Documenting Palm-Wine Tapping (Ònyi Nyigwò) Tradition in Ikwere

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Abstract

This study described and documented palm-wine tapping activities in Ìkwere. Palm-wine tapping is an aspect of Ìkwere culture that is faced with the danger of extinction as a result of a shift in occupation. The Ìkwere people were predominantly farmers. In addition, some of them engaged in wine-tapping, fishing, hunting or trapping. However, the advent of Western Education and consequently white-collar jobs have caused the majority of the people to abandon their traditional occupation, particularly palm-wine tapping. This in turn has resulted to a dearth in the use of the lexical items associated with palm-wine tapping. It is the belief of this paper that such items will certainly become extinct if nothing is done to salvage the situation. Therefore, this study described and documented the intricacies of palm-wine tapping in Ìkwere. The data were elicited through direct interview with six competent native

speakers of Ìkwere. The rich cultural heritage of wine tapping in the language was documented with the aid of an electronic recording device alongside writing materials. The data used for the analyses were drawn from Alùụ and Ọmuànwà, the dialects of the authors. Findings showed that Alùụ and Ọmuanwa recorded both similar and different linguistic items associated with the palm-wine tapping activities in the language. The alternations affected the phonological, morphological and lexical features of the language, with phonological ranking the highest. While lexical alternations may result from loan words, the paper further noted that some of the alternations are caused by the descriptive perspective of the action or state of affair to which the speakers are interested in the dialects. It also observed that the practice of indigenous palm-wine tapping is no longer in operation in Alùụ, whereas in Ọmuanwa, the only known tapper at the period of data collection was bedridden. It is believed that this work may be relevant for archival purposes as this aspect of Ikwere language and culture will be preserved in the event of extinction.

Key Words: Ìkwere, Palm-wine Tapping, Palm-Wine, Tapper, Tapping Equipment, Measuring Cans.

1. Introduction

In recent time there has been a renewed and focused interest in documentation as a means of reviving, especially, the endangered minority languages. To assert this campaign, "Documentation and Revitalization" made the nucleus of the theme of Jos Clan 2016. To state how recent this research endeavour in Language Documentation is, Woodbury (2003, p. 35) states: "in the last fifteen years, we have seen the emergence of a branch of linguistics which has come to be called Documentary Linguistics. It is concerned with the making and keeping of records of world's languages and their pattern of use." To make it clearer, documentation involves

methodologies in data collection through recording of a wide range of linguistic phenomena in genuine communi cative situation using high quality audio and video recording devices to ensure the best possible results are achieved (Obikudo 2013:28).

In an attempt to clarify the difference between language description and language documentation, Himmelmann (1998, p. 174) says "a language description aims at the record of a language, with 'language' being understood as a system of abstract elements, constructions, and rules which constitute the invariant underlying structure of utterances observable in a speech community. Language documentation, on the other hand aims at the record of the linguistic practices and tradition of a speech community." It could be deduced from Himmelmann's definition that descriptive linguistics comprises the sum total of the communicative aspects of language which constitute the content of a planned linguistic curriculum teachable in formal institutions, while documentary linguistics is concerned with the unique cultural lifestyle of a speech community which are usually handed down through generations. These linguistic activities/practices of a people are mainly unstructured and rather acquired by keen observation. As a result, a linguist may achieve success in a descriptive work by working with any 'informant' who is a native speaker, but documentation requires not just a native speaker, but a custodian, a specialist, a participant, or a practitioner of the aspect of the language being documented. Certainly this enterprise is not without purpose. Himmelmann (1998, p. 166) in that regard states thus: "the aim of language documentation is to provide a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a giving speech community." Precisely, the essence of documentation is to endeavour to 'arrest' the pattern of use of a targeted natural language and its cultural practices for the benefit of posterity. Consequently, the major concern of documenting *Ònyinyi ngwọ* 'raffia palm tapping' in Ikwere tradition amidst other facts is to document and preserve the traditional scientific rigours deployed in tapping raffia palm in line with the Ikwere traditional culture.

Ònyinyi ngwò in direct translation refers to the "tapping of raffia palm" in Ikwere. As a gerundive construction, it is formed by combining *ò-nyi* an infinitive construction (comprising *o-* an agentive prefix, and *nyi*, a verb root) to the verb root *nyi* 'tap' and the noun *ngwọ̀* 'raffia palm'. The resulting concatenation *ò-nyi-nyi ngwọ̀* could be used to refer to 'the act of raffia palm tapping'. As a secondary occupation among the Ikwere people, raffia palm tapping is one dignifying occupation that is exclusively practiced by the male folks. It requires skilful climbing and determination to succeed in. The liquor tapped from it, *manya ngwọ̀*; a combination of 'wine' and 'raffia palm' is the most valued drink across Ikwere land. Amidst its economic benefit, palm wine has some religious and socio-cultural values (Ikegwu 2014). In addition, it also meets some dietary and medicinal needs of the Ikwere people.

Raffia palm tapping is an integral aspect of the culture of the Ikwere people. Other materials extractible from the palm constitute approximately 70% building materials used in making 'thatched houses' *ọrò ọ̀knam̄ọ̀ro aknam*.

Data for this study is presented according to the Standard Orthographic rules of Ikwere. Hence:

a. All high tones are left unmarked, while down stepped-high tones are marked with a macron [¯] and low tones with a grave accent [`].
b. All initial vowels of words with non-expanded vowels or [- ATR] are marked with a sub-dot.
c. Vowel nasalization is represented by inserting the letter 'n' between the consonant and vowel of the affected syllable.

2. The Ikwere People and Language

The Ikwere people are found in Rivers state in the South-South zone of Nigeria. They also refer to themselves as the **Ìwhnùruòhnà people stating that** "Ikwere is a nickname given to the Iwhnuruohna people by the Igbo" (Amadi, 1993, p. 42). Some ardent crusaders of Ikwere ancestral ties

with the ancient Bini Kingdom have however claimed that **Ìwhnùruọ̀hnà** is actually a corruption of **Ighoroha** (Nyegonum 2016), the name of the Bini progenitor of the Ikwere tribe. In spite of these claims however, it is significant to note that an Ikwere man prefers to be addressed as **nye Ìwhnùruọ̀hnà** meaning 'a native of Iwhnuruohna'.

More so, Amadi-Nna (1993, p. 32) asserts that "the Ikwerres are a small but distinct tribe who have distinct linguistic, social, and cultural traits and formations that distinguish them from other neighbouring tribes."

