Traditional Musical Instrument of the Ogba People: A Symbolic Narrative for Textile Fabric Production

By

Onyige, Oruchi Johnny Odua
Department of Fine and Applied Arts,
Faculty of Humanities, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port Harcourt.

Abstract
This study on “traditional musical instrument of the Ogba people: a symbolic narrative for textile fabric production” used the musical instrument of the Ogba people to document the musical instrument culture of the people. Ogbaland is situated in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government area of Rivers State. Ogbaland is largely blessed with rich cultural and traditional values. These values the people have been able to pass on from generation to generation. One of such cultural values is their musical instruments. Musical instruments mean a lot to them because they are employed in entertainment during cultural events. They are also used as a medium to disseminate information. It serves as a symbol for the promotion and preservation of the people’s cultural heritage. But in recent times in Ogbaland it has been observed that in such functions such as burial, marriage ceremonies and other cultural events, foreign instruments are being used to entertain guests or give out information as against the previous practice in Ogbaland. The situation is seriously beginning to affect younger generations because some of them do not know the names of the musical instruments and their functions in Ogbaland. This implies that the culture is eroding and if nothing is done about it, it may go into extinction. Therefore, in order to preserve the culture, this study is designed to document the musical instruments artistically on fabric using batik technique. To effectively document the culture, the study was guided by expression theory. The study adopted the studio experimental research method as its research design since the study was basically carried out in the studio. Different sketches of the musical instruments were developed and used for the study, after developing the sketches; they were transferred to the fabric using batik.
technique. The batik works were analyzed. The study finally as part of its findings revealed that batik technique can be used to promote and preserve the musical instrument of Ogbaland. Conclusively, the study concludes that it is imperative to preserve the culture as it will create more awareness about the musical instrument of Ogba people. The study recommends that more artistic research works should be carried out that will further help document Ogba people’s culture.

**Keywords:** Ogbaland, Musical instrument, symbolic narrative, textile fabric

**Introduction**

Ogbaland also referred to as Ogba people, is a tribe in Rivers State, Nigeria. The people originated from the Ancient Benin Empire. They are located within the south-south area in Nigeria and they speak Ogba language. Ogbaland (Ali-Ogba) covers an area of about 920km² in the northern part of Rivers State in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, located within the River Niger floor plains. It is bordered on the west by the Orashi River and on the East by the Sombrero River. In addition to the main drainage system, there are the Omoku River and many back swamps, cut offs and interconnecting streams which form a maze of drainage channels superimposed on the area. At the peak of the rainy season, these interconnected waterways are prominent features of the landscape. Its location in the Somberiro Warri deltaic plains situates it in the rain forest zone of Southern Nigeria. The area can be divided into four ecological zones. The Sombreiro river plains (eastwards), The Orashi river flood plains (westwards), the central well drainage low lands and farms form a mosaic between the Orashi and Sombreiro Rivers and the non-tidal freshwater swamps basin (Cyril-Egsuare and Idibia, 2016).

According to Ellah (1995) an Oral history has it that Ogba people migrated to what is now called Ali-Ogba (Ogbaland), from the then Benin Empire across the Niger Delta in about the 16th Century. Ellah adds that the
geographic location, migration routes, languages and political structure are some of the socio-cultural and political legacies that reinforce a common origin and bind the people of Ogbaland (Ali-Ogba) together.

Ogbaland after her migration from the old Benin Empire till date still practice and value their cultural heritage by showcasing their culture through different medium. One of such medium is through their traditional musical instruments. Musical instruments are very vital to them because they are used for entertainment purposes as well as to promote and preserve their cultural values. Knife (2008) defines musical instruments as instruments with which sound can be intentionally made. In a simple term, musical instrument are devices specially manipulated with the hands and use in the process of particular functions (Google Search Dictionary, 2018).

