RESTORING OWÉ TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: A TECHNOLOGICAL JOURNEY OF RECLAMATION

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ABSTRACT

This article narrates the paradoxical and ambivalent role of technology in the erosion and restoration of the traditional life of the Owé people of Okun-Yoruba of Kogi State, Nigeria. It starts with background information on the Owé and a description of their traditional knowledge, based on their cultural practices and values. The second section demonstrates how modernisation and the advent of radio and television have eroded their traditional life and the consequent loss of indigenous knowledge among the younger generation. A third section traces how the loss of indigenous knowledge is gradually being restored through modern technology. Using the Owé Forum on Facebook and other activities, the efforts of Owé people of all generations at restoring their cultural values and affirming their identity are highlighted. The article concludes by illustrating how these efforts are leading to the revitalisation, preservation, documentation and intellectualisation of Owé traditional knowledge and culture.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Owé of Okun-Yoruba descent in Nigeria

The Owé are inhabitants of the ancient town of Kabba in the Kabba-Bunu Local Government of Kogi State, Nigeria. According to Olubiyo (2002, 1), Kabba was founded about 3 000 years ago by three hunter brothers – Aro, Reka and Balaja – who hailed from Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba race. This traditional history of the origin of the Owé people, as well as those of the neigbouring Okun people, is being challenged by recent archeological, linguistic and ethnographic evidence that suggests that the people of Okun land (of which Kabba is a central part) inhabited their space since at least 300 BC (Bakinde 2014; Oyelaran 1991). The Kabba people speak a dialect of Yoruba called Owé, so the word 'Owé' designates both the people and their dialect. According to Arokoyo (2013, 3) Kabba is located approximately on latitude 7˚50′N and longitude 6˚4′E, covering about 2 706km^2 (1,045 sq ml) along the A123 highway in the Southwest. According to the 2006 *National Population Census*, it has a population of approximately 150 000. This figure, however, excludes 'Owé' indigenes who live in other towns and cities in different states of Nigeria, and those who reside in different countries outside Nigeria.

Okun Yoruba

Within the larger Yoruba ethnic group, the Owé belong to a subgroup called Okun-Yoruba. This identity is shared with the people of Ijumu, Yagba, Bunu, Ikiri, Oworo and Igoin of Kogi State. According to Samuel (2013, vii), 'they are identified as "OKUN-YORUBA" from their mode of salutation. Okun people are to be seen greeting one another by the age-old salutation of "Okun, Kabo," meaning "warm greetings and welcome".' The five main tribes of Okun-Yoruba are the Owé, Bunu, Gbede, Ijumu and Yagba, although Okun-speaking people are found in states of Nigeria other than in Kogi State. All of these people speak distinct dialects of their own, with different degrees of variation from Owé, but all of the dialects are mutually intelligible. The Okun-Yoruba share a common ancestral history as well as identical traditions and culture.

The Okun are rich in traditional heritage and cultural values. Bakinde (2014, 17) asserts, for example, that some of the profound Yoruba cultures and traditions prevalent today have their origins in the Okun-speaking area. This is based on archeological and ethnographic evidence that the Okun land mass was the centre for the early development and dispersal of most of the linguistic groups in the southern parts of Nigeria (west and east), as well as part of central Nigeria. Cultural differentiation amongst most of the cultural groups in southern Nigeria (including the Yoruba) began in the region at least 7 000 years ago.

In comparison with the larger Yoruba ethnic group, the Okun-Yoruba have unique variations in their language, their social structure (based on an age grade system), their political arrangement (as reflected in chieftaincy titles) and their spirituality in traditional religion (as manifested in the ancestral worship of an *ebora* [deity], Egungun [masquerade], Ogun [the god of iron], Ohoin, Orisa and other cults. However, they share certain common features with other Yoruba people, especially in terms of cultural values and religious world views.