Historically, the few varying records about the origin of the Ikwere people favour, mainly, a migratory account of how they migrated from the Ancient Benin Kingdom to settle in their present place. This account traces the link between the Ikwere, the Ekpeye, and the Ogba as the descendants of Akalaka, and his half-brother, Ochichi. Note however that the Akpor kingdom claims not to have migrated from anywhere (autochthony) (Amadi, 1993, p. 41).

Nduka (1993, p. 22) recognises four (4) different accounts about the origin of Ikwere. The first records that the Ikweres migrated from the ancient Bini kingdom through Ogba and Ekpeye to their present homeland. The second and third accounts claim either that the Ikweres migrated from Arochukwu in Igboland, or consider Igboland as their ancestral home. The forth account traces part of Ikwere descent from Ijaws.

The Ikweres constitute the largest ethnic group in Rivers State. They occupy four (4) out of the twenty- three Local Government Areas (Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor, Emohua, and (part) of Port Harcourt City) in Rivers State with a projected population of 1,954,100 by 2016 (https://www.citypopulation.de/php/nigeria-admin.php?adm1id=NGA033).

Amadi (2003, p. 2) identifies that "the principal neighbours of Ikwerre are the ethnic groups of the Ogba-Egbema, Ekpeye and Abua to the North-West, the Eleme to the South-East, the Ijo communities of Okrika

and Kalabari to the South, and the Etche, and Igbo people to the North-East".

According to Williamson (2000, p. 31), the Ikwere language is 'an Igboid dialect belonging to the west Benue-Congo phylum'. Ikwere has twenty-four (24) dialects (Alerechi, 2007a) which are mutually intelligible. The dialects are Rumuekpne, Rundele, Ọdeegnu, Ẹmowha, Ọgbakiri, Akpo, Ọbio, Alụu, Igwuruta, Ọmagwa, Isiokpo, Ibaa/Obeele, Ipo, Ozuaha, Ọmuanwa, Ubima, Akpnabu, Egbedna, Ọmadeeme, Eleele, Omudiogna, Ubimini, Omerelu and Apnani. Of the twenty-four dialects of Ikwere, our data are based on the Alụu, and Ọmuanwa dialects, the dialects of the authors. The paper, therefore, describes and documents palm-wine tapping activities and the associated terms in Ikwere.

3. Palm-Wine Tapping Activities in Ikwere

This section takes cognisance of not just the act of wine tapping in Ikwere, it discusses the entire processes involved in palm-wine tapping in Ikwere tradition. Thus it looks at how raffia palms are planted, wine tapping and its procedure, palm wine, traditional ceremonies that require palm wine, etc.

3.1 Raffia Palm Planting In Ikwere

Palm-wine is produced from raffia palm. Until now, it is not known whether the seed of raffia palm could be planted by burying like any other crop or not. Reason being that one can rarely tell when its seed *mk̆pụru-a˘*is mature enough to germinate when covered beneath earth. However, the seed of a raffia palm ripens and falls beneath its tree, it dries up and eventually germinates. At such instances anyone willing to grow it could transplant it during rainy season to his choice location and it survives with regular supply of water. It is also observed that seeds from the pods of a raffia palm are a special delicacy to birds especially kites. This bird feeds on the seeds and eventually spreads them to other places to germinate. See examples of some terms associated with raffia palm planting in (1) – (6):

	Aluụ̀u	Omuànwà	Gloss
1.	M̀kpuru a᷄	m̀kpụ̀ru a᷄	'its seed'
2.	Kpa(sī)	kpa(si)	'plant'
3.	Pu	fu	'germinate (known planter)'
4.	Gba(pu)	(dnà)ǹdị̀dnàrnà	'germinate (unknown planter)'
5.	Ǹdùrù-minī	uduko᷇	'rainy season'
6.	òkpokā	egbe	'kite'

The preceding terms associated with raffia palm planting demonstrate similarities and differences in the use of terms in Aluu and Omuanwa. While some of the terms are the same as in (1) and (2) in the dialects and some are similar with phonological variation as in (3), others as in (4) – (6) are not cognate, depicting lexical alternations in the language.

3.2 Palm-Wine Tapping (Ònyinyi Ngwo᷇/Ònini-Ngwo᷇)

Raffia palm as the famous wine producing tree in Ikwere can grow in swampy rain forest area, and on dry land. Like plantain, it grows in height as its frond (tender) sprouts and flourishes into frond (mature). This frond withers and eventually dries up in succession. On its trunk grows a curly black rough and crispy blade-like rope known as *èje-ngwo᷇*. Figure (1) is a graphic illustration of a raffia palm.

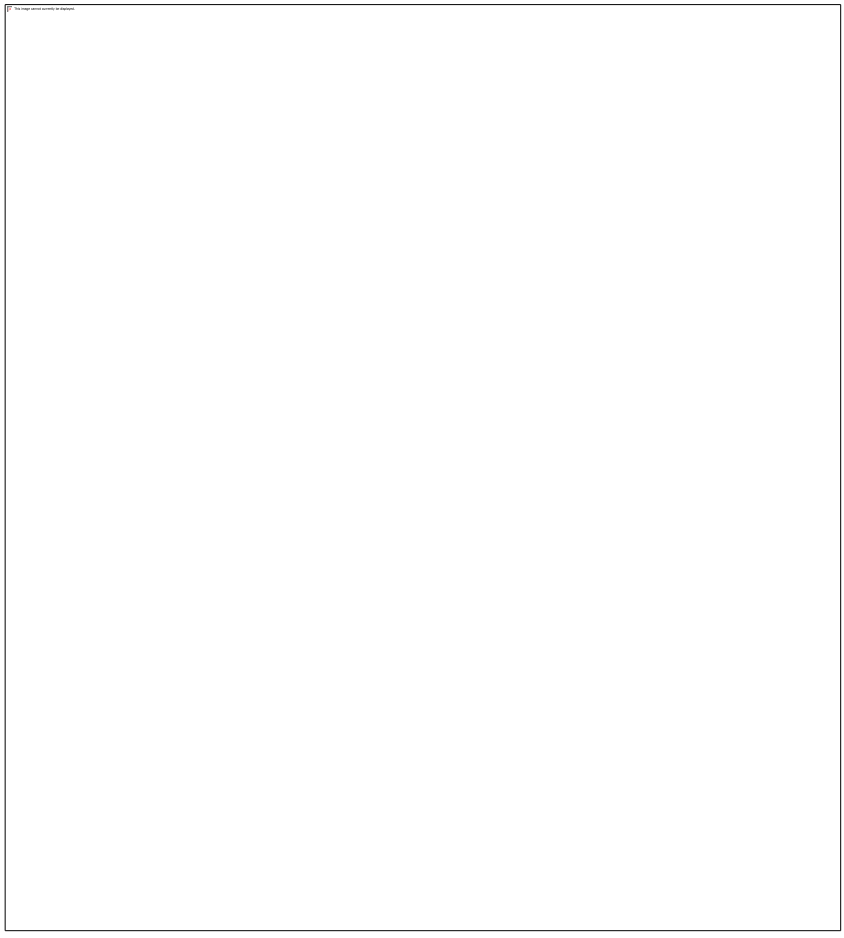


Fig. 1. *Ngwọ̀*'Raffia Palm'

