

## INTRODUCTION

The 2019 issue of *Umewāen: Journal of Benin and Edo Studies* features four articles and one book review. The first article by Josephine Abbe and Jean Borgatti is a historical examination of the Ekasa ritual observed in association with the coronation of Oba Ewuare II in Benin City in 2016. Its focus is on its images, music, dance, venues of performance, and use of space as well as costume. Its intent is to provide the most detailed consideration of the ritual to date and to determine its nature as ritual performance, its relevance to Benin coronation procedures, and its significance to Benin society. It is also meant to add to the literature on African dance.

The second article, “Iron mixed with Clay: Benin in Urhobo folktales” by Henry Unuajohwofia and Kennedy Edegbe, investigates three ways in which Benin influence on the Urhobo people is re-imagined in Urhobo oral narratives. Using cultural studies methods, the article employs two Urhobo stories to establish that the influence of Benin on the people of the fringe states is perceived both realistically and imaginatively. The storyteller also reminds the audience that though the world of the Oba and Benin are regarded as overtly powerful (image of iron), God Almighty is still the final arbiter in the affairs of the kingdom (the clay factor).

Stanley Enegbuma and Albert Odigie’s article “Okpekpe (North Ibie) resistance to Nupe-Fulani Ghazi among the Etsako (Northern Edo) in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” which follows, documents the resistance of Okpekpe clan of North Ibie group in Northern Edo area to Nupe-Fulani Ghazi raids. It shows their resistance as the longest of any Northern Edo people, and the only one that did not end in defeat on the battle field. It looks at the factors that aided their invisibility in battle and why they surrendered to negotiation of *Amana* or making tribute payments to the Nupe-Fulani raiders after a long siege.

The last article is a short piece entitled “Edo Alphabet Ignorance” by Gabriel Obaze. It draws attention to shortcomings of the old pre-1974 orthography and ignorance of the changes that were introduced with the new Edo Orthography of 1974. It shows how writers have continued to use the diagraphs of the old orthography and neglected the tone markers of the new one.

The only book review by Kennedy Edegbe addresses two recent books, O. Osemwegie-Ero and S. Owie's *The Benin Monarchy and Ogiamien Connection: The Historical Facts* (2016) and David Edebiri's *Ogiamien and the Illusion of Kingship* (2017).

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