

# Social Relevance of *Salẹkẹ* Music in Puberty Rites Custom of the *Ókpẹ* People

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## ABSTRACT

*Salẹkẹ* music is a component of puberty rite practice (*Osamo*) among the *Ókpẹ* people in Delta State, Nigeria. Puberty rite portrays maturity when *Ókpẹ* girls are most times matrimonially engaged and circumcised for marriage. This tradition has not sufficiently benefitted from intensive study of its music component. It has become imperative to examine the performance practice of *Salẹkẹ* music and its social relevance; collect, transcribe, notate and analyse existing songs for the records and knowledge for children within and outside *Ókpẹ* land. The Ethnomusicological Field Research Method by Bruno Nettl was adopted and the result showed that *Salẹkẹ* songs function as social paradigm as they are instructive to mature girls, their mothers and the entire society. The musical practice is currently dwindling going by the influence of the 2008 World Health Organisation declaration on the practice of circumcision. It is, however, recommended that *Salẹkẹ* music should be adapted to proximate social activities in the society and also benefit from scholarship and art music creativity.

**Keywords:** *Salẹkẹ*, *Osamo* (puberty rite), folk music, *Ókpẹ* culture, Social relevance.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ókpẹ* people, an ethnic group domicile in Delta State, Nigeria constitutes a royal kingdom that speaks a common *Ókpẹ* language. Some of the towns include: Oorerokpe, Sapele, Elume, Ogiedi, Ugborhen, Ikeresan, Amwokpe, Amwokpokpo, Mereje, Adedje, Okuedjeba, Aghalokpe, Arhagba, Ughoton, Jeddo, Okwidiemo, Osubi, and Okuokoko. While describing the *Ókpẹ* people, Emurobome Idolor notes that:

*Ókpẹ* people have a unique culture that distinguishes them from other civilisations. Its territory, which lies within latitudes 05<sup>0</sup> 33' 46" and 05<sup>0</sup> 57' 41" North of the equator and within longitudes 05<sup>0</sup> 30' 08" and 05<sup>0</sup> 55' 05" East of the Greenwich Meridian (Fellow's map, 1928), is located in the Central Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria and has an approximate landmass of 1,228.94 square kilometres, which comprises two hundred and five (205) towns and villages . . . *Ókpẹ* spreads over *Ókpẹ*, Sapele, part of Uvwie and Ethiope East Local Government Areas. The population is distributed within thirteen (13) traditional administrative districts with Oorerokpe as the ancestral headquarters, where the Orodje (Monarch) is the arrowhead of routine administration of the entire kingdom. (Idolor, 2019:8).

Music has continued to retain its uniqueness among human phenomena as it continues to serve as a creative process for the cultural expression of each community. It has also witnessed an inherent interrelationship between their musical and social structure.

## PUBERTY RITES PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

Traditional puberty rites and their practices in Nigeria, vary from one culture area to another. Ezenweke (2016:23) observes that "the origin of rites in the religious scenario of Africa is unknown; it therefore, has no historical origin but believes to have been initiated and practised by the forefathers as the need arose". Awusi (2015:35) also corroborates that "many cultures have practised the female puberty rite at one time or

the other in several parts of the world.” In other words, puberty rites have long been practiced in Nigeria before the eventual government ban on the practice due to its unhealthy implications. This ban should not affect the musical practice that is associated with it. Puberty rites custom of a girl is passed from one generation to another with possible changes in tune with prevailing social dispensations.

Onyeji (2016:90) buttresses that “a portion of the Igbo of Nigeria scall pubescence ritual for young ladies, as the disengagement for intentional swelling and beautification pointed towards reporting the young lady’s qualifications for marriage”, while Ezenweke (1976: 90) observes that “in the school ... it ushers one into the adult world and thereby gives one the sense of maturity from child-life behaviour to committed mature moral values and attitudes”. Ókpè people believe that the puberty rite of circumcision is a transition from childhood to adulthood and girls become mature enough after the rites have been carried out.

Akpakpan (1987:49) in discussing Ibibio cultural rites on young girls before they were betrothed, observes that “one of such rites is fattening that is, she has to go through a period of seclusion before marriage. This was done at Puberty, which was marked or determined when the girl’s breasts become noticeable”.

