



Conceptualising *Odova* (Alias) Within the Context of African Oral Performance

BLESSING ADJEKETA, JOSEPHINE AWELE ODUNZE,
CORNELIUS EZE ONYEKABA
Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Nigeria

GODFREY O. ENITA
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract. Africa's communal nature is deeply rooted in its cultural heritage, with social activities like festivals and ceremonies incorporating performative elements for education and cultural transmission. However, Westernization threatens these valuable oral traditions, leading to their marginalization. Preserving these traditions is crucial for maintaining African identity and cohesion. The study explores the concept of *Odova* (alias) within the Okpe nationality of Nigeria, a call-and-response performance demonstrating authority, marking identity, and transmitting cultural knowledge. The research combines interviews and ethnographic research within Okpe communities to understand how these traditions are sustained across generations. The study highlights the profound connection between orality and cultural significance, illustrating how *Odova* encapsulate individual identity, achievements, and social standing. These aliases are dynamic elements within Okpe traditional performances, serving as vehicles for transmitting history, values, and societal norms. Through the study of *Odova*, we gain insights into the complex interplay between language, performance, and cultural identity in Okpe society, underscoring the enduring power of oral traditions in preserving and celebrating cultural heritage.

Keywords: Call-and-response, Cultural preservation, *Odova*, Okpe traditions, Oral performances

1. Introduction

Africa's communal nature is deeply intertwined with its rich cultural heritage, evident in various social activities like festivals, burials, and birth ceremonies. These events often incorporate performative elements that serve purposes beyond mere

entertainment, such as education and the transmission of cultural values. However, the influence of westernization poses a threat to these valuable oral traditions, leading to their marginalization in some traditional performances. The continent risks losing a vital part of its identity if these traditions are not preserved and promoted (Adjeketa 2016). Abimbola et al (2024) rightly assert that societal progress is hindered by the displacement or obsolescence of its culture. In the African context, oral tradition is a vital component of culture, encompassing practices, belief systems, and ideas. It is crucial to protect these traditions from being overshadowed by Westernization. Beyond mere entertainment and moral instruction, oral performances hold significant socio-cultural value within African communities, contributing to their identity and cohesion.

African ritual and traditional performances are increasingly influenced by Western cultures and religions. This fusion has contributed to a decline in participation in oral performances within modern African societies. A specific example of this decline is seen in call-and-response performances, which are fundamental to traditions like the *Odova* performance of the Okpe nationality. The blending of cultures poses a challenge to the preservation of these vital aspects of African heritage. The decline of traditional African oral performances is largely attributed to the introduction of Western religion and cultural systems, significantly disseminated through popular media. This influence leads to the modification, recreation, and often mistranslation of various forms of oral performances to align with modern trends, as noted by Oladejo (2014: 73). This adaptation, while aiming for modernity, risks diluting the original cultural significance and authenticity of these performances. Many African oral performance traditions and cultures

are facing extinction, as noted by Blessing (2016). This decline involves the gradual erosion of cultural beliefs, processes, procedures, practices, and languages that are integral to these traditions. The loss represents a significant threat to the cultural heritage and identity of numerous communities across the continent.

This study explores the crucial role of communities in preserving oral traditions, particularly focusing on how oral performance functions as a vehicle for maintaining and transmitting African culture. It investigates the concept of Odova (alias) within the framework of African oral performance, using the Okpe nationality as a specific case study to understand how these traditions are sustained and passed down through generations. The central question addressed is whether oral performance will continue to be the primary means of preserving the culture of the people.

This study details the research methodology employed, which combines interviews and ethnographic research. The study involves visiting communities within the Okpe kingdom and using telephone call to interview male respondents over the age of 50. Data was also gathered through direct observation by attending marriage and burial ceremonies in five randomly selected communities-Orerokpe, Ugorhen, Elume, Ugwuton and Ikeresan-The communities were chosen using a simple random sampling technique.

2. African Oral Performances

Oral performances are deeply ingrained in African culture, with their origins stretching back to the earliest days of the continent's history. These performances are integral to various social gatherings in traditional African societies, encompassing diverse elements such as songs, narratives, chants, proverbs, and riddles. From significant life events like marriage ceremonies and burial rites to communal celebrations like festivals (Adjeketa 2024), oral performances play a vital role in expressing cultural identity and values.