Depending on the environment, a raffia palm can mature for tapping between 10-15 years. A mature raffia palm that is ready for tapping first produces a special frond *mḱpụkpa* that is slightly different from others. It is one of a kind that is found on every raffia palm and used as broom for brushing as shown on Figure (2). After that, a set of three tender fronds follow in succession. The youngest of these three shoots usually has the special frond *mḱpụkpā* at its back, to its right is the second youngest, and then to its left is the third youngest. The fourth is the special frond. The

position of the youngest shoot becomes the face of the raffia palm *ìwhnu ngwọ̀,* and it is the youngest shoot that produces the sap once it is cut off. This shoot usually does not grow as tall as others. At the sight of this sign, the tree is said to have survived *dnụ̀nam̀.* Two weeks after these signs, if the palm is left untapped, it begins to produce bunches of fruit *ọdụ̂* numbering from three bunches to a maximum of five. Palm with such flowery pods as shown in Figure 3 is referred to as *ngwọ pụ̀rù ọdụ̂,* meaning that the palm has out-grown tapping stage. Examples of terms associated with the foregoing description of the raffia palm are given in (7) – (17):



Fig. 2. *M̀kpụkpa* 'Broom' (for brushing) palm with pods'



Fig. 3: *Ngwọ Gàrụ̀gà* 'flowery pods'

Alụ̀ụ	Ọmuànwà	Gloss
7. So	znọ	'grow/flourish'
8. nwụrìa᷆	nwụri	'wither'
9. kpọ-nwu᷄	kpọ-nwụ	'dry'
10. ọ̀mu	ọ̀mu	'frond (tender)'
11. èje-ngwọ̀	eje-ngwọ̀	'curly black rough crispy blade-like rope'
12. igwùgwù/àka-ngwọ̀	ugwùgwù-ngwọ̀	'frond (mature)'
13. m̀kpụkpa᷄	kpàkàràsà/m̀kpàkàlàsà	'a special frond used as broom for brushing compound'
14. kpọbĭ᷆	gbubi	'cut off *ọ̀mu* tender frond'

15. dnụ̀nam̀	dnụ̀na	'set for tapping'
16. pụ̀rù ọdụ̂	furu-ọdụ̂	'grown pods'
17. gàrùàgà	gbàkàrà àgbàkâ	'out-grown tapping'

Just as in data (1) – (6) where the two dialects, Alụu and Ọmuanwa record cognate and non-cognate linguistic items, the dialects present a similar scenario in (7) – (18). Some other terms associated with wine tapping process are listed in examples (18) – (29):

18.	Nyi / ni 'tap'	
19.	Kpọbĭ̂	'to cut off the tender frond in preparation for tapping'
20.	Kpọ̀pớ/kpọ̀fộ	'to make a slit where the wine comes from'
21.	Che	'to inspect the palm to collect wine on routine bases'
22.	Kpa(sĭ̂) v.	'plant'
23.	Gbakâ	'used to refer to a fermented palm-wine'
24.	Kpọ̀kwnusĭ̂	'tie' especially pot for tapping'
25.	Gbabushĭ̂/gbabusụ̂	'lean' i.e. to set ladder on a palm tree
26.	Ọ̀ga mānyâ	'to book palm-wine in advance with a tapper'
27.	Ọ̀wugasĭ̂	'to pour tapped wine from tapping-pot to calabash in order to send it down'
28.	Òhie manyâ	'used to state that a raffia palm has begun to produce wine'
29.	Ọ̀la manyâ	'used to state that a raffia palm has stop producing wine'

Data (18) – (29) demonstrate that the two dialects share considerable terms in common except for those separated in slants '/', which indicate that the first item is the form for Aluu, while the second is for Ọmuanwa.

3.3 Palm-Wine Tapping Procedure

Base on the classification of wine producing trees indigenous to the tropical rain forest zone, Harris and Hilman (1989) list Palm trees (Elaesis guineensis), Raffia palm (Raphia hookeri, vinifera, and sponian mombin). Similar to Tuley's (1965, p. 120) observation of the use of Raphia hookeri in Igboland, raphia hookeri also is the specie used for palm wine in Ikwereland. This specie being adaptable to fresh water and swampy forest,

it is in fact widespread within Ikwereland. Palm wine tapping in Ikwere requires two stages. In the first stage, the tapper uses a cutlass to:

a) clear the bush surrounding the tree, remove stumps around the tree, position a ladder and tie it securely at four places on the tree as shown in Figure 4 and 5;
b) prune the second youngest frond to the right and push it aside;
c) prune the third youngest frond to the left and push it aside;
d) cut completely from the base, the fourth youngest frond *mỳpkụkpa*, and the one below it, usually at the back;
e) prepare a platform *nὰdnàbuˆ/ ọdàzi-àlì* by tying a thick tough rope usually drawn/cut from wild climbing plants called *abàlị̂* or *ekete* on two opposite fronds.

The tapper climbs steps further, then leans on the rope with his waist and braces backward. Being a little comfortable and capable of using both hands, he prunes other fronds at the top then clears the surrounding crispy black curly ropes *èje-ngwọ̀* beneath the tender shoot in order to gain access for the tapping proper.

In the second stage, the tapper uses a tapping chisel to:

a) cut off the youngest frond; on its base, he cuts two adjacent vertical lines of about 8inch, connecting them with a horizontal line of about 2–3 inch wide beneath;
b) neatly remove the tissue, hence making a slit of about one finger deep. Before the completion of this exercise, sap will have been trickling down from the slit.

Having created the tapping panel, the tapper secures a rope and a clay pot or plastic can as in Figure 5. He ties this container securely around the trunk at the top, positioning its aperture to the slit with a funnel made from a type of leaf *ọ̀kwukwō-etere* in order to channel the wine into the container. He covers the slit very securely with wad of leaves to avoid, bees or rain from penetrating.