Daniel (2009:156) states that “rites take glaring places in traditional African life and it is an issue that forms the African lifestyle...that effective puberty rites are of considerable value to the development of the individual and the cultural survival of the music “. Akpakpan (1987:49) asserts that “Ibibio community believes that *Mbopo* traditional institution is one of the agents of socialisation in the community, in that it teaches some high moral standards in the life of the people and a source of expression and communication which is present in all cultures”. Nwadiokwu (2016:45) reiterates that “puberty rite symbolises separation from childhood ... the dancing and rejoicing strengthen community solidarity and it is after this initiation that young people are allowed to join in public dances. *Saleke* traditional music of the Ókpè people is an agent of socialisation to the *Opha* (circumcised girl) and *Iko-Opha* (maids). As the *Iko-Opha* (maids) sing her praise, she dances to celebrate her new status.

Cory (1956:27) asserts that “the reason that makes girls get involved suggests the purpose of puberty rites and describes them as ways of creating new useful members of the tribe.” This is also prevalent among the Ókpè people, where the puberty rite of a girl is a result of respect for the Culture. Puberty rites of a girl among Okpe people are seen as a way to correct malady or promiscuity and it project the family dignity.

Nketia (1963:71) also notes that “to understand how traditional music functions in culture, consideration on how the music is organised concerning activities of everyday life is paramount and that music in Africa communities is socially controlled”. In like manner, Ókpè people through the performance of *Saleke* music at circumcision, express the feelings of excitement that their daughter is mature and found worthy to get married.

## PUBERTY RITES (OSAMO) PRACTICE IN ÓKPÈ CULTURE

Ókpè people have a unique culture that distinguishes them but also shows some similarities with other civilisations. Puberty rite (*Osamo*) is an aspect of Ókpè culture that can hardly be traced to specific dates or periods of origin. It came to be when the culture desired sexual fidelity for married women as promiscuous conducts of wives had dangerous effects on their husbands, children, ill health, insecurity and spiritual attacks. The practice is done for girls between the ages of ten to eighteen years and the period lasts between one to three months which is deemed as the end of spinsterhood especially when a suitor engages a teenage girl, and the rite announces the girl as a new bride. During this rite, the girl-child is prepared for motherhood responsibilities and she is coached for the basics of life while the community folks felicitate with the family for a noble stage in their lives.

In Ogedi-Elume town, a notable performer of *Saleke* music, Elizabeth Egborode (2022), in an interview,

affirms that the invitation of fellow women members to witness the event, depends on the influence and social status of the bride's parents. The bride's mother informs her close friends of the date and time for the *Osamo* (puberty rite) event which normally holds in the family compound in the morning between the hours of 6.30am and 8.00am. In the early practice of circumcision, the process was raw and painful to the bride as there was no use of anesthetic therapy. Mid-wives favoured the choice of morning hours for its soothing weather. Either *Edeileyi* or *Asueghwohin* market days are suitable for the *Osamo* as tradition overtime has found these days favourable for quick healing, peace and with good fortune.

Circumcision is not a pleasant experience for maidens as it physically involves the partial or total removal of an external female genital organ for no medical reason. The practice is mainly carried out by Doctors, Nurses, and traditional mid-wives, who often play additional central roles in communities including childbirth, treatments, and diagnosis. The celebrant (maiden) is known as *Opha* while her housemaids are known as *Iko-Opha* (*Uko-Opha* as singular form) all of them normally rob cam wood all over their bodies. All the housemaids stay in the family compound with the maiden throughout the duration of the rite and as the practice is in the culture, the maiden is not allowed to do any hard job, not even bathing herself; whatever she needs is made available for her. Her housemaids run errands for her and accompany her to wherever she goes.

## MUSIC ASSOCIATED WITH PUBERTY RITES IN ÓKPÈ CULTURE

1. H. Kwabena Nketia conceptualises that:

Since the symbolic transformation occurs, ritual is constituted by action drawn on sound, kinesics, and visual codes. Music heightens the intensity of emotion generated by a rite or integrates the Culture; the kinetic and the visual similarity enhance the ritual process. Accordingly, the Music for a ritual occasion may include not only contemplative music such as chants and other music for listening but also music that stimulates personal involvement in a ritual event through participation and interaction (Nketia 1984:112).