Akintunde and Toyin (2021) emphasize the intrinsic link between the creation and the oral transmission or performance of oral tradition material. The mention that essentially, an oral literary work's continued existence hinges on its oral realization through performance by a poet, singer, or storyteller. Without this active performance, the oral piece risks fading away. Their assertion stresses the crucial role of live enactment in preserving and propagating oral performance (literature). Hence, the act of performance is not merely a delivery mechanism but an integral part of the work's life cycle.

Burton (1990) defines oral performances as expressions rooted in oral traditions or lore. These traditions serve as vital channels for receiving, preserving, and transmitting knowledge and culture across generations through spoken means. Common mediums for this transmission include speech, songs, chants, and poetry. Oral performances are often regarded as "walking libraries" due to their capacity to store and transmit vast amounts of knowledge. This perspective, supported by scholars like John and Magnus (1979) and Chisita and Abdullahi (2010), highlights the significant role of oral traditions in preserving cultural heritage and historical information. The term emphasizes that these performances are not merely entertainment but also dynamic repositories of knowledge, actively performed and shared within communities.

Oral performance is a cornerstone of African socio-cultural life, manifesting in diverse forms such as poetry, song, oral narratives, proverbs, riddles, and jokes. This verbal art permeates cultural, spiritual, social, and occupational aspects of life. Africans highly regard and revere oral traditions, using both formal and informal occasions as opportunities for oral creativity. These performances serve purposes of entertainment, information dissemination, and cultural transmission. Oral performance is intrinsically linked to African life and is inherently public, making the audience a crucial component of the performance dynamic (Clement 2020). Clements further asserts that oral performance functions as a vital communication medium. It serves to transmit a community's history, widely held knowledge, and legal principles through spoken word. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in preserving and perpetuating cultural heritage. In essence, oral performance is a dynamic and multifaceted tool for cultural transmission and preservation (Clement 2020).

Oral performances represent the most prevalent form of human communication and have persisted into the modern era. These performances, deeply embedded in oral traditions, are transmitted verbally across generations. Often presented informally through storytelling, they are sometimes dramatized during festivals and other social events, showcasing the culture and traditions of the community hosting them (Abimbola et al 2024). In numerous African communities, oral performances are integral to various cultural events, including dirges, naming ceremonies, poetry recitals, and folktales. A key characteristic of these performances is the blurring of lines between the performer and the audience. The community views the performance as a communal

activity, with everyone actively participating to ensure its success. This shared responsibility and engagement highlight the collective nature of artistic expression in these contexts.

In many academic settings, participatory theatre is always emphasised. However, Akintunde, and Toyin (2021) stated that participatory theatre leverages the power of oral literature to connect with audiences on a deeper level. And that by grounding performances in familiar community contexts, it ensures accessibility and acceptance. They stated that a key strategy involves adapting well-known oral narratives to introduce and explain modern concepts, bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and contemporary societal issues. This approach makes complex ideas more relatable and understandable for the audience.

3. Research Methodology

This study focuses on seven call-and-response performances (*Edeva*) and their philosophical implications for community development within the *Okpe* nation. *Ogiribo*, *Omota*, *Uhuendi*, *Imoto ro keke vwan*, *Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva*, *Itebele erha* and *Odamoro* These particular *Edeva* (plural) were chosen due to their consistent use across various individuals and communities within the *Okpe* nation. The research observed their frequent occurrence in the seven marriages and burials, with similar responses elicited each time, thus highlighting their significance and justifying their selection for this study. The study uses subjective interpretation to read the seven call-and-RESPONS performance (*Edeva*), selected for the study.