A cut raffia palm produces wine after 2 – 8 days during when the tapper goes to lengthen, and clears the slit of tissues to avoid any bacteria from building up. In event of delay in production i.e. after about five days for trees upland, the tapper replaces the wad of leaf with another specie called *nṱ̀ịtnernemakpnu*̄. This leaf causes heat within the slit thereby provoking the wine tree to produce. Trees by the stream side begin to produce wine after 2 days.

Raffia palm can produce wine for a minimum of two weeks or a maximum of three months (92 days). During this period, the tapper goes to inspect his palm three times (morning *ọ̀tutù*, afternoon *èhnìhnè*, and evening *ànyaŝnò*) daily to collect wine. At every inspection, he removes debris from inside the slit and then expands it downward. The downward cut continues until the palm either stops producing, hence it is said to have gone, or the slit has reached the tapper's knee *mkpnerne-okwu*. At this point the tapper eventually abandons the palm as he could hardly bend comfortable to tap.

Raffia palm on a wet soil i.e. at a stream-side produces more wine, and records a longer period of flow, but it is usually not as sweet as the one on a dry land. Graphic representations of palm-wine tapping procedure in Ikwereland are given in Figures 4 – 9:



Fig. 4: Ngwọ̀ *'Raffia palm'* with Otopō *'ladder*



Fig. 5: Ngwọ̀ *'Raffia palm'* with Otopō *'ladder*



Fig. 6: *Ọ̀nu ngwọ̀ọ̀nu ngwọ̀*'slit'



Fig.7: *Ngwọ kpọbiri ọ̀kpọbìì* 'cut raffia palm'(being prepared for tapping)



Fig. 8: *Àbọ ngwò*'Forest of Raffia palm'



Fig. 9: *Ọ̀nu ngwọ̀ọ̀nu ngwọ̀*'slit'

Other terms associated with palm tapping procedure are given examples (30) - (61):

Aluụ̀u	Ọmuā̀nwà	Gloss
30. Ìwhnu-ngwọ̀	iwhnu-ngwọ̀	'face of raffia palm' from where slit is Cut'
31. Otopō	otopō	'ladder'
32. Nd̀nàbú/Ọdàzi-àlị̀	nd̀nàvu	'hammock made of climbing plants'
33. Ìwhnu atọ	iwhnū atọ	'three faces'
34. Kwnàla a	kwnàla a	'push it to'
35. Àka-ndī	aka-ọma/ nrī	'right hand'
36. Àka-ị̀kpà	aka-ìkpù	'left hand'
37. Àznụ̂	àznụ̂	'back'
38. Aba᷇lị̀	-	'a kind of plant where ropes are drawn from'
39. Ekē̄te	ekē̄te	'a wild fruit whose rope is used for tapping'
40. Dnà-buru	gba-vūrū	'rest/lean on something'
41. Iknù	iknù	'waist'
42. Znoshĭ̂	knesĭ̂	'tie tightly/firmly'
43. Kpọ pó	ò bù-ngwọ̀	'cut palm open for tapping'
44. Ọ̀-kpọ bĭ̌	gburì	'to cut off *ọ̀mu* frond (tender)'
45. Ìdùdù	ùdù	'clay pot for tapping'
46. Àgnàm̀	àgnàm̀	'tapping chisel'
47. Èrirī	erirī	'ropes from plants'
48. Mini-elū	mini-elū	'rain water'
49. Àgbọ̀	àgbọ̀rò	'calabash'
50.Ọ̀kwukwō-etere	ọkwūkwō-etē̄rē̄	'leaf from a kind of plant'
51. Ẹ̀bekā	èbekā	'bees'
52. Nt̀ị̀tnernemakpnū	nkē̄teremaknū	'a kind of leaf'
53. Àbàlị̀-ìsné	àbàlì-ìsné	'five days'
54. Gba manyá	ò̀gbabĕ̀ manya	'produce wine'
55. Ògbò lá	ògbò àbŏ̀	'two weeks'
56. Ọnwā atō	ọnwā atọ̄	'three months'
57. Ọ̀tutù	ọ̀tutù	'morning'
58. Èhnìhnìè	èhnìhnè	'afternoon'

59. Ànyaa̱snò	anyaa̱snò	'evening/twilight'
60. Lalam̀	lala	'used to refer to raffia palm that has stopped producing wine'
61. Mḿkpnèrnè-ọkwū	mḿkpnèrnè-ọkwū	'knee'

3.4 **Palm-Wine**

Kersters Karel et al (2006:169) define palm-wine as a typical tropical beverage drink produced from the fermentation of sugary palm sap. As a whitish beverage drink whose alcoholic content increases as it ferments, Wikipedia records that palm wine is "created from sap of various species of palm such as the Palmyra, date palm, and coconut palm." Further observation by Ayernor and Matthew (1971) in Ikegwu (2014) ascertain palm sap, in Nigeria, to be from two genera "Elaesis guineensis" and "Raphia hookeri/vinifera.". These two species unarguably grow in the tropical rain forest area which characterises the topography of, especially, the Ikwere part of Rivers State.

More so in the annals, of wine-tapping in Ikwere, not much has been heard about the specie "Elaesis guineensis" (Oil palm) save for its bountiful supply of palm oil. The glowing demand for palm wine by the Ikweres has hitherto been supplied from the genus "Raphia hookeri/vinifera (raffia palm). 'Wine' from this tree is treasured by all ages and sexes (male/female) across Ikwereland. Its fermenting stages meet the taste of different categories of consumers – lactating mothers and women generally relish it freshly tapped.

Palm-wine is enjoyed warm or cool. It is a basic requirement for every traditional gathering. Ikegwu (2014) compliments it to be a refreshing beverage drink that is served in traditional rites (marriages, kinship, title taking, naming ceremony, etc).