Nketia's observation is the same application of music in Okpe puberty rite particularly the *Osamo* event. Idamoyibo (2006:12) attests that "among the Ókpè people in Delta State, *Saleke* music is performed during the period of *Osamo* (circumcision), to celebrate the beginning of puberty rite". *Saleke* is a folk music genre characterised by humorous lyrics that use imagery to grace the occasion and direct members of the ensemble during performances. The music type is communally owned, publicly learnt by individuals in the society and performed by any woman in contextualised female puberty rites and it is sparsely performed in the context of other music genres. Cultural interpretation and contextual usage of puberty rites songs are virtually the same in all Ókpè communities.

*Saleke* music performers are *Eghwemese* (married women into the community). They are usually close friends of the bride's mother, family members and passersby who care to know what event is holding in the family compound. The number of performers in a *Saleke* music ensemble depends on who the bride's mother desires to invite. *Saleke* music is performed for merriment and also serves as retrospective recall of personal experiences for the performers when they were much younger. The performance of the music genre during these puberty rites, not only facilitates unity through communal integration, it is also the available platform to document and project the culture for the benefit of younger generations.

## SALEKE MUSIC PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

After the circumcision activity, the close friends of the bride's mother, having been informed earlier of the day and time, arrive one after the other. As the number of invited women is complete, the *Saleke* music performance starts with *Tie obo ne emrun* song. The songs that follow the first one are not in any specific

order. Since it is a communal folksong, there can be as many as three cantors who raise songs as they appeal to them. These cantors also play the role of cue cantors and performance motivators when any of the three persons takes the role of a cantor. The performance is done in a medley, singing from one song to the other. *Saleke* performance practice does not involve musical instruments rather, it involves systematic hand clapping and dancing. To appreciate the roles of the invitees, the family provides refreshments for everyone in the form of food, drinks, groundnuts, biscuits and take-away gifts.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF TIE OBO NE EMRUN

Ókpè puberty rite song text No. 1.

### Ókpè Language Text

### English Translation

Cantor: *Izu opha re osame omọ,*  
*tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun.*

Mother who circumcised her daughter,  
give out something.

Cue cantor: *Omase re osame opha*

A woman who circumcised a bride,

*tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun*

give out something.

Chorus: *Izu opha re osame opha,*  
*tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun*

Mother of bride who circumcised a bride,  
give out something.

Cantor: *Izu opha re osame omọ,*  
*tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun*

Mother of bride who circumcised her daughter,  
gives out something.

Cue cantor: *Izu opha re osame omọ*

Mother who circumcised her daughter,

Chuors: *Izu opha re osame opha,*  
*tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun*

Mother of bride who circumcised a bride,  
give out something.

Cue cantor: *Omase re osame opha*

A woman who circumcised a bride,

All: *Izu re osame omọ,*  
*tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun*

Mother who circumcised her daughter.  
give out something.

The song starts with the cantor who sings *Izu opha re osame omọ, tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun* which means “the bride’s mother who circumcised the daughter, should give out something”. A cue cantor comes in with *Omase re osame opha* once to bring in the chorus *tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun* means “a woman who circumcised a bride” and everyone takes the chorus *Izu opha re osame opha, tiẹ obọ nẹ emrun*. Which means “the bride’s mother who circumcised the daughter, should give out something”

The song is meant to tell the mother of the bride to “give out something” to entertain her guests who came to celebrate with her. *Giving* is part of celebration in **Ókpè** culture which could be money, food, drinks and gift items to guests and dancers.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF OPHA ORIĘ EMRUN HERHE RẸN QWAN

Ókpè puberty rite song text No. 2

### Ókpè Language Text

### English Translation

Cantor: *Opha orię emrun herhe rẹn qwan*

Bride, let us have the leftover of your food.

<i>Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan</i>	Bride, let us have the leftover of your food.
Cue cantor: <i>O re herhe</i>	She left some food over,
Chorus: <i>Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan</i>	Bride, let us have the leftover of your food.
Cue cantor: <i>O re herhe</i>	She left some food over,
Chorus: <i>Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan</i>	Bride, let us have the leftover of your food.
Cantor: <i>Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan</i>	Bride, let us have the leftover of your food.
<i>Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan</i>	Bride, let us have the leftover of your food.
Cue cantor: <i>O re herhe</i>	She left some food over,
All: <i>Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan</i>	Bride, let us have the leftover of you food.