According to Weleh (1999) the musical instrument of any tribe, town and village is derived from culture, tradition or religion of the place. Weleh adds that musical instrument and music are inseparable, they play very significant role in the life of people by bringing them together and in uniting them. Weleh further explained that musical instrument help to educate young ones traditionally to know the culture. Deducing from Weleh’s explanation, it is obvious that musical instrument and the tradition of a people go hand in hand and it is a vital tool to educate young ones about culture and tradition of the land. Therefore it is important to preserve the culture of sustaining values of traditional musical instruments in Ogbaland by documenting it for posterity. Regrettably, some younger generation in Ogbaland currently do not know most of the names of the traditional musical instruments of the people. Thus, to prevent the culture from going into extinction this study is carried out to document the musical instruments of Oga land artistically on fabric by adapting the batik technique.
Batik technique in textile according to Omuaru (2002) is a form of fabric ornamentation which employs wax poured on fabric to resist dye when the fabric is applied in the dye bath. Kleiner (2011) states that batik is an Indonesian fabric-dyeing technique using melted wax to form patterns. The dye cannot penetrate the waxed areas of the fabric. Batik technique is a very unique technique in the production of fabric in texture because it usually creates fine patterns of designs on fabric after production that informs the reason for its adaptation in this research to depict the musical instruments of the Ogba people.

Musical instrument are very important tools in every society or culture because of the functions they render in entertaining, bring people together and uniting them. The instruments also stand as cultural tools which educate the people about their culture. In Ogbaland of Rivers State musical instruments have played very vital roles because they have been in use for entertainment during masquerade festival, marriage ceremonies, coronation, to mention but a few. Importantly, they are being used in bringing their people together which unite them at different ceremonies and festivals. It has also served as a medium through which their children or young ones are educated culturally.

Regrettably, despite all the functions these traditional musical instruments render in contemporary Ogba tradition, they are gradually relegated to the background. This situation can be blamed on ignorance, negligence and condescension. Hence, the knowledge and history of these traditional musical instruments is at risk of extinction from Ogbaland and also in the state. Some put the blame largely on imposed foreign religion and the so-called western civilization. According to Achuonye and Ajoku (2003) while studying the colonial and missionary period of education,

The bookish and irrelevant kind of curriculum was imposed on African schools by Europeans without taking into consideration the
social and religious differences of the individuals concerned. As a result, Nigerian students know more about foreign culture than they know their own.

In most schools today, after independence, Nigerians never thought it wise enough to teach traditional African Culture to its fullest. To deduce from Achuonye and Ajoku's account, if students will grow and be custodians of their culture, they must have good knowledge of their culture, tradition must mean something to them, instead of being oblivious of them. We must teach the art of culture and tradition in our schools to encourage them to sustain cultural and traditional values.

Succinctly, Idiong (2004) cited Hotslede (1984), who stated that "he who has no culture is as bad as he who has no personality". Idiong (2004) also cited U.J. Essiene former military governor of Cross Rivers State who regrettably blamed the people's attitudes as: Lack of proper understanding. He pointed out that, "This had in the past led to attempts by foreigners to denigrate it, not to destroy our cultural heritage" He added that "In place of salvaging the situation they try to destroy and super-impose on our people their own foreign culture thereby eclipsing the true African personality and character. From The ex-Governor's account one major factor which is adversely affecting our culture is foreign religious influence. And it has negative and erroneously impressed on some persons to neglect their culture. Thus, one effect of it is that, it has made younger generations of the Ogbapeople to neglect their culturalvalues and heritage. This brought about the eroding of the musical instruments culture of the Ogbapeople. These among other reasons is why this research is carried out, to in order to help prevent the musical instrument culture from fast eroding by documenting them artistically on fabric using the batik textile technique.
Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the expression theory, and is discussed below: Expression theory was popularized by Leo Tolstoy and Robin George Collingwood. Noel (1999) views expression theory as a form of communication in art. Lowenfeld and Britain (2006) States that expression is possible without self – identification with the expenses expressed as well as with the art material by which it is explained. The Art materials or the materials used for expression are very important and it enhances art expression which is very importance to an artist. Therefore, there is no doubt that the expression theory has to do with several things, not just associating it with emotions, the medium and even technique used for the expression is very important too. Thus, it is believed that this theory can express the traditional musical instrument culture of Ogbaland by adopting the batik technique to express them.

