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ABIRIBA: SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDIES

BY

ARUA KALU NDUKWE

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ARUA KALU NDUKWE

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INTRODUCTION

"..... A people with no knowledge of their past suffer from a collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide-posts of precedence to shape their course." 5

This contention extracted from (Prof.) Bab Fafanwa book has given me the fillip in this search for the obscurity of the past of my people. The search becomes less difficult when there are sources to lead to conclusions. In the case of Abiriba there are few people who have interested themselves in digging into the hard core of history. They have not perpetuated their knowledge in writing. The elements characterized in oral tradition has dominated all evidence of the history of the Abiriba people.

Part of this literature therefore gives a background historical evolution of the Abiriba people as transmitted orally or as can be coined from few writings. In this first part the origin, the diverse cultural traits of the people will be briefly discussed, supported by a mention of the dominant literary forms.

The second part will deal specifically on an aspect of the tradition with particular reference to Age Grade System in Abiriba Initiation rites of passage into Manhood.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

(i) Location

Abiriba, the headquarters of the ANA Local government area of Imo State is situated at approximately latitude '5' 32' N and longitude 7 31' East and it is North - east of Owerri, the Imo State Capital. It is more or less centrally located among a number of villages and clans; Ohafia (East), Nkporo (North - east), Item (North West) and Abam Claim (South and South East).

The town has also an excellent link with Umuahia and Arochukwu from where her people have access to other parts of the country.

Although there has been no recent census figures for the town, except those of 1952/53 which put the population at 21,036, Ekeghe put a probable population of the area at 80,000. This figure

however, can only be taken seriously if it reflects the population during the Okochi, home-coming, when thousands of the people living all over the country and abroad usually come home to celebrate one festival or the other.

Abiriba is 78 miles (125 kilometres) from the Cross River Costal areas. She is however, greatly influenced by tropical climate. Rainfall are heavy with double maxima in July and September. Driest months are in December and January. This type of rainfall pattern has greatly determined the peoples agricultural calender:

January	-	period of clearing and burning of the bush.
February - April	-	making of yam mounds.
April - June	-	planting of crops and first weeding in June.
June - July	-	Harvesting of Maize
July - August	-	period of null in agricultural activities (There is usually a heavy downpour)
August - October	-	period of second weeding around the yam mounds. Early harvest of yams.
October - December	-	main yam harvest; harvest of black beans, cocoyam, pumpkin and three - leaved yams.

Settlement/Soil (ii)

Abiriba is a nucleated settlement made of a built up area and farm land. This totally make up 64 square miles of land. Built up area occupy a total of 3 square miles, while the remaining 61 square miles represent area for farm lands. The 61 square miles of farm lands is however, covered with poor sandstone soil. The infertility of the soild is further worsened by heavy erosion, soil leaching under the heavy tropical rainfall. The over - practised shifting cultivation has equally adversely affected the quality of the soil. There is therefore no wonder than when despite the proportionately large farm land area, the farm products are not enough to provide food at a subsistent level. This has equally brought about an abservable seasonal or periodic population mobility in and outside the clan, with significant socio-economic consequences.

The seventeen villages are closely built near each other with no discernable boundaries or demarcation. Each in other words flows into the other. The villages themselves are compact and mostly built in a typical close architectural formation. More often the women huts Usokwu are built around the main huts of the men 'ulo nta' A small clearing is often left for the leading gate into other compounds or village, and for the children's playground and village shrine.

The villages are divided into compounds. A compound consists of huts owned by a group of kinsmen and their wives. The aesthetic tastes of the Abiriba people are prodigiously exhibited on the rhythmic patterns designed on the glisttering mud walls. The floor is painted with ikere; shrub. The walls are mormally scrubbed with smooth stone and designed with white and red earth. There are equally numerous scuptural pieces exhibited in the obus, meeting halls, and the village or compound shrines.

O R I G I N

Historical background.

The pre-historical facts of a people, especially the non - literate, faces total avanascence if attempts are not made to reck up the dust of history from time to time from competent authorities versed in the oral tradition of that community. If this is lost sightof transmission of this tradition is impaired. Subsequently posterity is faced with heavy problem of analyzing, synthethetizing historical evidence from a conglomeration of varied and distorted images of the past.

The pre-historical origin of Abiriba seems elusive, since there are two irreconciliable assumptions. Some who have not been able to substantiate their assumption with facts claim the pre-historical origin of Abiriba could be traced as far a distance as Egypt or Israel. Dr. Obasi in a paper presented on the occasion of the first anniversary Celebrations and Installation of Patrons of the Akanu Enyioma Society, claims that modern historians have

traced the prehistoric origin to the great Bantu Kingdoms of East Africa, notably the Zambia, Zimbabwe - the Zulu lands of the Great Chaka whose real name was Khama, Khama had used the regimented age - grade system on foot to hold the British expedition in the area for several years. There is a substantial evidence to test the truth of the assumption of identical origin with Bantu Kingdoms.

In Abiriba today Kamalu or Kalu for short, is one of the commonest name, and it does look like a prostituted form of Khama. In East Africa too, we are told Khama is the god of war and thunder. In Abiriba today, Kamalu ndi ebe is feared because it is the god of thunder. Murdock too believes that Eastern Igbos (Abiriba inclusive) are of the Bantoid sub-family group. Somehow, the warlike spirit of the Abiriba people coupled with the well organized age grade system seems to have relevance to the organization of the age grade system of the Zulus. In Zulu land too, there was a well developed skill in black smithing in iron works, copper and brass long before the advent of the white men in the area. History claims that it was the Abiriba people who took black smithing to the farmer Eastern region of Nigeria, particularly Cross River and even Awka. Dr. Obasi in his article submitted that even Professor Dike, an eminent Nigerian historian, and a native of Awka admitted the fact in one of his books. This is why most Abiriba believe in uzu blacksmithing, and started their trade adventures outside their home armed with their charcoal and the bellows.

Ekeghe in his book claims that Abiriba people have a common descendant with the people Ekoi tribe of the Cross River State. It is possible that this tribe must have migrated from East Africa across the Congo to South of the Cameroon and Settled at the spot South - west of the Cameroons - their present abode.

As result of constant misunderstanding between the Abiriba immigrants and other tribes they had to leave this settlement. They came to settle at Akpa. From this spot they moved on down the Cross River and finally settled at Ena. Ena is on the southern fringes of the Savanah woodland in the Cross River plain. The many wars fought

by the Abiriba people while sojourning in Ena suggest untold hostility of the neighbours which may have stemmed from the over crowded swampy area too unhealthy for human occupation. As a result of this constant friction with the original inhabitants they had to move from there to Usukpam. After many years at Usukpam one of the groups broke away. They left Usukpam under the leadership of Mbiriba and arrived at a place known as Udara-Abuo, where they could not settle for long because of the excessively dry nature of the environment. Udara Abuo is a spot between Okon-Ohafia and Okagwe Ohafia, all in the Ohafia local Government area of Imo State. This area too was inhabited by numerous monkeys. The excessive dependant on the monkeys as source of meat, affected their mortality rate. Mbiri ba himself died.

The other group under the leadership of Otusi rowed downstream from Usukpam. It is claimed that this group founded the present Arochukwu. Perhaps this explains the deeper cultural affinity between the Aros and the Abiriba people. These two group regard themselves as nwadi' or brothers, Ibems of Arochukwu are said to be discendants of Mbom Abiriba, Ndi Otisi of Akanu Ohafia too are blood brothers of Ndi Ekpe ruling house of Abiriba.

Leadership of the first group was then taken over by Ifa Mbiriba, the son of late Mbiriba. The increaseing number of death coupled with inexplicable periodic drying of the surrounding streams forced them out of this settlement. The group once more moved out, this time led by Egbo Ifa, Ifa's son. Perhaps age had dealt many blows on Ifa Mbiriba to make him relinginsh his leadership.

The immigrants highly scared by the incident at Udara Abuo were now more cautious in their choice of a site. After a long painful ~~sight~~ search ~~to~~ came to Abuo, their present site, after they had settled at Urnanta and Agboha (still part of Abiriba today). There they saw numerous streams and rich vegetation. The settlers were said to be so flabbergasted by the nature of the place that they named it "Ebiri-aba" - suggestive of a place associated with prosperity.

Abiriba is therefore thought to be a derivative form of Ebiri-aba. There is yet another school of thought who probably think the name is coined from Mbiriba, the ancestral leader of the people. Unfortunately, oral tradition has not been able to resolve the apparent conflict of opinions.

The leader of the group and his lieutenants founded the three major settlements of Ameke, Amogudu and Agboji. Ameke is the capital and seat of government of the paramount ruler, the Enachi-oken of Abiriba. Amogudu is the second largest division, and the clan highly associated with activities making the birth of age grades in the community.

Those the story of the origin of the people is one franght with long trek through dense forests, through unfriendly and sometimes very hostile people and through most natural and unnatural dissipative conditions. It is a story of man's determinate struggle to conquer the forces of nature in order to survive.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM

In Abiriba, the family is the smallest unit of social organization. Enveloping it is the usual peculiar extended family system.

At the village level life is simple, but strict checks and sanctions are maintained against forces that tend to disrupt cherished traditional values and long established norms. At the beginning of Abiriba year 'Isi afor' normally between September and July, the Enachi - oken confers with his term of elders and village heads, and make proclamation, in form of decrees, that would be binding on the community for the coming year. These decrees are more or less laws that go a long way to protect and preserve Abiriba social institutions. Perhaps a brief illustration will strengthen the point. A more recent decree was the one that ~~prohited~~ prohibited ~~which~~ prohibited a girl bethroted to her husband from pre-marriage pregnancy. Those who were caught up by these decree were not allowed to go through all the traditional rites of marriage and in Abiriba

it was a taboo not to do so; and those who secretly flouted the order faced heavy penalties. Throughout the wedding there were only few cases of such recalcitrance.

Kinship (i)

Family units generally relate to one another. This social relationship is expressed by the extension attitude and names are given appropriately to the basic extended family unit to other wider groups of people - Thus the kinship terms 'Ikwu nne' and 'Ikwu nna'. The terms refers to the matrilineal lineage, that is a person whom in fox's words is a descendant of the "original" mother through females, her sons and daughters and so on. The members of the group (here ikwu) will be related to each other through females only.

This matrilineal relationship has influenced the people's way of thinking and doing things greatly. In olden days a child received more attention from relations of the mother, than from those of his father. A successful man was thus an assert to his mother first and then to the relations of the mother, then to his father. Thus it was not uncommon to find a child abadoned by the father for one fault or the other of the mother, only to be accepted and trained by the mothers relations.

Inheritance (ii)

The matrimonial system has equally affected Abiriba system of inheritance. The property of a father is traditionally thought to belong to the family as long as the man was alive. If by unusual natural instinct the man before his death had given out a share of his property in any proportion to his children (provided they are grown ups able to speak for themselves) then the property is undisputably the children's. If the children were too small at the time of death of their father, but an elderly man was in attendance at the time of the willed property the, the property remains the ~~child's~~ or children's. But if by a stroke of misfortune death caught the father suddenly and unprepared, then the man's ikwu nne are direct

beneficiaries of the deceased property. However a paltry concession was made for the mother and for the children's up keep until they are of age to take care of themselves. In most cases the mother's kindred quickly took over the training as the mother side relations of the deceased father, all shared might have out the property amongst themselves. It must be however emphasised that this manner of inheritance is almost anachrostic when talking of modern times Abiriba.

At the head of the thpical Abiriba family is the 'onye ichei; the elderst male (a sysmbol of authority and justice). All meetings of the family unit are held in his ulo nta, his main hut. He gives advice, judges cases, and performs sacrifices to the ancestral spirits. In other words, he controls the channel of communication with the ancestors. He is highly respected if not revered.

The age grade (iii)

Outside the family tie, another tight knit social/political institution is the age grade system. The spirit of the age grade system permeates the entire community structure. Each of the ten age grades has defined obligations to the community. Ekeghe maintains that the system is inseparable from the life of the Abiriba people.

A child at the age of about four is reckoned sufficiently able to associate with his peer group without much of parental restriction. This identify with other children of his age group marks a foundation for future growth and association. They will often group themselves armed with bows and arrows to learn how to shoot at set targets. Their skill at marksmanship result into uke ogba ngwuru, the age of the lizard shooters. They were are traditionally expected to deliver to the village shrines all the lizards needed for sacrifice.

At the age of five or six the children is initiated into the 'igba nnunu, the age of the bird shooters. E this age, the sensory and the psychomotor organs are barely developing and the careful but early training by his elderly mentor/nna uku) in archery eventuall makes him skilled in the art.

When the child performs the igba nnunu' it is traditionally accepted that the child had brought home his first human head - a ceremony tradition had placed so much emphasis on. In those days

a man who had not performed that feat of valour was not regarded as a man. Infact he was not permitted to marry, because a woman could not possibly marry a woman. An old man who is going to perform the Uche, the retirement ceremony, would face a lot of societal fines if he had not performed the 'igba nnunu' when he was young. This gives an ideal of the value the society placed on this ceremony. It actually laid a foundation for heroism and future active life of participation.

Between the ages of 15 to 21 the adolescent is initiated into another grade - 'Uke ekpe' the ekpe age grade. This initiation involves the adolescent keeping in the forest for four days and practising there shooting and other acts of bravery. This is meant to prepare his strength against possible encounters in future. Abiriba was a war like clan, and the only way to sustain the spirit was to continously train and maintain a string of men who would continue to guide the community against inroads of their enemies, as well as embark on their head - bunting expedition to foreign lands.

The adolescent at the end of the four days emerges from the forest with the rest of his colleague, weary and completely worn out. He had gone through the strain and pain of the initiation into manhood. The community now cheers his arrival with gun salute shots. Sometimes the very ambitious ones would come home at that 'tender' age, with their first human heads. Some other times, many who went into the forest, may not necessary come out again alive.

The survivals of the ordeals are now given community recognition as having constituted themselves into an age grade. The elders as usual will give the emerged age grade a name from the list of ten age grade names.

Soon after the man is considered initiated into manhood. From time to time the community might desire his service and he has no will of his own. His will is the people's will. He will usually fight in all the inter-clannish wars between Abiriba and other communities. His duty is to protect the land.

When the man is between the ages of 35 and 40 years he celebrates the Igwamang. This marks the end of his compulsory service to the community. This is a ceremony to thank the gods for successful protecting the incumbents throughout that period of tests. It was not uncommon to find only few survivals who are celebrating the ceremony. The rest of their colleagues may have all lost their lives during campaigns. Igwamang ceremony is normally marked with eating and drinking after the traditional rites have all been performed. Graduants now participates on advisory capacity in community meetings. 'Uche' in Abiriba means retirement from active participation in community activities. When a man is between the ages of 60 - 70 he performs the 'Uche' ceremony, and he is said to have 'laid down his matchet' igboto mma' Liberarily, this means that no one would expect him to participate in these assignments of his hey days. The ceremony is a time of gratitude to the gods for the life well spent. The man faces a barrage of gifts from friends, relatives and from the rest of the community. The gifts ranges from all types of wears to money. It is said that gifts collected some times may be enough to sustain the elderly for the remaining days of his existence on earth. After this, the elderly now relaxes and watches his successors. From time to time his advice is sought in one community problem or the other. Sometmes his experience qualifies him to be accepted as one of the elders in the court of the Enachi - oken.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The Ibos have been variously described by an -thropologists as "ultra democratic and highly individualistic (Ford and Jone 1950:24) in their socio-political organization. Gibbs quoting Ottenbergs research work states that "the absence of a complex centralised kingdom (comparable to the organisation found in Yoruba land) does not imply structural or cultural simplicity. He particularly noted the Afikpo community (Afikpo is not far from Abiriba) who exhibit a high degree of integration through the interplay of many elements especially age grade associations,

and improvement unions.

Abiriba on the other hand has a well defined political institution inherited from the ancestral founders of the clan. Abiriba historically is a monarchical clan. Perhaps that has been the reason why the community has put up so much struggle to make governments recognize the Enachi-Oken as one of the traditional rulers, (Ezes) like the Eze of Arochukwu.

In Abiriba, these is a compound in Ihungwu village, known as Ndi Okogo. This is the royal compound where the Enachi-Okens palace situates (the official residence of the paramount ruler and the keeper of Otusi, the god of the community). The palace is however set to stand on the spot where the founder of Abiriba is set to have built his hut during the early days of their settlement.

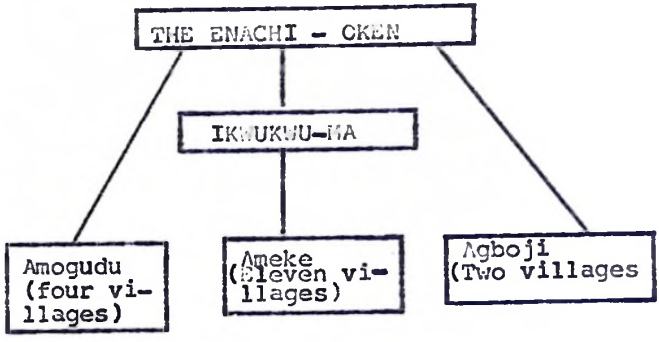
Ekeghe decribes the traditional government of Abiriba as a pyrami - with the Enachi-oken at the apex (see sketch), subordinated by the divisional chiefs (Eze Otisi) of Ameke, Agboji and Amogudu, who themselves belong to the ruling houses.

It must be emphasized that the paramount ruler himself, and those divisional head inherited their position by reason of birth and not by any democratic principle.

The Enachi-oken generally appoints a member of the royal house as his spokesman, a position normally referred to as the head of "Ikwukwu ma", (Prime minister) Within the context of the role of the Enachi-oken and his lieutenants; legislative and socio-cultural duties are performed. They constitute the mappers and protectors of the social order. Infringement of any kind is severely panalized. Most of the cases adjudicated are those concerned with property especially land, and guarrell.

