

BEYOND RITUAL AND ENTERTAINMENT: ETHNOGRAPHY OF EGWU OGENE IN ENUGU SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Introduction

Égwú ógēnè (the bell music) is an indigenous music of the Enugu people of Southeastern Nigeria. The music derives its name from the ógēnè, the metal bell. Traditionally, this music is typically used during ritual and later entertainment performances of the Spirit Manifest. It is much gendered as the instruments are played only by men. In recent times, this music has moved beyond ritual and entertainment to the realm of physical fitness and the latter is the focus of my research and paper.

This egwu ogene is believed to have originated in Aguleri a town in Anambra state south - eastern Nigeria. Madukasi and Onyekomelu (2019) states that Odili chukwuemeka from Eziagulu-Otu Aguleri town was the originator of the music while Peter Ofordile and Ayanti Aruonu both from Aguleri popularized the music. According to Dee Chukwukere (1977) in Chukwu (1999) "people who made us to know about ogene are the hunters, these hunters used it to call their dogs in the bush. That is why, ogene is used to make calls and deliver messages. Today it has become a musical instrument." Almost all social events in Igbo land including marriage, child naming, burial and harvesting of new yam are often celebrated with music. Apart mere entertainment and religious purposes, music can be used for other activities such as lullaby, therapy, war and exercise. When applied to exercise, music has the power to change metabolic rate of human body and also distract minds from physical activities as they move to tempo Crust & Clough (2006).

In Enugu, égwú ógēnè is accepted as an integral component of its existence. Today every Enugu indigene is culturally conscious of this traditional music. Hence, égwú ógēnè is not seen merely as an aesthetic or artistic endeavour, but as a way of life or the actual life of the people of Enugu. The culture of the people is therefore represented in the music and presented in its authentic state; this is because it is one of the genres of music that appeal to a typical 042 (Enugu younger generation) indigene and the Igbos in general. The need to highlight the other functions of égwú ógēnè (ogene music) beyond ritual and entertainment in Igbo traditional performing arts has necessitated this writing. This is due to the fact that the existence of this art in our communities needs to be documented and preserved for the future generation as urbanization is taking over most of our Igbo communities. It is against this background that this research work is initiated. Of greatest importance is the fact that this traditional genre is replacing the Western styled music that would often accompany physical exercises, for instance, in the Gym.

The method I used in this study is mainly ethnographic in nature, participant observation and open-ended interviews. I approached this paper from three perspectives, namely the ritual, entertainment and physical exercise, which represents the traditional egwu ogene, socio-transitional egwu ogene and modern egwu ogene.

Study Area

Enugu State in southeastern Nigeria was created in 1991 from part of the old Anambra State. Enugu is the capital and largest city of the State from, which the state derives its name. Enugu covers an area of 7,161 km². The Enugu State telephone area code is 042. Why is it important to mention this? It is because, recent generations of every Enugu born is called *Nwa 042* a more or less identity code for the child born in Enugu city. Okpara Square, where Ogene music is used to accompany physical exercises is located in this great and old city – Enugu. Enugu is an academic state as it has so many higher institution of learning among which is the University of Nigeria. Points of interest of Enugu state is Ngwo Pine forest, Nsude Pyramids, Centre For Memories, Oakland Park Enugu, Nike Lake and the famous polo park which is now the location for Shoprite and Game. Some call the state by the nicknames: Coal City State or Wawa State. The state shares borders with Abia State and Imo State to the south, Ebonyi State to the east, Benue State to the northeast, Kogi State to the northwest and Anambra State to the west.

The name of the state derives from its capital city, Enugu. The word "Enugu" (derived from Enu Ugwu) meaning "the top of the hill". Enugu State consists of 17 Local Government Areas. They are: Aninri, Awgu, Enugu East, Enugu North, Enugu South, Ezeagu, Igbo Etiti, Igbo Eze North, Igbo Eze South, Isi Uzo, Nkanu East, Nkanu West, Nsukka, Oji River Udenu Udi Uzo-Uwani. Enugu people are rurally craftsmen, farmers and traders and there are civil servants in the urban area with diverse socio-cultural background. They are hospitable, peaceful, energetic, industrious, spiritual and mystical people that have strong belief in nature, gods, God and the ancestral spirit.