Russell (2000) states that all visual art communicate some level of human experience that can be expressed through a wide range media, materials and techniques. Khatchadourian (1965) also sees expression theory in a work of art as an expression of the artists feelings or emotions embodied in it by the artist. The simplest interpretation one can give to the assertion given by the propagator concerning this theory is that when one expresses himself to another, the person has expressed an emotional feeling to the other. But very importantly the mode of communication differs from artistic communication. The Artist communication deals with visual presentation as a form of communication which reflects emotional as it were in the expression theory. A good number, of artists use lines to communicate or express themselves.

Deducing the above statement it is obvious that art deals with the expression of emotions and communication of feelings. This is one reason why this study intends to adopt the expression theory. Another reason is that as an art theory which deals with the expression of emotions and
communicates feelings, it gives room for visual expression and communication of the culture of Ogbaland with what will be produced by the application of the batik technique on fabric.

Brief Historical Origin of the Ogba People
The historical origin of Ogba people of Rivers State in Nigeria is traceable traced to the old Bini kingdom, particularly Benin City. The event that led to the migration of Aklaka, the ancestral father of Ogba and Ekpeye, now known as Ahoada is not known, but oral tradition points to the turbulent period of Bini when Oba Ewuare the Great who Ogba is called Oguaro was said to have made laws depriving his subjects of certain fundamental rights. He retired into his inner palace and wept bitterly for his sons and asked the Avhiogbe, (Town Cries), to announce the news to the people and asked them to mourn the death of his sons with him. He made such law that were considered absurd by the people These law caused great confusion as a large number of citizens migrated to various places. This could have led to the migration of Aklaka, and the tragedy at Ubuke consequently led to the separation of Aklaka’s two sons Ogbaland and Ekpeye, with the latter finally setting at Obigwe from where his Agburu, Okparaeme and other sojourners migrated to Omoku and other areas within the geographical sphere of Ogbaland, (Cyril-Egware and Idibia, 2016).

The account of Ellah (1995) Ogba also called Ogbaland, is a tribe in Rivers State, Nigeria originating from the Ancient Benin Empire. They are located within the south area in Nigeria. The people speak Ogba dialect which comprises Egi and Igburu. They both speak one dialect with slight difference from each other. Population of the people is about 280,000. It is located in the central Orashi-Sombreiro Plains of Rivers State, Nigeria. It is currently among the largest oil and gas producing areas in Nigeria.

Ogba people have some serial cultural and political legacies that reinforce their common origin and build them together as a people with common
heritage and destiny. In terms of their social cultural values Ogba people have lots of medium through which they express their heritage. And with which they display through musical rendition via the use of musical instruments for masquerade displays, cultural festivals and during social gatherings. Even though they have other medium they use in showcasing their traditional values and heritage, but musical instruments stand out very important because it is one major tool or instrument that performs very prominent roles in cultural ceremonies. That is one of the reasons why this study intends to document it in fabric research investigation.

**Historical Origin, Meaning and Functions of the Musical Instruments**

A musical instrument is an instrument created or adapted to make musical sounds. In principle any object that produces sound can be considered as a musical instrument, it is through this purpose that the objects becomes a musical instrument. The history of musical instruments dates to the beginnings of human culture. Earlier musical instrument may have been used for ritual, such as trumpet to signal success on the hunt, or a drum, in a religious ceremony, cultures eventually developed composition and performance of melodies for entertainment. Musical instruments evolve from one level to the other with changing applications.

