

A Historical Evolution and Development of Amassoma Seigbein Fishing and Feasting Festival in Central Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract

Festivals are special events which are associated with the historical, religious and traditional roots of the people, set aside by them to be celebrated. The Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival is a festival set aside by the Amassoma people to commemorate and honour Oboro the progenitor of Amassoma community. Oboro the Great is a son of Akama (Snr) the progenitor of Ogboin clan, who was also a son of Ijo the progenitor of Ijo ethnic group in Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria. For convenience and understanding the paper is divided into four sections. Section one examined the geographical location and history of Amassoma community and the conceptual clarification of festival. Section two x-rayed the historical evolution and developmental impact of the festival. Section three dealt with the traditional practices and programs of the festival, while section four, concentrated on the conclusion and recommendation of the study. In doing so, the paper adopted primary and secondary sources of historical methodology in gathering materials. The aim(s) of the study is to spotlight the rich cultural festival of Amassoma people to the globe and to add to existing body of knowledge of festivals of Ijo ethnic group of Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In the course of the study, the paper advanced some recommendations. One of such recommendation is that Bayelsa State, Federal government and Non-governmental organization(s) should see festival as a symbol of peace, love and unity. Conclusively, the cultural festival of Amassoma is their link and identity to their progenitor and forebears.

Keywords: Amassoma, Central Niger Delta, Ijo Festival, Seigbein, Oboro

Introduction

Amassoma is an autonomous community in Bayelsa State, which is located in the Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The community is

among other communities that make up the Ogboin Clan. The people of Amassoma like their Ijo counterpart in the Central Niger Delta are culturatic in nature and as such hold their festivals in high esteem which they celebrate annually. Kainga(2004) corroborated this view, thus:

Festivals are very significant aspects of the Ijo culture, many communities exhibit different forms of festivals, which are associated with harvesting, fishing and merry making, exchange of gifts, eating, drinking, dancing and wrestling among others.

The celebration of festivals among different ethnic groups and nationalities of the world can be traced to antiquity. The ancient Greeks and Romans celebrated different festivals for several reasons such as worshipping idols, celebrating great victories or marking an important event. In the Holy Bible (in Exodus 12 verse 14), the importance of celebrations is emphasized thus:

This is a day you are to commemorate for the generations to come; you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord a lasting ordinance for seven days.

One can infer from the above portion of the Holy Bible that festivals have divine origin because God himself instructed the Israelites to celebrate a seven-day annual festival. Festivals have historical antecedents since these events happened several years ago. Most significantly, festivals have universal appeals because people of all ethnic groups and origins globally have their own festivals which they celebrate for reasons, such as economic, social, political and religious among others. Consequently, the history of Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival occurred along similar perspective's, which origin is traced historically to the progenitor of Amassoma community. The Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival embraces the totality of African way of life in all its forms and ramifications, as the festival which is part of the culture of the people is indispensable and very significant to their lives. Consequently, the festival is closely connected with the development of Ijo culture, which date back to the historical roots of the Amassoma people. The festival has over the years evolved and rapidly developed

from a local festival to become a festival of national and international repute. It is thus, one festival to be reckoned with in the Nigeria society.

The task of this paper therefore is to trace the historical evolution and development of the Amassoma fishing and feasting festival from inception to the present day. For convenience and understanding, the paper is divided into four sections. Section one examine the geographical location and history of Amassoma community and the conceptual clarification of festival. Section two succinctly X-rayed the historical evolution and developmental impact of Amassoma festival. Section three dealt with the traditional practice and programs of the festival. Section four concentrated on the taboo(s) of the festival, conclusion and recommendations of the paper. The aim(s) of the paper is to spotlight the rich cultural festival of Amassoma people literally to the globe and to add to existing body of academic knowledge of festivals of Ijo ethnic group of Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Also the paper will serve as a means of rejuvenating and promoting the festival from declining.