Owé traditional knowledge

Traditional oral societies thrive on communal life and rich cultural values. They are also imbued with indigenous knowledge that spans all areas of life. Before colonisation, Christianity and Western education, these societies operated based on their structured and vast traditions which were passed on from one generation to the next. According to Olubiyo (2002, 35), 'the knowledge about Kabba must be gleaned from myths, legends, folktales, praise songs etc., all of which are rapidly being forgotten by the younger generation'.

History and sociopolitical structure

The indigenous knowledge of the Owé people is intricately intertwined with the history, sociopolitical units and cultural practices of the people. According to oral tales, the progenitors of the Owé are three hunting brothers, Aro, Reka and Balaja. The first place they stopped when they arrived at what is now known as Owé land, is referred to as Katu. The name refers to the hilltop where they unpacked their meal, and it is coined from the utterance of Aro, the oldest, who said on reaching the hill: *Katu eru ka mu akara je* ('Let us unpack our loads to eat bean cake'). Their second settlement is known as Kabba, a shortened form of 'Oke-Aba'. This settlement is so described because the area was full of fork trees (Aba). The third settlement, 'Odolu', from the expression 'Odo-Ilu', is used to describe the lower part of Katu and Kabba, the other two settlements.

At the beginning, the three brothers always returned to the first settlement, Katu, after hunting expeditions. After some time, however, the group separated into three: the first, headed by Aro, the eldest, stayed in Katu. The second brother, Reka, moved to Oke-Aba-Kabba, while Balaja, the youngest, moved to Odo-Ilu. Olubiyo (2002, 3) states that 'the names for their composite settlements (Katu, Kabba and Odolu) became known as Okemeta (the three hills) and together constitute the three lineages (Ogbon) of Owé land'. In the course of time, the three settlements eventually merged as one socio-cultural and political unit with Kabba as the centre. In spite of the merger, the brothers still remained at the head of their respective lineages. As the population increased, each lineage subdivided into clans. The clans were granted quarters (Adugbo) as they expanded. This development culminated in three clans

for the Katu lineage, six clans for the Kabba lineage and four clans for the Odolu lineage.

The clans were patrilineal, each with a family name, land, an *ebora* (the supreme Owé deity), *oriki* (praise names or cognomens), sacred groves and *amun* (sources). The protocol of interaction between the clans was based on seniority. The deference to age was respected at every level of interaction, irrespective of the economic status of individuals.

The clans formed (<and still do?><please check the tenses in the text – in some instances past tense, as if this is no longer the case, in others present, as if the traditions persist>) the nucleus of Owé society, upon which their whole life revolved politically, socially, spiritually and culturally. Obayemi (1975) describes the Owé gerontocratic clan system as closely tied to their sociopolitical organisation. Socially, the clans with common blood ties interacted closely in communal matters relating to births, marriage, chieftaincy titles, burials and the appeasement of common deities. Politically, the clans constituted the fundamental system for age group initiations and chieftaincy title conferments.

The following table shows the clans and the quarters they once occupied.

Table 1: Owé Clans formation

Lineage	Clan	Quarters
KATU	Atipa	Katu
	Abata	Katu
	Isoro	Katu
KABBA	Lemila	Pakun, Okedose, Odo Akete
	Idogba	Aganmo
	Ilajo	Okese
	Odogba	Odo Akete, Egunre, Okekoko
	Ugbo	Okekoko
	Okere	Okegidi
ODOLU	Ogbagi	Mawo, Odolahin
	Ijemu	Ilaro, Okewuko
	Irasi	Okelepa, Leleje, Asala, Odoganmuro
	Teko	Idohan, Odogbo

The age grades and chieftaincy systems were patriarchal and interconnected. There were five distinct groups. The first two groups were open to every Owé male, but the last three were limited to males who could afford graded chieftaincy titles. At the bottom was Olusele, from the full expression *Oluse titi ale*, meaning those who

work till dark. The group was made up of boys from about age six to 19. The group worked on the farm till dusk, and as a rule their parents or guardians had to provide them with food.