The Enachi-oken's cabinet thus comprises the Enachi-oken himself, the heads of the three divisions of the clan, the spokesman of the Enachi-oken, and representatives from the seventeen villages. This comprise the law-making body of the clain, over which the paramount ruler presides. Traditionally he symbolises the unity and solidarity

of the people, authority, equity and reverence.



:hieftaincy institution in Abiriba.

Abiriba had an age long traditional chieftaincy institution tran-
ıitted from the ancestral founders. The successors to the throne have
ılways been the direct descendants of the founding fathers. There
ıas never been a threat of any kind to this prehistorical arrangement.
'he stool of the ruler, the Enachi-oken is therefore hereditary.

Pherhaps it will be worth while to mention few noteworthy historica
ncidences connected with some of the founding fathers.

It was during the reign of Ukpabi, the fifth-dynasty that all
ıstile neighbours were completely routed from the present Abiriba site
When one Ukpabi (sixth dynasty) took over the reigns of power,
biriba was split into the three subdivisions. Each of the component
arts was administered by his sons.

Inyima Oke (Seventh dynasty) defined the Abiriba boundaries with
er neighbours. Often the exercise met with bloody confrontation.

It was during the reign of Okorafor Ukpabi (tenth dynasty) that
biriba established as the leading blacksmiths in the area. It was the
ear the skilled blacksmiths from Abiriba travelled out of their
erritory to other lands. It was a period of trade adventure into
nknown lands.

The people established trading centres which grew more extensive
uring the reign of Ukiwo Obi. Christianity came to Abiriba (1911)
uring the reign of Nwaju Otaka.

Age grade as a political and developmental institution

The age grades provide the medium which has become a vital link between the native authority and the people wherever they might be. They provide the a venue for communication between the members of the age grades and other age grades. The internal arrangement of each of the age grades provide strict adherence to traditional norms and social obligation as may be directed by the Enachi-oken from time to time. Deviants to such social obligations and law, were subjected to heavy penalties. In mordern times the age grade structure has constituted itself into an institution responsible for the communal improvement of the town. Most of the public facilities the people enjoy have all been produced through the instrument of the age grades.

Existing along with the administration of the Enchi-oken and the age grades parasitic functionalism is the modern quasi literate set up epitomized by the Abiriba Communal Inprovement Union which initially was the rallying point for the people of Abiriba outside their homes. It mediated between the traditional authority at home and the age grades beyond Abiriba. Information from the Enachi-oken through the ACIU to the age grade was and is easy to dissemisate. Generally it developed into an organization which not only linked the happenings at home to the people outside their home, but became avenue through which other inportant decisions were made affecting the town. It however never functioned arbitarily. Every citizen of Abiriba, including the Enachi-oken was a member. Membership thus was not a question of choice, but a question of birth.

The ACIU has a president and a paid secretary. The union maintains a functional secretariat in all parts of the country and abroad where Abiriba people are found. In this way the union has a comprehensive idea of possible location of towns and countries Abiriba indigenes inhabit. As already hinted, the Central Executive of the Union make decisions in consultation with the traditional authorities or local government. The branches cordinated by the secretariate furnishing the central executive a mechanism with whi to impliment its policies, as well as to collect information

for easy dissemination through the age grades organization to various members. Every adult in Abiriba who perhaps have performed the "ekpe" is automatically a qualified member. Levies are imposed on these members to generate fund to maintain the Secretariat, as well as to enable the union embark on any communal development project she might think fit.

This arrangement suppliments the age grades' efforts at building projects for the community. With the age of blood and human head gone, the age grades out of their collective volation project a plan of assignment they would accomplished for the community as a translation of the days the community desired their head if possible while keeping the enemies off Abiriba land. At various times in the history of an age grade, the members would embark on one project or the other to immortalize its name. This more often happens when a eage grade is performing or about to perform one rites of passage or the other. It will be recall that the Akahaba Age in 1955 financed the building of the Akahaba Abiriba General Hospital. Ekpa Nkuma Age Grade in 1956 built the Enachio-oken Palace. The Okezie Age grade built the Nursing and Midwifery school while Akanu Age Grade built the first public library west of Umuahia. Nchina public park was built by the Nchina age grade. The Erinma town hall was built by Erinma age grade, while Egwuena Girls Secondary school, Onarubi Technical School were all built by their respective age grades. A couple of years ago the Ogighiri age grade successfully built the towns' tower. Standing on the highest part of the town, one can hear the chiming sound of the tower kilometres away. Abiriba post office was built by the Nchina age grade, and at the time the Post Office served Nkporo and Umuhu communities.

The spirit behind the activities of modern darg age grade is said to have resurrected in 1912, when Smock claims three age grades dredged the Igwu Creek from the mouth of Oke peditu rito make it navigable for canoes through out the season. Soon after that incident age grade after age grade began to compete

Administration of Justice

The Igbo concept of justice is very much tied to the principal of equity; and this enshrined in the community's administratio of justice.

The traditional administration of justice exists vis a vis contemporary judicial system which involves following the more formal channel of redress in case of infrignment. An Abiriba man will however prefer seeking justice at local court level than the formalized level.

The judicial council of elders comprising the Enachi-Oken, heads of the three divisions of the clan and other selected member of the judicial council habitually gather at the Enachi-Oken palace. This group may be prevailed upon by a man in the community to arbitrate a dispute. The plaintiff first presents the council with two bottles of dry gin, manyi ikpe, before he pleads his case. The defendant too responds to this award with similar bottles of dry gin. On the day of the trial each of the parties to the dispute comes to the palace with his witnesses who the members of the council presided by the Enachi-oken, may then summon to give testimony. During the entire proceedings the entire council may ask questions to both to deduce materials for their judgement of the case, while they woul also be an occassion when each of the parties would be asked to throw questions at each other.

More often cases are not decided the same day. The two parties are asked to either go and reconcile with each other when a congenial climate had been restored within the aggrieved groups or they are asked to come for the final judgement after a couple of days. Deductions from answers given to the questions during the proceedings are deemed of greater importance than even the plaintiffs' point of view. The original defendant may even be aquitted and final judgement made against someone else, even the plaintiff.

There is really no such thing as complete acquittal of a case, for in any event, the plaintiff's good judgement is on trial. If his allegationm are substantiated, the defendant is heavily penalized. The penalty ranges from buying bottles of dry gin to the killing of goat. Should his allegation be disproved or rejected the plaintiff will be obliged to pay

a fine to the elders.

The community court may as desired administer certain kinds of ordeal or reveal guilt, and other oath-taking rituals - inu mang. Where ties may have dangerously broken down, among friends and where there are apparent threat to the existence of groups or individuals, each of the parties would be called upon to enter in blood contract with each other. This is a ritual involving taking drops from a member of each the party, mixing this in a glass of Palmwine, and drinking by each of the parties after a certain recitation.

ECONOMY

The economic history of Abiriba has been that of attempting to survival despite the odds of nature. With large farm land area at her disposal, she could conveniently depend on the soil for the sustenance of her people, but the soil is infertilized by other natural and unnatural factors. The fight to keep body and soul together has been a long and hard one. Sometimes it involved unprecedented risks. Often lives could be lost, but the people would swallow fear and continue the pursuit.

The few who had been skeptical of the environment outside their homes, and the elderly ones remained behind to scratch on the products of the reluctant and unyielding soil, while a multitude of her people armed with the skill in blacksmith, set off into unknown lands in their blind economic adventure. This economic adjustment according to Mrs. Obasi, brought about social mal-adjustment. Most of the time the Abiriba man is out of Abiriba in pursuit of one business or the other. Despite this spirit he is still an Abiriba man whereever he is, because the socio-cultural intricacies of his existence. continued next page

in ~~a glass of palm wine, and drink by each of the parties, after a certain recitation,~~ reminds him consciously or unconsciously of his ties to his root. Hence at a certain period of the year the okochi, he would come back wherever he is, to a family reunion with his people.

The Abiriba man reputed for his enterprising nature took to going to 'uzu' trade outside his home. He first settled in those olden days at Bende, Umuahia, all in Imo State, where he lived through the work of his hands. Nsugbe confirms that the Abiriba Ibo have always been skilled blacksmith and they supplied Ohafia most of their weapons and ammunitions of war. History had it, the people were so skilled in the art that many people from other areas came to be apprenticed to the Abiriba. This skill was thus spread to Cross river and Awka. In the days of inter-clanish wars, the Abiriba people because of this rare skill, were militarily indispensable to most of her friendly neighbours as they depended on the ~~[illegible]~~ chan, local dane gunds, matchets and other weapons of war produced by the Abiriba people.

The journey to economic emancipation took them to other areas of economic endeavours and other lands. It is documented by Smock that as far back as 1941, over one thousand three hundred and eighty one had left their homes to trade in different parts of the country.

The various trading communities were organized into two groups. There was the maritime group or water people (Umon group) who established trading centres at Calabar, Itu, Efianyon, Akpap, Oron and James Towns, all in Cross River State and the Equitorial Guinea. The other group was the land people (Bende group) with trading centres at Uzuakoli, Bende, Umuahia, Aba, Lagos, Port Harcourt and parts of the north. This division has remained till today and any Abiriba man going outside for business must identify himself with any of these groups. Abiriba people formally apprenticed their children to any of the people in these groups to learn the art of trading in their tender years. Education and religion though necessary, were of secondary importance to the Abiriba people in those days. More respect was

given to the wealthy trader for the instrumental use of his physical resources than for the university don with his academic potentialities.

The Abiriba Communial Improvement Union acts both as an organ of uniting the people in their different places of abode and principally as a forum which brought the various traders together to discuss common natural business problems. Some members of the union group came together and formed the Abiriba Merchants Company. This was an aggregate of Abiriba traders who like the historical Macgregor Laird, teamed up to complete with and route the monopoly of the U.A.C PZ and John Holt. The Company dealt with products of the palm tree and had fleets of lorries that went into the remotest parts of the cross river and other places to convey tons of palm oil and kernel to the company's depot at Port Harcort and Umuahia.

The Abiriba people were known to be daring in their pursuit. They were among the first group of people to defiantly placed the hand paddled canoes at the mercy of the mighty occan waves of the Atlantic and the custom men as they made their trips to and from the Equatorial Guinea. It was an arduous and most dangerous, but rewarding expedition. Lives were often lost, but the Abiriba man's doggedness and shrewd nature carried him on.

It seems this spirit has paid the Abiriba man off after all. Today Abiriba traders are known to control a sizeable economic potentials of Aba town (one of the commercial towns of Imo State) if not those of the state. They have most of the industrial and manufacturing companies as well as trading firms in the town and elsewhere. Their trading concerns had spread to areas outside the country, including as far a distance as Taiwan, Togo, Cameroons, U.S.A, London etc.

AGRICULTURE

As already noted in the proceeding chapters little agriculture is being carried on in Abiriba because of the poor condition of the soil. Agriculture was and is still practised at a subsistent level - the holdings are in scattered patches as a result of land tenure system. The small holdings and the uneven terrain make it

of the supernatural, since this portrays to a large extent the manner by which they think of the universe and their attitude towards life itself. It is an act that symbolises a spiritual experience with the physical through functional intermediaries of the supreme deity.

The Abiriba people believe in one supreme spiritual being normally referred to as Chi-uku the Great God or Obasi. Chi-uku is revered and acknowledged as the sender of rain, controller of soil fertility and creator of the universe. Chi-uku is also regarded as the father of anyanwu (the sun) and ali (earth) gods.

Existing vis a vis with the supreme deity are a member of lesser deities and spirits. The supreme deity allows the smaller dieties and spirits to intervene in the daily affairs of men, thereby involving the intimate relationship between the seen world of man and the unseen world of gods and spirits.

Ali-ezi (the earth spirit) is the mother deity, and has kamalu (the god of thunder) as her messenger, There are frequently petitions and sacrifices to these gods and some yearly offerings - ikwe nkwa - a condition where by one pledges certain degree of sacrifices to the god or gods after ~~a certain~~ a fulfilment of certain pressing need. The sun is associated with good fortune.

Ali - ezi is however the most important deity. The cults of the ansestors are associated with it. She is the source and judge of human morality and exercises the main ritual sanctious in disputs and offences. Each village or compound has a shrine dedicated to the god.

Njoku-ike, the god of farm, destiny and for time. Sacrifices are normally offered during the iri-ama and Ekembu festivals. The priests would normally appear in white wrapper. The sacrifice is proceeded by igo-ofo, an invocation to summon the spirits.

There are other lesser gods like Isimokoto and Iyeru. They are said to inhabit the lakes that bear their names. Isimokoto lake

is said to frown at receiving any other source of water to increase her volume other than hers. As a result she completely dries up during the rainy season, but one flows her bank in the dry season. Nobody ever went near it, much more make attempt to catch the sacred fish.

Just like any other Ibo community, Abiriba people believe that at the time of birth the great God (Chi-uku) gives each individual part of his divine nature called chi. This invariably becomes the spiritual form of the man throughout life. Whatever abilities, success, failures, weaknesses are possessed by the man are often attributed to the man's chi.

Through this medium, chi-uku connects himself with all human beings and the closer much a man are to one ancestor, the nearer to each other. Besides the individual chi differs and everyone is expected to prove of what kind his chi is, by embarking on various economic and social activities. Perhaps this gives a good explanation to the dominant strong achievement motivation typical of the Abiriba man. A typical saying in Abiriba dielect goes this way: onye kwe, chi ya ekwe,, translated literarily means ones will is in oneself - will, representing the personal chi.

However it was not uncommon for each person to own personal carved images, he normally invokes and sacrificed to each morning or before he retired to bed. These more or less were meant to serve as representatives of the ancestors.

The ancestor:

The ancestors (ndi ichie) are believed to be not only a reincarnate of the descendants of the family, but constitute themselves into a spiritual realm that influences the living. The living in turn performs certain rituals each time especially during festivals, to keep in physical - spiritual contact with them. It is customary in Abiriba to libate before drinking no matter the occasion. Normally the elderly is called upon in such situation to communicate with the ancestors. At the end of such brief ritual one or two in the audience would welcome him back to the physical

and a conversation like this may occur,

Q	nna, ifu wa afu?	Father did you see them?
A	Afu mu wa afu?	Yes I saw them?
Q	Nna, ibo ohu da aghi?	Father how is the place?
A	A - ma?	Very nice.
Q	Wa mari kwa agu dinogo?	Do they know theres hunger here?
A	Wa si ife ha adi mma.	They've promised everything will be alright.

The believed is that at the moment of libration, the elderly has been actually in the spirit world of the magic and witchcraft. These is no longer a widespread belief in magic (ekike) as common in other tribes of Nigeria, except in times past. However quite a substantial number still believe that certain concoctious and preparations usually referred to as ekike are capable of influenceing a persons action. A woman for instance may suddenly develop a swollen foot, The native doctor, dibia when consulted may attribute it to a charm the woman most have stepped over. This group also having charms in their houses or may carry one along as they go about the normal duties. The idea is to ward off evil spirit.

Witchcraft.

People suspected of witchcraft are commonly dreaded people. They are thought to have more strength during the night when they go out either in their actual bedies or send forth their soul in the form of some animal or bird, usually owl. They meet inconvens and dance maked round ples houses, after which they go their separate ways. Some put medicine across thisthreshold of their enemies who on coming out the next morning will have is arms legs paralysed. Some of themsuck blood from a vichini, occasionally literally in the guise of rat or bat sometimes by suggestion or in the astral form.

It is thought that if you meet a witch at night and call her by name before she recognised you - or if you first take earth in your hand and throw at her or pillow your self with a certain type of beans seed, she is powerless to harm you.

Since these people are dangerous and the society keeps a close observation of suspects, and at the slightest confirmation deal ruthlessly with them.

However a certain village in Abiriba is particularly associated with the practice of witchery. Oral tradition has not been able to deal in depth with the cercumstances of this peculiar characteristics of the inhabitants ancestors. All oxtraneous disturbances with cease in the gathering until he had transported himself back to the physical world of the human is through this believe in the ancestors that the dead share in the life the living.

OTHER BELIEFS

Man's predominant fears and inability to resolve some of the physical events of his existence have l d him to rationalize in most cases. This rationalization has been the basis of his beliefs.

Twin Birth

Long before the advent of christianity, twin bearing was a taboo, Abiriba society most impassionately abhorred. Restitution was therefore marked with cleansing sacrifice for the "unfortunate" mother, while custom compelled the children to be destroyed. They are thus destroyed not because of any guilty of theirs, but because their continous existence would further enlarge the gulf between man, nature and the spirit world. A situation such as this was considered inimical to existence. The abhorrence of 'ndi-ezi nta' turn mothers, emanated from the belief strongly held at the time that mankind is ordered by chiuku to propagate in single births. Only animals could have a double birth. So a human could not possible share a common propagatory with animals. Such products of propagation were accursed. The mother too became a victim of society's ostracism. She was discriminated against, taunted and humiliated.

The position at Abiriba at that time was similar to what happen at the Cross river end during the era of Mary Slessor whose selfles services saved many of the twin babies from possible destruction.

In Abiriba too the advernt of the missionaries saved the situation, though the church foundation in the society almost gave way because of the admission of these abominable members into their fold.

Reincarnation

Children yet unborn are believe to received the spirit genius of some dead ancestors through a kind of reincarnation. It is in this way that the Abiriba people believe in reincarnation. And the believe is as strong as the belief in the existence of the ancestors. An ancestor who lived a good life is capable of coming back in human form and be born to whosever he favoured when he was yet alive.

