

OKPE IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

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**By
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AT THE

**3RD ANNUAL CONVENTION
OF THE
OKPE UNION OF NORTH AMERICA**

HELD AT

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AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 03, 2007**

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Umogu, Umogu, Umogu.

Your Royal Majesty, Orhue I, the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom

Fellow Okpe

Introduction

This year's convention of the Okpe Union of North America is a unique event with strong symbolism. For the first time, since his ascension to the Okpe Throne on July 29, 2006, HRM Orhue I, is attending a convention of an Okpe Union. That the convention is taking place in North America, an Ocean away from Okpe Kingdom, makes this convention a special one in the annals of Okpe History. Secondly, this convention also provides us an opportunity to celebrate the 1st Anniversary of the Coronation of HRM Orhue I as the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom. On behalf of the Executive Committee and the entire membership of the Okpe Union of North America, I thank the Orodje for gracing this 3rd Annual Convention with his presence. Umogu, we are profoundly grateful that you accepted our invitation to be with us here in College Park, Maryland, USA, on this august occasion. Umogu, wu ne-sutor.

I welcome all of you to this 3rd Convention of the Okpe Union of North America. I will be very brief in my presentation. The Keynote Address you have come to listen to is that of HRM Orhue I., Orodje of Okpe Kingdom. I will not pre-empt the Orodje.

The theme of this Convention is OKPE UNITY. There is no greater symbol of Okpe Unity than the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom, whose presence here today has transformed this convention into the Orodje's Palace. Thus, today in North America, the centre of Okpe Kingdom is College Park, Maryland, USA. This is where all Okpe in North America should be. We commend those of you who have traveled from far and near to meet with the Orodje on this occasion.

Permit me to categorize the Orodje in Okpe History. We have had four Orodjes since the establishment of the Okpe Kingdom by the four princely brothers, Orhue, Orhoro, Evbreke, and Esezi in the 17th century. The names of the four brothers became the names of the Four Ruling Houses in Okpe Kingdom. (See <http://www.okpenation.org/>) Though he was the youngest of the brothers, Esezi was crowned the first Orodje of Okpe Kingdom. Thus he became the **Founding** Orodje of the Okpe Kingdom. After his passing away in the mid 17th century, it was not until 1945 that we had the second Orodje, who also came from the Esezi Ruling House and assumed the name Esezi II, whose reign restored the Okpe Monarchy. I refer to the reign of HRM Esezi II as the **Restoration** of the Okpe Kingdom. When HRM Esezi II joined his ancestors in 1962, HRM Orhoro I was crowned Orodje of Okpe Kingdom in 1972. I refer to the reign of HRM Orhoro I as the **Stabilization** of the Okpe Kingdom. Following the passing away of HRM Orhoro I in early 2004, HRM Orhue I was crowned Orodje of Okpe Kingdom on July 29, 2006. The coronation of HRM Orhue I coincided with the reawakening of Okpe consciousness in several circles of the Okpe Kingdom. I refer to the reign of HRM Orhue I as the **Renaissance** of Okpe Kingdom. I will provide detailed analysis of the above

periodizations in a subsequent paper. But one key point to note in the above is the interregnum between the passing of an Orodje and the coronation of his successor. It may be necessary for the Udogun Okpe to find a way of resolving this issue and to reduce the interregnum.

Okpe in Nigeria

Okpe is one of the 250 ethnic nationalities that comprise the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Okpe is the most populous ethnic nationality in Delta State. Besides the Benin Kingdom, Historical records recognise the Okpe Kingdom as the “best politically organised ethnic nationality for governance within its immediate geo-political area, second only to the Benin Kingdom.”¹

Despite these qualities we observe the absence of a credible Okpe voice in Delta State and in Nigeria. If the voices of smaller ethnic nationalities, for example, the Isoko and the Itsekiri, are heard loud and clear in Delta State and in Nigeria, what are the factors mitigating against the Okpe? Other ethnic nationalities have their unions/organizations that articulate their respective positions in state and federal politics. But which union or organization speaks for the Okpe in Delta State and in Nigeria? These are some of the critical questions that Okpe world-wide is summoned to grapple with.

The Okpe Union of North America is separated by the Atlantic Ocean from the shores of Okpe Kingdom and Nigeria. While we have been doing our best to contribute to the enhancement of Okpe in Nigeria, it is obvious that the Okpe Union in Nigeria that was founded in 1930 has the direct jurisdiction to articulate Okpe position in Delta State and in Nigeria.

Whether we like it or not, Nigerian politics is defined by ethnicity. And the Okpe must be prepared to carve a place for themselves in the socio-economic and political arenas in Delta State and in Nigeria. To achieve this noble objective, it is imperative that we remain united and focused on an Okpe Agenda, an Agenda that defines the strategic directions of Okpe in Delta State and in Nigeria. Towards this end, we call on the Okpe Union of Nigeria to assume the leadership in fostering this unity. We also call on all Okpe, especially those elected to represent Okpe interests in the various legislative houses in Nigeria, to join forces with the Okpe Union of Nigeria in this enterprise. Above all, our unity as a people must be anchored on our respect for the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom and Udogun Okpe. We must be prepared to render selfless services in the interest of the Okpe Kingdom.

As I promised to be brief in my presentation, I will have to stop here. But before I do that, I would like to seize this opportunity to invite all Okpe in North America to join the Okpe Union of North America, and to render their selfless services for the betterment of the Okpe Kingdom.

¹ See CORONATION AND PRESENTATION OF STAFF OF OFFICE, HIS ROYAL MAJESTY MAJ.GEN. FELIX A. MUJAKPERUO (RTD), CFR, ORHUE I, ORODJE OF OKPE KINGDOM, Okpe Palace, Orokpe, Delta State, Nigeria, Saturday, 21st October, 2006, p. 22.

Long live the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom.
God bless the Okpe Kingdom.
Umogu, wu ne-sutor.