Data Presentation: The Call-And-Respons Performance of Selected *Edova*

EDOVA	FIRST CALL (OTOTA)	FIRST RESPONS (BEARER)	SECOND CALL (OTOTA)	SECOND RESPONS (BEARER)	GENERAL RESPONS (AUDIENCE)
Ogiribo	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Ogiribo (heavy wind or wind stom)	Ogiribo	ukposo, Orhomu ghweye (heavy rain is better than a wind stom)	Urhomemlo (that is true)
Omota	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Omota (the baby squirrel)	Omota	We kpeyi, ono swijoro (if you don't kill it, people will hear his noise in the forest)	Omaroho havwo (that is how it is)
Uhuendi	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Uhuendi (bunch of palm fruit)	Uhuendi	Avwa haye kpakole e (one cannot hold it on his armpit)	Kakaka (never)
Imoto ro keke phan	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Imoto ro keke phan (over loaded vehicle)	Imoto ro keke phan	evwe le oroguae wrotore (the drivers sit is always reserved).	Ni marhe wuna sabu tekete wa nya (how will you get to your destination)
Odamoro	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Odamoro (Try)	Odamoro	awaye wuna sabu ruba (you can't do more than try)	Wu sabu wre gwe ye e (surely, no one can do more than try)
Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva (A Minute To 12)	Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva	Emlu ono sabu ji vwia (anything can still happen)	Oreh phian (definitely)
Itebele erha	Biko, gbe so Odova (please call your alias)	Itebele erha (after six shots or bottles of hot gin)	Itebele erha	Emase vwia ne dere (all women are equal)	Laughs

4. The Concept of Odova within the Okpe Nation

Odova is a fundamental element of Okpe culture, deeply rooted in the practice of Iten, which may also translate to alias telling. This tradition manifests as a call-and-response performance, passed down through generations. Odova performances are not merely entertainment; they often contain significant contextual meanings that reflect the values, history, and social dynamics of the Okpe people.

Within the Okpe nationality, every adult male child possesses the right to acquire an Odova (singular) or Edeva (plural). An Odova is typically inherited or acquired from an elder during a traditional social gathering. However, Odova can also be generic, meaning individuals can create their own based on personal experiences or observations. This highlights the dynamic nature of Odova, blending traditional inheritance with individual creation. In matters of inheritance, particularly concerning the Odova, the eldest son typically assumes the rights and responsibilities associated with it upon the father's absence or death. The Odova represents a significant

inheritance, often passed down through generations, from the father and his predecessors. This system underscores the importance of the eldest son in continuing the family lineage and maintaining ancestral heritage.

The acquisition of Odova, or form of knowledge, often occurs during traditional social gatherings. Younger individuals learn through repeated exposure to the Odova's presentation, noting its use of metaphor, tonal variation, and philosophical or socio-cultural relevance. Showing respect, the younger person may then approach the elder, seeking permission to adopt the Odova as their own. This highlights the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer and respect for elders in the process of acquiring cultural knowledge. In Okpe culture, the term Odova refers to significant call-and-response alias used during oral performances, particularly by men at traditional social gatherings such as marriages and burials. When multiple men share the same Odova at an event, the is bestowed upon the eldest man present. This practice highlights the importance of age and seniority within the community and underscores the role of Odova as a marker of identity and status for men in Okpe traditional settings.

Odova, a call-and-response oral performance tradition, specifically alias telling, functions as both a demonstration of authority and a marker of identity. The performance itself is rich with elements such as gestures, movement, recitation, and voice modulation, all of which contribute to its cultural significance and impact. These performative aspects are integral to the Odova tradition. Therefore, in traditional performances, Odova transcends simple spoken words; it is deeply intertwined with performative elements. These elements are crucial in elevating Odova from a mere identifier to a significant ritualistic or ceremonial act, highlighting the importance of context and execution in its cultural function. Odova serve multiple crucial functions within a community. Beyond their spiritual and ritual significance, they act as vital tools for preserving family and community history, maintaining lineage records, and paying tribute to important individuals. Furthermore, Odova can be used to confer authority and impart knowledge to audiences, highlighting their multifaceted role in cultural transmission and social structure.

