

PROJECTING EDO CULTURE IN DIASPORA.

The above assertion has been in the mind of a large majority of Edo in Diaspora for a long time and many have discussed it on numerous occasions. Edo culture is unique and a source of pride to many and many more are putting up props to prevent it sliding even amongst Edo in Diaspora. As Albert Schweitzer said, 'I am proud of my colour for any who isn't proud of his/her colour is not fit to live' The extension of this is the popular saying that 'our culture is our lives, we should not kill it' rather we should sustain it.

Gone are the days when our people will only wear suits in a traditional Edo gathering when buba and shokoto will do; or better still agbada, buba and shokoto adorned with coral beads to the amazements of the non-Blacks on lookers. What is important is being happy and comfortable with your traditional Edo wear.

The Indians in the United Kingdom for example have now made curry and rice a national menu from the traditional fish and chips in the UK. Rice in the UK many years ago used to be the meal for those regarded as not 'posh'; not any more as it is regularly served in most important gatherings considering the new phrase 'multi culturalism'

It is for being a true Edo man that I serve Edo traditional cuisine of 'ema and ogbonlor or egusi soup' and the traditional pepper soup as the after to my guests. This I do to influence our people to keep being Edo, acting Edo and eating Edo meals as a delicacy in Diaspora. Children are taught to greet in Edo traditional manner and show respect to senior as done in our culture before rushing off to play their games..

My joy was boundless when in Kassel Germany on invitation as President of **Edo Global Organization** by Edo Community of Nigeria in Kassel treated the guests to Edo music and dancing in a very cordial atmosphere with a balanced audience of about 50% Blacks and 50 % Whites. Our brothers in Germany have been well accepted into the German society and they (Germans) are very supportive of what our brothers are doing, raising funds for a project in Benin City. Their outfit on that day and the complementary Edo music supplied by an Edo live band and the served Edo cuisine added glamour to the event and made all of us Edo to feel at home in far away Kessel.

In Vienna, Austria a few weeks later, we were treated to a true Edo carnival, an occasion organised by Edo Community of Nigeria in Vienna Austria. At the airport to pick me up to the event were two true sons of Edo in white buba and shokoto with the traditional **sword and the scimitar embroidery on their outfit**. Both of them caused a stir as they walked in my direction. There was further amusement when onlookers observed the traditional embrace between Edo brothers and 'hand pumping' in the airport foyer. On arrival at

the venue of the 'cultural nite' to my utmost delight all the male Edo were in the same attire. The women were not left out as they came out in befitting traditional wears as well.

After the thought provoking speeches from the chairman Prof Iro Eweka, my humble self and the Nigerian Ambassador to Austria we got a pleasant surprise from '**Edo Ugho Dancers**' in their fascinating attire of marooned 'igbe gbe' and a top made of coral beads complete with white handkerchiefs stepping out gracefully into the dance floor. They sang and danced to the delight of everybody both Blacks and White. Melodious songs came one after another and even when they were done with this beautiful rendition of Edo songs and ugho dance, the audience shouted for more but the organisers of the programme had to move on. Thanks also to drummers who also were in traditional outfit and for a very good performance.

Edo culture is not just our mode of dressing, singing, dancing and what we eat, it includes our good neighbourliness, friendship, cordiality, generosity and receptivity of all and sundry. It also include our celebrations of birth and death, our spoken language and our numerous festivals including the Igue festival at the end of every year. Every Edo person at home and in Diaspora should take joy in speaking Edo language and teaching it to their children or we shall be lost as a unique cultural group in the Nigerian Nation. Teaching Edo language to our children does not interfere with their grasp of a second language or even a third language. The rate at which children process information can only be imagined so they should be encouraged to speak Edo language at home always.

I would like to thank my Edo brothers Mr Paul Ekhaguosa in Germany and Mr Felix Okoro in Austria for showing good leadership in putting up these Edo cultural activities. In not wanting to be left out, Edo in London will be staging a second 'show for Akaba man on the 27th of August after an initial successful outing earlier in the month. Thanks to 'Chief' Ogbomo of London for putting these events together. Although Akaba man is a musician and the show may arguably be described as not being cultural, he will sing in Edo language, dance in Edo tradition and ultimately project Edo culture so he should be encouraged and supported.

When next you have an Edo outing, think Edo, speak Edo, act Edo, dress as an Edo and help prop up our customs and tradition. Thank you.

Oba ghator Okpere! Ise

SEO OGBONMWAN.
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