are gathered to research, analyze, and interpret a problem and come up with solutions, to solving them such that the drummers, participants and audiences are into a web. The drummer through talking drums encodes kule, participants decode it, and the audience applauds, is the spur of the moment. Thus, in festivities talking drums greets or calls out dignities by their kule and not by their names as the Nembe-Ijo saying would emphasize "okumoerefabotingha". While the new media incorporate digital history methods to secure and popularize kule to the global masses. Kule is however transmitted by drum-lore for education, wisdom and universal truth fantasizing emotional, morals connecting every facets of life which further provides knowledge of the lived experiences, as well as a chronicle of the living Ijo traditions; preserved by virtue of kule techniques.

Recommendations

Given the above findings, this study recommends as follows:

- This kind of intangible social heritage is much more difficult to preserve, multidisciplinary approach will make it possible. This is because brotherhood and language are considered fundamental forms of the cultural heritage. This is to design preservation programs in such a way so as to develop an extensive cross-disciplinary knowledge of heritage principles and practices as well as awareness of community sensibilities. Most importantly, intangible aspects of the heritage such as the ritual drum language should get priority as far as programs are concerned.
- Active involvement of practitioners, scholars and students across Ijo land in the revival of the social heritage should be the focus. Dissemination of professional information by means of conferences, workshops, seminars, and educational programs should be a continuous process. More especially, involvement of young people will yield quick and effective results.
- Create a cultural heritage center of Ijo adumbrating best practices in heritage education, consultancy and research. Thus, introducing a department of cultural heritage in regular curriculum of our educational institutions and replicate the system of other countries where a cultural heritage management courses are being run in such institutions and exclusively deals with the vocation and practice of managing heritage, tangible as well as intangible.

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