Maps of Nigeria and Enugu



Enugu in Nigerian map.



Map of Enugu state

Okpara Square

Okpara Square Enugu is the official venue for government functions as well as social and cultural activities in Enugu state Nigeria. Occupying a very large expanse of land close to the Enugu State Government House the square which was named after former Premier of Eastern Region Dr. Michael Okpara has been given added responsibility over the years. Dr. Michael Okpara Square, in Independence Layout, a high brow area in the city, has now been turned to aerobics nest of some sorts for fitness seekers. A visitor to Enugu would definitely be loss as to what might be happening at this square between 6: am and 9: am every day but Saturday is extra ordinary. One has to either register with any club of choice, fulfill the different requirements, such as buying of uniform, paying registration fee, coming out at least three times in a week to jog and so on any group which he/she wish to exercise with because it's free for all. Such available clubs include Coal City keep fit, Green Shirt

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club and Coal City Exclusive Red Shirt Clubs. These clubs are duly registered with the Co-operate affairs commission.



The researcher standing close to the statue of Dr. Michael Okpara at the square.

Ogene Musical Instrument

The ogene is noted in African music literature for its time keeping role in the instrumental music ensemble. As an instrument, ogene is made of cast iron forged by blacksmiths who can still be found in Awka. The construction is a specialty of *ndi na kpu uzu* (Blacksmiths) in Awka, an iron smiting Igbo community in Anambra state. These instrument has a flattish, conical shape and is hollow inside. Sound production is a result of the vibration of the struck iron body, made to resound by the hollow inside of the bell. The iron body is struck with a soft wooden stick. Nzewi (2000) states that:

ogene appear in a great variety of size, two common categories are the single bell and the twin bell. In the single category, the large bell called Alo by the Igbos can be as much as 105cm high and it plays as master. The twin bell is a pair of single bell held together by an arched handle which generally is structurally integrated with the sounding shell of the bell. Component bell have different tones

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/ pitches, usually of an interval from a musical second to a fourth
apart (p.).

Ogene is the most important piece of metal musical instrument in an array of Igbo traditional musical instrument Echezona (1964). Besides the town-crier's use of the instrument, it is needed at cultural events, not to mention rituals. Ogene was originally made from bronze, but are now made from common metals in recent years. Ogene is shaped like elongated bell that comes in single or double. It is hit by a stick to produce different tunes.

Health Properties of Parent Material used in the Making of Ogene

Ogene instrument is designs from bronze (bronze is a mixture of metals including copper and iron). The copper has healing qualities as well as iron. As revealed by Brainy (2012), for centuries, copper rings bracelet and necklace have been worn for their medical properties to alleviate arthritis and improve skin tone and clear up infection in the throat or eyes. Copper and iron are two metals required for the formation and circulation of blood, beneficial for the production of red blood cells in the bone marrow and bone tissue. In ancient Egypt copper was used to purify water. In the hospitals today, door knobs are made with copper to prevent spread of diseases. Metals like iron (Fe), zinc (Zn) and copper (Cu) are essential to human health. We are not quite Iron Man, but metals are intricately entwined with our bodies. They make vital functions like respiration, circulation and reproduction possible, exposure to too much metal can be harmful. Not getting enough metal in the right places can make us sick, too. This is the case with conditions such as iron-deficiency anemia and osteoporosis.

Iron helps make hemoglobin (the oxygen-carrying chemical in the body's red blood cells) and myoglobin (a protein in muscle cells). Iron is essential for activating certain enzymes and for making amino acids, collagen and hormones Harvard Medical School (2019). Iron is used to treat anemia, revitalize muscle tone and nerve tissue and has refreshing properties. Other studies reveal that there is a link between metal and mental health. Carrying ogene instrument on the arm fortifies the body with iron. So no matter the mood of participants, listening to music made with metal calms an angry listener. It regulates sadness and enhances positive emotions. It makes one feel more active and inspired to exercise. It boosts feeling of love and enhances physical wellbeing.