Conceptual Clarification of Festival

Etymologically the term festival is derives from the Latin word *festum*. Originally Latin had two terms for festive events: they are “*festum*”, for “public joy, merriment, revelry”, and “*feria*”, meaning “abstinence from work in honour of the gods”. Both terms were in the plural, *festa* and *feriae* which indicate that in ancient time’s festivals lasted many days and included many events (Clare, 1982).The term festival is defined from different point of view by scholars and dictionaries amongst others, as the term lack global acceptable definition. Notwithstanding there are varied perspectives on the meaning of festivals. According to Falassi (1987) a festival is an event, a social phenomenon encountered in virtually all human cultures. On their parts Richards, 2006; Picard and Robinson, 2006; Metaucci, 2002; Bowden, 2001; Getz, 1987; Turner, 1982), Getz’s (2007:31) simple defines festivals as “themed, public celebrations” as the most practical approach. The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS) categories festivals under ‘performance and celebration’, further defining them as including “all expressions of cultural events that occur locally and can be informal in nature” (UNESCO-UIS, 2009:26). Definitions of festivals tend to emphasize particular characteristics to explain their role and function.

For example, serving the interests of the elite (Waterman, 1998), enabling commodification of local cultures to satisfy tourist-driven demand (Robinson and Connell, 2008), as catalysts for economic development (Andreeva, 2008; Wait, 2008; Bowden, 2001; Nurse and Tull, 2003, 2004; Tull, 2003; Hall, 1989; Getz, 1987), as well as positive influences on the socio-cultural landscape of their host societies (Robertson and Rogers, 2009; Bianchini, 2008; Pickernell and O'Sullivan, 2007; Small, 2007; Reid, 2007; Fredline et al., 2003; Onyx and Bullen, 2000; Delamere, 1997). Festivals can be broadly classified according to their primary characteristics, duration and spatiality venue and geo-location of the festival. Festival activities may be drawn from various festival forms and may feature multiple geographic locations within a region, such as the Caribbean's CARIFESTA and Bali's Arts Festival in Indonesia (Nurse, 2004). Festivals have several different objectives and functions, to the point where some are not related to the festival 'genre'. For example, they may be explicitly designed to support tourism, in which case they may be 'successful' if they attract foreign visitors and spending, even if they present a view of local culture which is otherwise of little interest to the local community.

In contemporary English, festival means (A) a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances; (B) the annual celebration of a notable person or event, or the harvest of an important product; (C) a cultural event consisting of, series of performances of works in the fine arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre; (D) a fair; (E) generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness (Kurath and Kuhn, 1952). For the social sciences, the definition that can be inferred from the works of scholars who have dealt with festival while studying social and ritual events from the viewpoint of various disciplines such as comparative religion, anthropology, social psychology folklore, and sociology indicates that festival commonly means a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and, a series of coordinated events participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival,

which is ultimately what festival celebrates (Onions, 1973). The Encyclopedia Britannica, defined festival (also feast) as “a day or period of time set aside to commemorate, ritually celebrate or re-enact, or anticipate events or seasons— agricultural, religious, or socio-cultural that give meaning and cohesiveness to an individual and to the religious, political, or socio-economic community”, (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/203113/feast>).

According to the Polish human geographer Cudny(2014, 643), “a festival is an organized socio-spatial phenomenon, taking place at a specially designated time, outside the everyday routine, shaping the social capital and celebrating selected elements of human tangible and intangible culture.” On his part Davies (2015, 535) sees “festivals as distinctive because they take people outside their normal behaviours in time and space. They provide unusual activity and evoke feelings and emotions that are very different to the regular and material routines of the workday. Traditionally, festival took place in spaces that are either normally used for other activities such as roads or were empty spaces, but later become the exclusive sites for the period of the event—sites usually are temporarily transformed by decorations and events that add to the sense of occasion and the separateness of the experiences gained in that spaces. Furthermore, a festival can be defined as a special event which is associated with the historical, religious and traditional roots of a people, set aside by them to be celebrated. Some festivals are celebrated annually, while some are not celebrated annually. It is imperative to note that festival offers a unique way of seeing the human culture of a people at its best.