This belief finds expression in numerous testimonies given by people about children who have actually confessed that they were such and such a person, or whose actions and speech lead people to connect these with departed ancestors. There was this six year old child relative of mine who was born after the Nigerian civil war. The child was said to have 'named himself' one day, iku onwe ya. This child was conversing with fellow children and a grown up over heard him make comments about his role as an army officer during the civil war. It will have been easy to dismiss his presumptions with the wave of the hand, since he possibly could have heard those details from other people, but for more discret utterances. As if one possessed, the c ild instructed his mother to search through the wardrobe to get him his military identity card. This threw the helpless mother into an overwhelming grief. For sure enough the man when alive had put the identity card there in the wardrobe and forgotten it there. And for fear of recalling the past, the woman had after the death of her husband kept the wardrobe locked. It was a high wardrobe, and the Knob far beyond the reach of the boy. Nothing could conviencingly suggest that the boy could have opened the wardrobe, and seen the content. All other references and utterances no doubt pointed accusingly to the fact that the wife who took in just at the time the man who killed in the battle filled, must have given birth to the man. Although this story when

subjected to serious empirical analysis may sound naive, but this is as far as the beliefs of the people could go. The conclusion might be quite arbitrary and could generate a lot of controversy. But this is not, however the intention.

Ogba nje

Just like the Yorubas, the Abiriba people believes in Ogba nje or abiku. This is perhaps another type of reencarnation, often shrouded with negative influences. Some children are believed to be capable of incarnating into several 'life journeys' which lasts for a very short while during birth. This type of children form themselves into a group in the spirit world, and decide to be born in various homes, where they live for a short while and die, normally before the age of puberty. These repeated comings and goings, are meant to punish their mothers. In Abiriba, when a child is discovered to be an ogbanje, the medicine man is consulted and he uses his supernatural insight and devices to break the child's spiritual chord with the spiritual world.

The night visitors

There used to be a dominating belief in children from the spiritual world who wander into women's kitchen at night to look for crumbs. This belief had a far - reaching effect on the behaviour of women, especially young marriage women towards children generally. It was the custom to always remain food in the earth ken ware plates and clay pots before retiring to sleep. As a matter of fact food containers were generally not washed at night since this amounted to denying the night visitors food. This was interpreted to have enormous sanction by these super human children. It was possible for them to obstruct all avenues that could bring about child-bearing for any woman who showed such disposition towards them.

Baby with teeth

A child who at the time of birth came out with teeth was usually destroyed. This was an abomination and the only way to obviate possible catastrophe for the community was to do away with the source and placate the gods on behalf of the living.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

In Abiriba, certain materials are symbols which give meaning to the peoples' cultural traits. Such materials include nzu (white chalk), okpete (bush cane), Ekoro (fern) Odu (tree) ọmunkwu (palm tree tendril). These articles have all at one time or the other have had meaning attached to the way they are used.

In the olden days, if war was to be declared on a neighbour, emissaries would be sent adorned with split palm frond tendrils (ọmunkwu) and this would ensure them of a safe conduct. On the way they would drop a similar strip but knotted at the boundary of the two lands.

If the village so informed had no intention to fight a war, emissaries are sent too from that other village with split palm leaves, These emissaries would blow their trumpet with a native flute (Opi). This signal indicates that whatever preparations the Abiriba people are making to prosecute the war should be temporarily suspended for the other side has accepted to talk peace. The affected communities would then come to an agreement normally conducted under certain rites at the boundary between them Goats are slaughtered and offered to the god Ala, earth. After this event reopening of hostitity is no longer possible. At the point of this sacrifice cum agreement, an Odu tree is planted - an enduring symbol of the peace agreement.

In certain village bush paths too, it is a common sight, to see split palm frond tendrils, and ekọrọ, or okpete tied at the entrance into the bush. This presupposes either that path houses sacred articles or is used to wade off trespassers. If these articles are tied round domestic plants like, coconut or kola nut trees, it means no one has a right to temper with these trees because there are personal property.

If on the other hand they are tired on a road side, it is warning that bush clearing would soon start out the site, so that persons having traps etc should clear the bush. If a booth or mini hut is erected on a piece of land, this symbolically

means that such a land is in dispute and the public thus warned to steer clear. Nzu (white chalk) is one ofthe commonest household symbol for peace, love and affection. The first thing an Abiriba house offers a strange or visitor as the steps into the house is okwa nzu, white chalk tray. Exchange of verbal greetings goes on simultaneously with the visitor dipping his hand into white chalk and using the affected hand to draw line(s) on the wrist of the other hand. Kola nut is then served to compllete the warmth of acceptance and best wishes. It is believed in Abiriba as it is in all other Ibo community that Kola is a symbol of life hence the expression, onye wetara oji wetara ndu; one who brings Kola, brings life. Besides acting complimentarily with Kola in the reception of guest, women rub the white chalk on their neck when news of child delivery is announced. It is not uncommon to find people asking for information on a particular delivery merely by seeing the chalk marks on a woman's neck. In other words, the white chalk symbolises happiness and reception for the new baby.

White chalk too is prodigiously used as part of decorating colours in traditional regalia, and one of the important sacrifici items.

Carvings

In several obu nkpa situated in the villages are several carvings symbolising deities and men of valour and authority in times past. The ikoro reinforces the claim that the Abiriba has value for artistic creation. The ikoro is an instrument of music and a means of communication,carved out of a large tree trunk usually five to six feet in girth. The trunk is hollowed inside expertly, and with the folded palms the man beats the Ikoro standing on stool to make it convenient for him to get at the mouth. In olden times the stains of blood reminiscent of past sacrifice the little house in which it was kept, and the palm frond hanging ominiously in front of its entrance amplified the mystery behind the ikoro. However, the carving or hollowing is the absolute responsibility of sacred carvers. All the work is completed in

secret and is only exposed to public appreciation on the day the ikoro is to be ceremoniously commissioned.

Apart from serving as a quick means of sending messages across to the members of the community in periods of emergency, it is connected with everything noble, heroic and acknowledging. Just as much as it alerts Abiriba warriors of impending threat by her foes, it extol praises on her gallant and brave warriors for successfully carrying out a compaign. Many could conveniently interprete the drumming. It is to the Abiriba man, as the shoulder -sling talking drum is to the Yoruba, as far as praises to people is considered.

FESTIVALS AND CEREMONIES

Abiriba is rich in culture, and this richness finds expression in the numerous festivals and ceremonies that are featured throughout the year. Apart from these festivals serving as a means of spiritual reunion with the deities, their systematic re-enactment and dating has uniquely given the community a traditional calendar which remains observed till date.

Iriama festival	26 June to		6 July
Ekembu "	1st August	to	4 September
Omume "	5 Seeptember	"	10 October
Ekpe Akoro "	18 October	"	30 October
Uzo Iyi "	6 November	"	25 November
Igwamang "	4 December	"	7 December
Ilu nwanyi "	26 December	"	Jan. 10.

Iri ama festival

Perhaps one of the most important traditional festivals in Abiriba is the Iri - ama festival. The social significance of this is bound up with the fact that it is the festival performed at the end of the planting season in gratitude to the god of earth, ali, the god of fertility, for ending the season without any mishap. Over- whelmingly significant is the fact that this marks the beginning of Abiriba traditional new year, isi - afo.

Propitiations are made to chi-uku, (great God), to personal deities and to the ancestors to usher in a new year of hope. It is at this period people make pledges to the gods if their wishes for the new year ~~are~~ had been fulfilled.

The origin of this all important festival is as old as Abiriba itself, but oral tradition has not dug deep enough to find out the circumstances of its original existence. The most that concerns the community is that it is a festival which involves the fate of everybody, both young and old. It normally lasts eight days.

The festival is herald by the ekwemgba (the wrestling music) and subsequently by mgba, (wrestling contest). The contest continues throughout the period in each of the villages that make up Abiriba. The young and the able-bodied men are engaged in this test of strength. This is the time when the whole community is recovering from the strain of the past planting season. It somehow becomes a social past time to relax and forget about work.

Most evenings the contestants gather in the village square to slot it out with their opponents. At the end the village champions would emerge awaiting to face the champions from the other villages The climax of the wrestling contest is the day all the village champions converge at Amogudu to wrestle on their divisional levels.

Appearing simultanously with the wrestling contests is another phase of the Iri - ama - the presentation of gifts of preserved yams and other traditional items such as nja (day bowl) for bathin and asi (ornamented waist beads).

The traditional act of givingis not unconnected with the believe in charity.

The gift of preserved yam at this point in time 'unwu' (famine') is priceles because it is the exclusive reserve of the diligent farmer who must have had enough to plant, to eat throughout the planting season, yet had remains to give out at this festival.

The situation compelled the farmers to work very hard on their farms in order to have enough remains for the Iri - ama. The presentation of yams apart from its symbolic recognition as a sign of hard work if not affluence, demonstrated practically the good will existing between relations and friends.

During the festival suitors who are preparing for their wedding the coming okochi(January) seize the opportunity to offer presents to endear themselves to their various in - laws. A man who has not yet found a wife scans through the bevy of girls who come to watch the wrestling contests in the evenings.

On a sociological point of view, it looks as if the magic of the wand of the season fanned most indigenes of Abiriba back home during this period. Thus the festival becomes instrumental in the reunion of friends and relatives after years of separation, and also a time to examine the socio-economic problems of the community.

Eke - mbu. (Iri - ji ohu)

Eke mbu (traditionally means the first of the eke) Eke - mbu is a festival celebrated to mark the arrival of the new yam, and consequently a period of gratitude to the god of earth, ali for keeping one alive to witness the birth of this precious food. In ancient times the period preceeding the harvesting of yam was very precarious and normally involved the death of many people, especially the aged. The reason may have extraneous traditional interpretation, but it could be inferred from practically experience that the phenomenon is consequent upon natural occurences. It is possible that death could have occurred as a result of the untold physical exertion and the extreme weather condition of the time. So those who servive the period think it is worth thanking the gods.

That eke morning (the first day in the traditional week) the ikoro would sound calling on dignitaries of the town to come forward and offer their gifts of yam to the ikoro. Under pomp and peagantry, the men would step majestically with yams under the praise music of the ikoro into the village square. After offering

the gift, the men will go back to their homes, while the women go to the market to buy fowl or goat and other food items for the festival. In the evening fat yams are brought out from the man's harvest and displayed in front of his but. The fowl or the goat is slaughted and the blood sprinkled on the yams, amid incantation and invocation. Later the meat of these animals is shared among the wives and relations. The women would prepare pounded yam with the new yam, and a delicious soup is prepared with the goat meat. Later that evening friends and relations come together to feast on the food, with a pot of palm wine to wash down. Usually eke mbu, is a period of merry making - drinking and eating.

Omume

This festival is an extension of the new yam festival. The emphasis this time is on children. Children travel from their various homes to visit homes of relatives to observe the festival. It was a kind of good will visit. After having given enough food, they are given pieces of yam. The children in this way come to familiarise themselves with relatives and friends of their family.

Uzo-iyi

This festival is basically the maidens' affair. It is a festival of strength for the ladies.

In the evening of that day each group of young ladies from each village converge at a central spot in any of the villages chanting abusive songs. When each of the groups have settled they will present four women from amongst them. These were supposed to be the strength of the villages. The four members of one of the groups will step into the circle while the other contestants would plant 'heavy loaded' blows on their backs. They would absorb these blows. Later, it becomes the turn of the four who received the blows to allow the others absorb their own blows. This goes on for a long time until any member of the groups shows any sign of exhausion. The winning opponents would chant louder and louder to cheer their victors. When eventually members of the losing

side notice that their representatives are no longer withstanding the blows, they may decide to take to their heels. The winning group would pursue them right into their kitchens, abusing them all along.

This seems a direct opposite to the men's wrestling contents which had previously taken place, but significantly supported by occasional songs with abusive content. Although sociology may consider the festival in different perspectives but ordinarily, the purpose is to entertain.

Okika Agboji

The festival is dominantly observed by Agboji people. It is a festival of occasional songs whose content boarder on satire. The songs and talks are directed to individuals who may have behaved contrary to the acceptable norms of the community. The festival lasts seven days.

The festival takes off early in the morning. Faintly the early morning breeze blows into the ears of the early morning wakers, the abusive talks of 'oke - amang(' . Indirect references are made to those girls who wander into men's hut for indecent dealings; the man who steals his neighbours yams is warned to keep his hand clean the coming year. This eastigation of deviants of the society goes on for the seven days.

On the last day a group of singers from the village would trek to the historic Okagwe hill and assemble there that early morning. From here they attire themselves with akọrọ, after two or three men have been sufficiently disguised to look like women.

From the hill they would come into the village singing. People would gather at the square to catch a glimes of the 'women' and to listen to their satiric songs. After singing round the village all the roads leading out of the village will be sealed. Nobody comes in and nobody goes out of the village. Then the house of the criminals will be spotted. The group then will sing to the place carrying refuse which they eventually deposit on the roof of the culprits hut. Often this act actually and finally brings the

hidden criminal to public knowledge.

Apart from the songs, the whole exercise seems to be geared to ridding the society of criminals. Often a new discovered criminals may decide to pack off from the village to start life afresh somewhere, his notoriety is little known.

Igwamang ceremony.

The emphasis or significance of the ceremoney is to give thanks to the gods for having spared the life of the member throughout those trying moment. As a matter of fact one who had not performed his Igwamang ceremoney was not entitled to have a wife.

Uche ceremoney

Uche simpley means retirement from active participation in community activities. The age grade system in Abiriba lays emphasis on every male of the community to give selfless service to the town. This means that the age grade is morally bound to make significant contributions to the community throughout the period of active life service. When a man or woman has attained the age of between fifty five to sixty he is said to have dropped his matchet; igbotomma. This literarily means that he has worked enough to retire from service. He then performs the Uche ceremoney with other members of his age grade.

Uche is a period of joy, pomp and pageantry. Relations and friends, in fact the whole community rejoices for these individual who have lived so long and served the community so well. As a mark of their appreciation, they would normally come with enormous but diverse types of gifts for the celebrants. The gigts range from clothes to food items. In most cases money is included.

It is assurmed that an Uche celebrant, under normal circumstances could generate so much found and clothes that could be last the remaining part of his life on earth.

After the ceremony, the man only acts on advisory capacity to office holders in the community.

Marriage Ceremony:

In the time past two things entitles a man to take a wife - having successfully brought home a human head, and having performed

the Igwamang.

Parents play important roles in the selection of wives for their sons. When a man sees a young girl he admires, he informs his parents about the girl. The parents would then take the first wine to the parents of the girl - manyi njuru. This is the first pointer to the fact that someone has an eye on this particular girl. The two families having accepted each others proposal as future in - laws retire to a period of inquiry into the history and back ground of their future in-laws. This inquiry may include finding out what disease traits the family suffers from, the morality, and other social backgrounds of the families concerned. When the two families have sufficiently been convinced that nothing could impede their expressed hope, then the family of the man brings the second wine, ibu manyi.

The significance of the second wine is to formally declare the intention of the man to friends and relatives, and to name a possible date of marriage. This invariably means other young men who have interest in the young girl should now steer clear because someones hand is on her, eka ji ya.

The period of courtship may extend to as far as three years. As long as it may last, the second wine traditionally means that the girl is the man's. But on each of the major festivals in the community, the prospective son in-law must present the girl and her parents gifts. Gifts thus are symbols of a serious undertaking by the families concerned, binding a man together with the wife in the sight of their families. The gifts normally include all types of wears for the girls and the parents, and food ingredience.

When the man is ready for the marriage he informs his wider friends ikpo oku. It is during this ceremony that the man tells the people the fixed day of the wedding which according to Abiriba traditional calendar falls within late month of December and early January. All marriage ceremonies, whatever the number in the pipe - line, are by tradition conducted on these days.

On the eve of the set day the young men of the town would normally come to celebrate the all bachelors' eve, imu anya. Apparently this is to mark the man's end of bachelorhood. There is normally much drinking, dancing and eating throughout the night. Early in the morning every one is worn out, but not the bridge groom who still has the day of activities stretched out before him.

The man wakes up early and dresses in the traditional attire. He is led into iluo okara the tradition george hut where he remains throughout the period of the wedding. The 'hut' is normally built with george wrappers in front of his traditional home. The wife too sits outside her home inside the said 'george hut' with most of her friends. Friends, relatives and well wishers come inside the place to give her fights mostly in cash. The man too is given fights as he sits in his george hut.

Early that morning members of his age grade would come to his table and collect the tradition dowry of (three pounds five shillings) six naira fifty kobo. This amount is taken to the parents of the girl. On their way home they will collect a living ogirisi branch which they plant at the back of the husbands hut. Traditionally, dowries are not haggled in Abiriba, and the low cost of dowries is consequent upon the believe of the Abiriba people on the deeper meaning of marriage. Marriage of a man's daughter to another man, is interpreted to man, safe keeping; not buying her, for no amount of money can reasonably equate the human treasure. This makes it mandatory for the parents to easily take back their daughter should the daughter be ill - treated. The ogirisi tree collected and planted at the back of the man's hut is a symbol of continuity and fertility. Ogirisi is a vegetative domestic tree. It reminds the wife that her root has been transplanted and that nature has bestows on her the fruits of life. Just as the tree grows and blossom, so sh she grow, multiply and look after her upsprings.

all

When the evening comes, the man's age grade leaves for the home of the girl. Members of the man's age grade would normally be burdened with the responsibility of bringing home the wife.

Funeral ceremonies

The death of young people does not call for religious ceremonies. Such deaths are regarded as great calamities. But this is not the case when an elderly man dead. Although it is often observed with great solemnity, never-theless it is interpreted to an extent to mean a period of gratitude for life well spent on earth, and subsequent joining of forces with the ancestors. The elderly man is buried inmediately after the preliminary ceremonies like washing him, dressing and incauting and libating at his grave side.

After a year of two, the second burial would take place, ipaba madu. This involves far more elkborate ceremonies than the first burial.

Child birth and Naming Ceremony

Just as the death of the elderly who had successfully spent his time on earth is marked with ceremonies, the birth of child too is equally a moment of joy in Abiriba.