The cantor starts the song, followed by the cue cantor and then the response by the chorus. The word *Opha orię emrun herhe ren ọwan* means that it usual that “A bride should have leftover food after eating” for the maids who serve her throughout the puberty period. This song trains the circumcised girl to consider the comfort of her maids by leaving some leftover food for them to eat. This act is expected to be extended to her children when she gives birth in the future. Besides, in Ókpè culture, the food of the circumcised girl is usually much that she could afford to have leftovers. When the song is performed on the first day of the circumcision, the bride was being instructed to be compassionate with the maids in the aspect of food.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SALEKÈ

Ókpè puberty rite song text No. 3

Ókpè Language Text	English Translation
Cantor: <i>Salẹkẹ yo, Salẹkẹ</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> , yes, <i>Salẹkẹ</i>
<i>Salẹkẹ yo, Salẹkẹ</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> yes, <i>Salẹkẹ</i>
Cue cantor: <i>Salẹkẹ uhwerhe</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> like sugar cane
Chorus: <i>Salẹkẹ yo, Salẹkẹ</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> , yes, <i>Salẹkẹ</i>
Cue cantor: <i>Salẹkẹ, uhwerhe</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> like sugar cane
Chorus: <i>Salẹkẹ yo, Salẹkẹ</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> , yes <i>Salẹkẹ</i>
Cue cantor: <i>Salẹkẹ yo, uhwerhe</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> like sugar cane
All: <i>Salẹkẹ yo Salẹkẹ</i>	<i>Salẹkẹ</i> like sugar cane

The song has only three words, *Salẹkẹ*, *yo* and *uhwerhe*. *Salẹkẹ* has no specific meaning, rather it is an onomatopoeic word that describes a circumcised young girl as succulent and attractive. *Uhwerhe* means “sugar cane” which is juicy and succulent while *yo* means “yes”, an affirmation of the descriptive words for the bride. In this context, the young girl is described as succulent, juicy and beautiful having under gone the puberty rite. On the whole, it is a praise song for the bride and an appreciation to the parents and groom who provided needed conveniences and comfort to the bride.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF ỌMIỌMỌ ỌMERHAN

Ókpè puberty rite song text No. 4.

### Ókpè Language Text

Cantor: *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan yo, Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

Cue cantor: *Inene oo*

Chorus: *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan, uvbiẹ Inene*

*Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

Cantor: *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan yo, Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

*Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

Cue cantor; *Ibaba oo*

Chorus: *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan uvbiẹ Ibaba*

*Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

Cantor: *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan yo, Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

*Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan, Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

Cue cantor: *Inene*

Chorus: *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan uvbiẹ Inene*

*Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*

*E, e.*

### English Translation

It is really joyful to have children,  
my mother.

Many children of my mother's lineage,  
It is really joyful to have children.

It is really joyful to have children.

It is really joyful to have children.

Oh, my father,

Many children of my father's lineage,  
It is really joyful to have children.

it is really joyful to have children.

It is really joyful to have children.

my mother,

many children of my mother's lineage,

It is really joyful to have children.

Oh yes.

The song is in call and response form where the text *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan* is the call and the fuller chorus response comes with *Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan yo, Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan, Uvbiẹ ibaba, Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan yo Ọmiọmọ ọmerhan*. From the English translation above, to give birth to a child, especially so many of them, is a joyful experience. This joy manifests in the evenings or moonlight nights when children in the family play in the compound with so much noise and excitement. In the Ókpè culture, one who has no child is called *Agẹn* (barren) which is a bad state and distasteful description for an enemy. Indeed, a good number and quality of children are seen as a measuring standard of living and successful families.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF ỌMỌ GHINẸ EFE

Ókpè puberty rite song text No. 5.

### Ókpè Language Text

Cantor: *Ọmọ ghinẹ efe, Ọmọ ghinẹ efe*

Cue cantor: *Otu mẹ abọn oghwa iblọku oo*

*Ji mia wiowian emọ*

### English Translation

Child is real wealth (x2).

My mates are building block houses

While I invest in my children,

Chorus: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth.
Cue cantor: <i>E! otu mẹ rhuẹ owẹn single</i>	My mates put on <i>single</i> quality of clothe
<i>Ji mia wiowian emọ</i>	while I invest in my children
Chorus: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth.
Cue cantor: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth.
Chorus: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth.
Cue cantor: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth
Chorus: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth
Cue cantor: <i>Otu mẹ awian owian igho</i>	My mates accumulate monetary wealth
<i>Ji mia wian owian emọ</i>	while I invest in my children
Chorus: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth
Cue cantor: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth
Chorus: <i>Ọmọ ghinẹ efe</i>	Child is real wealth

A cantor sings the theme of the song *Ọmọ ghinẹ efe* (twice) which means “Child is real wealth” before the cue cantor sings *Otu mẹ abọn oghwa iblọku, ji mia wian owian emọ* while the chorus sings *Ọmọ ghinẹ efe*. The translation of this line is as stated above.