3.4.1 Traditional Ceremonies Requiring Palm-Wine

Traditionally in Ikwereland, palm-wine features prominently and significantly in diverse ceremonial activities as given in examples (62) – (70):

62.	Ọ̀lulu nnwèrnè	'marriage ceremony'
63.	Òchnichni-ezè/Òshni ezè	'kingship coronation'
64.	Ọ̀kpukpu egèlègè /Uteˆ	'entertainment during wrestling festival'
65.	Òri ji iknēˉ	'celebration of New Yam Festival'
66.	Ìlìlì/ oḳnùknù	'burial ceremony'
67.	Ọ̀mùrnù-nǹwo	'child birth celebration'
68.	Ọ̀gbama-ọ̀rò	'dedication of a new house'
69.	Ìkpe	'judgement'
70.	Nǹri-kọ̀	'feast of reunion'

In course of marriage negotiation, palm-wine serves as one of the basic requirements among other necessities. During this meeting, it is presented and served in turns with the host leading. To welcome the suitors, the host presents a keg of palm-wine as a refreshing drink for entertainment. This is accompanied by the serving and breaking of kolanuṭ. But from the guest, presentation of palm wine is a major requirement to register his purpose of coming, which is to express his intention to marry a daughter of the host's family.

Advancing in the course of negotiation, palm-wine features prominently in the activity of four days journey. In fact, this stage in the process is termed wine-carrying. Here the ability of the prospective son in-law to negotiate and provide fresh palm-wine consistently for the four days is a proof of commitment, responsibleness, and preparedness. On the fourth and last day, friends, well-wishers, and relatives send kegs of palm-wine to the both families as their tokens of support and consent to the marriage. Some families keep memories of those who supported them in order to reciprocate the gesture when the need arises.

In a traditional setting where a constituted authority such as council of Chiefs/Elders, youths, or women groups, etc., assemble to adjudicate on a

matter, there is usually a demand for the defendant and the accused to present first and second drink. In ranking, palm-wine is said to be the first drink simply because it is produced from the indigenous soil hence the name *àknaṇị-àlị̂*.

During funeral wake-keep, the host or bereaved families mostly serve warm or hot palm-wine to enable the guests to keep warm through the night.

Generally, in all other traditional ceremonies, palm-wine is served for refreshment to show hospitality. Examples (71) – (86) are some the terms associated with various ceremonies where palm-wine is used in Ikwere:

	Aluu	Ọmuānwa	Gloss
71.	Ijnè nnwèrnè	ijne nnwèrnè	'marriage negotiation'
72.	Òkno ajị̄	ògwèya / òkno ajị̄	'presentation of kola'
73.	Ọ̀wa ajị̄	ọ̀wa ajị̄	'breaking of kola'
74.	Ijnē àbàlị̀-ànộ	òvu manya àbàlì ànộ	'four days journey'
75.	Òbu manya nwèrnè	òvu manya nnwernè	'wine carrying'
76.	Enyì	enyì	'friends'
77.	Ìknu n'ibnè	iknū n'ibnè	'kith & kin'
78.	Nk̄nàna manyâ	mb̀i-àchàra manyâ	'keg of palm-wine'
79.	Ọmù nwene	ọmū nwịrnìtà	'relatives'
80.	Òkpe ikpē	òkpe ikpē	'to give judgement'
81.	Nye mèrnù ikpe	nye tụ ògbò	'defendant'
82.	Nye zārū ikpe	nye za ògbò	'accused'
83.	Manya mbọm̄	-	'first drink' palm-wine
84.	Manya àbọ̀	-	'second drink' local gin
85.	Òse àbàli	ọ̀rna n'ezī	'wake keep'
86.	Manya nknū	Manya nknū	'warm/hot palm-wine'

3.4.2 Uses of Palm-Wine

The use of palm-wine cuts across religious, medicinal, and magical purposes.

Religiously it is used for libation. Medicinally it is used to treat malaria, splenomegaly, to boost the flow of breast milk for lactating mothers. For magical values, it is used for invoking and dispelling of rain. The terms associated with the uses of palm-wine in Ikwere are listed in (87) – (92):

	Aluu	Omuanwa	Gloss
87.	Ọ̀wu manyaˆ	ọ̀wu manyaˆ	‘libation’
88.	Akọ̀m	akọ̀m	‘malaria’
89.	Àpaw̌họ̀	abā-awhọ	‘splenomegaly’
90.	Ọ̀gba mini arnā	ọ̀gba mini arnā	‘to boost flow of breast milk’
91.	Òji elū	Òji elū	‘to dispel rain’
92.	Ọ̀do elū	ògbu elū	‘to invoke rain’

3.5 Basic Constituent Parts of Raffia Palm

Some of the constituent parts of raffia palm and instruments used in tapping are graphically presented in Figures 10 – 14, while the terms are listed in examples (93) – (95):

93.	Iknù-ngwọ̀	‘the trunk’
94.	Èje-ngwọ̀	‘a curly black rough crispy and blade-shaped rope Extracted from the trunk of the raffia palm. It is used to tie rafters’
95.	Àka-ngwọ̀	‘fronds of the raffia palm’



Fig. 10: *Àka-Ngwọ̀* ‘Palm fronds’



Fig. 11: *Èje-ngwọ̀* ‘a curly black rough crispy and blade-shaped rope extracted from the trunk of the raffia palm’



Fig.12:. *Ikwnù-ngwọ̀* 'the trunk of raffia palm'



Fig. 13: *Nkowo/Òmèrnè-enī* 'Cutlass'



Fig. 14: *Àgnàm* 'Tapping Chisel'

3.6 Other Raw Materials Extratable from Raffia Palm (Ngwo)

Other terms referring to raw materials extractable from raffia palm are listed in examples (96) – (102), while the pictures representing them are shown in Figures 15 – 20:

96.	Oḳam̄/aknam	'thatches made from the leaves of raffia palm fronds. It is used in roofing thatch houses and local kitchens'
97.	Akpnàrnà/akwnàrnà	'thin long brownish rope drawn from a felled dissected raffia palm. It is used to fasten thatches on rafters.
98.	Oḳòrò	'a dry long stick cut from the frond of raffia palm'. It is used in tying/making *ibu-ọrò/mkpoko ọrò* rafters.
99.	M̀kpitimkpī	'a flat long and brownish fastener used in thatch making'. It is usually peeled off from 'bamboo' *oḳòrò*.
100.	Àkwụ-èkètè	'the tiny broom-like sticks from fronds of raffia palm used for oblong fishing baskets'
101.	M̀kpụkpā	'a long broom usually cut from the frond of raffia palm used locally for sweeping especially the frontage of a man's compound'
102.	Ibū ọrò/ mkpoko oṛò	'rafter'



Fig. 15: *Ibū-ọrò* 'Rafter for making thatch houses'



Fig. 16: *Ọ̀knam̄* 'thatches'

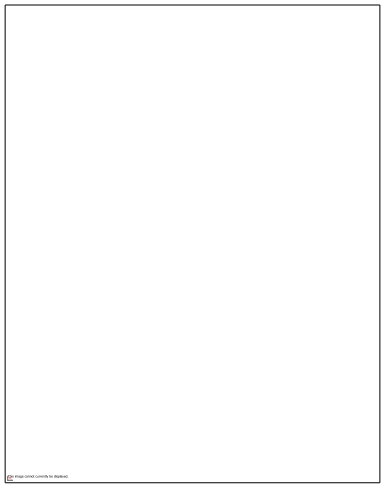


Fig. 17: *Akpnàrnà/Akwnàrnà* 'thin long brownish rope drawn from a fell dissected raffia palm.'