The first sign of acceptance is displayed as soon the new visitor' utters its first shrill cry.

'Omuru ngini? Omurugini?

What is the sex of the child will be the usual question all over the place.

The women relatives and little children would rub white chalk round their neck still as a symbol of acceptance and an expression of joy. Prior to the modern times experienced women tended their fellow women folk in times of child - birth. There were no hospitals and midwives.

As soon as the woman's safe delivery is announced, relatives and friends come with gifts of yam, smoked fish, garri and crayfish for the woman. It is assumed that the woman would henceforth

be sustained by relatives for a brief period of her recovery from the pains of child bearing before she could start fending for herself again.

The child is given a name by the father after a period of eight days from the day of its birth. Traditionally a man's first male child is given the name of the man's father while a female child takes the name of the man's mother. Hence in some families you will find two or more children bearing the same names, because each family unit will like to retain the names of each of the parents.

When a man has retained the names of his parents in this way he is then free to give subsequent names of prospective children to either his friends or relatives. This time the man uses his discretion.

However, there is no elaborate ceremonies connected with the naming of a child. This may be very peculiar, On the other hand the period associated with ceremony is the time the name-sake to the child comes to express his gratitude to the parents for giving his name to the new child, ikuru ogbo.

He comes to the home of the father of the child with yams, smoked fish and other food items. In modern times the gifts may include all types of wears for both the child and the mother, cartons of beer and other assorted drinks. In the company of his friends they will bring all these items into the man's house.

Everybody present will drink and eat to his satisfaction. Sometimes the women present will burst into songs. It is believed that this ceremony helps the spirit of the departed to rest comfortably wit the ancestors. Sometimes cows are slaughtered so that the elderly man would 'smile in his grave.'

ABIRIBA ORAL LITERATURE

Through oral literature, discovery is made of the categories of Abiriba people's thought, values and the total world view. Story telling is the chief means through which social and oral values are dissiminated and inculcated consciously or unconsciously into

children. As already mentioned songs are equally oral literary form that play a vital role in the propagation of morals. Thus, the over all literacy forms are significant in the examination of the Abiriba literary thought.

Folk loves

Through the numerous folk-loves the people express their beliefs, the morals and their politics. Stories of animals are employed profusely to narrete life styles and direction. Ordinary animals are meant to exhibit pertinent human traints. They are given rational attributes. Thus in Abiriba folk love, the tortoise and the squirrel and the embodinent of wisdom. Perhaps a good example would elucidate this reference.

The squirrel had convinced every member of the animal kingdom that the only way to survive the famine in the land is to start feeding on the flesh of their mothers. This they had given their support and actually carried out the systematic killings. The squirrel sent his own mother to heaven with a long robe. Each time he wanted to see her he would sing a song, and the robe would be released for him to climb up to heaven.

When eventually every animal had slaughtered his mother for the meal, the squirrel was approached but also he started to cry. He never remembered to tell them he had no mother after all. She had died long before he could remeber. But unfortunately the wise tortoise had seen him and actually heard him in one of his trips to and from heaven. The tortoise pleaded that animals should forgive the squirrel and watch out for the suprise he had for them.

One day he went to the exact spot, and sang the usual song, and the robe came down from heaven. Quickly he climbed up but his weight never allowed him climb fast enough. The squirrel soon appeared and knew his game was up. He sang again to the mother to cut the rope. The rope was cut when the tortoise was half way to heaven. The tortoise came tumbling down and when he landed on the hard ground his shell broke into numerous fragments. The spider was called to do t patches. When he started working on the tortoise, the tortoise tickled

him, and because of this distraction, the spider could not do a smooth work on his shell that was prior to this time, as smooth as the snails.

This explains, the reason for the characteristic external features of the tortoise. Besides, the two display of wisdom, the children are made to realise the evils of dishonesty as displayed by the squirrel.

Praise poems

The rationale for praising a person in Abiriba consists, among other things in the need for encouragement. The people say. Etuo emeghe ya emeka (when one is prasied, he strives harder).

Sometimes the heroic achievement of someone is incorporated in poems which may be highly exaggerated, for example, O gi akpara a ga enyim.

One who crosses the river with a single bamboo Nwamba asu eru ali

The cat whose back never touches the ground.

Each of the lines gives a metaphorical expression to the strength of the hero. Striking qualities of objects, and animals are directed to people.

Praise poems freely occur in occasional songs especially in women Ohuwa dance and the war dance. The soloist versed in the categories of the heroe's achievement recounts his (hero's) lineages achievement and tries to match these with the incumbent's later exploits. In the first example the element of prose is distinct, but it becames a little difficult to differentiate prose, poetry, and song when the soloist performs especially during the war dance rendition. Intermittently the soloist breaks up his prose talks into a short song which is reechoed, and later, he break off, and continues his praises. Some times the soloist would mention particular striking stories to support the praises showered on the hero.

Proverb

Chinua Achebe describes the use of proverbs in Igbo thought as an indespensable literary ingredient. Put in another way, proverbs abound in any conversation involving two Ibo people. In Abrirba, the practice is even over flogged, especially when the elders are involved. There is no formal education to understanding proverbs. It only requires constant association in the company of the versed. Age is not a prerequisite. This a typical proverb an elderly man normally throws back at a younger man after he had given him a protracted lesson on moral is; imara asu sua ikwo, mi imaghi asu sua apata. If you know how to beat the mortar, you observe the manner mortars are correctly beaten, or your carelessness endangers your laps.

In all intent and purpose proverbs are statements about life. They more or less find root at the level of obervation and experience. The importance of unity in Abiriba is expressed in a number of proverbs. It is often said for instance; agbakata agbawa ite. (a multitudes's force is enought to break a pot) In other words there is strength in unity, an additional emphasis on community that has sustained the people so far.

Various examples of proverbs abound in Abiriba literary thought reflecting on all phases of her social values.

Riddles

This category of literary geure are more or less more enigmatic than the later, since the former could find meaning easily in the context of expression, but riddles require more direct solution without any apparent suggestions. The purpose could be partly for game and amusement. They however, may be used to teach history or moral values.

(i) What is that which paints himself white in the forest?

(ii) What is it that which walks in front of an old man?

(iii) What is it that enters the forest with me but never come out?

(iv) Who is the little child that cries at night at the back of your mother's hut?

(v) What is the road that no human being ever walks.

These and many others are typical of the viddles in Abiriba, and children during moon light story session are suppose to strain their conguitive powers to find appropriate answers to them. As a result of their nature, most of them may have diverse answers, but then acceptability is a question of adaptability to solving the question posed, In question (iii) there is a suggestion of disuse and abandonement. A lot of articles could be suggested; faeces, or a piece of paper used for a clean up after emptying the bowl.

Songs

'Songs can be used to report and comment on current affairs, for political pressure, for propaganda, and to reflect and mould public opinion. This assertion by Finnegan is typically strong in Abiriba as most occasional songs have specific functional value. Satirical songs of the maiden during Okoka Agboji function not only act on individual level, but collectively to effect a social change in an indirect but subtile manner.

You, the chicken who for ages when all have gone to bed.
You've been perching on the fire.
Do you knowthat fire burns?
You draw lines across your eyes
And rubs blood on your lips
All to catch the dances of the cock
Soon we shall know the rest of the story....

The lines are from a song attacking the excessives of a young sophisticated girl. The poet or rather singer puts the publicity across to the audience in a form that satirically demands personal examination. Significant enough is the fact that suggestions are made with metaphoric expressions that look a bit esoteric to the untutored listener.

LANGUAGE

African literature, and indeed Ibo or Abiriba literature rests on the language - the vehicle of expression. This proviso makes it absolutely necessary to examine to an extent linguistic qualities of the Abiriba dialect.

Abiriba speak a common language - Ibo, one of the Kwa languages of the Niger Congo family. At the same time, there is a range of somewhat adulterated forms of Efik dialect in the vocabulary. This is perphas very typical. Particular examples can be drawn from names of articles in Abiriba with the equivalant in Efik:

Oterikan (Abiriba), Utuenikan (Efik) lantern. Mai - maikon (Abiriba), mmon mmon ikon (Efik) water leaf.

Usan (Abiriba), usan (Efik) plate.

While it is pertinent therefore to suggest a possible language integration due to cultural and trade relationship with the peoples of Cross River State, it is equally necessary to reflect on the traditional and historical origin of Abiriba as well. It is not unlikely that with the long history of migration the dominant Cross river or Ekoi dialect of the original imigrants might have undergone remarkable acculturalizing changes.

The advantage of such a situation is very obvious: Abiriba dialect thus has enlarged its vocabulary by this significant assimilation of other dialects whose vocabulary are more widespread and varied. Enlarge vocabulary has the other advantage of embodying more picturesque and imaginative forms of expression since the word build up is very dynamic. Directly the oral literary forms are all influenced by this various vocabulary types.

PATTERN OF CHANGES

Abiriba like any other community is a society in transition. Since culture is dynamic the people have but found it difficult to break completely from the past, but to imbibe as much of the present as possible so far as not much damage is done to her long cherished in stituations. However, remarkable influence had been felt principally through her peculiar trade pilgrimages by her

merchants. This has not weighed too heavily as to completely rout most social traditions and beliefs, except those which by definition fall away from the acceptance of mundane social value. Social value in this context should be taken as conception of what is morally good - conception of dispositions, attitude, reactions to fellow man, thought and regarded by the immediate society or perhaps on larged one as consistent to standards of behaviour.

The processes involved in the Abiriba traditional marriage system have been strictly followed to the letter, except of course for few inevitable contemporary changes. The dowry for instance remains within the original concept of a small token. Thus the dowry remains one of the lowest in Imo State, or in the whole country, even at the period where parents wed their daughters after collecting thousands of naira as dowry. The Abiriba people still retains the idea of save - keeping and not sale of their daughters to their in laws. Never-theless the amount involved has been a subject of constant change in equivalence from the age of cowries and manilla to the age of naira and kobo. A man paid three pounds fifty kobo during the poundage era. The value has since had the exact equivalent in naira and kobo. It should be pointed out too that this amount is never paid in notes. No parents will accept that. Traditionally it must be paid in coins, till this very moment. It might be of interest too to note that judging from the traditional calendar all marriages are fixed within specific period between late December and early January of every year. No Abiriba man, however rich or well placed marries outside these dates. Any one who is about to marry comes home, performs the ceremony and leaves with his wife after. Those who by western standard wed outside their homes - a good example could be people who marry abroad during their studentship; are supposed by tradition to come home and perform the traditional wedding under the 'eyes' of the people. It is strictly strange to live with your western - marriage wife without the people given recognition to your wedding. Age grade to which the man belongs and relatives

would say nobody has urinated at the gable end of our house, anyu berighi mmamiri n'isi ulu. This literary means bobody has taken wine from you in recognition of your wife's role in your house. To an outside this might sound inconsequential, but many stubborn individual have found that they have to accept the norm of the society no matter their conceptions of marriage in the modern term. The traditional calendar and the associated festival and ceremonies are still been observed. The Age grade system because of the impact it has on the growth and development of the community and the firm belief the people have does not seem in the nearest future to be affected by an iota of influence no matter where the influence comes from.

On the other hand there are many other practices which have found themselves caught up with modern thought and definition of what is marally accepted as good. Head - hunting in an age of 'peace and unity' is almost by any standard of judgement anachronistic. Obtaining human head is no longer regarded a mark of heroism, or achievement. A man's achievement is now a matter of assessing output by his economic where withal.

Having twins is not longer a taboo, but a natural phoenomenum most parents would pay dearly for. Twins are looked after, and adored in our community today.

The whole concept of matrilineality which is as old as Abiriba itself has been retained, but with a little modifications with regards to the off spring of the system. Most parents no longer regard their children as benefits to their mother's relations and as such do not deserve enough attention. As a matter of fact there is apparently no clear cut dichotomy between who is patrilineally and matrilineally more acceptable to the off-spring of the parents. Parents encourage the children to accept these relationship without much undue analysis.

ECONOMIC TREND

Perphas one of the most influencing factor in the change of attitude was as already mentioned, the spirit to explore communities outside the Abiriba man's homeland. A brief mention was made in earlier chapters how the Abiriba people struggled to build up an economy

for themselves through advancement in the skill of black-smithing. This change from the predominantly struggling farmer to the artisan vocation brought with it a number of blessings. For once the communities survival could not hang on the mercy of the unyielding soil; but on sound viable economy. Trade was developing. The money from trade bought the food the soil could not provide. This situation turned the peoples' attention from destruction of lives for superfluous personal aggrandizement to a more profitable economic pursuit. The era of matchet and blood thus gave way to era of bellow and iron. This was the economic base from which the Abiriba took off to other diverse forms of trade. The Abiriba man was among the first group of Nigerians to introduce the stockfish, second hand clothings, leatherate etc into the country. Soon the people came together under the unbrella of the A.C.I.U for sound economic unity. This union became a forum where people meet to discuss their exploits and their problems, apart of examining the problems as it affected the community at large. The Union was as it were the instrument to coment the union of soul and spirit. The Abiriba man's attention too, was constantly reminded through the instrumentation of the age grades and the union, that no matter his wealth outside his home, the home environment needed to benefit from it before its recognition. He therefore had one obligation-to transform his home just as he was committed to defend the town in prehistoric times. And it seemed the Abiriba people had stuck to his vow to do for himself what the government has refused to do for him through the prosecution of several communal development projects.

Today, the pattern of the olden times architecture is virtually extinct, and most parts of the town flourish complicated architectural designs that only the well to do, and the much travelled can have the previlege to erect. Indeed it would not be an over - exaggeration to say that there is no part of the world the Abiriba business man has not visited in his endless search for 'manilla'. They own most of the industries at Aba.

On a sad note however, the Abiriba people has made no significant exploits in the academic field. This is borne out of the erroneously held believe that 'money this time is mightier than the sword'. The rich non - literate Abiriba young man who by stroke of luck came to his end, does not believe in education as a means of success in life. Rather he believes his money can indirectly buy the knowledge in the man. The situation has thus led to a continous de-emphasizing on formal education - a canker worm that is still eating deep into the system. An average successful business man would definitely send his children to school. He may even send him to the best universities abroad. On coming back he entices him with all the goodies from money. Eventually the child who should have formed part of the academic world, ruts away in an old fashioned management system. Education is regarded sadly, as secondary to commercial success.

Growth and Pattern

Economic up shoot has brought with it other forms of development. The town has experience a cross - sectional habitation in mobility. The original village enclave have very little time to survive the urban expansion. The typical mud house with mat roofs are constantly demolished to make for corrugated building blocks systematically located to give room for well designed road system. There has been remarkable movement from the dense pressure areas of Abiriba - around the Oriakwa area to the low - pressure layouts around Ndi Oriri and Amuba. This cross-sectional migrations has led to a duplicity of village loyalty. A man from a village at Ameke, may decide to live at his new house at a village in Amogudu. Although this would not deny him of his loyalty to his village of origin; at the same time he cannot afford to remain an island in his new environment. Thus a lot of internal integration goes on within the town. Obviously this has its socio - political values.

The Church and the Wind of Change

One of the most significant changes in Abiriba after the advent of chiristianity was the positive changes in conduct and

behaviour which obviously could have been as a result of deeper awareness of our conscious and unconscious qualities. This awareness invariably affected thought in relation to person to person dealings. The melliflous preachings tamed the wild fierceness of the people. As Chinua Achebe put it, relations were turned against relations by the subtlety of the new religion.

Soon after 1913 the shrines were challenged and at times desecrated. Christianity took over where the shrines had stopped. The schools started, but only the poor and the slaves could go and be conterminated with the twins and their mothers. Since the people had resisted, schools were declared compulsory and pupils were recruited at the ages of fifteen to thirty five years. Soon more churches came, and more schools came too. The missionaries work relentless, and more became aware of the need for the new changes blowing through the whole community. Some who felt the wind never came out from its influence. The number in the schools increased. As early as that period in time many organization sprang up, among which were the Abiriba Young Men Christian Association. The Abiriba Students Movement, and the A.C.I.U. Many people now saw the need to place education in its righful place in the realm of affairs.

Today most families can boast of one or more graduates. There are equally a good number of the Abiriba people in all works of life. This is due to the influence of the activities of the churches.

Today there are over fifty different churches in the town. And there are numerous primary and three post primiary schools.

To a very large extent this has resulted and had generated within the community a new life style of the western manner of thinking and behaviour.

The history of the Abiriba people is a long one which further researchers would find interesting to embark upon. It is one burdened by danger as they marched from one place to another. It is one that has been victimized by other cultures and influences.

The spirit of adventure into the unknown has made the Abiriba people not only much travelled but has brought with it the blessings of wealth and means of sustenance which the soil could not provide.

Modern Abiriba, which some over zealous admires call 'Little London' is a typical community which has demonstrated without doubt that indomitable spirit of meliorism.

INTRODUCTION

"Love, fame, fear of disgrace, schemes for advancement, desire to make life more confortable and pleasant, and the urge to humilitate others are often at the root of valour men hold in such high esteen"

- La Rochefoucould, Maxim
1665

I find the above quotation appropriate to introduce yet another very crucial aspect of the socio - cultural studies of Abiriba community.

'Igwebu ike', the Ibo proverb will say. "Multitude is strength".

Perhaps the above quotation and the accompanying proverb give a greater weight to the whole concept of age grade system particular reference to Abiriba. With blinking eyes on these quotations one may ask again why all the hullabaloo about a system as old as when Mbiriba found Abiriba? Why were these people so courageous? Why were they warlike? Where are there so much talk about Abiriba's looks despite apparent neglect by subseqent governments of former Eastern Nigeria?

To my mind the answer is inevitably interrelated with the age grade system still so much sustained under the aegis of culture too strong to be swept away by the tide of time.

Perhaps any one who has taken pains to go through the following interview will find more answers and perhaps more questions to ask.