The second age grade was called Omeko, which the Olusele graduated into at puberty, taking care of themselves without support from their parents or guardians. They were given full-size hoes (*ooggo*) to start their own farms and were not expected to work in their fathers' farms for the whole day. They could also opt to trade instead of farming. Each clan had its own Omeko group, headed in order of seniority. Most Owé males ended up in this age group as the next three grades involved chieftaincy title conferment. The Olusele and Omeko are called *gbarufu moso*, i.e., untitled men.

The third, fourth and fifth graded age groups fell under the chieftaincy system. Members held titled names and were referred to as *ojoye* (title holders). Admission into these groups involved financial commitment, societal obligations and complex rituals. The first group at chieftaincy level, the third age grade, was known as Igemo. Members of this group held a single title and were known as one-titled chiefs. The fourth grade was Orota, whose members were double title holders. Their status was superior to that of the single title holders, but the ceremonies conferring titles on both groups are similar. The fifth and last age group, Ololu, constitutes the highest graded age group, and was made up of three titled chiefs: Obaro, Obadofin and Obajemu. They are chosen by the Igemo and Orota to hold the highest traditional titles in the land after consultation with the Ifa oracle. At the apex of this triumvirate of Owé traditional administration was the Obaro who, according to Olubiyo (2002, 60), is 'first among equals'. He is followed by the Obadofin, the second in command and Obajemu, the third in command. The double and single-titled chiefs are also hierarchically placed in the ancient power structure of Owé land, based on their functions and roles.

Traditional religion

The spiritual life of the Owé is intricately tied to their belief in a deity referred to as *ebora*. This deity is their connection to the supreme god, referred to as Eleda (the creator), Olorun (the owner of the heavens), Alase (the one who commands) or Eledumare (the almighty being). They believe in a supreme being considered too extraordinary to be seen or consulted directly. As with their sociopolitical structures, their spiritual lives revolve around the clan system. Every clan has its principal *ebora* as well as other smaller ones. In addition, each of the three lineages – Katu, Kabba and Odolu – has *ebora*s. According to Iyekolo (2006, 34), the Owé were polytheists before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. In Owéland, *ebora* is perceived as an invisible spirit with no personal attributes or gender specification. Owé *ebora*s are deified and worshipped as protectors and guardian angels. Olubiyo (2002, 69) puts

the number of Owé *ebora*s as at least 201. In olden days, mass initiation rites into the cult of *ebora* were perfomed every 40 years for all Owé male children.

The religious worship of *ebora*s is linked with Ifá (a system of religious divination) as well as many festivals and rites, of which the annual Oka or Oro Akara is the most important. It involves traditional rituals which exclude women and non-initiates. Other annual festivals are Oro Emidin (the new yam festival) and Abo, the worship of masquerades. The custodians of this festival are the Omodo, who constitute a 14th Owé. The Owé believe that the masquerades are incarnations of their parents and ancestors, so the festival is seen as a time to receive blessings.

Traditional education

Apart from the sociopolitical and spiritual aspects discussed here, Owé traditional knowledge, cultural values and world views are passed on through oral indigenous education methods. One method is communal socialisation, which takes place in the evenings under moonlight in different quarters of the town. This involves children gathering around the elders, grandparents, uncles and aunties, to listen to Owé folktales and folklore. This opens up a world of knowledge for children and young adults. Apart from learning cultural norms and interpersonal skills, the stories teach traditional values such as courage, endurance, equity, greed, grief in bereavement, integrity, justice, fairness, love, charity, leadership, poverty, unity, regret, failure, self-control, wisdom, faith, foolishness, forgiveness, fate and destiny, gratitude, friendship, strength and self-appreciation, to mention but a few (Samuel 2014, xxi–xxii). In addition, children are exposed to the nuances of their language through proverbs, riddles, idioms, taboos, wise sayings and figures of speech. Their vocabulary is enriched as they learn the names of animals, birds, objects and places. All of this helps them to develop critical thinking and good character, so that they become socially, politically and spiritually aware and responsible.