Geographical Location and History of Amassoma Community

Geographically, Amassoma is situated between latitude 5.20N and longitude 6.050E in the Niger Delta, which is known to be the third largest Delta in the world. Amassoma occupies the levee on the left bank of the Nun River, which flows through Sagbama Creek (Kainga, 2004).

In its present location, Amassoma community sprawls from River Pennington to River Nun. Using geographical and ethnic linguistic parameter, scholars like E.J. Alagoa (1999) E. E. Eferé and K. Williamson (1989) have classified the Central Niger Delta Ijo as composed of the Apoi, Bassan, Olodiana, Oporoma, Ogboin (which

Oboro the progenitor of Amassoma is a son of) Tungbo, Kolokuma, Opokuma, Gbarian, Okordia, Biseni, Oruma, Ekpetiama, Tarakiri, Bumo, Akassa and Nembe (Brass) of Bayelsa State. Additionally, Amassoma community occupied the historical Wilberforce Island of Central Niger Delta region, which is in Bayelsa State.

The Amassoma people are members of the Ijo ethnic group which speaks the Ijo language of the Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The history and origin of Amassoma according to oral tradition is traced to a noble son of Chief Akama (Snr), the progenitor of Ogboin Clan in Central Niger Delta called Oboro the Great. The most widely accepted version of traditions of origin was related to the researcher by Pa Tate Izon in an interview conducted in Amassoma on the 18th August, 2017. Papa stated that Oboro the progenitor of Amassoma is a son of Chief Akama (Snr) who migrated from Agadagbabou with his father Akama (Snr, the Ogboin 1) to Orubiribaibou where he had earlier settled with his father and siblings, to the present Foro-ama site where the community is situated. The departure of Oboro the Great from Orubiribaibou was necessitated by a dispute between the sons of Akama and Akama (Snr) as such Oboro being a fisherman, farmer and hunter migrated to a swampy and marshy area to continue with his profession. Pa Tate further explains that the founder of Amassoma gave birth to the following children Okpodu, Alomu and Ogoni. The name Amassoma literally means swampy or marshy village/town given that “ama” means town/ village while “soma” means swampy or marshy land. The three children of Oboro the Great developed the first Ama(s) (subdivision of the town) after their names that are Okpodu-Ama, Alomu-Ama and Ogoni-Ama. Presently, Amassoma is made up of twenty two (22) Ama(s) which sprang up from the three Ama(s). Below are Amassoma twenty two Ama’s, according to their progenitors.

Okpodu, Oboro’s son was the progenitor of five Amas namely:

1. Efeke – Ama
2. Wapere – Ama
3. Waduwei – Ama
4. Ebitimikondei – Ama
5. Azene-Ama

Alomu Oboro’s son was the progenitor of eleven Ama’s namely:

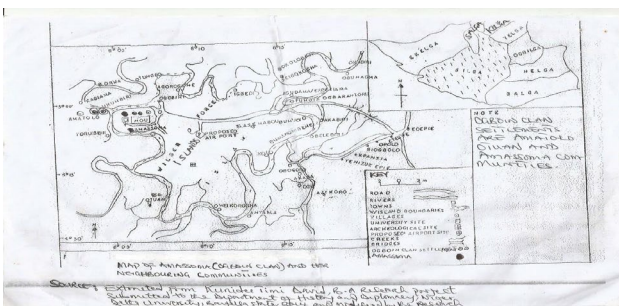
1. Sadiemo – Ama
2. Ebiladei – Ama
3. Agbedi – Ama
4. Oporomo – Ama
5. Goin – Ama
6. Ogbopina – Ama
7. Ogbo-Ebi – Ama
8. Ibenikiri – Ama
9. Foro – Ama
10. Bietebi – Ama
11. Aya-Ogbo – Ama

Ogoni, Oboro's son, was the progenitor of six Amas namely:

1. Okori – Ama
2. Oweidei – Ama
3. Okolobo – Ama
4. Ogun – Ama
5. Adule – Ama
6. Ikoki – Ama

The current twenty two Ama's today are not autonomous village as implied by the word Ama in Ijo language, but autonomous compounds in Amassoma. They all pledge their loyalty to the Amananaowei (King) of Amassoma. Oral traditionalists have struggle to state the time and period of the people migrated and settlement. According to Azebi, O. I, the time and period of Amassoma settlement is not certain but the people believe that Oboro settled in Amassoma as early as the 3rd or 4th century, since it is believe that Ijo's were among the earliest group of people to settled in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Below are pictorial diagram(s) of Amassoma community in contemporary era and Amassoma and her neighbouring communities. Figure one and two.