Égwú ógēnè (Ogene Dance)

Egwú ógēnè (Ogene dance) as stated earlier is a popular traditional energy dance from Igbo land mainly in Enugu and Anambra. Although known as Égwú ógēnè (ogene dance) ogene is not the only musical instrument that produces the melody that the ogene dancers dance to, other instruments give ogene music its melodious tone. Two sets of medium-sized twin bells (ógēnè mkpị n'abo) are the basic musical instruments of égwú ógēnè. Onwuegbuna (2012) opines that the bells are differentiated by the gender status ascribed to them; the high pitched set is the male while the low-pitched is the female. The two units in each set are tuned a major second interval apart; and the intervallic distance between the male and the female is a minor third or a perfect fourth. In the past, to play Ogene music, only two instruments are vital: the lead Ogene itself and the *Oja* (local flute).

Etymology

Egwu Ogene is coined from two Igbo words – two nouns. The first word Egwu is a noun, which is a genetic term for various music activities, game, song, or dance. The second word Ogene is a noun which is the name of the musical instrument metal gong, or bell. Egwu Ogene is therefore a brand of music and dance emanating from the young vibrant youth in the masquerade (spirit manifest) carry age grade. The music is made using the ogene instrument.

Main Instruments of the ensemble



ÓGÉNÉ (METAL BELL)



OJA (LOCAL FLUTE)

In the past, to play Ogene music, only two instruments were vital: the lead Ogene itself and the *Oja* (local flute). But today the music has evolved so much that it is normal to find an ensemble of many instruments including the *Okpokolo* (wood block), *Udu* (musical pot), *Igba* (membrane drum) and *Ichaka* (rattle). Other instruments of the *Égwú ógēnè* ensemble.



IGBA (MEMBRANE DRUM)



OKPOKOLO (WOOD BLOCK)



UDU (MUSICAL POT)



ICHAKA (RATTLE)

Structure of Egwu Ogene

Structure is an arrangement and organization of interrelated elements in a materials object or system. Abstract structure includes data stores in computer science and musical forms. Elements of music such as pitch, duration and timbre combine into small elements like motifs and phrases and these in turn combine in larger structures. Looking at the structural analysis of Egwu Ogene. This is a vocal music with instrumental accompaniment. The form of the vocal is solo and chorus. It is another form of *akuko n'egwu* (minstrel) as the lead instrumentalists tell stories while the music is on. The Ogene bell is constructed of iron sheet by specialist blacksmiths. According to blacksmiths, Deep tones are attributed to a higher gauge sheet, a 15- or 16- gauge sheet gives a deeper texture and lower-pitched scale/tone row, which is generally preferred. The Scale tonal organization and the melody are built around the traditional diatonic scale. It is most times set around key C major with a constant approach to G. The harmony between the solo and chorus shows overlapping. The refrain is however sung in union by everybody. Nzewi 2005 reveals that:

The human meaning embodied in other African melodic and harmonic construct is that an individual must take cognizance of the community real or imagined in exploring creative originality or self- affirmation... it is for the same reason that traditional

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performance convention coerces everybody to share the psychophysical wellness afforded by indigenous musical arts by partaking at various degree of active participation (p.5).