Fig.18: *Ọ̀kòrò* 'Spine of Raffia Palm'



Fig. 19: *Oḳpàta* 'bed made of the spine of raffia palm frond



Fig. 20: *Ọrò oḳnam̄làknam̄*''Thatched hut'

3.7 Tapper

A tapper in Ikwere translates as ònyi ngwọ̀. It is an agentive nominal derived by a combination of a prefixal agentive marker attached to the verb root *nyi* 'tap' / 'climb' and the noun *ngwọ̀* 'raffia palm'. In this form, it is used in a eulogistic sense to refer to a 'professional or an expert tapper'. The proper Ikwere equivalent for a 'tapper' is **nye nyi ngwo** (a person who taps raffia palm).

As a profession, it goes beyond the mere ability to climb and extract wine from a wine tree. Adolescent male in Ikwere learn tapping by observing either their father, or other male relatives very closely as they join them in their tapping routine. This begins usually at a ripe age of about 12 – 15 years when a growing child ceases to go about naked. Keen and intelligent observers master tapping between two to three months from the moment of first attempt. Others tarry between four to six months. From the taste of the wine, a good tapper could tell almost precisely what wine was tapped from a home-tree and one from freshwater or stream-side. Amadi in *The Concubine* reveals thus:

> 'This must be a "home" tree', Wakiri said
> 'No. it is tapped from a tree in the Great Ponds'
> Wagbara replied in a matter-of-fact way (1966 *p.123*)

As it is with other professions, tappers dedicate ample time to tapping. They skip meals and even crucial village gathering in order to inspect their trees to avoid wine spilling. In *The Slave*, Amadi (2005) states that "there was a saying among women that a wine-tapping husband was half a husband; the wine-tapping claimed the other half (p. 76). Tappers are traditional clock themselves. They keep accurate time with the crows of cock, and the length of shadows under the sun.

Tappers, for security reasons, go tapping with a machete in hand, and *a* cutlass strapped on the waist. On event of any confrontation and he loses his machete, then he would rather die than let go his cutlass. Some terms depicting the going discussion in Ikwere are listed in (103) - (116):

	Aluu	Omuanwa	Gloss
103.	Ngwọ̀	ngwọ̀	'raffia palm'
104.	Nye nyi-ngwọ̀	nye ni ngwọ̀	'one who taps'
105.	Ngwọ̀ ọrò	ngwọ̄ ezī	'home raffia palm'
106.	Nt̄u-igè	-	'clock'
107.	Ènine	ènine	'shadows'
108.	Àkwna ọkwukwò	akwnā ọkwūkwù	'cock crow'
109.	Kpasnu	kpasû	'excite'
110.	Nt̄ḳịkara ikpè	nt̄ḳịrika ikpè	'rag/piece of cloth'
111.	Àkpà-iwhū	àkpa iwhū	'wasp nest'
112.	Ọ̀chi ọhīā	ọ̀chu	'hunting'
113.	Mini anwụ̀rnù	mini anwụ̀rnù	'snuff solution'
114.	Ajnā	ajnā	'sand'
115.	Akpàra	erùru	'soldier ant'

3.7.1 Common Insects that Attack Tappers and their Dispelling Measures

Tappers are usually tactful and courageous enough to confront and dispel certain stinging and biting insects that confront them during tapping. Popular among these insects are listed in examples (116) – (120):

	Aluu	Omuanwa	English
116.	Ẹ̀bekā	ẹbekā	'bees'
117.	Èbù	èvù	'wasps'
118.	Atàgburu-n̄gbàdnà	ijnemkpele	'tailor ant'
119.	Ìwhu	iwhu	'black ant'
120.	Akpàra	erùru	'soldier ant'

Èbekā 'bees' are black and yellowish aggressive insects that make honey. They move in swarm and sting ones they are excited *kpasnu*. They are found in the wild and mainly on running wine trees.

Èbù/Èvù 'wasps' are stinging insects commonly found in 'nests' referred to *àkpa-èbù*. They cluster around the nest hanging under a frond.

Atàgburu-n̄gbàdnà/Ijnēm̄kpèlè 'tailor-ant' is an orange-colour biting and climbing ant that leaves on trees and wild climbing plants. They rarely tolerate the presence of man. As a result once tappers clear the surrounding bush to create access, they disperse.

Akpàra/Erùru 'soldier-ant' seldom attack tappers except when they are hunting preys i.e. *ọ̀chi-ọ̀hīā̄.* At such times they spread to every part of the surrounding bush in aggression.

Ìwhu 'black biting and climbing ants' that live in black cave-like mound on trees. Examples of some of these insects are shown in Figures 21 – 24:

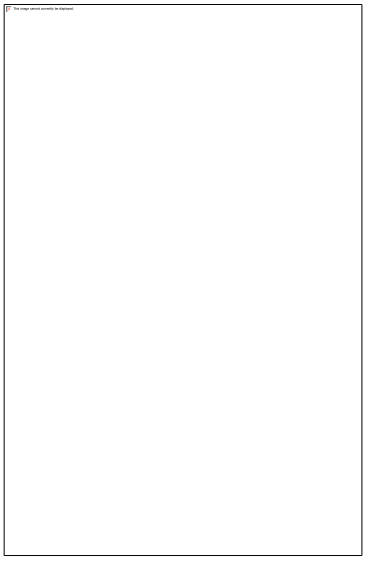


Fig. 21: *Atagburu-mgbadna/Ijemkpele* 'Tailor Ant'



Fig 22: *Àkpà-iwhu̅* 'mound of black biting ant'



Fig. 23: *Akpàra/Erùru* 'Soldier Ant'



Fig. 24. *Èbù/Èvù* 'Wasp'

3.7.2 Dispelling Measures

The insects are dispelled using snuff solution *mini-anwùrnù*, sand *ajna* and in recent time, insecticide.