Teaching also occurs through observation. According to Paul (2014, 45), this method is gender defined: while boys follow their fathers to the farms to work or to the bush to hunt, girls stay at home with their mothers to perform domestic chores such as cooking, fetching water, caring for siblings and washing clothes. On the farms and in the bush, boys observe the patterns of their fathers' work and learn through participation. In the process they are taught how, for example, to tell the time and the seasons of the year through natural phenomena such as the position of the sun, the pattern of clouds or the appearance of trees. Girls learn child-rearing and domestic work such as cooking and cleaning. They still, however, go to the farms with their parents during the planting and harvesting seasons.

A third method of transmitting traditional knowledge is the apprenticeship system, where professional and specialised skills are learnt. A good example is when young adults learn about herbal medicines from established traditional herbalists, or

when women learn to weave cloth and make pottery. The skill of palm wine tapping is learnt through this system. Other means of learning include asking questions out of curiosity, for example, or finding out the health benefits of food items and soups used for particular situations and occasions, participation in activities such as traditional games and onomastic practices which serve to index beliefs, philosophical world views and cultural values.

EFFECTS OF MODERNISATION ON OWÉ TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The first disruption to the traditional life of Owé was during the Nupe incursion of 1840 – an invasion which lasted for 55 years. During this period the daily lives of the people as well as their sociopolitical structures and spiritual activities were shaken to their very roots. The Nupe began to rule the people and tried to impose their own ways of life on them. Some Owé went into exile as a result of the harsh conditions imposed on them. The Nupe were eventually rooted out with the coming of the British in 1895. However, the arrival of the missionaries in 1900 and the introduction of Western education in the 1930s caused some tension between the newly converted Christians and the traditional authorities. An example was the disruption of the age grade system. The length of time for staying as Olusele was cut short, from the traditional ages of 6–19 to 6–16, as young mission boys sought the economic advantages of opportunities for paid work and trade outside Owé land. This led to a loss of service on farms. Conversions to Christianity also subverted the mass intiation rites of the *ebora* cult; in 1956 all Owé Christians demonstrated for three months against *ebora* initiation.

As more and more people became educated and enlightened, they formed sociocultural associations to advocate for community development. Writing about the positive impact of Western education on the Okun-Yoruba, Paul (2014, 52) states:

> It bred new and vibrant Okun-Yoruba educated elites who became instrumental to the development process of Okun-Yorubaland. They became spokespersons for their communities through forming different socio-cultural associations and pressure group for development projects.

In Kabba, such efforts brought electricity to the region in 1978. This period coincided with huge increases in civil servants' salaries (from the oil surplus), making it possible for many households to buy radios and televisions. The novelty brought a radical change to the sociocultural lives of the people, diverting attention from traditional ways of interacting and socialising. The moonlight tales and stories became increasingly unattractive and were displaced by tales on radio and television. To compound the situation, most educated people left town for civil service employment in the cities, thus leaving the elders unsupported. The rich traditional

culture of the people inevitably started being eroded. This manifested itself in the eventual extinction of some traditional practices surrounding moonlight tales and the affinity created with uncles, aunties and grandparents who served as custodians of traditional knowledge. What was left was further compromised by the rapid spread of Christianity. In addition, as younger generations attained higher levels of Western education they became increasingly alienated from their indigenous practices and cultural values.

Effects of advanced technology, post radio and television

The negative impact of advances in technology, Christianity and education on the traditional lives of the people continued unabated. The worsening political and economic situation in Nigeria in the 1980s saw many Owé sons and daughters leaving for greener pastures elsewhere in Nigeria and abroad. The migration resulted in some Owé elites not teaching their children their mother tongue, let alone details of the intricate sociopolitical structures and traditional religion, or the cultural values and customs embedded in them. The essential ingredients of traditional knowledge in the indigenous language were lost, stylistic variations in vocabulary dwindled, and words became forgotten or extinct. This mostly affected those outside of Kabba (and indeed Nigeria), while younger generations left back at home opted for Standard Yoruba and English as a sign of their modernisation. Paul (ibid, 53) laments the negative impact as follows:

> Western education has made Okun-Yoruba to lose most of its socio-cultural values. In onomastics for example, Okun-Yoruba names are unique as they portray historical backgrounds and are philosophical in nature. Eating habits have been affected as indigenous eating culture is almost eroded in the face of modernism. Local foods such as Augbu, Babatu, Akara Eka, Ori, Popolo have been displaced for English food. Agricultural practices have been affected by migration to cities leaving agriculture in the hands of the aged people who are gradually dying. Beautiful Okun-Yoruba festivals such as Abo, Ogun, some of which attracted people from all works of life annually have been abandoned.