The special features of egwu ogene is the improvisation and embellishment which comes as interlude between the voices. Dance deriving from conformation of musical structure en-spirits the dancers thereby imbuing benevolent spirituality and affording psychotherapeutic healing Nzewi (2005). This creates an internship and special variation as the music goes on. The sound of the Ogene adds a cot of motivating touch to entire music. The Tonality/Text of the music is very much affected by the dialect, text and meaning. The theme of the music is most times indigenous religious songs or some life experiences of the performers presented to the rhythm of the Ogene sound. The rhythmic structure of ogene music is most times 6/8 compound time with a recurrence of its basic rhythmic motif. During performance, the presentations incorporate percussion instruments listed above. A major component of the egwu ogene is the dance and vocal aspect. The vocal part is often in a solo and chorus call-and-response form. It can be viewed as *akuko n'egwu* (minstrel) as the lead instrumentalists often tells stories while the music and chorus rolls on. During performance, the messages are amplified by the husky voice of a male lead singer clutching the Ogene, who narrates all kinds of mundane stories about life from the personal to the communal, by deploying a densely metaphoric and idiomatic language. *E ɔgwú ógēnè* is incomplete without the message it transmits and these messages are told by the voice or Oja (flute). So there must be a flute or voice accompaniment as it grouped as *akuko n'egwu* (minstrel genre). The music is always filled with embellishment and improvisation with the energetic dance steps of the dancers. Most times during performances, the song comes as praise singing as they praise a prominent person or a masquerade (spirit manifest). When they are not singing indigenous gospel song, they are singing with the indigenous Enugu language which is *waawa* language. Some of these traditional songs are listed below:

Oh oh n' di egwu – oh oh this is terrible

Ada nw'o gene abia n' ubo – the ogene princess has made an appearance

Borrow borrow ga te me kwe - borrow borrow will soon happen here

Omere ife ikoro bia- oke nwa nnoo – he has behaved like a real man – real man
welcome

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Ome n'elu, ome n' ala n'obu egwu - be it western or traditional it is music

The Traditional *Égwú ógēnè*

***Égwú ógēnè* and Ritual:** The native doctors or chief priests use the *ógēnè* as a communicating tool to call the spirit of the gods and these instruments are attached to the staff of the chief priest and when they hit it on the ground for it to stand the gods are all present in the area.



Eze Dibia using *ógēnè* to call the spirit of the gods.

***Égwú ógēnè* and *mmanwu* (spirit manifest):** *Mmanwu* ndi igbo (Igbo spirit manifest) are always beautiful and captivating. They come with bright colours and loud noise from the *ógēnè* sound. The wild energy they exhibit leave no one bored as people run around to have a glimpse of them. *Mmanwu* Spirit manifest has a deep spiritual meaning that has been passed on from generation to generation. *Mmanwu* are mostly seen during festivals or ritual processions. The *ogene* music accompanies the *Mmanwu*, as they dance to the sound of the *ogene* and flute, which calls out to them. They entertain the people. African music in general is a spirit-socio-cultural phenomenon guarded by the ancestors. Most times *Egwu Ogene* accompanies masquerade (spirit manifest). Ethno-musicological records show that the spirit manifests that feature in Igbo culture have both artistic and religious significance. But for the “invisible” *mmanwu*, the sound of the *ogene* warns every woman or non-members of the cult to stay away from the procession lane. The compositional materials, the performance practices and the extra-musical properties

have a myriad of symbolic and ritual connotations (Okafor 2017; Onwuegbuna 2015).



Nmanwu Enugu iyi

Socio-transitional *Égwú ógèné* (Entertainment): Issue concerning aesthetic of music includes lyricism, playfulness, color, harmony, etc. It is often thought that music has the ability to affect our emotions, intellect and psychology, it can assuage our loneliness or incite our passion. According to the philosophers, music has a direct effect on the soul Pinker (1997). Egwu Ogene is a traditionally spirited youth dance from Enugu South Eastern Nigerian that focuses on the use of Ogene instrument. Igbo music is a spiritual and sociocultural phenomenon, guarded by the ancestors. The musical sound is characterized by polyphonic and contrapuntal textures, complex rhythms, syncopations and simultaneous combination of ornamented linear melodies. Imageries deployed in musical lyrics are expressed in idioms and proverbs. Performance practices in this Igbo music engage a multi-dimension of creative arts, including songs, dances, drama, oral literature, visual arts and the likes.