Historical Evolution and Development of Amassoma Seigbein Festival

The Amassoma festival is traditionally known as Amassoma Seigbein, with the passing of time, it was changed by the people of Amassoma to Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival, due to the deltaic nature of the town and the successful farming and fishing of their agricultural products belief to be blessed by Oboro their progenitor and the gods of the land. The history of Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival according to oral evidence given by Mr. Virtue Youngbo, in an interview conducted on the 2nd of May, 2017 in Otuoke, traced the origin of the festival to Oboro the Great to whom the people attached gigantic sanctimonious and significance and from whose burial the Amassoma Seigbein festival originated. The Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival embraces the totality of African way of life in all its forms and ramification, as it is highly consummated in the Amassoma culture.

According to Kainga (2004) Amassoma Seigbein festival is as old as the community owing to the high status and great esteem of Oboro above other Amananaowei (King) in the neighbourhood and the Niger Delta. The death of Oboro attracted physical condolence and participation at his funeral ceremony by peoples from all walks of life in the area. In order to cope with the visitors and sympathizers in terms of hospitality, men and women of Amassoma community were made to contribute to a common treasury as coincidentally, it was a period when farmers were harvesting new yams. Amassoma women donated baskets of yams, while men donated palm oil. Traditionally, the Amassoma Ijo diet is not complete without fish, as a result men and women of the community decided and went for a successful fishing expedition at “Oubulu” literally means long narrow lake, which is located at the southeast of the town, which culminated into colourful feasting ceremony. A second fishing expedition was embarked upon in honour of Oboro the Great in a wonderful second burial ceremony without a common treasury. Again, owing to its success, the Amassoma people

believed the spirit of Oboro and Oyein literally Our Mother-God the Creator blessed their harvest. By these events the practice of annual fishing expedition and feasting was established.

EbioweiSikpi in an interview conducted on the 12th June, 2017 stated that the Amassoma Seigbein festival is a period of merry making, forgiveness, peace, unity, purification and strengthening of the community by the gods of the land, as all the evil of the land is thrown away by the “seigbein” practice. According to Mr Ebiowei Sikpi, the foregoing is the meaning of Seigbein. At the beginning of the festival from time immemorial, the festival was organized as communal efforts of all sons and daughters of Oboro, but with the passing of time, the festival evolved tremendously as such, the festival was organized base on Ama’s (compound) rotation. In 2001 the community again decided to organized the festival based on communal effort and not Ama’s rotation or setting. The reasons according to oral source(s) are that Ama organization lack adequate support financially and otherwise. Secondly there were issues coming up on the Ama to host the festival, if an Ama is not prepared financially and spiritually. The festival was not getting its traditional flavor.

Thus, before the Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival is organized, the Oubulu Lake, which was later abandoned in favour of the Ogugubulu lake due to population growth of the community and its inlet and outlet areas are usually preserved by the community laws to prevent fishing until the festival time. The date of the festival is picked after several rituals have been conducted by the Chief Priest (Pere or Orukariowei) and members of the Adegbe deity, while festival date is usually June of every year, the festival spans a week.