Further, within the Okpe cultural context, Odova holds substantial cultural weight and significance. It functions as a key identifier, particularly during social events, where individuals are often addressed by their Odova instead of their

personal names. This practice underscores the importance of Odova in social interactions and cultural identity within the Okpe community. In certain performance traditions, using an individual's real name during introductions can indicate a lack of familiarity with the cultural norms. This is because within the Okpe culture, a distinction is made between general names and Edeva, which are names that carry deep philosophical meaning. While some given names may also possess philosophical significance, the specific context and understanding of Edeva within the Okpe tradition are crucial. Therefore, using a real name might inadvertently signal an outsider's perspective or a lack of understanding of the nuanced naming conventions within the culture.

His Royal Majesty, Orhu 1, the king of Okpe Kingdom, emphasizes the profound significance of names as cornerstones of cultural identity when writing the forward of Idolor's book, *Ede Opkpe*. He posits that names have served as vital sources of cultural identity and practice from the very inception of human civilization. This perspective underscores the enduring role of names in shaping and preserving cultural heritage (Idolor 2019). On the other hand, Edeva is a significant and deeply rooted tradition within the Okpe community. More than just a means of identification, it functions as a system for documentation, enabling the retrieval of information about individuals and the community. Furthermore, Edeva plays a role in projecting future expectations, drawing upon past experiences, both individual and collective, to inform potential outcomes and guide decision-making. This practice highlights the Okpe people's sophisticated approach to record-keeping and future planning through cultural traditions. While names are typically given to children at birth by family and friends, Edeva are inherited, acquired, or generated by adult males. The preservation of these Edeva with deep philosophical meaning is crucial for sustaining, promoting, and transmitting the desired identity of the Okpe nation to future generations, thereby enhancing its visibility in the global cultural landscape.

5. Odova: Call-And –Response Performance as African Oral Performance

Built in oral traditions, Oral performances within the Odova oral traditions of the Okpe society are deeply rooted in personal experiences and life events. These performances serve as testimonies, reflecting the circumstances of an Okpe individual. For audiences unfamiliar with the community, such as eyewitnesses or strangers, these performances offer a direct account of the events being portrayed. However, for audiences

who are members of the Okpe community, the performance functions as an "indirect statement," resonating with shared cultural knowledge and understanding, as noted by Wilson (2015). The meaning is layered, depending on the audience's familiarity with the context.

Call-and-response is a dynamic performance characterized by the interaction between key participants. The Otota, acting as the orator, initiates the exchange with a "call." The Odova bearer then RESPONDS to the Otota's call. Crucially, the audience plays a vital role by affirming the significance of the exchange, completing the communicative loop. This three-part interaction—call, response, and affirmation—defines the structure and participatory nature of the call-and-response performance.

In a traditional performance setting, the Otota (Orator) plays a crucial role, particularly in reciting the Edeva (likely referring to specific verses or pronouncements). Remarkably, the Otota often learns these Edeva on the very day of the performance. Following an initial recitation, the Otota continues to deliver the Edeva from memory throughout the event. The process involves the Otota making a call, to which a designated bearer responds with the philosophical meaning of the Edeva. The audience then affirms this meaning, creating a dynamic and participatory experience. This highlights the importance of oral tradition and memory in the performance. The call and response is a vibrant exchange between a storyteller (the orator) and the audience. As Joseph D. Sobol (1992) notes, these performances are often enriched by paralinguistic elements. These elements include facial expressions, vocal inflections, and body movements, which heighten the impact and engagement during the storytelling process. The interaction creates a dynamic and immersive experience for both the performer and the audience.

In traditional performances, such as marriages or burials, distinct roles are assigned to the audience, the Orator, and the Odova bearer. A key figure in these events is the Otota, who serves as an initiator. The Otota's responsibility involves presenting the men in attendance, specifically the elders, in a sequential order based on age, starting from the oldest. Importantly, these elders are not introduced by their personal names but rather by their Edeva, highlighting the significance of lineage and heritage in these cultural contexts. This practice underscores the respect for seniority and the importance of ancestral connections within the community. The core of the Odova tradition is the call-and-response interaction. An Otota initiates the process by addressing an

individual, referred to as the bearer, and inquiring about their Odova. The bearer then vocalizes their Odova, employing a specific tonal inflection. The Otota echoes the bearer's call, after which the bearer provides a philosophical interpretation of their Odova for the audience appreciation. This entire process emphasizes both individual expression and communal understanding through shared philosophical insights.