Egwú ógèné (Ogene dance) is a popular traditional energetic dance from Igbo land mainly in Enugu and Anambra. Dictating both the tempo and rhythm of the sound, the lead vocalist calls and backups respond in a way that engages an audience in conversation, so that if he decides to sing one's praise, the person is almost compelled to nod, dance or part with some cash. As simple as the dance steps of Egwu ogene may seem, its complexity is inherent in the symbolic

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representations of the movements of the male and female dancers. The dance always begins with a slow tempo, the dancers dance slowly and gracefully in a gradual but rhythmic movement to the centre of the arena. This graceful yet uneasy-like movement soon graduates into a vigorous movement of the whole body as the tempo steps up. At the peak of this hot rhythm and quick tempo, the dancers assume different dance positions as the instrumentalists guide their movements. The instrumentalists then reduce the tempo of the music to allow the dancers to rest for a while before the next movement.

The dance and musical actions are usually on the fast tempo as one has to eat properly and be physically fit before being involved in the performance. It also comes on the backdrop of the cultural orientation where laziness is abhorred. It seems to be either you dance well by moving your body or you sit and clap for those who are able to dance well.

To enjoy egwu ogene, one does not only listen to the music; you watch a performance, as the sound lends itself to drama and robust dance.



Udegwu ogene group



Shidodo the king of Égwú ógēnè during performance.

The Modern Égwú ógēnè

Égwú ógēnè and physical exercise at okpara square Enugu: Music and exercise go hand in hand because just as music goes with rhythm so also does exercise. When music is applied to exercise it has the power to change metabolic rate of human body and distracts mind from the stress of physical activities as they move to tempo (Nnam and Onuora-Oguno, 2019). Music has been shown to optimize arousal, facilitate relevant imagery and improve performance in exercise, music is used to accompany endurance task such as walking and running (Simpson and Karageorghis 2006). The cultural pursuits of playing and listening to music are extremely widespread and almost as old as civilization itself (Nethery, 2002). Music applications in physical exercise developed rapidly in the western world and are now used in our environment even though most physical activities and plays in indigenous African societies functioned with some form of music accompaniment.

The ogene music is the most interesting part of the physical activities at Okpara square Enugu. The singer sings, the instrumentalists play the local musical instrument and the participants jog along giving response to the song they sing. They always start with indigenous Igbo religious songs and end with Igbo folk song familiar with the people of Enugu. The target of this group each day is 5km jogging to be covered in one hour. According to, Mr Arinze Julia (also known as Nnewi, the leader of one of the ogene groups), egwu ogene motivates people very well. For

him, he can jog for a while “but with the music, we go on and on.” The group often starts with Igbo indigenous gospel song (as the Igbo are very religious people) at about 8:00am. This is followed by the traditional ogene, which is called *ogene ikpashi* Igbo folk song familiar with the people of Enugu, which is fun. They round off, after they have covered about 5 km at about 9:00am. According to Arinze Julia, ogene sound encourages people to meet up as it is a good motivation. This use of egwu ogene in physical exercise according to him has been going on at Okpara Square for more than 20 (twenty) years. Victor a participant said ‘on a normal’ (Enugu slang), one cannot run or jog for 5km with ease but while enjoying egwu ogene, I get distracted from how far I have covered and the stress involved. Also, he said and I quote:

the pace (rhythm) of this music is always comfortable for jogging. Sometimes, they increase the timing (tempo) while climbing the hilly part of the square but while running down, they return to the normal tempo which is slow thereby allowing the participants to rest a bit without stopping entirely.

He called it ‘jogging made easy.’

In the words of the Red T shirt leader Mr Ifeanyi during the interview, ogene is an instrument that spurs people,

In traditional setting when men hear the sound of ogene, they can climb trees or even fence in response to sound of the music. The ladies dance to the tune and while doing so, one exercises and burn calories. Every day the ogene club jogs to cover 5km in one hour or more. The club has stipulated time of one hour to accommodate all and sundry.

So, because of the energy that the instrumentalists and dancers exhibit it was easy for the music to be included in physical exercise and then I asked does it really work? I got the answer and it was yes because I became a part of it. Every Saturday, I make out time to join the ogene group to jog. I realized that as a participant, while enjoying the dance, I never felt any form of tiredness. I also realized that whenever the tempo of the music increases, it means we are climbing the hilly part of the square and when running down the hill, I feel bodily too that the instrument forces

me to slow down. I must state here that, these are people who I or we feel have little or no medical experience, I began to question myself a lot and then I could see how indigenous medical knowledge and way of life play a role. It enables them to know that when running up the hill, the music needs to be fast so that people will not get tired and discouraged and when running down the hill, you slow down so that 1. You do not rush and tumble 2. You slow down to catch a breath. I also realized that at the end of the one-hour jog in which we covered 5km, I was able to join others in dancing to the ogene ikpashi.