But the Okun-Yoruba are not the only people who have suffered the impact of modernisation. All over Africa traditional communities are affected. Rwodzi (2014, 63) reveals that

> t]he prevalence of electronic media, cell phone network availability and globalization shift people's attention and attitude away from tradition and folklore. Church gatherings, modernization and improved communication networks remove the attention of society from traditional games such as riddling.

In recent years technological advances have become even radically sophisticated, fuelled by the use of cell phones, the internet and social networking sites. The global effects have been phenomenal, especially in information and communication

technologies (ICTs) and human communication. This has revolutionalised every aspect of human endeavour and has brought about profound political, economic, educational, social and religious change. It has also further threatened whatever is left of communal activity and changed the mode of contact and interaction among people. Adesanmi (2011, 101–102) describes the loss of communal activities and contact in Africa to people having a virtual online existence, and points to the fact that 'we all now live in the civilization of impersonal propinquity that defines the MAC (Mutually Assured Connectivity) age'.

Despite these negative observations, the global effect of modern technology has also, paradoxically, awakened people to the need to preserve their cultural identity, using the same technological media that have contributed so much to its endangerment (and, in some instances, extinction). Among the Owé, the cell phone provided opportunities, especially for communities without landline telephones, to stay in touch with relatives, friends and acquaintances all over the world. This brought back the tendency and sometimes the need to speak in Owé, especially to parents and relatives for whom this is their only language. Social network sites (SNS) such as MySpace, Twitter, Hi5 and Facebook, as well as designated web pages, have also been exploited to revitalise, restore, reclaim, document and preserve minority and endangered languages (Al-Saleem 2011; Arobba, McGrath, Futrelle and Craig 2010; Campbell and Huck 2013; Roy 2012; Sallabank 2010). SNSes have also promoted and provided a platform for creative and innovative thinking. Modern technology has been exploited, for example, to enact many noble activities in the field of economics, commerce, shopping, online education, politics and cultural studies. One such innovation is Owé Forum on Facebook.

RECLAIMING OWÉ TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH FACEBOOK

The Owé Forum on Facebook was initiated by an Owé lady, Miss Modupe Ajibade, now Mrs. Modupe Babajide Dare, in July 2011. It is a platform for Owé indigenes to promote their culture and contribute to the development of their town culturally, politically, socially and economically, as a virtual community. It plays a unifying role in bringing Owé people on Facebook into contact, irrespective of where they are in the world. The forum is managed by a group of active individuals who oversee the smooth running of the activities, while playing a moderating role in all issues. The forum had 8 423 members as of July 31, 2015.

At its inception, Deola Tunji Strajet JP started posting proverbs. This elicited positive responses, attracted more members and brought about the idea of creating an episode named Owé Tanno (Owe of Old). The episode was introduced by Mike Ibitomuhi on behalf of the administrator of the forum on January 31, 2013. Its first episode, launched on February 7, including the following extract:

> This program is to serve as a sort of generational bridge, give us a better perspective of our culture, our values etc. The programme will be interactive as much as possible, questions and contribution will be welcome from all. The best contribution/question for each episode shall be rewarded with recharge card ranging from N400–N750. The adjudged best contribution/question will be announced the very last Wednesday (day) preceding the next episode. Watch out for this program. I have no doubts, there will be a lot to be reminded of especially the older folks and so much to learn by the younger generation. More importantly, it is only your active participation that can make it a success. Folks, let's go, together we can do it better.

There have been 19 episodes since it was first launched.