According to Baines (1993) a musical instrument makes sounds. When humans changed from making sounds with their bodies, for example from clapping to using objects to create sounds of music, musical instruments were born, primitive musical instruments were probably designed to emulate natural sounds. And their purpose was for ritual rather than for entertainment and the artist pursuit of musical composition. The concept of melody was unknown to early players of musical instruments. A player sounding a flute to signal the start of a hunt does so without the thought of the modern notion of “making music” (Bickuell, 1999).
Musical instrument are constructed in a broad array of styles and shapes, using many different materials based on how they will function in due to the services they will render. Basically it is a known fact that musical instruments serve rituals purposes previously but in the present generation, they are largely used for entertainment, communication tool for people among others (Weleh, 1999).

**Over View of Traditional Musical Instruments of Ogba People**
The musical instruments of any tribe, town or village are largely derived from culture, tradition or religion. (Weleh, 1999). Musical instruments of a particular tribe play very significant role to the people because; according to Weleh it brings people together and unites them. Musical instrument and tradition go hand in hand, therefore the need for younger generations of any tribe to know their traditional musical instrument. But the situation is almost currently different among the younger generation of Ogbaland and Ogba people because most of their younger generation do not even know the names and functions of most of the traditional musical instruments. Ajih and Adegbe (2009) points out that today most youths know little or nothing about their culture and the musical instrument of their traditional origin. Ajih and Adegbe (2009) stated that most tribe’s traditional musical instruments are going into extinction due to western civilization. On a final note, Ajih and Adegbe (2009) recommend that traditional musical instruments should be encouraged to keep up the spirit of our cultural heritage.

Regrettably, despite the socio-cultural values and functionsthe traditional musical instruments of Ogba people renders, it has not gained its rightful recognition and documentation in cultural discourse. Cyril Engware and Idibia (2016) explained that in Ogbaland most young people do not even know the names of this traditional musical instrument.
Notably, the people of Ogbaland are blessed with different kinds of musical instruments just like every other Nigerian tribe. Cyril Egware and Idibia (2016) informed us that musical instruments (Nkwa) are very important items during their festivals, especially in during the Nchaka festival. Some of the musical instruments or drums of the Ogba people are:

i. Wooden Drum (Nkwa)

ii. Metal Gongs (Ukela) (Double Gong)

iii. Agbadih (Animal Skinned and wooden drum)

iv. Ichaka Igba Egwu Udu (Musical Pots)

v. Ichaka Egwu-Ogba (Shekere shaker)

**Meaning of textiles and its methods of fabric production**

The term "textile" is derived from the Latin word "Texere" meaning to weave, originally it is made from a fabric made from fibres. However, in its
present use, the term "textiles" encompasses a vast number of fabrics produced by weaving, knitting, felting and embroidery and other methods. (Okeke, 2002). According to Banjoko (2000) Textiles is an art of fabric production and decoration. Fabric is derived from fibre. Fibres are converted into yarns for weaving of cloth materials. It also involves paper works. Batik, Tie and dye, block or screen printing. They are achieved through the use of various elements of design like motifs and colour. To achieve the desired pattern on the material, designs are made first on paper in repeat patterns and then transferred on the fabric planned by printing on machine, screen, stamping or stenciling. Textiles are a two-dimensional art in the class of applied art. (Banyoko, 2000).

Textile design is one of the applied arts concerned with designing and making of cloths and dress to cover the human body for protection and beautification. Omuaru, (2002). Sampson, (2016) averse that textile design is the process of creating designs and structures for knitted, woven and non-woven fabric, it also involves the embellishment of these materials similarly, Ganagana (2014) opines that textile design refers to the designing and making of cloth and dress for the covering of the human body. For clarity purpose Cyril Egware (2013) states that textile and their use as dress are seen as foremost in the expression of a people's identity. Okeke (1996), (2005) confirmed this, stating that textiles is a principal medium through which identity is expressed and symbolized all over the world even though it's major purpose is for beautifying the body and enhancing the dignity of persons.