Egwu Ogene gives the joggers mind wellness as they move in the same motion as a community facing the same direction. The Egwu Ogene works on their mind as they move in unison giving them sense of community and they move in steady manner and at the end of the 5km per hour jog if one looks at them, you will notice they are not tired and they will still do the aerobics exercise. Without the bell, only about 60% will finish the jogging exercise but with the bell present, it gives them a sense of community. The bell sound organized them as a unified psychical community. At psychic level, the music work on the mind. At physical level, sound of the ogene enables them to apply their physical strength in a steady manner. At that time, all of them are conscious of the fact that they want to be physically fit and this is the mind wellness dimension. These are the factors that result to the fact that they finish strong.

Some of the Songs used by the Ogene Group during Physical Exercise at Okpara Square Enugu.

Song no.1

oke muo(Great Spirit)

Ih'anyi n'eme b'ihe muo, ony'anyi n'achur'a ja b'o ke muo

Oke muo	English meaning (Great Spirit)
Ih'anyi n'eme b'ihe muo	What we are doing is spiritual
Ony'anyi n' chur' aja b'o ke Muo	The one we worship is great spirit.

Song no. 2

Nwaturu chukwu (lamb of God)

nwa tu ru chu kwu, nwa tu ru chu kwu o nye n'e kpo cha pu'n jo nke u wa

me r'a ny'e be re, me r'a ny'e be re me r'a ny'e be re, me r'a ny'e be re

Nwa turu chukwu	English meaning (O Lamb of God).
Nwa turu chukwu (2 times)	O Lamb of God (2 times).
Onye n' ekpocha pu njo nke uwa	He who takes away the sin of the world
Me r' any' ebere (2 times)	have mercy on us (2 times)
Me r' any' ebere, (2 times)	Have mercy on us (2 times).

Song no. 3

Onye nwem Chinekem (Oh Lord my God)

O-nye nwem chi ne kem, ar' isi' ke k'a nyi n'a yo

O-nye nwem chi ne ke, anyi n'ay'o go lo go ndu n'a ru' isi' ke

Onye nwem chinekem	English meaning (O Lord my God)
Onye nwem chinekem	O Lord my God
Aru isi ike k'anyi n' ayo	We are asking for good health
Onye nwem chinekem	O Lord my God
Anyi n'ay'ogologo ndu n'aru isike.	We are asking for long life and good health

Song no. 4

Any' abia wozo taa (we are here again today)

A ny'a bia w'o zo taa A ny'a bia w'o zo taa A ny'a bia w'o zo taa
 A ny'a bia w'o zo taa chi ne ke k'o di l' a nyi na nma

A nyi abia wo ozo taa	English meaning (We are here again today)
A nyi abia wo ozo taa (3 times)	We are here again today (3 times)
Chineke	God
Ka odili anyi na nma	So that it will be well with us.

Song no. 5

Eze ndi gi abia wo (The King your people are here)

E ze 'di gi a bia wo a nyi a bia wo E ze a
 nyi a bia wo E ze a nyi a bia wo n'i ru gi.

Eze ndi gi abia wo	English meaning (The king your people are gathered)
Eze ndi gi abia wo	The king your people are gathered
A nyi abia wo Eze (2 times)	we are gathered, O King (2 times)
A nyi abia wo n'iru gi	we are gathered in your presence

Song no. 6

Jihova bu onye oma (Jehovah you are good)

ji ho va b' o ny'o ma o ny'o ma o ny'o ma muo
 ii ho va h' o ny'o ma o ny'o ma o ny'o ma muo

Jihova bu onye oma	Jehovah is a good God
Onye oma, onye oma m o. (2 times)	He's so good, My good God (2 times)

Song no. 7

Ih'i mere di nma (Jehovah what you did is good)

ji ho va i hi me re di nma i h'i me re di nma i
 i h'i me re di nma i hi me re di nma
 h'i me re di nma i hi me re di nma
 i h'i me re di nma i h'i me re di nma

Jehova ih'i' mere di nma	English meaning (Jehovah what you did is so good)
Jehova ih'i' mere di nma	Jehovah what you did is so good
ih'i' mere di nma (7 times)	What you did is so good (7 times).