Table 2: Owé Tanno Episodes

Episodes	**Title**
1	The three hunters
2	Aguramola (annual traditional festival for teenage boys)
3	Transportation industry, way back
4	What's in a name?
5	The *igo* game (popular among boys)
6	Kabba delicacies
7	Gadgets back in the days
8	Old schoolmates
9	*Oro amuluwo* (festival of clapping)
10	Cultural/traditional plays
11	Mountains/rocks in Oweland
12	Rivers in Oweland
13	Owé cultural festivals
14	Traditional marriage in Owe/Kabba land
15	*Erikọ aja* (dogs' name).
16	*Ogun ebu* (*ogebu*) abusive war.
17	superstition
18	Farming
19	*Itumo eriko ilu gha* (The meaning of the name of our town)

The following is an example:

> OWE TANỌ EPISODE 9: Today's episode of Owé Tanọ is on Oro Amuluwọ. Oro Ikihọ popularly known as Oro Amuluwọ is one of the main festivals that are annually

observed in Oweland. The festival is called Amuluwọ because it involves clapping of hands when the festival songs are being sung. It is preceded by Agura Mọla (treated in one of our earlier episodes) which takes place the night leading to the festival. The festival has three unique features – ORO FIFẸ (singing of the festival song), beating of OGIDIGBO (wooden drum) and IGHE FIFỌN (flutes made from special plants that grow around river). While the beating of Ogidigbo normally lasted for three days the other two (Oro fifẹ and Ighe Fifọn) lasted for 3 months. As a matter of fact the singing of the festival songs after the expiration date is regarded as a taboo in Oweland – with exception of the ILEMULAS. Some of the festival songs go thus:

Ubi re emẹ ja rirọ bọbi nọni se.

Ogbolu re ogbolu sọ un-ẹwẹlẹ.

Ọnọ ni.

Tell us your experiences about this Festival.

Question for this episode: ORO-ẸYẸ is one of the festivals celebrated in Oweland, what is the popular name?

Apart from Owé Tano, there have been other efforts to restore Owé traditional knowledge through postings and activities. For example, there have been postings on Owé songs, greetings, place names, nicknames, advertising modes, oral tales and discussion on other settlements around Kabba. Three other activities – Owé Wise Sayings and Riddles, Owé Dialect Day and Kabba Day – have contributed to the reclamation of indigenous knowledge. The first of these activities involved postings by members of the forum which always start with *Owe ghoin hi* ('the Owé people will say'), and the riddles are posted for people to find answers to. Examples of posted sayings include:

Owe ghoin hi; biba ko ba, yati ba jẹ. ..... 'The Owé will say: it is about to but it is not yet spoilt' meaning that there is still a remedy to the bad thing that is about to happen or the bad situation can still be salvaged;

Owe ghọin hi ẹmọ ọni lojọ ahi oru 'Could someone help to interpret it in English language for the benefit of all?'

The second example can be literally interpreted as: 'You cannot say a person you are seeing for the first time is lean', meaning 'Don't judge by appearances.'

Examples of riddles are:

Alọ oo-Alọ (A formulaic expression for introducing riddles)

1. Ẹyẹ binti fo igi igba? (What very tiny bird flies above two hundred trees?)

2. Ọpa tirin kọn ilẹ akọn orun? (A thin stick which touches the earth and heaven?)

When they are posted, members provide answers, and if the answers are not correct, others weigh in to explain. For the two examples above, the answers are:

1. *Oju*. 'Eye'

2. *Ojo*. 'Rain'

Owé Dialect Day is an activity that promotes the Owé language. This happens every Thursday on the forum. Every member is encouraged to write their posting in Owé. In addition, a major posting features either Owé words that are endangered or out of use, indigenous names of objects, or any other aspect of Owé tradition that has been forgotten. The following is an example of a posting by Bayo Adesuwa Owoleke on June 18, 2015:

> OWE DIALECT DAY.
>
> *Okun lawọ ba gha tọnọ hi ọrọ ghọin* ('Who can help us expatiate these words please').
>
> *1. Erikisi.*
>
> *2. Arinhi.*
>
> *3. Ọdẹjẹ.*
>
> 4. Akẹkẹ.