Onebrakpeya (2007) also points out that textile designs and their use as clothing is foremost in the expression of people's identity. In like manner, Chukueggu and Cyril Engware (2009), corroborates that textiles reflects man's environment, his society and community and stand as a means of non-verbal communication in revealing the culture and history of a people.
There are different methods of textile fabric production. Ranges range from weaving with thread or wool to produce fabric, tie-dye, embroidery and Batik methods among others. These various methods are unique in the production of fabric for human and materials consumption. But for the purpose of this research emphasis is geared towards the use of batik making as method in the production of textile fabrics.

**Batik as a Method of Textile Fabric Production: Materials and Procedures**

There is lots of literary discussion on batik as a method of fabric production. According to Banjoko (2000) batik is an Indonesian word, derived from the word "tik" meaning “a little bit” or "a drop". This refers to the tiny drops of hot melted wax used on the design to resist the dye. The tradition is held to have originated in Java, the most populated Island in Indonesia.

The batik process is another popular dye resist technique, in which the design is applied to the material with a substance that will resist the action of the dye. This resist substance is commonly wax. This is applied to the surface of the fabric cloth with a traditional tool known as a "tjanting", or brush and the cloth is then dipped or brushed with dye. The wax resists the dye which fills the areas that are not waxed. This resists the dye which fills the areas that are not waxed. This is a similar process to tie-dye. After dyeing, the resist (or wax) is removed from the cloth, using hot water and iron.

Batik is exciting: it has that special "magical" quality of secret writing. Contemporary craftsmen have developed this craft into a personal art expression, and it is recognized widely for its unusual effects and creative possibilities.

Banjoko (2000) also outlined the following as materials needed for batik fabric production:

- Paraffin wax/Bess wax or candle wax
• Old roasting pan or empty beverage tin.
• Heat source.
• Waxed paper, cardboard, or foil under the cloth to protect working surface.
• Cotton materials
• Tjanting (Optional)
• Old brushes of various size (bristle)
• Plastic bucket/bowl to mix and hold dyes
• Household dyes (chemicals etc)
• Rubber gloves
• lots of old newspaper and paper to welling
• Electric iron
• Water (boiling)

Similarly, Banjoko gave the following as procedures:
Batiking should be carried out in well-ventilated area. Helpers, newspaper covering, and stations for varying procedures are a must.

a) Wash new materials to remove any sizing (cotton materials preferable).

b) Suggest patterns for designing batiks: butterflies, birds flowers, monsters, geometric patterns or imaginary patterns. Consider large spaces as well linear details when planning designs. Plan and draw the patterns directly on the cloth with coloured chalk.

c) Materials for applying design can include:-
   • felt tip pens
   • oil pastel
   • crayon/pencil
   • melted wax
   • any found objects

a) Plan the drawing sketch one day, waxing and dyeing on the subsequent days.
b) Stretch the material tightly on a smooth board. Fasten it with thumbtack or a staple gun.

c) Transfer the design from the paper into the cloth fabric and bring out using coloured chalk.

d) Removed the cloth from the board, and stretch it tightly over the wooden frame. Fasten with thumbtack or staple gun.

e) Prepare the molten wax (wax need not be boiling because it flammable) use only enough heat to ensure that the wax penetrates through the cloth.

f) Place the frame on newspaper with the cloth side up.

g) Paint the melted wax on the cloth in areas that are to remain the natural colour of the material. Make sure the wax penetrates through the cloth.

h) Remove the material from the frame, crumple and submerge the material in the bowl of dye (dye bath). Crumpling makes the crackle effective in the finished batik. Allow the cloth to dry.

i) Stretch the material on the frame again for each additional colour that is needed.

j) Paint the melted wax over the areas just dyed to retain this colour. Remove the cloth from the frame and bath it in a second colour (dye). This operation can be repeated several times.

k) Remove the wax from material in boiling water or by ironing with turpentine and between newspapers. If using iron for wax removal, change the papers often.

l) After removal of wax, the cloth is then given final ironing, folded and ready for use.