The role of the audience in the context being discussed is characterized by both mimetic and verbal participation. This means audience members engage by mirroring actions, such as nodding in agreement, and by verbally affirming the philosophical importance of the Odova. Notably, these responses are spontaneous and occur without any prior rehearsal, suggesting an inherent understanding or connection to the subject matter. The oral performances thrive on communal engagement, deeply enriched by the use of proverbs. These proverbs encapsulate the community's norms, belief systems, and practices, often exploring themes of morality. The audience's appreciation stems from recognizing and connecting with these embedded cultural and philosophical undertones within the performance. The success of the performances hinges on this shared understanding and resonance.

In Okpe traditional performances, such as those featuring the Odova, active participation extends beyond delivering a verbal piece such as speech, poem, or dramatic monologue. The audience is not merely passive; they engage through consistent call and response, creating a dynamic and interactive performance medium. This shared participation, involving both verbal contributions and responsive repetition, is crucial to the overall experience. This Okpe oral performance is deeply rooted in a shared cultural belief between the performer and the audience (Manieson et al 2012). Echoing Mbiti's (1966) perspective, these performances, particularly the call-and-response style known as Odova, serve as a reflection of Okpe life. They mirror the Okpe people's activities, thought processes, lifestyle, values, joys, and sorrows. Fundamentally, the Odovan functions as a way for the community to express their relationship with and reaction to their surrounding environment.

The Odova performance is deeply significant to the Okpe people of Nigeria, extending beyond its physical manifestation. It serves as a powerful symbol representing ancestral spirits, the collective identity of the Okpe community, and their historical continuity. The performance is a living link to the past and a vital component of Okpe cultural heritage. Odova are revered objects believed to hold the power and

wisdom of ancestors. They act as a tangible connection to past generations, enabling communication and ensuring ongoing guidance and protection from those who came before. This reverence highlights the importance of ancestral connection in the culture where Odova are significant. Odova are central to the cultural fabric of the Okpe people, featuring prominently in significant events such as rites of passage, chieftaincy installations, religious observances, and conflict resolution processes. Their presence is particularly notable during major festivals and communal gatherings, where they act as a symbol of shared identity and a means of reinforcing core Okpe values.

The preservation and veneration of Odova are critical to the cultural integrity and social cohesion of the Okpe people. Disrespecting or neglecting Odova performances, whether due to Westernization or religious affiliation, is viewed as a unwise. Such actions are believed to potentially bring misfortune to both the individual, especially inherited odova and the wider community. This, highlight the deep cultural significance of Odova and the Odova performance within Okpe society. The traditions surrounding Odova performance are preserved through meticulous knowledge transfer and ritualistic practices. This ensures that the customs are passed down across generations, maintaining the continuity of this significant element of Okpe heritage. This safeguarding of these practices and performances are important in preserving cultural identity.

6. Philosophical and Cultural Significance to the Audience

Ogiribo... ukposo, Orhomu ghweye.... Urhomemlo

The Odova, Ogiribo is used to describe a destructive force, specifically a violent windstorm. This aligns with the broader definition of a windstorm as a natural disaster that exceeds a community's capacity to cope and jeopardizes its safety and normal operations. Raffaele et al. (2013) support this understanding by defining windstorms as events that overwhelm local resources. Raffaele et al. highlight the philosophical interpretation of Ogiribo where wind disasters serve as a critical evaluation of a community's emergency response effectiveness. Ogiribo emphasize the inherent challenges in planning for these events due to their unpredictable nature. The bearer of Ogiribo advocate for the development of a comprehensive and adaptable emergency strategy capable of responding effectively to unforeseen circumstances. Failure to adequately plan for wind disasters can have significant detrimental impacts on a community's economic

stability, social structures, physical infrastructure, and the psychological well-being of its residents.