The posting elicited the following initial responses:

> Ben Kabba Owoleke 1. Meddlesome 2. Instigate 3. Lobby 4. Burdensome. I hope I tried @ Owoleke Bayo Adesuwa. These are original Owé words.
>
> 18 June at 08:10 · Like · 3
>
> Owoleke Bayo Adesuwa Nice attempt Sir@Ben Kabba Owoleke.
>
> 18 June at 08:56 · Like
>
> Ramsey Maiye I think Akeke should be sycophant.
>
> 18 June at 09:42 · Like · 3
>
> Engr Raph-ben Enioloruda Odeje = psycophant
>
> 18 June at 11:15 · Like · 1
>
> Tunji Wilson-cole Hnnmm! Owé is difficult o....
>
> 18 June at 12:45 · Like · 1
>
> Ben Kabba Owoleke Owé language is not difficult o just that we are beginning to lose the original words @ Tunji Wilson-cole.
>
> 18 June at 13:55 · Like · 1

The last activity, Kabba Day, is an annual gathering of all Owé people in November or December of every year in celebration of their traditions and culture. It is a funfair, with everyone wearing the same uniform. Activities include the re-enactment of forgotten traditions and the cooking of traditional food.

In addition to the activities on Facebook, there have been three other technology-based developments: 1) the production of the first film in Owé language, titled *OJE-SE* ('It is possible'), by Shola Fashagba, a member of the forum; 2) the debut of a

music album, partly in Owé language and Yoruba, titled *Omo Owé ni mi* ('I am a child of Owéland') by an upcoming female musician Omonijon Jaja; 3) the design and launch of Owé Website by Olorunlogbon Ayo Samuel in 2013. The site aims to serve as a digital archive for Owé Forum activities and for Owé history.

On the forum Obatimehin Joseph acknowledged the role of technology in advancing the Owé language, tradition and culture:

> Ami, am so excited dat while internet seems 2 b killin oda cultures and traditions, d prudents Owé citizens are usin d same internet 2 take our culture 2 d next levels, l wuld love 2 see more of dis, and l say kudos 2 u all. Owé agbe yha Ooo.

The activities highlighted above are bold and creative efforts to reclaim, preserve and document the essential ingredients of Owé language and traditional knowledge. There has been a huge change in the attitude of Owé people towards their language and culture. For example, there is now the willingness by Owé elites to teach their offspring their mother tongue. In addition, there is a heightened awareness of the danger of losing their identity if the language is not preserved. The following postings are examples of positive changes in attitude:

> Rapheal Adebayo I think it's big shame for u having a child that can not speak his or dialect. I know an Owé man who is a professor name witheld all his children speak Owé fluently to fact that they can make a proverbial statement. thanks Owé is great
> February 22 at 5:37am via mobile

> Ben Kabba Owoleke We must preserve our language, before we lose our identity. I am equally guilty, only my first son speaks Owé fluently. Imagine. I have started operation speak Owé in my house now.

The will to achieve this is infectious and continuing among Owé people. There is also an awareness to intellectualise Owé indigenous knowledge, as seen in recent publications by Samuel (2013) and Arokoyo (2013), as well as the Omookun Journal (2014).

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the status of Owé traditional knowledge, in the face of technology, is both ambivalent and paradoxical. Even though the natural essence of traditional life and cultural values cannot be completely recaptured through technology and a virtual presence online, essential features are being reclaimed, especially on social networks. What is important and significant is that Owé traditional values, customs and history are being documented. In the process, Owé indigenes at home, within Nigeria and in the diaspora, have become more culturally aware that they need to promote and maintain their unique and rich culture and identity. Reclamation efforts will help younger Owé generations to connect in meaningful ways with their parents'

and grandparents' world. On the whole, part of what has been lost through technology is now being restored through the same medium. This is a healthy compromise that other ethnic communities should emulate for the prosperity of their language, culture and heritage.

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