Indians and Africans also produce batik. The Indians use a brush-like tool to put the wax onto the cloth. The Africans decorate some of their material with simple, powerful and direct designs using printing blocks and stencils cut out of a metal sheet. The African Clothes are noted for their blue colour which is derived from the indigo dye. These are usually from Yoruba land
in Nigeria where it is known as adireeleko. They use the stencil method. They cut out the motifs on a sheet of tin, zinc or a corrugated iron sheet, prepare starch paste or flour paste then rub it onto the fabric through the stencil with feathers and chewed sticks. The areas noted for this are Ibadan, Osogbo, Oyo and Abeokuta. Twin Seven-Seven and other Osogbo artists had become very famous in this art not only in Nigeria but also internationally.

**Significant benefits of using the traditional musical instruments of Ogba people as visual narrative for textile fabric product**

A lot of significant benefit can be derived from using the Traditional musical instruments of the Ogba people to produce fabric. Notably, the symbolic musical instruments that form the motifs promote and preserve the cultural heritage of the people. It also, serves as cultural identify because when people wear the fabric produced with the musical instrument motifs people will relate them to the Ogba people.

Cyril-Egware and Idibia (2016) opines that using the traditional motifs to produce fabric help to document the tradition and culture of a people. Deducing from the author’s point of view, it is believed that, significantly it will benefit the Ogba people when their traditional musical instruments are being used as motifs in batik production because it will help to document their culture. Visually, it will help to showcase and narrate the various musical instruments of Ogba people of Rivers State.
Analysis of Ukela-Egwu Ogba (Double Metal Gong) and Udu (Traditional Pot)

Artist: Oruchi Onyige
Title: Ukela- Egwu Ogba (Double Gong) and Udu (Traditional Pot)
Medium: Batik
Size: 5 yards
Year: 2018

In the production of this blue and purple coloured batik fabric two musical instruments of the Ogba people were combined and used to form the motif on the fabric. In this study each of these musical instruments has been used individually as motif on the produce fabric and they have been discussed and analyzed accordingly as they are used by the Ogba people of Rivers State, why it became necessary to document it aesthetically and the artistic method adopted to document them.
Aesthetically viewing the fabric it appears very attractive. And it achieved due to the skillful manipulative ingenuity of the artist in arranging the motif to form the design on the fabric and the choice of colour used for the production of the fabric. The introduction of white dots and orderly arrangement to form part of the design is very interesting and is very commendable. Generally, the fabric is fine and serves a good medium to showcase the musical instrument culture of Ogba people.

**Conclusion**

The research revealed that the use of Ogba musical instrument as symbols to produce textile fabrics for the preservation of the musical instrument culture of Ogba land is effective and efficient. Most importantly, the use and manipulation of various textile studio techniques like tie and dye, batik and print techniques to produce the fabrics in this study is commendable and interesting because they give variety of aesthetics to behold while viewing the fabrics produced. Producing the fabric in the studio was not an easy task to easily accomplish because it requires resilience and patience because it has to do with identifying which musical instrument to combine that will form a good design and general the process of dyeing the fabric waxing, dewaxing and ironing in some cases were not easy to come by. Also the development of thumbnail thatches before the dye processes was challenging but it help in guiding the production of the fabric produced.

Finally, it is the researchers believe that this research will not only preserve the musical instrument culture of Ogba land, but it will also enlighten artists to explore with various medium and techniques to produced textile fabrics. Thus, the achievement of this research has opened up flood-gate for further researches on the musical instrument documentation and preservation of Ogba land of Rivers State.
**Recommendations**

Consequent upon the findings obtained in carrying out the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That more artistic research works should be carried out that will further help to document, sustain and preserve the culture of Ogba people. So that their generations yet on born will be privilege to see and know things concerning their culture and traditions.

2. Continuous experimentation and diversification of the use of textile materials and techniques should be encourage as to encourage the production variety of textile fabric works even when using symbols and motifs of a particular culture.

**References**


https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei2H8qW72PFYbPsAe-s40g0g&q=meaning+of+musical+instruments&oq=meaning+of+musical+instrument&ab.18.0.0...0.V.B2;Wazukthdobs=tool.20th June, 2018