The analogy of rain and wind is used to illustrate the impact of community crisis. While one can navigate through rainfall, a strong wind, representing a severe crisis, instils fear and causes significant damage, such as uprooting trees and destroying homes. The core message emphasizes the importance of preventing community crises, as the consequences, including loss of life and property, can be irreversible. This, underscores the necessity of proactive measures to maintain peace and stability within the community, highlighting the potential for devastating and irreparable outcomes if conflicts are allowed to escalate. Also, communities within the Okpe nation, and indeed across Nigeria, face annual devastation from violent windstorms. These storms disproportionately affect inland towns and cities, resulting in loss of life and significant property damage. A specific example is the 2023 windstorm that struck Deghele community in the Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State. This event destroyed crops and residential buildings, leaving many residents homeless and without access to food. The impact of these windstorms highlights a recurring and widespread environmental challenge.

Wind disasters cause significant physical damage, injuries, fatalities, and economic losses (Kamil, et al 2021, Raffaele et al 2023). The "Ogiribo call and respons" emphasizes the importance of annual preparedness for windstorms. This includes taking immediate safety precautions during windstorms, such as avoiding forested areas and reinforcing residential buildings to prevent roof damage. The call serves as a reminder to be proactive in mitigating the potential impact of these destructive events. Emphatically, Ogiribo respons, emphasizes the importance of learning from recent and significant wind disasters in our vicinity. This call to action suggests a need for preparedness and mitigation strategies based on past experiences to minimize the impact of future events. The focus is on applying lessons learned to improve resilience and safety within the community.

Omoṭa... We kpeyi, ono swijoro... omaroho havwo

The squirrel, known locally as "Ota," is a common animal throughout the Okpe nation. It is familiar to people of all ages in the community. Squirrels typically inhabit plantations, agricultural lands, and gardens with trees. They are predominantly found high in the canopy of trees, and only occasionally come down to ground level (Cassola, F. 2017). The Ota, a type of squirrel, has a diet mainly consisting of fruits

and palm fruit seeds, which it can access by cracking open tough nuts (Kingdon et al 2013).. These squirrels are primarily hunted by children, but their small size and intelligence make them difficult to catch. The Omota, or baby squirrel, is particularly elusive and rarely captured by human hunters due to its diminutive size. However, squirrel is preyed on by eagles and other large birds of prey (Thorington et al 2012). This illustrates a basic ecological interaction where one organism (the squirrel) serves as a food source for another (the eagle or bird of prey). This relationship is a fundamental aspect of food webs and ecosystems.

Omota, exhibits remarkable spatial memory, enabling it to navigate and remember locations effectively. This cognitive ability allows Omota to solve intricate problems related to foraging for food. Furthermore, Omota's behavior suggests a capacity for adaptation, indicating it can adjust to and thrive in novel environments. These traits highlight Omota's cognitive flexibility and survival skills.

The Odova, Omota call- and- response serves as a potent reminder to the audience about the critical importance of preserving the lives of young children. This traditional form of communication emphasizes the community's shared responsibility in safeguarding the well-being of its youngest members. The call likely presents a situation or a question related to child welfare, and the response reinforces the commitment to protect and nurture them. The *RESPONS*, *We kpeyi, ono swijoro*, underscores the immense potential of young individuals, highlighting that today's youth will become the leaders and caregivers of tomorrow. It also emphasizes that their capabilities are vast and should not be underestimated. Crucially, *We kpeyi, ono swijoro* stresses the paramount importance of ensuring the safety and well-being of children, suggesting that safeguarding them is a fundamental responsibility.

Uhuendi... Avwa haye kpakole e ... kakaka

In traditional Okpe society, the Uhuendi (bunch of palm fruit) is a widely cultivated farm crop. Local farmers and residents highly value it for its versatility in producing essential commodities like palm oil, palm kernel, and palm kernel oil. The Uhuendi is harvested from palm trees that typically range in height from 15 to 30 meters. The Uhuendi is a substantial object, potentially weighing 10kg or more. Its outer husk presents a risk of injury to anyone handling it carelessly, due to its piercing nature. This risk of self-inflicted harm is central to the philosophical concept of the Odova, Uhuendi. Palm fruit harvesting involves a specific process where the

farmer cuts the fruit and then manually carries it, using both hands, to a carrying pan or wheelbarrow. This method highlights the weight and size of the palm fruit bunch, contrasting it with the ease a footballer might have carrying multiple footballs. The key point is that each palm fruit bunch requires individual handling due to its size and weight.