Pa Douye Oyeintari in an oral interview conducted in Amassoma on 12th June, 2017 stated that on the day of the festival, outlets of the preserved Ogugubulu Lake are blocked with raffia mats to prevent fishes from escaping from the lake. All Oboro sons and daughters as well as interested non-indigenes prepare their fishing materials alongside their canoe(s) at the river bank of Amassoma, ready to officially take off in a competitive race to the lake. Canons are shot twice, the first canon shot signify the take-off to the Ogugubulu (lake) while fishing commences

with a second canon shot. In pre-colonial era activities of the festival included swimming competitions, Adegbe efficiency (practical displayed of Adegbe deity powers), dancing competition, cleansing of the land, gifts and food stuff exchange, wrestling and war boat display among others. However, due to westernization from colonial era to post-colonial era activities such as Adegbe (god) efficiency and deity cleansing of the land among others are no longer carried out effectively in contemporary era.

The Amassoma Seigbein fishing and feasting festival has evolved historically over several decades to be what it is today, from a local to international festival of great repute in Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Remarkably, the festival has attracted a lot of Amassoma indigenes (home and abroad) and foreigners to Amassoma. Currently, the festival is accorded great recognition by the Bayelsa State Government, Ijaw National Council (INC), Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) and other Non-governmental organization of the state as one of the important festivals in the state. Also, the festival has attracted moral and financial support from the state government, corporate bodies and well-disposed groups and individuals within and outside the state. The festival has become an avenue for inter and intra ethnic group relations as Amassoma indigenes and non-indigenes continually benefit from it. Aborigines and visitors use this festive period to learn the culture, norms and traditions of Amassoma people. The festival due to its sui generis and transformation nature has increased the economic status of the community during and after the festival due to influx of people to the community, as the festival serves as tourist attraction to non-natives.

Pa Yeri Peremene in an interview conducted by Ogbomo .G. Bolouboere in Amassoma on the 27th June, 2010, stated that Amassoma festival has witnessed in the 1970s the presence of Melford Okilo, the then commissioner of education in Old Rivers State whom graced the festival. In 2000s dignitaries such as commissioners, house of Assembly members, permanent secretaries, first civilian governor of Bayelsa Dr. D.S.P Alamieyeseigha (blessed memory), government representatives and other senior government officials among others have also graced the festival.

Pa Yeri further stated that foreigners from Europe, Asia, South and North America among others graced the festival and films the proceedings in the past. According to Madam Akpama Diana in contemporary era the festival has also witnessed the presence of tourists from all over the world, whose presence serve as a boost and development to the festival from local to international festival indirectly and directly. Today the festival has evolved historically to a festival of great repute far beyond the Bayelsa State soil to the entire Ijo nation, Nigeria and abroad.

Developmentally, due to the recognition of the festival far beyond the Amassoma and Nigerian soil, the Egbelegbele dance group of Amassoma became famous and has won several local and international awards, such as Bayelsa state government award as Ijo Ambassador of cultural dance group, Nigerian cultural dance group and recognition award, People Republic of China award of African dance art, Bayelsa state government award of recognition as cultural dance group, Canada award of creative dance, etc. These entire awards came respectively from 1999 to 2017. With the above awards, it is succinctly clear that Egbelegbele dance group has participated in several cultural festivals and events home and abroad. Remarkably this dance group serves as an avenue of spreading and appreciation of the sui generis Ijo culture of Central Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Consequently, the festival serves as medium of reunion between friends and family members annually. The festival increased the economic status of the community during and after the festive period and also served as a medium of inter and intra ethnic group relations during and after the festival period. Another key development to note is that the festival served as an avenue where the rich and sui generis culture of the Amassoma people is learned and appreciated by aborigines and non-aborigines of the town. Amassoma today is seen as a tourist site due to the festival. Sardonicly, the festival has witnessed few negative developments, such as death of aborigines and non-aborigines, taboo unknowingly committed by non-aborigines of the land and excessive alcoholic drinking leading to death and crime during the festive period. An example is the death of a non-aborigine from Okumbiri town in

Sagbama local government area of Bayelsa state and a student of Niger Delta University, Bayelsa state, whose death occurred in Ogbopina and was accredited to excessive alcohol drinking in the 2008. In 2000s few persons have been summoned for excessive alcohol drinking leading to breach of peace during the festival and the killing animals during Seigbein which is a taboo in the village, etc.