Song no. 8
Ekwerem Nkwa (I Promised)

E kwerem nkwa (i promised)

E kwe rem kwa na bo chi ba-p tis mal m'ga e fe chu kwu n'e lu u wa

A gam e ge nti no' kwu n ke nzu ko nwe re nye y'o ti to n'me u wa

Nye rem a ka, O, ma ri a kam nwre mee ihe m kwere na nkwa

Nye rem a ka, O, ma ri a kam nwe re mee ihe m kwere na nkwa

E kwerem nkwa	I made a promised
E kwerem nkwa na ubochi Baptismal	I made a promised on the day of baptism
M ga efe chukwu n'elu wa	that I will serve God in this world
A gam ege nti n'okwu nke nzuko	I will pay attention to the word from the church
N' nye y'otito n'me uwa.	So as to praise Him in this world.
Nyerem aka, O Maria (2 times)	Help me Oh Maria (2 times)
Kam nwre mee ihe m kwere na nkwa (2 times)	So that I will fulfill my promise (2 times)



Ogene group at okpara square

A Session with Prof. Meki Nzewi on Health Benefits and Science of Ogene Material and Sound

My discussion with the Africanist scholar Meki Nzewi, illuminates another realm of the Ogene metal bell. He explains that the hollow inside the ogene is rough while the outside is smooth. When beaten, the bell resonates and brings out invisible vibration, which heals. In his words, “you cannot use any other material for making the Ogene instrument”. The iron used in making ogene is rough inside and when played it produces rough sound. Anything that resonates brings iron. The way air is invisible so is iron. The same way sweat comes out of the body that is the way vibration and the iron penetrate human skin. When vibration penetrates it gets to the tissue, when it gets to the tissue it enables health. Iron is used for blood building when one has iron deficiency in blood, iron is needed. When the Ogene is carried and played on the arm the irons penetrate the pores of the skin where sweat comes out from and bring healing to the body, as it is close to the body when it is put away from the body, the iron will penetrate but not as easy as when it is held close. And finally, he said I am not talking about what is possible, I am telling you what has been possible. In this work Nzewi (2005) revealed that,

there was no randomness in the choice of materials as well as the design and construction of indigenous music instruments in Africa. Health objectives are commonly implicit in the human science of African musical sound and practice. Music instruments science generally research raw harmonics or rough vibrancy that characterize the raw harmonies of indigenous music instruments massages tissues, senses and organs whether of the mind or the body. In this regard the materials for making personal instrument such as the cast iron for the bell produce raw harmonics (p. 6).

He exposed that ogene music is therapeutic. In indigenous Africa, when we work in the farm, it is rhythmic, when they pound yam or oil it is rhythmic. The mind of an indigenous African is guided by rhythm. Anything we do it is mind that directs. So music in general is an agency for mind wellness of a psychological community making them to move together in consciousness of humanity.



The researcher poses with Prof Meki Nzewi

Conclusion

Music is part of the life of every African and they enjoy their music any way they want. At Okpara square, Enugu residents enjoy the local ogene music as it spurs them to do more while exercising. This ogene music has the power to inspire and entertain, it also has powerful influence that can improve health and workouts for physical fitness. Instead of thinking of ogene as pure entertainment, I considered some of the major benefits of incorporating this music into our everyday workout and I found out that one feels more motivated, happy, and relaxed as a result. Knowing that egwu ogene can influence physical exercise in such a positive way even though this male dominated genre was initially performed for the spirit manifest or during traditional ceremonies, which includes rituals is heartwarming and interesting.

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