The lyrics of this song present two conceptual scenarios of what an ideal life investment should be. While one school of thought believes in the ideology of material capitalism as the essence of life and societal attainment, the other believes in human capital development as the ideal basis of life expectation. In this song, it is believed that a child that is properly trained is an achievement to the family and the society and it describes the mother of the bride as a woman who has invested her energies in sound moral upbringing, formal education and firm establishment of her daughter instead of investments in material acquisitions which in time depreciate in value, reality and survival. It is believed that *Akpọ oghwẹ ọmọ* meaning that “A child is the essence of life” which guarantees the continuation of the family lineage. Investment in children appreciates in value when they multiply in achievements, their own children, mass presence and display of affluence in family events. The song describes children as *real wealth* that one can ever think of. The song implies that the investments the parents made in their daughter, brought joy that is associated with the puberty event.

## SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF *SALEKE* MUSIC

Idolor (2002:2) posits that “no phenomenon void of utility survives in a society; an indication that the presence of music in almost every African society has a formidable role to fulfil”. In *Ókpè* culture, there exists many music genres and typologies for various purposes in the society which include ritual, entertainment, ceremonies and events, various occupations, documentation and education. Majority of these typologies are contextualised for the purpose they exist which is their societal relevance. Going by Idolor’s position and by its implication, all African music types including *Saleke*, have defined relevance and utility in the society, else they would not have survived the contest of contending technological factors in contemporary times.

Puberty rites chronicle and transmit knowledge from one generation to the other. Goldstein (2010:17) maintains that puberty rites are Community-created and Community-directed experiences that transmit cultural values and knowledge to an individual or group of individuals. One of the commonest utility of African folksongs, to which *Saleke* belongs, is societal usefulness. The songs are communally owned, collectively practised and their peculiar roles in the society guarantee their existence. The collective practice of *Saleke* music brings people together for enhanced social interactions where different musical roles do not only fulfil complete musical presentations, but also strengthens relationships amongst performers.

Female population in societies tends to be higher than their male counterparts'. Phenomena that relate to them also have wider reception and concern than those of their male counterparts. *Osamo* (puberty rite) in which *Saleke* music is performed, is highly rated as the peak of award or recognition a well behaved girl-child can receive in the community. Indeed, a particular puberty event becomes a communal celebration when fellow village women fetch firewood, bring food items and jubilate with the mother of the bride and the bride. *Saleke* songs and praises are presentations every girl worth the salt lives to experience and therefore becomes a socio-moral standard for all girls in the community. The degree of the event varies from one celebrant to the other. A hardworking virgin with humble behaviour, attracts many maids, gifts and supports from the society while a hostile, stubborn and immoral kind receives insults from people.

Unlike some regular music genres, *Saleke* music is seldom performed and only in puberty rites contexts. The fact that the event of circumcision is dwindling, makes the music performance relatively rare to behold. Community women folk fill privileged with excitement to participate in the music presentation as it has become an experience that is a cultural delicacy. It is a musical reproduction to the women folk who get reminded and rebranded of their experiences in their younger days and they perceive the music as a playback of a related scenario. While the performance might be of ultimate entertainment, the significance of the messages in the songs rubs off on all as a revival of acceptable societal decorum. That *Saleke* songs seldom surface in the community, signifies that for that moment of performance, the environment is energised with singing, clapping, dancing, and exchange of pleasantries. Throughout the puberty period, the community is functionally alive to its cultural specifics and for sometime from thence, the details of the event are in the memory of most people in the society.

Sustenance of marriage relationships in communities, is a major concern of families and they do everything possible to achieve it especially in the face of contemporary challenges that do not guarantee lifetime marriages. In the *Ókpè* marriage culture, two married women, one each from the paternal and maternal families of the bride, escort her to the elders of the families for the traditional wedding of the bride and the groom. No female relation that has ever packed from her matrimonial home back to her parental home is qualified to escort the bride. These and many other marriage related contents constitute the lessons brides receive from *Saleke* songs. Such contents include respect for the husband, respect for all in-laws, preparation of delicious meals and on time, neatness, peaceful co-existence in a polygamous setting, and so on. Now that the bride has become a mature lady in the society or her new marital environment, her actions must commensurately align with her new status to associate with mature people, engage in adult activities, attend adult events, set priorities right and dress responsibly.