Mini-anwụ̀rnù 'Snuff solution'**:** Bees are easily dispelled when taken unaware. Tappers tie 'a piece of cloth' *nǩịkara-ikpè /nǩịrikā-nǰìjeˆ* on their head, they climb slowly up to the swarm of bees filling their mouth with water mixed with snuff, they spray the bees repeatedly until they disperse.

Ajnā 'Sand': This is mainly used to dispel wasps and soldier-ant. Tappers club a handful of sand and spray at the wasps' nest, once they are excited, he cuts off the frond hosting their nest. Soldier-ants pose threat to tappers when they are on rampage or hunting. At such times they make swishing sound. To dispel them, tappers club handful of sand and spray at them repeatedly until they disperse.

Insecticide: The tapper targets the heap of bees and spray insecticide until they are dispelled. The use of insecticide is the most effective and easy way to dispel bees and all other insects, however, it is expensive and may be injurious to the health of the tappers when inhaled or get into contact with eyes.

3.8 Tapping Equipment

Tapping as an indigenous profession requires some set of locally made tools to drive the technical aspect of it. The examples in (121) – (133) are some of the terms for tapping equipment in Ikwere:

Aluu	Ọmuanwa	Gloss
121. Nǩowo	òmèrne enī	'cutlass'
122. Àgnam̀	Àgnam̀	'tapping chisel'
123. Otōpō	Otōpō	'ladder'
124. Èkere-àchàrà	Èkere-àchàrà	'Indian bamboo ladder'
124. Àgbọ̀	Àgbọ̀rò	'calabash
125. ìdùdù	ùdù	'clay pot'
126. Èrirī	Èrirī	'rope'
127. Mkpọ̀rò ọ̀kwukwō	mkpị̀ri ọ̀kwukwō	'leaves'
128. Abaĺị̀		'a kind of climbing plant'
129. Ekēte	ekēte	'a kind of climbing plant'

130. Ọbộ	ọbộ	'sheath'
131. Wụgasĩ̂	wụlusụ̂	'pour into'
132. Èje-ngwọ̀	eje-ngwọ̀	'black curly crispy rope'
133. Ọ̀kòrò	ọ̀kòrò	'a long stick that forms the spine of frond

3.9 Traditional Measuring Containers

Palm wine in commercial quantity is usually poured into a large basin or a plastic water-pot from where it is measured with different sizes of cans depending on the quantity needed by a buyer. Some of the basic sizes of measuring cans in Ikwere are given in (134) – (140):

	Aluụ̀	Ọmu͞anwà	Gloss
134.	òkiko	owhè	'cup'
135.	àlị̀kpọ̄rọ̄ / wị̀kpọ̄	ọgò-vuònù	
136.	òkologa͞	òlìlo	
137.	nk̀nànà	mb̀i-àchàrà	
138.	jòngò	jòngò	
139.	àgbu͡gbà	àgbu͡gba ididẹ̄	'basin'
140.	ìdùdù	ùdù	'clay pot'

*Àlị̀kporo / Ọgòvuọ̀nù***:** *Alikporo* or *ọgòvuonù* also referred to as *wị̀kpo* in Alụu is a ceramic bottle-like measuring container that has one handle on its neck. It contains about two litres of wine. Consumers use it essentially to store wine for their personal refreshment either at home or in the farm.

Òkologa͞/Òlilo: *Òkologba͞* or *òlilo* is another container made of ceramic. It is bottle-like in shape and has a handle on its neck. Its content corresponds to the standard four litre measurement.

Nknana/Mb̀i-àchàrà: *Nk̀nana* or *mb̀i-àchàrà* in measurement varies between eight and ten litres of nowadays standard measurement. Both made of ceramic and with two handles on the necks. Mathematically, two *okologa* make one *nk̀nànà*

Jòngò*:* Jòngò is the largest size of measuring container of about 20 litres. It is made of plastic and contains two nknana. Jòngò from findings is a

corruption of jug (Worukwo, personal communication). The graphics of some of these items are shown in Figures (25) – (29):



Fig. 25: *Òkiko/Owhè* 'Cup'



Fig. 26: *Òkologbaī/Òlilo*



Fig. 27: *Àlịkporo/Ogòvuònù*



Fig. 28: Nǩnànà for



Fig. 29: *Oǩwukwo¯Etēre* 'A kind of leaf used tapping'

4. Linguistic Features

Considering the use of the terms associated with palm-wine in the Alụu and Ọmuanwa dialects of Ikwere, we observe certain linguistic features in our data. Despite the fact that the activities of wine tapping is the same in the two communities, our data demonstrate similarities and differences in the use of the linguistic terms associated with palm-wine tapping in the language. While some of the cognate items are exactly the same in the two dialects and some others present alternations based on the phonological and morphological features, others are non-cognate as the alternate lexical items in the two dialects are not of the same origin. Some other alternations are as a result of the descriptive perspective employed by the speakers of the two dialects. The implication of the foregoing is that Ikwere records both cognate and non-cognate items for the terms associated with palm-wine tapping in Alụu and Ọmuanwa. Thus documenting palm-wine tapping activities and the associated terms is relevant for archival purposes as this aspect of the Ikwere language and culture may be preserved in the event of extinction. The various alternations recorded in the two dialects also will help to make decision on the likely proto forms of the various terms in the language. Of the various alternations recorded in this paper, phonological alternations are in the majority, followed by the lexical variation, while the morphological alternations are in the minority.

Some of the phonological variations recorded in this study are alternations involving the consonants and vowels of the language. For consonant variation, it is observed that where the choice for Alụu is [p] as in *pu* 'germinate', that of Ọmuanwa is [f] as in *fu* 'germinate'. Similarly, Alụu shows preference for [b] as in *èbù* 'wasp', where Ọmuanwa uses [v] as in *èvù* 'wasp'. Note that similar observation of the alternations of [p] and [f], and [b] and [v] are made in the language by Donwa-Ifode and Faraclas (2001) and Alerechi (2007b), though such observation took cognizance of more dialects of Ikwere than these two. For the alternation between [p] and [b], Alụu favours [p] as in *àpa̍̆whọ̄*'splenomegaly', while Ọmuanwa uses [b]

as in *abā̱-awhọ* 'splenomegaly'. In [ɓ] and [kʷ] variation, Aluu records kp [ɓ] as in a<u>kp</u>nàrnà 'a thin long brown rope made from raffia palm', whereas Omuanwa has kw [kʷ] as in a<u>kw</u>nàrnà 'a thin long brown rope made from raffia palm'. For the alternation reflecting the palatal and alveolar nasals [ɲ] and [n], Alụu shows preference for ny [ɲ] as in *<u>ny</u>i* 'tap', where the Omuanwa form is [n] as in *ni* 'tap'.