The call and response sequence, "Uhuendi" and "Avwa haye kpakole e," serves as a crucial reminder within the performance. It highlights the importance of treating productive individuals with respect and care, cautioning against exploitation. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for patience and understanding in interpersonal relationships. The exchange also conveys a pragmatic approach to life's challenges, suggesting that they should be managed incrementally rather than attempting to solve everything at once. This resonates with the idea of tackling problems step-by-step for more effective resolution.

Imoto ro keke phan" ... "Evwe le oroguaye wrotore... ni marhe wuna sabu tekete wa nya

Overloading vehicles leads to several detrimental effects. One major consequence is a significant increase in fuel consumption, impacting operational costs. Furthermore, tires experience accelerated wear, requiring more frequent replacements. Handling also suffers, as steering becomes harder to control, posing safety risks. Transporters confirm that braking distances are extended in overloaded vehicles, increasing the likelihood of accidents. Ultimately, these disadvantages and safety hazards can cause substantial damage to the vehicle itself, reducing its lifespan and increasing maintenance expenses. An often over loaded vehicle visits the mechanic workshops often.

In many Okpe communities, market days occur every four or five days, depending on the specific community. These market days are significant events, particularly for women who are heavily involved in agriculture. They transport their farm produce to the market, often utilizing vehicles that are specifically arranged to carry both the goods and the women from the farming areas to the marketplace. The core idea presented is that even when a vehicle is heavily overloaded, the driver always manages to find space for themselves. This highlights a common scenario where, despite the excess load, the driver's presence and control are prioritized. The saying "no matter how keke (overload) the Imoto (vehicle) is, there is a reserved space for the driver" encapsulates this concept, emphasizing the driver's essential role regardless of the circumstances.

The call and response, "Imoto ro keke phan" and "Evwe le oroguaye wrotore," serves as a crucial reminder to the audience about the importance of respecting and valuing the roles of family heads, community leaders, and national leaders. It underscores the idea that these figures play a vital part in the well-being and progress of society, and their contributions should not be underestimated. The response also signifies that effective community development hinges on strong leadership. A designated leader, empowered to utilize their skills, is essential for navigating challenges and driving progress within the community. The leader's ability to govern, even amidst difficulties, is crucial for the community's advancement and overall well-being.

Odamoro... awaye wuna sabu ruba... wu sabu wre gwe ye e

When the person who bears the Odova *Odamoro... awaye wuna sabu ruba... wu sabu wre gwe ye e* (Try), is called, the response will be: "you cannot do more than try." This explores the philosophical concept of human limitation through the lens of the Odova. The proverbial response, "you cannot do more than try" highlights the ultimate futility of human endeavors in the face of mortality. Regardless of one's achievements – be it academic success like earning a PhD, political power such as becoming a president, military triumphs, material wealth like owning a private jet, or even the legacy of having many children – death remains an inevitable end. The saying serves as a poignant reminder that after death, all that can be said is that the person "tried," emphasizing the inherent limitations of human existence. The tonal variation used when reciting the saying further underscores its solemn and reflective nature.

Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva... emlu ono sabu ji wvia... oreh phian

The Odova performer, known for the phrase *Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva... emlu ono sabu ji wvia... oreh phian* "A Minute to 12," embodies a powerful message of hope and perseverance. His characteristic response, "anything can still happen," underscores the belief that positive change remains possible even in the direst circumstances. This sentiment mirrors the popular saying, "it is not over until it is over," highlighting the importance of never giving up and recognizing the potential for last-minute breakthroughs. The performer's message serves as a reminder to maintain optimism and continue striving

for success, regardless of how late in the game of life it may seem.

Itebele erha... emase wvia ne dere... Laughs

On the Odova, *Itebele erha... emase wvia ne dere... Laughs* "After Six Bottles" the bearer responded with "All Women Are Equal". This humorously illustrates how excessive alcohol consumption can impair judgment and alter perceptions, leading to questionable decisions. While the number of bottles mentioned in this is subjective and depends on individual tolerance. Members of the audience are reminded that in traditional gathering where alcohol is a regular feature, moderate drinking is advised to avoid indulging in questionable demoralised characters.