Traditional Practice and Programme of the Festival

The Amassoma seigbein fishing and feasting festival offers a unique way of seeing the Ijo culture at its best. The festival is aimed at promoting the Ijo culture of love, peace brotherliness and friendship among the people. Pa Ere Aminawa in an oral interview conducted on the 4th August, 2010 in Amassoma, stated that the festival is an annual event meant to commemorate and honour the progenitor of the Amassoma community called Oboro the Great, and also an avenue to pray to the gods of the land for a successful planting season and fishing harvest. The date of the festival is set after some traditional rituals are done, as such traditional rules and regulations governing the festival are enforced by the council of chiefs and any defaulters caught going against these rules and regulations is liable to a fine , also he or she offer sacrifice to the gods of the land.

In another practice of the festival in honour of purification, Mr Frank Azebiin an interview asserts that, the Adika dance group represents purity, dance seminude in the public. These girls/women are seen as virtuous girls and women who are still virgins. The last day of the festival are rounded off with the traditional practice of shooting canons by the men of the community while women dance round houses of the community with burning rubbers and flame of fires thrown into rivers at dusk, which signifies “Seigbein” literally throwing away evil. It is the belief of the Amassoma people that throwing away evil (Seigbein) is to get rid of bad and evil spirit parading the community and cleansing the community from evil after the festival. The traditional practice of Seigbein also is to strengthen, protect and purify the visitors, aborigines and the community during the festival.

The festival is governed by programme of activities; as such everyone is expected to follow the program of activities to make the festival colourful and successful. The Amassoma seigbein fishing and feasting festival programme of activities are: Opening of the festival by canon shots by men of the community/Amananaowei(King) opening speech, Arrival of guests to the town, Seigbein traditional ogele, Fishing competition and expedition, Cultural dance from Amassoma dance group, War canon display, Canon race competition, Wrestling, Swimming competition, Adika dance group cultural display, The Amananaowei (King) closing and thank you speech, Second canon shot (signifying the close of the festival), Departure of guests from the community, Seigbein is done at the river of the community.

The Amassoma festival programme of activities has witnessed changes, as the festival has evolved from its initial local to international repute. Due to westernization, the programme has been drafted to fit modernization thereby seeing the removal of some activities. Kainga (2004) asserts that the program of events of the festival is split to cover a number of days as follows. Arrival of the guest to the town, preparation of fishing gears, procession of Chiefs, members of Seigbein planning committee, among others, seigbein traditional ogele, War canoe display, preparation of lake, festival eve gala night/ all night owigiri/ picnic party, arrival of guests/ chiefs to the venue, opening ceremony, Reception of dignitaries, Presentation of addresses, declaration of the festival open by Amananaowei (King) , Live dance bands, festival dinner (buffet), cultural dances, first and second canon shots, fishing expedition (Oguguembi) at ebb of high tide, lake side dance, canoe regatta, swimming/diving completion, canoe race, wrestling, football (Novelty, etc), seigbein traditional attire queen contest, drama, love boat cruise, yam toast, catching train, marble game (Okokotein), miss seigbein beauty contest, war boat competition (TarabiriArukili), Exchange of gifts, press conference, farewell message, thanksgiving service, visitors depart. Below are pictorial representations of the festival. The photos are credited to Mr Douye Sogo of Amassoma community.



Adegbe Deity Members Worshipping the Deity at the Festival in Amassoma 2017



Women of Amassoma Expressing Their Delight after Seigbein Practice (Throwaway Evil) Was Conducted at the Festival in Amassoma Community In 2017



**Ama Oru Traditional (Woman) War Boat Regatta at
the Amassoma Festival 2017**



**Ama Oru Traditional (Men) War Boat Regatta in
Amassoma Festival 2017**



**Ama Oru Traditional (Men) War Boat Regatta in
Amassoma Festival 2017**



**Ama Oru Traditional (Men) War Boat Regatta in
Amassoma Festival 2017**



**The Amananaowei (King) of Amassoma Town
His Royal Highness Major Pelebimo Graham Naingba (Rtd)
Oboro the Seventh**

Taboo(s) of the Festival

The Amassoma festival like other Ijo's or African festivals has certain taboo(s) and beliefs that influence the Amassoma culture. Taboo(s) are forbidden acts; as such, all members and visitors of Amassoma were warned to refrain from such taboo(s).

Pa Inemo Yagba in an interview conducted on the 15th June 2017 stated that taboo were taken seriously during the festival as defaulters were asked to pay a fine or sacrifice to the gods of the land. Killing of animals are taboo(s) during the festive period. It is forbidden in the land. The festive period is believed by Oboro descendants as a period of purification and cleansing of their land, as such no shedding of blood is

allowed. The death of aborigine(s) or stranger(s) is silenced as it is treated with confidentiality; therefore, it is a taboo by the belief of the Amassoma people to announce such death. In essence, the dead corpse is buried without a canon shot in honour of the deceased. Additionally, it is a taboo to steal, kill or commit any crime that is punishable by the laws of the land and the nation while the festival lasted.

Idol worshippers, (Adegbediety members) do not eat fishes such as clupeid specie (Imbeli), *LatesNiloticus* (tome), etc. Forest products such as *Harungana Madagasiariensis* (Esisngha) are not used as firewood in cooking while *Musanga Lecropoides* (cork wood) locally called Akpwei is not used in cooking during the festival, because it is belief that such (cork wood) Akpwei is used in cooking food in funeral ceremonies (2004). Married woman never serve her husband with food that poured on the ground without the consent of their husband, as refusal to seek consent from their husband is a taboo. Before, during and after the festival all rituals and traditional rites must be carried out by the Chief Priest, Amananaowei, Adegbe deity members and aborigines of the town. It is believed that in event of omission or refusal to carryout the required rituals great consequences shall befall Amassoma community by the gods. These rituals and traditional rites are done in preparation for the success of the festival, before, during and afterward.

Madam Ogbomo Tari an interview in Amassoma explained that all traditional rules and regulations regarding the festival must be adhered by the aborigines and visitors in the land during the festival to avert the anger of the gods. The festival taboos serve as watch dog for the conduct of all persons in the land during the festive period, as the festival has evolved from local to international festival over the years due to its wide acceptance and recognition by Bayelsa State government, Ijaw National Council, Ijaw Youth Council, Non-governmental Organizations, tourists from Europe, Asia and United State of America among others.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Amassoma Seigbein festival is as old as Amassoma community, the festival is held in high esteem just as Oboro the Great, the progenitor of Amassoma is venerated in Ogboin clan and its neighbourhood in the Central Niger Delta. Amassoma Seigbein festival embraces the totality of

African way of life in all its forms and ramifications. The festival is one of the socio-cultural activities of the town. Despite the complex and evolving nature of the festival, the festival has retained its primary importance to the Amassoma Ijo culture.

The Amassoma Seigbein festival serves as a link and identity to the Amassoma people progenitors, forebears and their culture. The following below are recommendations advanced by the study for continuous evolution and development of the festival to a more reputable international festival in Africa and the World. The Amassoma festival needs more encouragement, sponsorship and recognition from indigenes of Bayelsa State (precisely Ogboin clan), Bayelsa state government, non-governmental organizations, Federal government and Federal ministry of culture and information among others, to enable the festival compete with international festivals in Europe, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Bayelsa State Government, Federal Government of Nigeria and Non-Governmental Organization among others should see festival as a symbol of unity, love and peace. The people of Amassoma should not relent in the promotion of their cultural heritage through their festival. The proceedings of the festival should be broadcast live on Nigeria Television Authority, Channels TV and Africa Independent Television among others as a means of promoting and exhibiting the festival to the globe. The proceedings of the festival should be recorded and made available for tourists, sons and daughters of the land among others to purchase as a means of preserving and promoting the Amassoma culture. The cultural events and norms of the Amassoma festival should be strongly upheld by the people in a society of massive westernization encroachment such as Nigeria. More prominent personalities home and abroad should be invited to grace the festival by Amassoma community. Footage and images of the festival should be kept in Bayelsa state museum and national museum of Nigeria.

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