Home management is a primary lesson from *Saleke* songs and it (home management) is a social responsibility of mature ladies ready for marriages. Homes vary according to contexts but basic ideas about home management are passed on to puberty brides. These include how clothes are washed, decent food preparation, care for children in the home, appropriate placement of home equipment, washing of plates and utensils, and cleanliness of the house and the environment.



## CONTEMPORARY STATUS OF *SALEḲE* MUSIC IN ÓKPÈ CULTURE

Some individuals in Ókpè communities no longer practice puberty rites, an act that is pushing it into extinction in recent times. *SaleḲe* songs which are performed during the rites are being forgotten. Consequent upon the oral nature of its documentation, the songs alongside the rite are fading out very fast. This accounts for the necessary and urgent documentation of existing puberty rites songs to save them from total extinction and make them to serve as knowledge opportunities to children within and outside their hometowns.

Urbanisation is a critical factor that affects the regular practice of puberty rites event and indeed *SaleḲe* songs. In urban areas, it is very difficult to enact the paraphernalia of the puberty rite especially in multiethnic inhabited compounds. For parents to leave their means of livelihood in the urban environment to the village for the sake of convenience for the rite, it is a sacrifice too labourious for most families to undertake and therefore, they may decide to do without it. Considering very limited space in urban homes (e.g. *face me, I face you*), to house between five to ten maids for the bride is a difficult management. Regular attendance in schools even in the villages does not permit young girls to faithfully serve as maids unless for only interested ones during weekends.

Puberty rites and *SaleḲe* music that accompanies the event are now often given less attention due to changing global knowledge explosion especially by the 2008 World Health Organisation (WHO) Assembly and United Nations declaration WHA61.16 on the elimination of Female Genital Mutilations (FGM); the reason being that the act has no medical benefit. This development received very wide publicity to halt every traditional practice. The elites amongst the people were the first to key into this WHO declaration and gradually it has eaten deep into the orientation of a large population of the people that so many people have withdrawn from the act. Ultimately, the complimentary *SaleḲe* music to the event is also slowly becoming unpopular among the people especially the younger generations.

However, the authors of this research recommend that African traditional music genres that are attached to events should urgently receive serious studies and documentation so that in the circumstance when the existence of the event is threatened by social developments, data will still be available on it. This also applies to *SaleḲe* music where extensive collection and transcription effort is crucial. As for puberty rites songs, more indebt researches should be done for it to be effectively preserved while its adaptation to the performance of other music genres should be conveniently worked. Further creative efforts in art music composition and performance genre using *SaleḲe* music features will highly guarantee its sustenance.

### SUMMARY

The targeted research population is composed of women, maidens, family members, and friends. Using the three-phase design of Pre-field work, Field work, and Post-field work, the technique was helpful in the selection of respondents for interviews and data collection. All data collected were analysed alongside cultural values of the society since it an ethnomusicological study. The text of data collected was translated from Ókpè to English language for a wider understanding and meaning by whoever will read this publication particularly on how it reflected on social relevance of the music. The recorded *SaleḲe* music types from the field were transcribed so that readers can sing the songs and see the interplay of vocal roles in the presentation of the music.

As for its social relevance, *SaleḲe* music falls within the folksong genre in Ókpè culture. The collective performance of the music encourages social interactions for interpersonal relationships. Puberty rite in which *SaleḲe* music is performed is highly rated as one of the peak-award or rare recognition a wellbehaved girl-child can attain in the community.

Due to the fact that the event of circumcision is dwindling and rural-urban migration is eating deep into the social system, the performance of the music has become relatively rare and it is now a big privilege for women folk to participate in the music presentation whenever the opportunity pops up in contemporary times. The lessons from puberty rites event and textual messages of *Salẹkẹ* music help to sustain marriage relationships in the communities as it is a major concern of families to ensure lasting unions in the face of contemporary challenges. Music's general role in pubertyrites of girls in *Ókpẹ* culture can be summarised as education, communication and entertainment.