The Odova performance, primarily used for communication, is increasingly influenced by Western languages, particularly English. This influence has led to a humorous trend where individuals translate Odova phrases into English, creating comical expressions. Examples include translating "Odamoro" to "Try," "Unoke ohu ono te qwojo ikpereva" to "A Minute To 12," and "Itebele erha" to "after six shots or bottles of hot gin." This playful adaptation involves both the use of English in the call and the response, highlighting the blending of cultures and languages. Also, these Edeva performances, primarily engaged in by men in their early 50s, appear simple and even comical on the surface. However, a deeper analysis reveals that they possess significant social meaning within the Okpe community. Because the study focuses on understanding the underlying social significance of these seemingly ordinary oral performances, it also undertook their analysis.

7. Summary and Conclusion

This study explores the vital role of oral traditions in preserving African culture, particularly focusing on oral performance as a means of maintaining and transmitting cultural values. It highlights the communal nature of African societies and how social activities, such as festivals and ceremonies, incorporate performative elements that serve educational and cultural purposes. The influence of Westernization poses a threat to these traditions, leading to their marginalization. The chapter emphasizes the importance of preserving these traditions to maintain African identity and cohesion. The study focuses on the concept of Odova (alias) within the Okpe nationality of Nigeria as a case study. Odova is a call-and-response performance deeply rooted in Okpe culture, serving as a

demonstration of authority, a marker of identity, and a means of transmitting cultural knowledge. The research methodology combines interviews and ethnographic research within Okpe communities to understand how these traditions are sustained and passed down through generations. The study details how oral performances are integral to various social gatherings in traditional African societies, encompassing diverse elements such as songs, narratives, chants, proverbs, and riddles. These performances are not merely entertainment but also dynamic repositories of knowledge, actively performed and shared within communities. The call-and-response dynamic is a key characteristic of these performances, with the audience playing a crucial role in affirming the significance of the exchange. The chapter also explores the philosophical and cultural significance of specific Odova, illustrating how they reflect the values, history, and social dynamics of the Okpe people.

African Oral Performance, particularly within the Okpe tradition, highlights the profound connection between orality and cultural significance. This is vividly illustrated through the use of Odova, which are personal aliases that encapsulate an individual's identity, achievements, and social standing. These aliases are not merely labels; they are dynamic elements within Okpe traditional performances, serving as vehicles for transmitting history, values, and societal norms. The oral performance of Odova involves intricate linguistic artistry, employing techniques such as repetition, metaphor, and tonal variation to enhance their impact and memorability. The selection and performance of Odova are deeply contextual, reflecting the specific occasion, the performer's skill, and the audience's expectations. Through the study of Odova, we gain insights into the complex interplay between language, performance, and cultural identity in Okpe society, underscoring the enduring power of oral traditions in preserving and celebrating cultural heritage. The use of Odova in performances serves not only to honour individuals but also to reinforce communal bonds and transmit cultural knowledge across generations.

8. Recommendations

Odova oral performance need to be incorporated into local academic curriculums. Integrating Odova performance into the school curriculum across Africa would be a significant strategy to combat cultural marginalization. This argument suggests that by formally recognizing and teaching Odova performance within educational institutions, the cultural significance and value of this art form can be

elevated. Also, this inclusion would help ensure that younger generations are exposed to, understand, and appreciate Odova performance, thereby preserving and promoting it. Ultimately, this initiative will counteract the erosion of cultural identity and foster a stronger sense of cultural pride and belonging among African students.

Further, assimilating Odova oral performances into academic curricula is crucial for sustainability, building upon prior research in oral traditions. Damola Adesina (2021) highlights the significance of Yoruba folktales in early childhood education, advocating for the preservation of orature's value. Similarly, Michael (2021) emphasizes the pedagogical power of folklore and oral tradition, urging their inclusion in school curricula. This paper extends this argument by proposing the Odova oral performance of the Okpe people of Nigeria as a valuable educational tool. It aims to explore the traditional narrative's inherent meaning, its contextual and emerging meanings during performance, and to safeguard this performance from extinction due to Western and media influences.

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