There are two interviewees, designated interviewee I and 2. The essence, however is to present too different views so as to make for comparision, and subsequent conclusions.

The choice of the two persons of almost the same age for the interview is purely coincidental. But then the choice of one who is based at home, and the other whose orientation may have perhaps

been influenced by external contacts, is deliberate. Fortunately or unfortunately the two accounts sound similar, exeept perhaps, on the issue of exact ages of children for the preliminary performance of the Igba nnunu and ekpe ceremonies respectively,

The recordings are victims of unavoidable circumstances like power failure and other unforeseen extraneous factors. They may not be the best recordings, but they may try to achieve the objective of written facts of my people. It is only when the emphasis tilts towards this direction will the listerner appreciate more of the content of this Historical findings than be bothered by the supeficialities of the recordings.

PART II

IGBO TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer: Ka,

Interviewee Ndewo, ibiala

Interviewer If nkwobe kia ogbasi-e bu iju gi mkpuru aju ju olere - ole mala eleghi adi ejueme omerela e - Abiriba, ibe anyi he elende anyi, bu eleghe adi eji akpa nnunu. Ogha adimma ta ikowa tugbuorun eleghe adi eji agba nnunu Abiriba, isa Igba nnunu olu abanyi mme oduo adi eneya ta abia mme ife wa di akpo ikpa ekpe, tupuo ga malisa, oha dimma ka ikowa onwe gi, kpayi efa gi, kpayi kwanu afo olu ikpala na ife oduo ha di onye hegebe i nchi ife ha ba ri onye ogbu uru imapusa onye n'akpa ni uk - ka

Interviewee Ndewo. Afam bu magi Agbanyim Ugwuomo, akpala ihu afo abuo la iri - owa ndebe ka datagbo fifty okwa di ya?

Asa wa ezi onwu bazuhu. Ebum ri Aba ya baru ezi. Ife bayari omere ala Abiriba, eleghe odola hi anya, anyi we omereala dimma, okwesi nnomu. Ndo odwo di nnomu ennomi. Nba oduo kpa anyi gburu gburu de elebu anyi elebu. Okwa hie omereala ohu mme anyi binde zie hu ta ife da alara anyi ihu. Nke iru uke, nke owa d'akpo Age grade system ndi Abiriba. Igba nnunu - a soka buru ya; nihi na oburu asa igba nnuna - eleghe ohu unu gi maliga de tuo, gpakata unnunu ohu, afa olhu unu gba nnunu i - be ade amalisa emebe ukeohu. Ony gi ibe ya ru, oburu nwe enyi to owa, miya ha akpari umuri na, eleghe anya eje ha ho - o ya oburu kwa hi afo olu ohu, ibe mi ya ha gbatata ununu ya aburu a - minya tuokata nehi. Igba nnu dabu sahi is anu madu rue afo asaa ya ngbe ohu agbo ya omarizila him aka akpari o - geheri zi vouwe ya , Igba nnunu ohu.'Igba nnunu ohu kwanu bu iji

eme ta ndife bu nne na nna ma ude gbaghi gburu gburu mari onye nighi etuohu, imari efi. Nke/ka nke odi imenta onye ife ozipusa eleghe odo unu anya ndi mgbe ichie anyi ori lagha ife igbuagha onwa mgbe ori adabu gworu mma gwura egbe ga madu ga iua agha [illegible] ohu - mba, adi asari [illegible] ohu, mgbe ade-duyi uke ohu wa ga me, Igba nnunu onwa bu ebe odasa emalise tuha anari eleghe nwanta ha digha ike eni. Ya obu uzo chiri ni aku ya mauyta ha [illegible] e - nke ofia ku zie nnunu ohu, ebe obu nnunu ohu wogha ya agba ya yo owerike dapu, ya oba ya i - zi ni ikike ohu, Opusa oya etuoni la edinkpa ite ya we ike ikpa nnunu. Opusa ele obu oburu anu ofia ndikwa ike aniya egbe ya ojinde gbo obu e - malisa afo olerole ohu, a - fa isi inmo bu asa ohu okagba.

Ogbu hu bu ifi uku mbu okwesi ta oburu enwanta mme isi o nahi etuonu. Opusa ya buru ife obu mgbe agha, opusa mgbo ori adeje agba nwa opusa ike adi ya je agba nwa, obu odamalise ya embu agba nnunu e.

Izu nwanta gba nnunu eleghe emereala Abiriba di di nne na nnaya adighi d'ama. Ife nne na nna ya bu kwa mgbe ohu ogbu kwa agha ohu, nnuse kwe kwala osusa annuse - nnuse bu kwala nigbe ogasehe agbayir nne na nnaya opusa oya egbila agba. Ya oburu kwa ibe nde enyi ya hu, eleghe anya ya buru nde gbula ni odika agha ohu duse ya kwa ya. Opusa odi ejio egosi nne na nna ya mma n uluo ya mma udigba ya gburu gburu opusa oya etuohula eleghe ohu jii uburu isi iti ijio eku nnunu agbo ya dapu. Mgbe ohu ogasehe ife mbu emi, mgbe ichie ori, adi agba kwa hi oto onye anaghi adu ji nwa ife nkpuru olu, obu if olu obubbagha eme, obu tonwa, eleghe echere ji mebe, nwanta nwa ike iduru nwa kapa ya. Ife adagbo pant. Obu if aheghi idi ya ukwu bu ola ohu adegba gburu gburu ola onwa adi eji ewebe ya ukwu. Ola hu bu iji egosi si opusa nwanta egbula agha, omela ife uku, oya bu ola hu odeowo ukwu. Opusa ya agbesehekwa nnunu ya onwa, bu mu agha nwa ogbu eda kwun ya isi uta ohu isi obu uta onwa ya nkpuru aku ole reole ife eji agbatu -e nnunu - a. Eleohu etupusa kwa hi opusa, mobu nna ya iye ya mo obu nwenne ya oduo, maobu

nna ya uku oduo buru uzo fu ya onye ebu uzo asi opus
egbule agha. Ya gba iri Y'otuo emera eti, emerea ema
Ya asa iberi gbari bia ya agwalis elu, owulie ri elu
'cha mmamen, ppusa onye ohu ekwo ya, iya, Cha mmamen
onye sa agha, gbuo agha bia. Ya ogbari mno ri uluo
ukwuru - a bu ibe nzuzuo, ibe unu - e ndi beke dagbe
opasuibe uzuzuo ebe ohu ono de ekwihi nnunu - onwa
mgbe ogbatu - ro. Ya sa rusa ibo ohu, oya kwihi sie
o dapu, o ya bande ya, izi ikike mbu ohu nwanti nwo
in ya onwa bu nu nwanta afo isi bu obu asa, opusa,
ya ohu. Mgbo ohu kwa obi uto ejula nne na nnya mo o
ya mo obu nde enyi ya oduo, mo obu nna ya ubu oduo,
oduo. Opusa omerala anyi bu achiri aja, aja ohu opu
ilua, igbula agha lua. Egworu ya wa kwasi ya isi is
oke ife. Opusa, gbe ifu ola hu owo bu iji ezi one
ya onwe ya ngbo ohu ewobe kwa ya, o - nde enyi ya
ola hu ya. Nne na nnaya a dighe ama. Aja onwa nna
nwanne ya oduo ji wukwasi ya isi, ma obu onye oduo
onwa, bu kwa isi e - nwanta omela oke ife, o bu oh
hu ife. - Onye owa oba - ri agha. Omereala anyi bu
kwa bu ituo ya ya apapusa mba ndi olu harinne ogbu
mbuo agha, adagbo ya, mbuoagha, opusa obuola ya mb
nwanta mme ife uku, izi la ya ome ife uku ba ikel
ya aba hi usokwa ya chipasa igba gba ya, ine nla
ndi - owa eye ogboha. Nna gwebusaha ndi debe ya e
opusa wa abuola ya mbuo agha - Egwuru kwa nnunu o
ibe nde nwa we ya iche iche, nde nwame/ya nwoke,
odi ife oduo imarikwa, eleghe omerea eala anyi ji di
nnunu onwa abayisa aho. O no ri ezi, isi onye gbu
ohu abayisa uhio, O no ezi. Agbo kwa ya aho la di
wa nwanta afo isi ho kwala dinkpa ohu,
gbua ya chi jin, edibe zie ya opu ohu -
Abiriba abah anu - ife nwanta
ano hu ya nutugbuo ya pusa ude

ndi, ma igba gba, mo ogboho ju a buo wa - onwe onye da ebusa ya. Obu odi kwa ife oduo di nkpa nkpari lu mgbe anuha nnunu owa abali ano wa nchagbuo ya gwu. Abia gwuopusa nnunu onwa hua, ahua nnunu a. Opusa umurima owa, eleghe ohu wa ha go nua nnunnu ohu etuo ya, wa ta za ga. E - leghe a di emeya, E tuo ya tasa ya. Eleghe onwa opusammadi pu ta, yaburu i'lepa anu uku eleghe anua etuo ya ohaeze Umurima bun ezie ohu iba nwanta gbu agha onwa opusa wa a ta sa ya. Ife onwa anakataya bu ife nwa di iche na ife onwa, mma ikpa kpo onwa, mma ogboho, abia tube ya. Adetuya hi tunkwa wanta oku nke ya tun ozugba ndo ohu je ni njem onwa, ya muo abuo gi nua agha onwa. Tun ya wa akewa olu olu olu lu. Eturo ezi ibo hu. Opusa gba gburu gburu. Ezi amarala, ma agbala, e - nwanta onwa egbula agha nnuna bu agha nubu, adigbupu e Abiriba, Ohu bu eleghe igba nnunu e Abiriba ji di. Ya meha ya anayi asikwa ya e - ekoro buohu ike. Onye ekoro bu ike. Nwanta asi ekoro bu ike bu nwanta aka agbahi nnunu - o,nwa o omereadi Abiriba. Elegha umurima wmo ya to nwa, opusa wa agbala ya. Eleghe Ugwuomo, eko,ro ebu kwahi ya ike Eleghe Ukoha ma no, ekoro ebukwa hi ya ike. Obu ma oga buru oke mmehi ya umuri ma ibe ya ha di asi echetu ta wa fepu - o ekoro buoni ike, izi so ka aghahi agha nnunu - ohu. Ife ohu bu ife mbu nwanta emep uluo nta, nne ya na nna ya izi so oya nahi etuohula okorobia. Ife lula ni ya sa hu afo isi, ruo ru afa asa. Eleghe ife onodi igba nnunu gi di oge Abiriba.

<u>Interviewer:</u> Ka, Ijela

<u>Interviewee:</u> Nowo

<u>Interviewer:</u> Ife nnachoiju bu, Isi nne na nna digbi ama mgbe nwanta ge he igbe nnunu, Odi ife di eleghe-- Odi eleghe umurima oli eji e tu-ma wa musani eleghe adi gi agba aku taburu wa go ikpa nnunu ohu?

<u>Interviewee:</u> O no, Kamsighi ife Abiriba bu uke. O nwe uku adagbo uche-ogba ugwunru uke ogba ugwuru onwa bu ibe nwanta onwa amanyituhari. Ya gburu uta ya onwa ya aku ya - elegha - ada ara pu ya ife ugiri, mo obu kwan ife aduo di iche, mo obu isi mangoro, ife ohu unu dagbo mangoro. Ya dapu eleghe ohu atupu ya. Agba ya eleghe ohu ahakwa hi

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<u>Interviewer:</u> Ka, Ijela

<u>Interviewee:</u> Ngwo

<u>Interviewer:</u> Ife nnacho iju bu, Isi nne na nna dighi ama mgbe nwanta ge he igbe nnunu, Odi ife di eleghe-- Odi eleghe umurima oli eji e tuo, ma wa musani eleghe adi gi agba aku taburu wa go ikpa nnunu ohu?

<u>Interviewee:</u> O no, Kamsighi ife Abiriba bu uke. O nwe uku adagbo uche ogba ugwunru uke ogba ugwuru onwa bu ibe nwanta onwa amanyituhari. Ya gburu uta ya onwa ya aku ya - elegha - ada ara pu ya ife ugiri, mo obu kwan ife aduo di iche, mo obu isi mangoro, ife ohu unu dagbo mangoro. Ya dapu eleghe ohu atupu ya. Agba ya eleghe ohu ahakwa hi

da aburu uke ohu, onye nini egwuoru aku ya ye uta ya, adi acho onye he bu uzo agba. Izi eleghe obu mgbe iha agba nnunua, ike ha di kwa gi gba tuo nnunu. Opusa itubazie ga tubazie eleghe ihe eji agba ta aku hi ohu ga tunde ibe oha ujiri ohu di, Ibe asanyi da agbo uke ogba ngwaru, Ngwaru owa bu ife di egbeha si we. Ife unu dagbo lizard. Opusa ga di kwa acho ta inwe ike iji aku hi ohu ya uta hi ohu tuba, eleghe ohu agwuru ohu gbaheri nihi na eleghe anu di - eji agba, eleghe nnunu ohu agba de efegbata ta ike ha di tuba eleghe ohu ugwuru ya bia ala ngwa iro igbapu aku ohu onaga atu ya, ga tuba sie kwa ibobu igba aka ohu ya eji tunde ngwuru oha. Ibe nwanta di egi ri amutu ha. Adi gie ma wa Umu akwukwo emeka ta emekata adagbo eju, edi ene atupu ya, adi asi Ogo gba, Ni igbasahi ya ga nwanta ga agwaha ni. Abia kwa tuba sie ri ya. Umu unu gbasa, migbasahi ya yo odi eleghe agehe agha onwa inahi egbusa. Obu iburu lahi onye anya de e - nwanta g di eso ife umu un no di ene gi mmebe sie aku gi, onwe gi ife za ni igbasa hi ya Igbasa yo oburu kwa nwa eleghe ihe ji eje - odasari uke igba ngwaru ohu t ya rupuo mgbe nwanta ha igbu aha mbu ya, Ibe nwanta ha da amu eleghe oha eji emebasi mma igbe nnunu ya ohu, ilu agha mbu ohu.

Ninterviewer: Ngbo ohu nwanta ohu gbu agha ohu, ewobe ya ola ukwu. Onye di ewobe ya ola ohu?

Interviewee: Ola bu eleghe ohu orusahe. Ola onwa onye de ewobe ya bu nna ya. Nihi na eleghe ohu ogbu agha ohu, osani ofia. Inanla nnunu odighi ebu uho. Eleghe osa ofia ohu lasehe, obu una ya ohu fu ya mbu da gbaba uho egwepisa ola ohu, ewobe ya isi e nwa ya ewela ife uku. Opusa ohu bu ekele mbu nna ya n'ekele ya a gha ogbu. Ofuta, o - wekwaya ola ohu, ya obanyi kwa ra ya mba onwa eleghe oji, opusa ofu la anu ohu ogbu. Anu a bu nnunu a dihala isi uta ya nwanta onwa oji gaseche. Ya amara odighi ife o duo, e - nweya egbula agha. Ya agbaba uluo gworu ola onwa wobe ya ikele ya ekele. Ola ohu bu elem ngbayila gi izipusa ife uku nwanta e - lebehi anya oha egbula agha ogbu agha, iji ekele ya iluala, inela nwa m. Ouna nwanta ohu di ewobe ya ola ohu mo

bu kwan onye ichie oduo nonu na oburu onye nna ya ano kwahi onye ichie oduo no n'esie ohu na bu onye oduo O buri onye ichie, na bu nwane ya oji nere nna ya obuzo ba bayiri agha ohu.

Interviewer: Isi adannu abali ano. Abali ano e - muo adighi anu iluo, wa a anokwanu e - leyi?

Interviewee: Nnunu adi apunu anu annu ye. Abali ano isi adannu bu eleghe nwanta ohu gbu agha hu rusa bia bahari nna ya nde umuri na ibe ya eso kwaya wa edi ge ibe nde nwanne wa ya. Ojehaya - O - anagi abayi sa uluo, - fen kpayi. Onogi abayisa uluo, nihi na agha onwa adighi egbu ya abayisa uluo. Ada apua agbala a - nnu ya ya. Ifin negbe obayiri madu, na ezi ibe nwanne ya ohu bu, o no hu kwa hi ezi abayari wa agha ohu ogbu Annuha ya chi jurya olokwa edebe ya. Egwopu ha ri agha onwa ogbu e - dibe. Onye ichiee gwopu ha ya edebe ya ibia eri ha ife. Ubahu chi ya ngbo hu ogiken kwa ya pusa kwa onagi abayi kwa iluo ohuo tutu o - o ya unutu gwo gwo kwari kwa agha ohu ogbu ga nnua tu buo - o abali ano hu nuo.

Interviewer: Isi wanta eghuhu agha a - dasi e - koro bu ya ogbu. Odi eleghe iwu ike igi kowa tu ife di eleghe e-koro ohu ka odo nde aka nutu ya mbu anya?

Interviewee: Ekoro bu afifia de etuo ofia nyi, o kwa nwa apipia. E kiku di - ikowa ya bu ife unu dagbo Climbing plant. Obi climbing plant, o di efiko ya ro osisi. Eleghe ohu ona efiko ya ro osisi ohu. Wanta o ri madu, ou we osisi ya fiko utuo adi araya hu, na hiahi dasi ya ya ono gi ekwo ya ntuo hu. Egbe anasi [illegible] ta e - koro buhu ogbu bu egbe ohu oka enegi ife unu wa me. Opusa egbe ekoro ebukwahi ya ogbu bu egb[illegible] obu ya kpa nnunu ohu agbo ya e - koro ohu buya ogbu e - fepu la ya. Opusa efiko pula ya, opusa onye ike ituo, opusa okuerilu onye ya. Nere ike iso unu wa mehe kwa ife wa we nen. O ya bu ekoro ohu, opusa odiri eleghe ilu atuatu isi e - koro bu hu ogbu. Ngbo ohu nke mehi ife ituonu ime unu unu megala egwosi kwala ime. [illegible] ohu ime kwa ya hi, opusa e-koro hi efepula, ekoro ohu ebukwa gi ogbu. Eburiua ibe gi anagi okokwa gi onu ngo ekemegi odika ife di eleghe ohu.