## CONCLUSION

*Salẹkẹ* music is concomitant with female puberty rite in *Ókpẹ* culture and it contains valuable textual features that are useful for social reconstruction of ills in contemporary society. According to the interviewees, the songs are used to enlighten and teach good morals in modern society and correct anti-social behaviours which culture change has influenced. At the rate traditional music is neglected, their educative elements and social values will soon be abandoned.

The performance frequency of *Salẹkẹ* music is generally on the low side due to contemporary concept of puberty rites as archaic, undesirable, inconvenient and of health hazard. However, the social values of the lyrics of the music need to be preserved and projected with every available and effective means for the identity of the *Ókpẹ* culture and to maintain an enriched plurality of traditional music repertory in global music cyberspace.

## FINDINGS

It was observed that *Salẹkẹ* music:

- was highly employed during *Ókpẹ* puberty rites in the era when the practice was encouraged.
- which is associated with *Ókpẹ* puberty rites, teaches social values and good morals particularly to the bride and community house wives.
- through its lyrics, condemns anti-social behaviours generally in the society.
- appeals more to women folks than men.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*Osamo* (female puberty rite) practices are no longer widely encouraged which has affected the frequency of regular performances of *Salẹkẹ* music in the society. It is here advised that *Salẹkẹ* music should be preserved by other music media in addition to this research documentation.

\* Since the female puberty rite music is not performed in another context, traditional musicians should be encouraged to spice their performances with some *Salẹkẹ* songs in order to retain the messages for their social functions.

\* Efforts should be made by art music composers to use *Salẹkẹ* songs for further creativity.

\* Researchers should be encouraged to investigate the music of other social institutions of female puberty rite of the *Ókpẹ* people to create awareness and relevant references for the present and future generations

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## APPENDIX

Samples of transcribed **Ókpè Osamo** (puberty rite) songs.

### TIE OBO NE EMRUN

Okpe folksong 1

Transcribed by  
Orherhe Edah.

Solo



i zu'o-pha re sa mé'o-mo o - pha\_ tie'o-bo ne' mrun o-ma se

Unison



4



re sa mé'o-pha, i zu'o-pha



i zu'o-pha re sa mé'o mo - tie'o-bo ne' mrun

7



re sa mé'o- mo - tie'o-bo ne' mrun o-ma se re sa mé'o-pha,



i zu'o-pha

10



o-ma se re sa mé'o-pha,



re sa mé'o mo - tie'o-bo ne' mrun i zu'o-pha

## OPHA RIE EMRUN HERHE REN O WAN

Okpe folksong 2

Transcribed by  
Ortherhe Edah.

Cantor

O - pha rie' mrun he-rhe ren O- wan - - O - pha

Chorus

4

rie' mrun he-rhe ren O - wan ria\_ ren\_ ren'O-wan

O - pha rie' mrun he-rhe ren O - wan -

O - pha rie' mrun he-rhe ren O - wan -

7

ria - ren\_ ren'O-wan ria - ren\_

- - O - pha rie' mrun he-rhe ren O- wan - - O - pha

- - O - pha rie' mrun he-rhe ren O- wan - - O - pha

## SA-LE KE

Okpe folksong 3

Transcribed by  
Orherhe Edah.

Cantor



sa - le ke yo - sa - le ke sa - le ke yo - sa - le ke u-hwe-rhe,

unison



5



sa - le ke u-hwe-rhe, sa - le ke u-hwe-rhe,  
sa - le ke yo - sa - le ke sa - le ke yo - sa - le ke

9



sa - le ke u-hwe-rhe, sa - le ke yo — sa - le-ke  
sa - le ke yo - sa - le ke sa - le ke yo - sa - le ke

## OMIOMO OMERHA

Okpe folksong 4

Transcribed by  
Orherhe Edah.

solo

o mio mo'o-me ran\_ yo o mio mo'o-me-rhan yo

response

5

o mio mo'o-me ran\_ yo u mio mo'o-me rha u vwie ba - ba.α

9

o mio mo'o-me ran\_ yo u mio mo'o-me rha u vwie ba-bao -

o mio mo'o-me ran\_ yo

13

o mio mo'o-me - ran\_ yo u mio mo'o-me - rha

o mio mo'o-me - ran\_ yo

## OMO GHINE EFE

Okpe folksong 7

Transcribed by  
Orherhe Edah.

Cantor

voice 1

voice 2

<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup>