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Egwu Ota : *The Sacred Musical Heritage of Onicha*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Onicha Chief dancing egwu ọta, Ofala Festival

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EGWU OTA

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At the center of the cultural way of life among ndi Igbo, Egwu-Ota is a revered practice that is cherished among Ndi ichie, Obi, and red cap chiefs. This tradition of melody holds an important role in the festivity of various Igbo communities, mostly the elaborate Ite Omatu Eze Onicha and Ofala festival.

During these astonishing festivals, the rhythm of Egwu Ota is mostly felt, egwu ota melody helps in redefining the area of reference and unity. Beautified in the traditional costumes of the Igbo people, Igwe and ndi Ichie enjoys and dance to the exceptional sounds of drums and gongs being produced from the ensemble of Egwu Ota. The movements of ndi ichie and igwe to the rhythm of Egwu Ota are purposeful and lifted by the echoes of harmony that portrays the importance of ancient music of Egwu-Ota.

However, Egwu Ota is not only observed during festivals. It also occupies a crucial position during various initiation ceremonies for new intakes into Ndi-ichie, which is the institution of red cap chiefs.

Every dance—whether by, Ndi-ichie Okwa, Ndi-ichie Okwareze, or the respected Ndi-ichie Ume, are all being guided by the music of Egwu Ota, showing a signal of pleasure and honor to be committed to the legacy of their forefathers.

The reverend Egwu Ota also follows the community in reflection times, such as the burials of individuals who are married. Here, the group of Ndi-ichie pays respect to the dead, moving to the echoes of Egwu Ota in a grace moves that are dignified. Serving as a strict reminder of life cycle and the dignity of life as a result of those who

departed.

Egwu-Ota is more than just a mere sound; it also serves as spirit of the heritage of ndị Onicha, a force that serves as a unified entity meant to cherish, brings the community together and and honor the past. Ndi ichie and Obi holds Egwu-Ota at high esteem, and it's role is widely recognized in promoting harmony and keeping them connect to their roots.

At the sound of the drums of Egwu Ota, the spirits of the community, Obi and Ndi-ichie are being lifted, kept together because of the shared love for this ancient tradition which stands to also be a testament to the enduring legacy on Onicha, a traditional melody that persisted through the generations guiding future and celebrating heritage.

©BETWEEN EGWU-OTA, TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
AND G OVERNANCE IN ASABA, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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