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Interviewer: Ikowazila hi opusa karia eleghe muo bulari obu. Nuo odozi kwalam ri anya. Ife nnokwa acho ti iko warim bu uche obi hu eye kwari ekghe omerali ji di, nna ya ife iri ya anyi musa i gba nnunu, mo bu kwan ife elem anya di nni e nwanta igba nnunu.

Interviewee: O dinwa ifele ntutu ntutu hu. Nke mbutuha mmta gba bu asa ya sa igba nnunu, muru ha la eleghe obu ya buru obu ime ife gidim, ya omi fe ehem. Opusa onuru la ozi la onwe ya oya ha onye tahi ite isota umurima uke ya ike. Eleghe mgbayila hi obu ife uke a bu ife ndi Abiriba ji buru. O kwani ya me omer-eala anyi ji tahi ike, ma ta nni ka ifu iletuzie anya Abiriba igua ta nni odi nde akpaku uke iri ato efa, sa ri uke ji akpala, bunu uke onwa ne emekwa uche ru kwari uke iri ato. Onwa asatuha igba nnunu ohu bu ibe oji pui. Nke menya ni ife bu ozi anya bu e-nwanta e - tuohula jikerisie, nkemen, mgbe nwa gi gba nnunu a opusa ike. Opusa onagi ala azu ife bayiri . tuo nke ndu. Nke ka nke eleghe oji metu sa omere ala Abiriba.

Interviewer. Eleghi iji ko wa odinni eleghe odiozihi anya. Ife oduo nwike ichopsa bu. O di ife iwake igbayara anyi he eme t anyi hosa imalisa igba nnunu ohu. Eleghe omere ala Abiriba ji di, onwe ife iwe ike igbayi rim, ime ta nyosa eleghe oji mmelisa mi igba nnunu a ngbe ichie.

Interviewee: Imanla mgbe ichie ori, eleghe anyi ji buru bu iji agha. Ogora ogo, isi mbu mba Swere ike ya danyi. Swere ike ya ga eleghe adasi mbe onwa bu ala anyi. Ogo unu ya gbata da duota ya. Kpi ima ma inwohu nde agha, nde egworu eleghe nde suja, agha owa anagi ekwe ojije. Mmalisa igba nnu - a bu eleghe oji dazu unwirma nghe ori izi si oge onwa bu ogo Abriba onwa tuonuni aghahi e ngbe ri hu inwo nde olua ogu ya, bu nde suja onwa. Ohu bu eleghe oji danyi. Ya me mgbe nwanta malisa afo iso ya, mmo bu kwan afo isi mmo bu asa ya bu afu adu no agba nnunu - a. Opusa o ngbe o danyi dazu onye ya si ya ru lahi oge mgbe okwesi anyi bu nde agha anyi ejenya oji, ifukwanwa eleghe oji mebe ya. Adighi alukwan agha

egbe ya mma to nwa. Odika agha ada alukwa bu eleghe anyi ji mebe uke ru uke. Elehe anya uke tuorisani ihu wa we emeri Abiriba ngburu ife olu. Elegha buru eleghe eji qua uke ohu e - mbu mme imalisa igba nnu - a sa ri uke igba ngwuru, eleghe ohu ejiri mmalisa zua wa igba ngwuru ohu rue mgbe agba nnunu - a . Opusa o ri mgbe imalisa da azu nde agha onwa we ni ike idi eché obodo, ifu si obodo alahi mi mi, mmo bu kwan nde agha oduo asagi mba oduo bia merie wa. Opusa omgbe ohu umurima no di emi ife ohu bu mgbe wa nuru azu onye wa uzo eji mebe ta adizur wa als ta oburu wa tuoru wa were ike chie obodo mgbe obu ujiri wa, mgbe wa tuopusa ya.

Interviewer: Eleghe ije kowa, opusa adi ebuzo nwesa uke ijgba nnunu taburu abia nwosa uke igba ngwuru?

Interviewee Odighi, Uke igbe ngwuru, uke agba ngwuru, inbu taburu ya erupuo uke igba ngwuru onwa. Ogba ngwuru oha bu ibe ihano am-anyini amu eleghe ihe eji kwanu egbu aha mbu onwa. Igba nnunu - a bu igbu aha mbu ohu. Nke ugwuru eleghe ngwuru de - egbegbata uluo, eleghe anya gi egworu uta gi ya aku gi, Mgbe ufodu umuri-mma da eji onwa unu dagbo uta rubber - unu dagbo obu kataput - egworu ya kpo. Obu igikwa hi amu eleghe onyo ji emebezi agbasa ifu hu. Ada eme emerighari mgbo no-o ada ano ya uke ri uke eleghe ohu unu ji tuohe. E - leghe adi eji agbaya umu ifo hu ya rue kwanu gbe afo isi esa ohu, oburu ta onwa afo isis asa bu mgbe onye malisa uluo ekwo ya. Opusa onyerula ike iga ya emusa, akpori ya A, 1,2,3 ya amuro, mmo obu ABC ya ommuru - o. Opusa mgbo ohu bu mgbe anya do ya, o mgbe odiji egbu agha mbu ohu. A di agbahala ngwuru, ada agaghala uke igba ngwuru taburu ga abia kwan gba nnunu gi. Eleghe oji di. Ndewo.

Interviewer. Ka. Mgbe nwanta gbaha nnunu, odi kwa ife oduo oha eme te otuohu lahe ihu? O di kwa mme oduo odi emeya hi?

Interviewee: Ife di ya icho ri icho ya, imanla anyi kpa he ya tani chi ejie. Asala uke ogba ngwuru, ya bia gba nnunu, ggbu agha mbu ya. Ya hapu onwa ri megha ife le. Onwe mgbe nwanta tuoha - o,

opusa ya aburu wa erula uke ekpe. Asahi uke ekpe - o o - ya aburu onye eruo mgbe anasi oru la uke Igwa-mang. Ya gwapu mang ya odi kwa ife oduo olebe anya, ma obu kwahi mgbe oha eme uche, onya unu dasi kwani bu mgbe retirement, na oburu nde beke. Mgbo ohu onye hu bia kwa da ezu ike nluo. O ka sokwahi eleghe uke Abiriba ji mebe. Isa onwani mu - uke, unu etuchu gi eruo onwa. Isa onwa geruo onwa. E - leghe eji mebe ya. O ya bu age grade system - o lhu unu dasi. Onwa ni kpu oku onu Abiriba Adi emezi ta hi ike.

Interviewer: Ibe m ha dimma ta anyi kwusi ifela bu uke ekpe nihi odi eleghe obu uke obu kwa ihe eru ga hola di nkpa. Bu kwa uke obu Abiriba elekwasihi anya imeya ife okwesi imeya iye aka oganiru nke obodo. Oha dimma ta ikpabuotu kwara anyi eleghe adi eji eme ife ekpe ohu.

Interviewee: Asi iganwa letuzie anya, ekpe onwa emenya wa abali olerole gaga, afo onwa anyi lua nwa. Uke ekpe, Ifolhu unu dasi age of adolescence, gbo ya nno. Mgbe ohu oge ohu, agbo ya e - madu etuejuhe okorobia. Nde menya ohua bu umurimma afo iri iso ya sato. O hu ani bu kwahi isi opusa anyi nokwahu wo nza anyi gbaha nnunu - wo me ife oduo. Opusa anyi etuoha ya la ya. Anyi tuose hi wo. Mmaom mgbe oha dinyi anyi Igwamang wo. O ya bu ekpe ohu. Ife - a odadini okoyi okoyi anya. Onwa ni emenwa obali ole-ro-ole ibe onwa uke nde Amoagudu - a adi alaya ofia. Opusa onye mini de eji ni ngwa, umurima nta ohu eleghe ohu wa pusahi, gi ni ngwa ha ha ha. Ifu onye eji ogbon sika ya fa ya ifele mu ya oku. Ya buru okpoko. Ga fu onye eji agbangba okohoro ya okpuha ngwa onwa. Amariya akpa, ada ama akpa. Ome ya ife go fu ga da achi ochi. Obu iwa ya bu ichia wa ochi ya buru opusa idala iwu. Opusa iji ni ezi eleghe anyi dini gwuo gwno - a anyi nahi etuohu. Obukwahi ibohu anyi chi uta. Uta ohu dikwa hi ri' Ibe onwa anyi chi ni uta gba nnunu - a . Onwa kwa ikpayi ri unu anya lebehe - kwa anya bu izi anasi igwamang mgbe ohu obu opusa ituezulari o - okorobia.

Bia kpayiri Abiriba si etuorulam i - fe dini eleghe anya gi egwuopusa erimeri ni wa. Ngba nwe di ni onwa ni uke ekpe onwa bu, oka nwogi ife onye onwa nwe nke eleghe ohu aha elebe ya anya ta obia gwepusa erimeri ni Abiriba hi oka bukwachi ikpayi si anya tuosehi wo. O ya me wadi egi ni ngwa lughu lughu lu. Kpim nsi wa da amagbuo agba. Ga fu anye ji nkahiri waha ngwa. Mma onye ete inyiri ngwa Asikwahi asilu ya. Okpu wa d' ekpu, Okpu ukeghari ya. Opusa wa di kwa hi eleghe ndi ifife. Isuwa uzo ife ohu unu d' eme, d'eme nde ndeje university, adasi obu rag day. E - leg he wa da digwa hi mmu uke ekpe owa oka bu kwa hi imebezi uke, kpi ifu asari uke ogba ngwuru, rue uke onwa okpa nnunu, ya sa kwa ya ya rusa uke ekpe, ya salahi ibohu pusa otuopuo. Oduo ya bu kwa gwa mang. Ohu hu stage oduo uke ekpe ohu, obu mma oga buru ife ibiatula abali ole - ri - ole o ma aburu ijiri anya gi fu ake ekpe onwa. Wa lari ofia, wa da la ofia. Ofia hu ada ar adi ya abali ano. Obu onwa bunu eleghe odi mgbe ichie ori. Nketa onwekwahi eleghe adi ji emebe ya imanla ife opusa madu ije ofia a no abali ano. Wa sa kwa ofia ohu ututu ewa obu mara agba wa eleghe ohu gasche. Wa gariha eleghe ohu yaburu wa emela ekpe.

Interviewer: Odi eleghe upusa ofia ohu bu ususuo [illegible]

Interviewee: [illegible]

Interviewer: Mgbe ohu wa pusa kwau ofia ohu, nda ife zi ni si anabasala wa uku na etuo hu etuohu?

Interviewee: Obukwala afo ohu, wa ha azahe, asi na nwanta za oke afa nlogbo ya. Nihi na uku wa ori. Kpi imari ta onwa anyi nwe hu ruo ri onyiba eme ato. Akpohi wa afa obu nde ori bu onyiba onri. Ndi ewo ike ikpo onyiba mbu. Nde umu nzu wa buru Onyiba eme abuo. Ne nde umu nzu umu nzu wa b[illegible] Onyiba eme ato. Obu kwari afa wa ohu e - ji anari mo oburu wa etuorula ibohu. Mma obughi nno wa wu ike iburu Onyiba eme isi zi . Obu wa asa kwan afa nnu uku nna nna nna nna uku wa. E - leghe oji mebe. Mgbe wa azakwari afa ohu bu mgbe anasi wa uku izari afa. Ske

yo buru mgbe ndi ozo mepu uche zon. Ya aburu nwendu tuopusa ibia egwuru afa nde ohu mepu uche zon. I-letu anya nde zara afa afo abuo gahgah bu uhe Ojighiri e - ndu. Nihi na ebu uke ojighiri e - ndu mepu uche taburu Akpa nkuma me. fara abuo di ihu, kpi ifu uke gehe azari afa. Uke onwa gehe azari afa gebe azari Akpankuma. Nde onwa mpu uche afo abao gah gah. Nke oduo gehe a ru uche bu Akahaba. E - Ighe obukwa afo ano di ihu, Akahaba emeghala zon wo. Ndi oduo naza afa haza Akahaba. Ife me - n - mme uke - afa uke anari efu efu Abiriba. Nde onwa za ya zon gbo kwa Abiriba. Eleghe adi akuji Abiriba - obu nde a gbotola mma wa, mela uch, ela Akpan kuma lahinkwa elu di. Umurima nta adikwa egwuokwari afa wa. Kaifila emegha kwari abali ohu, umurima ori gba ngwuru ori, ma uhe ohu gba nnunu afo ohu, mma uke ohu gba ekpe ohu ya dabasarikwari wa ebe wa he egwuokwari afo nwa kwa. O ya me asi ife bayere ifu uke Abiriba adighi efu efu, adikwani mma. Opusa efa ndi naha a-a ya apu nde oduo egwuokwari ya.

Interviewer: Odi ife oduo m ha jutuhu owa ajuju. Sa mgbe nwanta gbaha nnunu zue mgbe ohu obu kwa uke egbe, ódi ife oduo hade me ndi ozi ha eji amara onye tuohu wa - o.

Interviewee: Oburu mgbe ori anaghide eme uka afia ya nna ya iye ya ada abi, ifu kwan nwanta gbe afo iriabuo, iri ise, iri asa O dinne eje ubu. Eleghe anyi aburu la onye manla ngwu aku, nnaya ezi ya eleghe adi eji aku ngwo. Eleghe ife gi mmebe ta adi ame nwanta ewala ri afa iri abuo ekupu ya uzu, Ya di kwala akpu uzu. Ndi ufodu wa me ya ya ni ahua buyala ri nke onye wa. Ifi kwalan eleghe ife gi mebe ta ufodu nola ri da azu afia nke onwe wa, ufodu di echetu izu wa na ahapu aka una wa uku emeberi wa afia. Imenla omuegi onye deduru e muna eleghe ohu. Mgbe ori uzu adighi bari adi eje ubi. Go onye eji, onye eji, onyeamuri iku ngwo. Ya di emutu ya ifo ohu ohademe eyeturu nne na nna ya eka. Obu nketa onwa otu onyi umurima anyi nori uzu iba adije azu afia onwa

E leghe oji mebe, adighe edughaya e - mu na. Obu akankwa ntutu a no uzu-o-ohu o nwa ukpuru ole-ri-ole bu nde no ezi. Nde ohu nezi ya buru wa anurula gi ubu, ko ndi wa kuru ngwo wa makwan ife oduo.

Interviewer: If nkwebe ju ajutu ohu bu odi eleghe mme me ekpe onwa odi elewa de eji atuya gbuo utu, mma gwuru niya me mmem mme wa. Ndi kwani aju ikhopusa me o di eleghe ife di eleghe okpoho di eji aboyisa e - gba wa, ma wa gworu niya me mme ma?

Interviewee Ele ngbayi la ufodu wa sa mgbe ohu ogbaha nnunu. Ima nwanta adikwan etuohu etuohu - no afo asa. Mgbe uluo ekwo bia ufodu bayi ya uluo ekwo ltu okpoho ya. Imanla ufodu wa kpula uzu. Ya bururi onwe okpoho echota. Ya buruonye no uluo akwo, nde ya, nne na nna ya agbahi ituru ya. Ma aturi ya ya bu ositagha ake ohu ike. Ya bu kwan nwanta no lan uzu aka enwegi okpoho ya, nna ya uku, oda abu ri eni, edime emecha gbu kwari o nne na nna ohu adatu ife okwesi ituri nwa wa mu mo kwan nwenne wa. Ifu si oseta uku ya ike, ibe anagba asi o tughu utu uke ohu. Eleghe oji mebe. Ife mebe zitu ba ta onwa. Kpi ifu la enwo ike ga afula nwanta afo iri asa ya da azu nwa afia uke ya emeberi ya. Ya bruru onye anya do. Anya do ya ya buru ife echo ife pon olu ike adi ya, nihi na obu okpoho ife wa da eji. Odi ehikwanu ife. Ihu wa ife bu ife adeji eme erimeri ohu ada eji erisa. E - le - m maribugha a - la ngwo ohu.

Interviewer: Mazi Ugwuomo, biko ekele ta migi ike eleghe iji wasi obi ala da akowa ri anya ife andoa agbe. Omela ta muo ghosa kuria elem bula ahosa ala ife igba nnunu - a eye ife ekpe. Ele m gi ghosa ime kwa ta mari eleghe nji akowari onye oduo ju m ni aju ju eleghe adi eji eme ya ifa. Nuo kele ta gi ike eleghe iji da saya aju ju - a in adasaya di kwani akpabuo ibe obula edon ni anya. Ka.

Interviewer: Oha dimma ta ikowa tu gbuo onye gi maka ife ocho igba maka omerala Abiriba. Oburu ezi mbia mgbe abali miyi obuo ikparitu ifa, obi di muto eleghe iji nabasa hapu ife inodi akpa ii ta izam oku - a. Iyekwaniru ude oduo negbe nchi ife anyi na agbari oha dimma ti ikowa onwe gi kpayi efa hi kpayi kwan afo ole igbala. Ka

Interviewee Anya no iko akuko ife gbasani igba nnunu. Afam bu Abasi Alinta. Agbalam My age grade bu Nchina Ogorima - bu n'ukem.

Interviewer Ka, ifa pusa kwa ni wa, imula umu ndi meyala ni mmeri mme a.

Interviewee Ife mbu nwanta he emi ma otuolisa ebe four years o'mereali Abiriba anyi bu ohagba nnunu. Ya gba nnunu ohu y were ya ga kpata ebe ude ya nde ohu be nwenne nna ya mo obu nwenne mma ya. Ya je suo nde ohu anitu ya ya ife onyiye ife kwesi ni maka ogba nnunu Ometugbuo ife nnunu ohu, egwere nnunu a huara agbala. E tu ya ozugba umurima. Eleghe wa gi de eje njim ya eleghe Abiriba ji di. Abia gwuoru aku hu wa dasa, ma ndi, ma oka, igba gba, ma okpoho, egworu ya tuo, ozugba village wa, eleghe wa he, ma nde ichie ma umurima, onwe gi onye odighi ezu. Emetu gbuo ya, akpoya nwanta ohu enwosala one step o - merala Abiriba.

Interviewer: Ife igba nnunu ohu, o - sa, afo ole rwe afo ole?

Interviewee Osa four years or five years je ruo six years

Interviewer Odo anya sa four years ruo five years ike akanag ha adi nwanta, mo obughiri onye abia kuzieri eleghe eji akpa nnunu - a. Ike akanagha adi ya gwere aku gba nnunu. Na eleghe adigi azu nwanta ya enwere ike gba nnunu?

Interviewee Nwanta - a ha di eso umurima ibe ya wa. Ma onye oduo gba nnunu -a as nde tuoruya. Ya da eso muo di eje ozi ohu tutu zuo mgbe ya onye ya ha agba enwe onye isi agha, onye chiri gi agha nnunu, bu nna uku; bu ony ichie tuoru gi atuori i - gba nnunu - ohu. Onye ha ada a guide gi. Eleghe amara isa si eleghe nwanta no ya ga gba nnunu, ya bia gworu nnunu - a chiarim agha. Ya buru mma agbala nnunu. Ma egiuru nnunu ohu ge nnua - ele ibe madu gbu agu. Ma eje nnu - a - e - leghe adi eji eme ya.

Interviewer Nnunu ohu, nwanta ohu odi abayi kwa ofia agba nnunu ohu to odi elegbe adi emeya?

Interviewee Odi elegbe adi eme ya. Onyi ohu o nwe nwe nna uku onye yi ra buo ha di eje, epioghari mobu onye de ejeriya ozi. Onye ohu gbuo nnunu oha, ya gwuru ya chie re ya agha nnunu ohu, mo oburu onye ohu aka ru gi a stage ibe onwe ya aka enwegi ike igbu nnunu ohu. O - nwe nna uku onye onwe ike igburu ya nnu - ohu, ya egwuru ya no ya eme omereala ohu. Onye ahu aburu nna ya uku. Onye ohu gbu kwani nnunu-a- ekesa oke mgbe ana eturu ife ohu omresa. Nne ya uke ohu ha ekesa oks. Ya buru kwani onye du uku nwe ike igbu nnunu, ya egbukwa hi nke onwe ya, anagi enwe unu uku

Interviewer:- Mgbe ohu nwanta gbaha unu nda ife oduo di esobe ya. M'gbe ohu achighari ya agha nnunua. Mi wanta uta - a. Ndi ife oduo da esobe ime kwahi ta mmemme igba nnunu owa gehe ihu?

Interviewee Ogbahala nnunu ohu odighi ife oduo anaeme?

Interviewer: Aka mgbe ohu ogbapu kwa hi nnunu. Asala ni ofia lua?

Interviewee Ifi o neme bu wa sa ofia hu lua egwuoru nnunu lua, egwuoru nnunu ohu ya uta, ife adagbo uta. Ya ha erusa bia zi ya nne ha nna ya, nna ha egworu ogboho webe ya, ola webe ya ugwu.

Interviewer: Nda ife ola ufia ohu zi?

Interviewee Brass. Ozi si nwanta ohu egbula agha. Ya gahe amari e - nwanta ohu egbula agha. Oburu magbe ori adi egbu isi ogbua agha ya gworu ola ifie ohu woru aka. Mgbe obula madu fu ya ya amari ogbula isi. Oya bu ife eji da atu yere igba nnunu ohu.

Interviewer Mgbe ohu nwanta ohu gehe kwani odi eleghe odi eji eme onume ma amarini?

Interviewee Nwanta ohu gahe, obia ru sa ebe nwanne ya onye okwbe bia. Nwanne ya ohu agboya, o bia bayireya agha ogbo, ya bia kele ya, ya kpariya o ya ga o ya gba nnunu a odapusa, o ya bande - o. Onye ahu ekele ya so oke ndikom. Ya egwuru onyinye nke onenye ya nye ya.

Interviewer Achopusam si mgbo ohu wa dimeya ife ohu adi eji ya aja emetu ony ohu ihu, nna ife ozipusa ma eja ohu?

Interviewee Ozipusa, etubela ya ugo. Mgbe ohu ogbu agha ohu. I - ife opusa.

Interviewer Opusa ngini mi ituba ugo?

Interviewee Ituba ugo bu imenya chief. Anabasala ya make o gbula agha ohu.

Interviewer Odi elegh wa di eji abayi agha inwe ike ikpayi tu warim eleghe wa deji abayi ya.

Interviewee Wa ada abayi ya, Cha mma mma-n iya, abiam uluo ikwuru, mgba ya ya da, in - mbande ya. O yo biari uluo ikwuru bu ife ohu nde dieofia de eme be ofia wa bia mesiha ibo ohu ibe di ibe de eleghe ngbuka, emesiha ala ibohu. Onye ohu edugha ibohu de echebiri mo bu anu ohu ina agba mo bu kwan nnunu eleghe obu ya beyi elu osisi nni ga gba ya. Onagi ama ngo nnohi - ife adagbo uluo ikwuru. Nde nta - dagbokwaya uluo ikwuru. Ibia noha ofia ibe ohu, ofia imesihazie ibe ohu ga nnoha - obu ga mesihazie ha ibe di mma. Ga abia noha ya di ege anu, iwo ike noho kwan gani gi. Ogere wa tuo ogo mgbe ohu anu da akpari anu apusa ga anogho ibe ohu gbagbuo ya. Anu ohu anihiama ngo nohu. Ife adagbo uluo ikwu ru.

Interviewer: Mgbe - a nwanta gbaha nnunu-a anuchagbuo ya - Ighelani eleghe adi eji kwa ekeya okeya. Igba nnunu ohu uda ife ozi? Nda ife ozi ememe Abiriba?

Interviewed Ozi kwa hi obu ife mbu nwant he ebu uzo eme emari ya eleghe wanta opusapula eleghe madu.

Interviewer: Odi ife nlebe anya di ni e-meme?

Interviewee Onye kwahi mme mme oduo di ni ala igba nnunu ohu

Interviewer Aka ife oji lebe anya sa ni wa mme mme igba nnunu ohu?

Interviewee Obukwa ime ekpe. Mgbe onye ohu gbaha nnunu - a mechiagbuo mmem mme igba nnunu ya burukwa ony na amu akwaukwo, burukwanu obu onye ga pu uzu ya ga pu kwa. Mgbe anogha ta - o, ya tuolisa tuba ubere oha eme ekpe, wa bia melisa ekpe wa bia tu utu ime ekpe, wa bia malisa utu ya. Mgbo wa abiala check onwe wa. Bu nwanta ohu gba ri nnunu, nde amuka ta ya muo obuo, Nde ohu amukata ya muo si e - one year ge mo e - two years wa emekota buru one age. Mgbe ohu wa mekata buru one age, mgbe wa n'eme ekpe

ohu bu kwa mgbe emela organize eleghe wa aburula uke olu. Wa amalisa, ife bu ife mbu iji ama ra wa eleghe age grade, iji amara wa eleghe nde pusanikwani elghe age grade so wa amalisa ekpe - a. Wa meha ekpe, me chiagbuo emume di ni ekpe-a wa di free

Interviewer Odi mme mme ad eme ya me ekpe?

Interviewee Adimme ututu mmemme.

Interviewer Ndi kwan elege odi emebe ya?

Interviewee Ime ekpe. Nke mbu afa ohu nde ne eme uche ne eme. Uke ohu mepu uche afo ohu. Nde ekpe ohu abayisa ime afo nwanne ya. Eleghe ohu Akahaba we me uche ahua, me rue aka, ending eighty three, anyi bayikwa eighty four ya ya buru ime uche. Mgbe ohu wa mepu uche, uke oduo neme ekpe eleghe nda me wende amalisa wa bia bubasa mmanyi obu. Wa abia luo manyi bu basa kpamiri ndi ichie owa amalisala. Owa abayisala e- ege grade. Mgbe ohu wa aka nagi enwe afa. Owegi afa wa ha adi aza. Wa gehada akuju, wa kuju afa ude ohu turou wa ni, nde ohu nwela afa wa ne eso azu. Wa di aza afa nde ohu, tutuo, rue mgbe wa bia mechagbuo ekpe kpam. Wa mecheghuo ekpe wa kadikwahi aza afa nna wa uku ori tutuo. O ua gwu ekpe. Mgbe ohu wa a bia mebezie nkeuke wa. Akpoya uke wa apusala, Abiriba ohu amarala wa afo ohu rue mgbe ahabia agu wa afa ife wa ha za uke ohu. Mgbe wa zara afa ohu, afa nna wa uku ori wa da aza wa ahapu ya. We ginde kwa nke wa. Nde oduo wende tuoru so wa azu adi kwa aza nke wa me afa, rue kwa mgbe wa nde ha gi adi kwa ugwu, wa enwere nke wa ude ha gi adi kwa ugwu, wa enwere nke wa ma afa. Afa ohu yokwani ani aza aza - uke ohu mepuni uche afa ohu, nde onwa so ni nde ekpe onwa azu, o wende gehe aza afa nde ohu. Nde ekpe ohu azara afa nde ohe mehelani nde onwa bia me. Afa ohu egehe kwahi eleghe ohu

Interviewer Ime ekpe ya iji uche oba obu ife ohu?

Interviewee Igba uche o ba ma ime ekpe bukata ife ohu.

Interviewer N'a mgbe ada a bia - ime uche oba onwa?

Interviewee. Mgbe ohu wa da emekata ekpe ohu bu imekata uke.

Mgbe ohu wa ne emekata ta wa bayisa ekpe, ibayisa uke, ife mbu wa hemi be ibayisa ime ekpe - wa tua utu ya. Wa tu utu uke ohu. Wa egworuya bia luo manyi bia gbayiri nde ichie obu wa bu uke ekpe Abuaba sa wa. Amara wa eleghe uke ekpe. Mgbe ohu wa emalisa ime emume di ya nisi. Wadi ebu basa manyi obu every year. gba four years. Every year we ebubusa manyi o kochi im onwa Trieolu. Wa ekupusa ojo nkwu. Arukwa aka wa ebu b sa manyi wa ekupusa ojonkwu tutuo ru kwa afo ohu wa ha eji adi free we ga kwa la uche oba. Wa ga oba wa ga rande four days. Wa ha alasahe wa amari agba buru ya egbe. Nde na wa uku achiokwa wa uzo mgbe ohu wa lasahe. Nde nna wa uku eji ewu, nkpi eji achokwawa uzo. Wa he enisa, we abiagworu ya ekpe ohu debe ya onu obu. Mgbo ohu ekpe adila ada aghara aghara mgbo ohu wa lasahe alasahe, mgbo ohu mgbatu adi eme ogo

Interviewer O gini de eme wa de gi ala ofia eje ano abali ano?

Interviewer Ofia ohu wa da ala eje ano abali ano bu ofia ori madu da ala mgbe ichie ori. Mgbe ohu ituppusa uke, umu bayisa uke Abiriba. Uke ohu wa la ofia.

Interviewer. Wa da eme ngini?

Interviewee Wa da eje ikpu agha. We je no abali ano ohu wa eburu ya isi madu lua. Nde ohu egbusa hi ni. Nde ohu ike adighi gbusa agbowa ujo. Wa eje gworu ogboho zua. Eleghe a di eme madu gbuo efi, egwone afa gi gbayi igbula efi. Eje gburukwa afa nwanne gi gba yi gbayi kwa o gbula efi. Onye egwurukwa ogboha kwa nke ya. O ya bu imeme ije arande oba ohu mme min. Ife eji darisa ife ohu.

Interviewer Odi ife oduo wa de eme mawa noho ofia ibohu? Odi mme mme wa di eme ma wa no ha ofia ibohu?

Interviewee Wa da eme wa noha ofia ibo hu wa di emuru ma igba egb ofia Ibohu. Wa da emuruya me ife gba sahi ni ipie ofia. Wa da amu ya ife gba saya ni eleghe iheji emehi ga aburu onye di ike. Ututu mgbarawa, e - dinkpa etuopusala. Onye mgbe obu wa noha ofia ibe ohu wa abia manyi igba ngba ime wa wa. Wa gbenhiagbuo

mgba ohu wa bia zue ike, wa abia wua mini. We anagi eri ife eji mini wube ya ogba pu uhu. Primari wa bukwa hu ife ahu ri oku eri ya eleghe ohu. Wa anigi eri gari. Wa anigi eri utara obula. Wa anagi eri ma obu eleghe rice di. Odwula udi ohu ahuahu ife wa eri tutu ruo izu wa hia.

Interviewer Adime wa lasahe me, ndi ngwa wadi eji?

Interviewee Wa agbo uto e - hu. Wa anighi adu nyoyi, wa amara agba. Wa ete inyiri ozugba hu wa. Ife adi afubuha agwula anya wa. Ife hu bu ife ademe alasahe mgbe ori, wa menya eleghe ohu. Odiri isi ohu wa gi ya lasahe, ya buru onwe onye, mabu onye ekpu e - mberegede, eme ekghe ohu anihi amakwa. E nwe ike eleghe anyi ho wa ahuru ni nde o ha he pusa, onye ohu miaria, ya omebe ife ohu inaha amakwa onye obu. Ihu ya e change - ie obu ya wsi ha kwa ga amasi ya. Ife wa di eji eze ndu. Nihi na igbu agha ohu dakpasa ri wa ife harinni uku mgbe ichie ori. Eleghe ori eji age ri wa. E - leghe.

Interviewer Wa sakwani uche oba ohu pusa, nda mme mme de eso be ni?

Interviewee: Wa sa uche oba ohu ha ala ezi, wa haeha ezi, egburu wa ewu iji anabasa wa. Nde nna wa uku, nde ohu tuoru wa ni egbu ewu ohu. Wa edi be ya ekpe wa ala. Ekpe ohu wa gi je uche oba ohu, wa egworu ewu ohu huo egbe wa ohu. Egbe ohu wa gi gbuo isi ohu ma oburu mgbe ichie ohu. Ya buru mgbe ichie ori ada eji ewu ohu egbu egbe wa, egbe ohu wa ji pieba ofia ga buru isi onwa ahu.

Interfiewer Ngbo ohu emechakpu, asikwani uke ohu mahi?

Interviewee: Ngbo ohu emechakpu asikwa wa emela ekpe.

Interviewer Odi ife oduo wa he echebiri?

Interviewee Ife oduo wa ha echebiri bu izara afa, wa zari kwa af ya oburu Igwamang. Ozu Abiriba anabasala wa, gua wa afa eleghe uke a.

Interviewer Ka, eleghe iji kpa buo ikpala eleghe adi eji eme ma igba nnunu ma ime ekpe ma kwani efe obu emechiagbuo ya oburu kwa ife dini mgbe madu meghe egbe. Ekele ta mugi ike.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Interviewer: Ka

Interviewee: I greet you too. You'are welcome.

Interviewer: My mission this evening is to pose a number of questions to you. This question however are related to some of the ceremonies in Abiriba with a special reference to igba nnunu "the bird 'hunting ceremony'. From this ceremony I shall draw your attention to ikpa ekpe ceremony too.

Before we formally start I shall [illegible]ed if you could introduce yourself, stating your name and age and perhaps other personal details you may like our listerners to know about you.

Greetings (again)

Interviewee: I greet you too. My name is Mazi Agbanyim (1) Ugwuomo. I am fifty years old. I am a business man and based at Aba, having left my home sometimes ago. Abiriba as you know has a most enviable tradition which has constantly appealed to the interest of our neighbours. It is our tradition that has held us together and ensured our progress. The Age Grade System has been very instrucmental to this unity and progress. Igba nnunu is the preliminary stage of the system. As a child grows he keep company with his peegroup who eventually constitute members of his age group. It is members of this group who form the igba nnunu and are held together as they grow up and find themselves with time as members of the same age grade.

The igba nnunu ceremony is performed by a male child between the ages of six and seven, when it is noticed that the child would have been well articulate and able to an extent look after

himself. The ceremony too is to make people aware that the child is growing. This ceremony equally re-anacts events of the olden days when a man was expected to go into the neighbouring village with his matchet or gun to fight a war. Sometimes an age grade may be sent to fight the war. In effect, igba nnunu immediately demonstrates the pot ntial courage of a child as he looks forward to fulfiling this responsibility.

The child takes up his bow and arrow, goes into a near bush and hides where he could carefully aim at the bird. He graps the bird as soon as it falls to the ground. This act is regarded as having demonstrated that courage required of him. This means too that that child is growing.

This means too that as the cuild grows up with the skill and courage instilled through this child hood, ceremony, he will grow up fearless and able to meet the challenges of the campaigns.

The day a child performs the igba nnunu in accordance with the customs of Abiriba neither his mother nor his father is hardly intimated. They only know when the hero arrives with his kill in the usual ceremonial mood, accompanied by his friends, who must have performed the ceremony too. He comes home to show his parents and neighbours his courage. He is normally without any attire. But in modern times a child might wears his pant. Round his waist is a copper rod. This copper rod is a symbol ofstrength. He had fought a battle and consequently perfored a great feat.

The bird which symbolises his strength and feat accomplished is carefully strung at the tip of one end of the bow to show that he had used this weapon to kill the bird.

As he emerges, his parents are flabbergasted as they ponder over the circumstance, then any of them will beckon him,

"Omere ati, Omere ati" (One who had killed the bird)

The little boy will run as fast as his legs will allow him and as he gets to the sopt he willjunp and say these words.

"Cha nman",

response, "Iya"

Then he will narrate to them how he overpowered the bird. That he went into a hidding place where he aimed at the bird with his bow and arrow. He shot the bird, and as it fell, he quickly grapped it. This shows his strength at that tender age of six or seven. The parents or any other relations will be so over-whelmed that they will collect a quantity of sand and sprinkle it on his head to bid him welcome from his ordeal. This further symbolizes the importance attached to the ceremony. He performs these to every person especially friends and relations who beckoned on him in the prescribed manner. Our tradition stipulates that the father at this instance gets into his house and collects a good size of yam to present as figt to his son. The mother too goes into her kitchen and collects some cubs of maize. From his parents home his sets out to visit other relations and friends. According to our custom the incumbent will never step into the house with his kill. He stays outside, just like in olden days when a man has his human head, he dared not come into the house with it. The bird is securely kept for the next day. This visitation continues the next day for four days. At the end of the period of the ceremony it is not unlikely that the group would have collected sizeable quality of yam and maize. The striking thing is that at the end of the fourth day the bird is roasted. The roasted bird no matter its state and size is shared among members of the group. It is eaten. The quantity of yam and maize is equally shared among members of the group and the whole compound. This is to witness to the fact that indeed this child has performed igba nnunu ceremony. After this ceremony nobody will refer to him as have "akoro in his anus" anymore.(An expression) One who has akoro in his anus means he had not performed the ceremony. My son Ugwuano has perform[illegible] Igba nnunu [illegible] no [illegible] in his [illegible]. [illegible] not get it. But if they had not gone through the rites his peer group would taunt him thus:

"Let us uproot the akoro growing in your anus". This however is the nature of this preliminary ceremony of a male child as he grows up.

Interfiewee Thank you. You are wellcome.

Interviewr You di mention that the parents are not normally aware of the activities of their child prior to the day of the ceremony. What other ways does the child grow into this sastery of archery before they embark on the bird hunt?

Interviewee:- I mentioned that most activities of Abiriba are tied to age grades. We have the age grade normally referred to as uke agba ngwuru: (Age grade of the uzard shooters) membership of the age exposes him to shooting practices with other members who invariable are within the same age grouping. This group of gound boys armed with their bows and arrows would normally pick a target. It could be an orange or mango. They will pick a distance and complete among themselves on who would eventually get at the target. This practice trains their shotting skill that eventually prepares them for the subsequent lizard shooting exercise. As the lizards runs about like any other animals or the birds, theyboys would meticulously make his aim at this lizard. This constant practice eventually makes him a good shot. Sometimes a bundle of papers is tied together, normally called aju, and kept at a distance. You will be asked to shoot at it, If you fail to get at the target, you will be so dejected. If all others succeed, it will seem as if you will fail in the mission ahead. On the other hand if you practice constantly with the rest of the members, there is apparently

no reason why you cannot perfect your shot. You find that the practice for this ceremony begins at this age of the lizard shooting and continues until the child eventually grows into the age he had to exhibit his strength and skill.

Interviewer: Who wears the child the copper rod round the waist?

Interviewee: It is the father of the child who as he sees his with his (on) kill rushes into his house to collect the copper rod which he wears round his sou's waist. This act apart from the symbolic use of the copper rod is an act of gratitude to the child for having performed such a fact. In a situation where the boys' father is no more an elderly fellow in that compound performs the act. It is an act that is inextricably attached to the ceremony.

Interviewer: The ceremony according to you lasts four days, and within this period the child is not expected to step into the house. Where then does he stay?

Interviewee: The child does not come into the house as I said before or his heroign will be obliterated. Whosoever beckons on him to narrate his heroic fact stays outside his house to hear the story. When it is late, the group would come home, and before he steps into his mother's kitchen for his meal, the father or that elderly fellow who stands for his father collects the weapons and the kill and keeps them safely somewhere outside the house. The next day the child collects them and sets off again. He will not normally come into the house again till the evening. The father receives him as before. This goes on for the four days of the ceremony.

Interviewer: A child who has not performed this ceremony is regarded as "having ekoro right inside his anus. Could you explain this expression for the benefit of those you night like to listen to this enterview.

Interviewee: Ekoro is a type of climbing plant that grows in the forest. Normally this plant entwins on trees. There are some cases where this climbing plants have actually militated against the growth of some plants. If these climbing plants are not removed from their abode it will be very difficult for the plant to grow.

When the expfession is used for a child, it means he had not done what tradtion desire him to do. This in effect this inhbits his traditional expectations and does seem his growth in that direction is impaired. His performing the ceremony tantamount to plucking out the menace of this plant from his anus. He is then free to grow tith the society and participate in what his age group is doing. It is rather a proverbila expression.

Interviewer: You have explained this so much to my satisfaction. In your opinion and in comformity with tradition, what are the expectations soon after a child has performed this ceremony?

Interviewee: The expectations are many. First of all, a child who at the age of six or seven learns how to perform a feat 'gi dim' or 'hem, learns so early in life the inevitable association of strength in his existence and the fact that he has to be actively belong to a group. As I told you earlier it is this group classification that has sustained Abiriba, and tradition of the People, Right now we have thirteen age grades. These age grade, right from the Uke gi agbala , the age grade that is soon to perform the Uche ceremony, all began from this preliminary igba nnunu. When your child goes through will this ceremony it, convinces you that this child will play his part actively in the community with the rest of his age mates and that he will not find it difficult to grow in consonance with the tradition of Abiriba.

Interviewer: I seem to believe that you are very knowledgeable in this aspect of your tradtion. To this end I shall be grateful if you could briefly tell us the origin of this igba nnunu.

Interviewee: In those olden days we live by fighting wars. We might in the desire to expand our territories start a war.

You are aware of the fact that without these people, the soldiers it is difficult to persecute such a campaign.

The origin of igba nnunu was that desire to nurture a child and mould him to futurity of this inevitable task of defending the land. That was how it gegan. Things have changed. We no longer live in the era of matchet and guns. The substitute to this defence is the practics for age grade to leave behind a project that will be of benefit to the entire community. This spirit of communal altruism had been implanted through the instrument of the igba nnunu.

Interviewer: Which comes first is it the age of the bird shooters or the age of the lizard hunters?

The age of the lizard shooters before the child then moves over to the age of the bird shooters. It is within the age of the lizard shooters that the child learns the skill of shotting which eventually help him in the performence of these ceremonies. The age of the lizard shooters is just that which involve shooting lizards around with bow and arrow or catapult. This offer enough training ground for the child at that age of six or seven. This is perhaps the age the child should be in school because he could now go through the rigours of instruction. It is after the age of the lizard shooters that you move over to the age of the bird shooters.

Interviewer. After a child had performed the rites within the age of the bird shooters, what other ceremonies await him in future?

Interviewee: There are very many other ceremonies which time will not permit us to delve into. The child has performed the igba nnunu and consequently demonstrated his feat in the campaign. As he grows on, he grows into the ekpe age group. From the ekpe age group he matures into the Igwamang age. Soon after he had performed the ceremony, his expectations are highly tired to

to the time he would perform the Uche ceremony which is the retiring age. This brief illustration gives an idea of the age grade system in Abiriba.

Interviewer: I would like us to focus our attention on the ekpe age grade because I feel it is the age a child is regarded as having matured and able to hold a responsibility to the community. To this end I shall be grateful if you could through a little more light on how the ekpe ceremony is performed.

Interviewee. The age grade normally referred to as ekpe could be likened to what the English man would call the age of adolescence. At this time, it is assumed "that child is fully matured. Those who performed this year are about the ages of fifteen and eighteen. This ceremony invariably is a sort of reminder to the fact that those little children who perfomed the igba nnunu years back are still growing up. The ceremony entails their moving into the forest to stay there for four days. When they emerge they disfigure themselves and act in such funny ways that one seeing them is tempted to laugh. Sometimes they put on rags, and look like university students on a rag day. But then tradition imposes heavy find on any one who laughed at them. As soon as he had completed this ceremony he would look forward to Igwemang.

Interviewer Soon after they have come out of the forest, what bears witness to the fact that they have been accepted as the group that is growing up?

Interviewee: We have now Onyiba the first till the third. This group has not be indentified with any name within the age grade structure. They may be forced to loan the name of their master's age grade say like Onyiba age grade the third as the case ma be. The age grade following the becomes Onyiba the second. They will only have their own recognized name when the community

decides to give them their legitimate name according the custom. This happens when those who have performed the Uche are no longer in the scheme of thing. The growing age grade is then bestowed with the name of these retired age grade. The age grade that was given a name last two year was the Ojighindu Age Grade. This is so because it was Ojirindu that performed the Uche ceremony before Akpankuma age grade stepped into their shoes. In the next two years another age grade will be given a name, and the appropriate name they will bear is Akpankuma - the group that retired two years age. The next age grade for the Uche ceremony is Akahaba. This means in the next four years, the next age grade to be recognized will be given the name Akahaba. This cyclical arrangement invariably perpetrates the names of the age grades in Abiriba. As a group grows up with a particular name and retires, the name of the age grade is passed over to the coming generation.

Interviewer: There is a particular point I need your clarification. What pro-occupies a child from the period he performs the igbannunu and the period he performs the ekpe?

Interviewee: In the olden days such a child must be helpful to the father especially in the farm and other areas. But things have changed. Most of those who performed the ceremony this year no longer live with their parents. They already fend for themselves at uzu where we trade.

Interviewer: The reason for this question is the realization of the fact that the ekpe ceremony definitely would involve certain expenses. Consequently the celebrant must have a way to generate fund to execute it.

Interviewee: Some who at this period find themselves in school are quickly covered by their parents in whatever levies are imposed for the purpose. Even those who had left for uzu are equally helped out by either their parents at home or their masters. Actually it costs them money especially for the enter-

tainment of those who grace the occasion of the naming ceremony.

Interviewer: Mazi Ugwuomo. I have express my gratitude to you for taking so much pain to enlighten me on some aspects of our age grade system. I dare say I am now armed for any one who might have questions regarding this aspect of our culture. Ka

Interviewee: Ka

Interviewr: I greet you. It will be necessary for you to introduce yourself for the purpose of hilping this investigation I am conducting on certain aspects of our tradtion. It is true I have come rather late in the evening for this purpose.

Inspite of this you have received me quite well.

In order to as ist this investigation it will be necessary to introduce yourself, say your name and how old you are.

Interviewee 2 (2) We are involved in the ceremonies connected with Igba nnunu.
My name is Ude Obasi Alinta. I am fifty three years old and I belong to the Nchina Ogorimba age grade.

Interviewr Your age qualifies you to speak authoritively on this topic since you have children who invariabl must have performed these ceremonies. I will like you to say all what you know about this ceremony.

Interviewee The first ceremony a child of say four years is expected to perform according to Abiriba custom is the igba nnunu. When he had got the bird, he talies it round to the relatives of his father and mother. These people will offer gifts because of the feat he had accomplished. After ceremony the bird is roasted outside, and shared amongst the friends who had accompanied him throughout the occasion. The gifts which include maize, yam and money is also shared, although the sharing is extended to the rest of the village. This means the child has gone a step in the traditional fulfilment of the child.

Interviewer: What are the qualifying ages for this ceremony?

Interviewee: Between the ages of four and six.

Interviewer: I am sure a child who is four or five will find it difficult to shoot a bird with bow and arrow unless he is instructed. How are these children trained in order to develop this skill to shoot?

Interviewee: The child always associates with his peer mates - until he is able to shoot for himself. However the child normally has a master who prepares him for this feat. It is this person who directs him on what to do.

Interviewer: Does the child actually gets into the forest for the purpose of shooting the birds or there is some other way the whole ceremony is conducted?

Interviewee The child's master takes him about the forest. The master himself gets the bird and prepares the child with it for the ceremony, should the child be found too tender to make a good shot. The master too has share in whatever gifts the child receives during the ceremony. Should the child be grown enough he could go through the whole ceremony without an assistance from a master.

Interviewer After the child has shot the bird, and come back home with it what happens next?

Interviewee When he has come back from the forest, the bird is tied to his bow. He shows this to his father and mother. The father takes a long round copper rod

and places this round the boy's waist.

Interviewer: What is the significance of this rod copper?

Interviewee: This shows that the boys has performed the ceremony. This distinguishes him from any other child. In the olden days when a man comes home with his human head, he wears the same copper rod on his arm. He is immediately recognized as having performed such a feat. This in effect is correlative to ehe igba nnunu

Interviewer: Apart from the copper rod, are there other ways people could distinguishe this child from any other?

Interviewee When the child arrives at his relatiòn's, the relation will aske him to come and narrate how he had performed the feat. The child will relate how he shot and caught the bird. His relation will shower him with praises and then offer him gifts.

Interviewer In discover that at the time the child is narrating his story people sprinkle sand on his head. What does this signify?

Interviewee: This means he had been made chief. In other words his feat had been acknowledged.

Interviewer: Could you briefly tell me how this little boy usually narrates his story.

Interviewee Hewould say thus:

(2) "Cha ma man"

"Iya (Response)

I entered Ikwuru house, aimed at it, and when it fell down, I caught it. Ikwuru house is a small shrub hut normally prepared by hunters in the forest. There hunters will stay in an hush for animals, who may not see them in that hidding place. In the same way the bird cannot see anyone who hides within this shrub hut.

Interviewer: In Abiriba custom, what do you think is the significance of the igban nnunu?

Interviewee: This is one of the ceremonies a child must perform as he grows up.

Interviewer: After this ceremony are there other expectations for the child?

Interviewee After the c remony a child may enrol in the school or leave for uzu (trading) When he had grown, he will settle for another ceremony normally referred to as ekpe. Members of the group will then start the usual contribution of money that will be used to execute the ceremony. At this stage they have constituted themselves into age group. It is this same group that years gone by had performed the igba nnunu together. When they have gone through the ceremonies associated with ekpe, it is assumed they once more qualify for another rite.

Interviewer: What ceremonies are associated with ekpe?

Interviewee There are many ceremonies. The year after the uche ceremony, the ekpe group sets in. As Akahaba age grade will be 1984 perform the Uche ceremony. The age grade involved with ekpe then takes palm wine to the various obus to inform the elders that they are the proppective age grade to be given a name. Prior to this time they have had no name, except associate with the elder age grade's name. After ekpe the group continues to share in another group's name until they formally constitute themselves into an age grade after a name had been given them by the elders. At this time all association with the previous appendage name is terminated. The

age grade that is just springing up then appends the new name on to themselves until they have gone through the various stages connected with name identification. The ekpe group takes their name from the age grade that had performed the Uche ceremony two years earlier.

Interviewer: What is the difference between ekpe and uche oba?

Interviewee: They are the same ceremony.

Interviewer When then do they perform uche oba?

Interviewee The ekpe is the first stage in formal age grouping. After they have informed the elders that they are the ekpe group, they then embark on subsequent ceremonies and rits. Each year they must send drinks to the elders consecalatvely for four years. This normally takes place around November, and later precedd by Ojankwu nasquerade dance This will go on till the forth year. The last year witnesses the rest of the ceremonies and rites. On a set day the whole members of the age grade move into the barn forest and remain there for four days. The day they come up they wear raffia bags and disfigure themselves with chalk and charcoal marks on their faces. Their masters, (apparently those who belong to the age grade preceeding theirs,) will greet them on their way with a he - goat. Before their arrival several gun shots will be heard from all parts of the town.

Interviewer: Why do they have to go to the barn forest to remain there for four days?

Interviewee The practice is a reminiscence of olden times when a group of growing young men were expected to remain in the forest for four days. Most of them at the end of this period might be brave enough to come home with their first human heads. Those of them who could not have heads were termed

cowards.

Interviewer: What do they do there in the forest?

Interviewee: At the forest, they learn a number of skills and go through certain ordeals. Sometimes they learn the wrestle amongst themselves. There they are not supposed to eat anything cooked with water. Everything they eat is roasted. They will eat neither garri, nor utara, nor rice. They only feed on the roasted yam.

Interviewer: How do they appear after these four days in the forest?

Interviewee: They wear raffia bags round their waist, and disfigure their faces with chalk and charcoal marks. This is however deliberately done to hide the identity of the celebrants for the reason that within the period in the forest there might be casualties either consequent upon external or internal exigencies. It will then be difficult for parents to identify their children immediatelly until the whole ceremony is over. It is only after the ceremony that such revelations are made. As they walk along, you may not be able to recognize a boy you know very well.

The whole idea is to protect individuals, because in olden days this particular aspect of the ceremony was fraught with danger.

Interviewer: After the uch oba what other ceremonies follow?

Interviewee: Back hom, the celebrants are welcome home by their masters, their guns are placed on the group and a he - goat is slaughtered. The blood of the goat is sprinkled on the weapons of war they took into the forest.

Interviewer: At the end of this ceremony what else remains to be performed?

Interviewee Nothing more. They are then regarded as having performed ekpe.

Interviewer Are there other expectations?

Interviewee They will then be looking forward to their naming ceremony as an age grade. This means the whole Abiriba have accepted them as having constituted an age grade.

Interviewer I greet you. You have taken pain how igba nnunu and ekpe ceremonies are performed and what follow after these ceremonies are performed. Iam very grateful to you. Thank you.

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PLATE I: The little boy at the forefront is performing his igba nnunu. (Note the bow and the little bird tied on to it. Round his waist is a copper rod. Inside the big basin are his gifts. His friends accompany him throughout the ceremony.

PLATE II: This group of young men are performing the *ekpe* ceremony. (Note the heavy disfiguring - the purpose is to conceal identity of the individual performer).

PLATE III: The man has performed his Igwamang ceremony - (A ceremony that absolves him from further participation in the defence of the community).

PLATE IV: A group of young boys performing the traditional war dance. (The dance re-enacts the welcome given to war heroes. The lead dancer carries a decoration which in olden times comprised three human skulls. The music of this dance is recording during the first part of the interview).