Some of the vowel alternations observed in this paper reflect those involving [i] and [u]; [ɪ] and [ʊ]; [a] and [u], and [ɔ] and [a], alternations that are identified in Alerechi (2008) in the twenty-four dialects of Ikwere. Whereas Alụu records the close front expanded vowel [i] as in *igwùgwù* 'palm frond (mature)'in initial position, Ọmuanwa uses the close back expanded vowel [u] as in *ugwùgwù* 'palm frond (mature)'. Conversely, the non-expanded counterparts of [i] and [u] also alternate in the dialects. Thus where the choice for Alụu is the close front non-expanded vowel ị[ɪ] in the final position of the first word of the compound as in *ọ̀chị-ọ́hiā* 'hunting', Ọmuanwa records the back counterpart u [ʊ] as in *ọ̀chụ-ọ́hiā* 'hunting'. The form for Alụu is [a] as in *aka-ī̱kpà* 'left hand' for the alternation between [a] and [u], while that of Ọmuanwa is [u] as in *aka-ìkpù* 'left hand'. Finally, for [ɔ] and [a] alternation, Alụu favours ọ [ɔ] as in *ọ̄knam* 'thatches', where Ọmuanwa shows preference for [a] as in *aknam* 'thatches'.

Morphologically, it is observed that where Alụu records overt past marker, Ọmuanwa does not. A typical example is demonstrated in (144):

144. Aluu: Nye za-rụ ikpe
Person answer-PAST judgement
'The accused'

Omuanwa: Nye za ikpe
Person answer judgement
'The accused'

Data (144) illustrates overt attachment of the -rụ past suffix marker to the verb za 'answer' in Alụu and its absence in Ọmuanwa.

It is also evident in this paper that the presence of reduplication in one dialect and its absence in the other can generate alternation in the language. Reduplication is a word formation process of repeating or copying all or part of the base and attaching to the base (Kari, 2015, p. 114; Lieber, 2010, p. 80; Haspelmath, 2002, p. 24). Thus where Alụu uses the word *idudu* 'clay pot', the choice for Ọmuanwa is *udu* 'clay pot'. Conversely, where Ọmuanwa shows preference for *agbọro* 'calabash', *Alụu* has *agbọ* 'calabash'.

It is further observed from this work that some of the alternations are lexical, indicating that some of the terms are not cognate in the dialects. Some examples are *akpàra* 'soldier ant' in Alụu and *erùru* 'soldier ant' in Ọmuanwa; *egèlègè* 'wrestling' in Aluu and *ùtê* 'wrestling' in Ọmuanwa; *nàdùrù-mini* 'rainy season' in Alụu and *udukọ̀* 'rainy season' in Ọmuanwa, and *ìlìlì* 'burial ceremony' in Alụu and *ọ̀knùknù* 'burial ceremony' in Ọmuanwa, to mention but a few.

It is worthy of note that the descriptive perspective of the action or state of affair to which the speakers are interested can cause alternation in the dialects. Examples are demonstrated in (145) – (146):

145. Alụu: Ijnē̄ àbàlì̤ anộ
Journey night four
'4-day wine carrying'

Omuanwa: Ò-vu manya àbàlì̤ ànộ
INF-carry wine night four
'4-day wine carrying'

146. Alụu: Ò-se àbàlì̤
INF-wait night
'wake keep'

Omuanwa: Ọ̀-rna n' èzi
INF-sleep PREP outside
'wake keep'

The example in (145) demonstrates that the Alụu speakers lay emphasis on the series of movement embarked upon by a suitor during the period of

marriage negotiation, whereas the focus for the Ọmuanwa speakers is on the carrying of wine by the suitor to the bride's home. On the other hand, example (146) illustrates that during burial ceremony, Alụu people emphasize on the watch at night, whereas Ọmuanwa speakers perceive it from the point of view of sleeping outside the house rather than inside the house. This implies that variation in the dialects of a language may result from the perception of the people. Thus documenting the various aspects of a people's language and culture is relevant in order to depict their way of reasoning and consequently decide on how to relate with them.

5. Summary

From our study it is obvious that documenting any aspect of a people's activity reveals a lot about their culture, language and reasoning. Thus a consideration of palm-wine tapping in Ikwere has not only unveiled the activity itself, but also some aspects of Ikwere culture concerning marriage negotiations, burial ceremonies, wrestling competitions, settlement of cases, religion, etc., that involve the use of palm-wine tapping. The linguistic items associated with these aspects of Ikwere culture further give insight into how, for example, marriage negotiation is carried out in Ikwereland. The fact that the suitor does not go alone to the bride's home shows that it is a communal affair. Traditionally, the suitor and his relatives are required to carry wine to the bride's parents/relatives for a period of four days consecutively as a matter of necessity as it determines how serious the suitor is before another stage of the marriage negotiation.

Comparing the linguistic alternation of terms in Aluu and Omuanwa further reveals that certain activities are expressed based on the descriptive perspective to which the speakers are interested. Even though they record similar terms, the expression is based on the aspect of the activity the speaker wish to emphasize. Thus when the perception is different, the expression varies but the same when the perception coincides. The lexical variation observed in the work is an indication that members of one of the

community are in contact with speakers of other languages to which speakers of the other community do not share any contact.

6. Conclusion

It is evident that the documentation and preservation of a dying language is not only important for social and cultural reasons, but also for scientific reason. As a distinct language, Ikwere is spoken by a major ethnic group in Rivers State. Though yet to develop a standard dialect, the language meets the day-to-day communication need of a vast majority of speakers in most communities.

Unarguably, certain aspects of the cultural heritage of the indigenous people of Ikwere are under threat of extinction; prominent among which is palm-wine tapping. In Aluu, with the retirement of few famous tappers, tapping activities are now left in the hands of very few non-indigenes who rather take the easy way out by felling and tapping oil palm *nk̀wụ*. As a result, certain terms associated with tapping activities are either replaced with the ones from the language of the non-indigenous tappers or English. For instance, tapping chisel *Àgnàm`* is known for its Ikwere term mainly by tappers, and their associates (children and friends). This documentation is a conscious effort to preserve the language and culture of the Ikwere people for scientific and pedagogical purposes. This study presents an introductory account of the lexicon of palm wine tapping in a categorical order in Ikwere tradition. It is in view of keeping alive this cultural heritage and its related terms for the benefit of posterity that this task is undertaken.

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