

# Implications of Enlarging Regatta Festivals in Nembe Kingdom, Bayelsa State for Art and Heritage Studies

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## Abstract

*Regatta is synonymous with lifestyle in the costal parts of Nigeria. Canoeing or boat paddling to the Nembe child is as involuntary as walking on foot. Major aspects of Nembe social life such as fishing, farming, distilling of gin and trading are necessitated by water travel or sea transport. This makes life in the area boat or canoe based. There is a need to revisit the lethargic appraisal so far given to regatta festivals in Nigeria. The current study was, therefore, warranted by the need to enlarge the regatta festival by exploring its visual arts features and expanding the scope beyond a mere sporting and historic jamboree so as to prescribe same for cultural studies. Specifically, the study set out to: (i) find out the historical events that influenced regatta in Nembe Kingdom, (ii) figure out the aspects of visual arts exhibited during regatta festivals, and (iii) investigate the prospects of Nembe regatta being explored for art and heritage studies. Attention was focused more on the visual art contents of the regatta festival than the performing arts. Direct photography and participation in regatta were the minor sources of data collection. Also, a structured Likert-scale questionnaire was designed, tested and adopted for opinion poll collection. The questionnaires were distributed among a selection of Nembe chiefs, farmers, traders and tertiary school students. Data was analysed using simple percentage calculations. Findings show that regatta has a rich visual art base cutting across painting, sculpture, graphics, textiles and fashion design. It also finds regatta a converging pinnacle for tradition and modernity in art and heritage studies.*

**Keywords:** Canoeing, distilling, pinnacle, warranted, converging, synonymous, lethargic.

## Introduction

### Background of the Regatta Culture

A regatta is a sequence of boat races. Regatta is a prominent cultural sport of Nembe people which uses rowed or sailed water crafts like boats and canoes. The regatta culture in Nembe Kingdom dates back to the transatlantic slave trade period. According to Chef Erewari Igbata (2015), the origin of regatta is not known. However, it may not be unconnected with the celebration of victories from inter-communal warfare and successful trade expeditions. The above assertion lends credence to one of the earliest reasons for celebrating in canoes, traditional warfare and its victories. Boats or canoes were the only means of transport between the Niger Delta chiefs and the European traders who bought slaves. After slave trade was abolished in 1807, they became legitimate means of transport mainly for trade in palm oil and palm products. Each King or head chief was entitled to a boat and these ceremonial boats (also known as Alali-Aru) were paddled by men from the

chief's household. It was risky having to travel and trade by watercrafts because naval criminals, pirates, attackers and insurgents also lurked about. So, it became pertinent for the chiefs to also protect their merchandise with war boats (Omu-Aru) manned by warriors carrying ammunitions, cannons and mystic powers. In recent times the war regattas are re-enacted to honour special dignitaries reputed to have been men of strength and valour. But warriors and warrior-kings were the first to be honoured this way. In modern times, regatta festivals involve social or promotional activities in which prizes or awards are staked for winners. According to Alagoa (2009), this ceremonial display of colourfully decorated boats is peculiar to the riverine parts of Nigeria, mostly the IZONS. These people located in the Southern parts of Nigeria between Rivers Forcados to Opobo were first referred to as IZON in 1920 by Talbot.

### **Geographical Slot of Nembe**

Nembe kingdom in Bayelsa State is occupied by people of the IZON (Ijaw) ethnic nationality. The Ijaw (traditionally IZON) also spreads across other towns and communities in the Niger Delta region. Nembe and Brass are hidden among a number of creeks East of River Brass and St Nicholas; some 30 miles from the sea. Ogbolomabiri and Bassambiri are separated by a small creek about fifty yards wide. There are also smaller sub-urban settlements like Orumabiri (Juju Town), Okipiri and Tubopiri (watering bush or bush of wells). There are surrounding villages and towns which hold Nembe as their mother city, they also identify themselves as Nembe. The most important of them are Okpoama (fish town), Odioma (on St Nicholas) and Brass modern maps (twon). The Kingdom is a totality of the villages, clans and communities that make up the present Nembe and Brass Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. The traditional rulers of Nembe take the title *Amanyano*. The main language spoken in Bayelsa State is IZON (Ijaw) with dialects such as Nembe, Ogbia, Kolokuma, Bomu, Epie, Mein etc.

### **The Niger Delta**

The name Niger Delta is not an appellation for states or towns where crude oil is found as it seems today. The traditional Niger Delta is made up of ethnic groups like (Ijaw) IZON, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ibibio, Efik among others. According to Eluwa et al (1988), the IZON speaking people were the earliest ethnic group that occupied the Niger Delta areas of Nigeria. Their main centres were Brass, Nembe, Kalabari, Bonny and Warri at the western Niger Delta. The Nembe people of Ijaw extraction, like every other group in the Niger Delta, are known for fishing and farming, boat building and net making. Opinions differ as to how the IZON came to their present homeland.

While some say that they are of Benin ancestry, others ascribe their descent to the Yoruba lands. But more complex claims state that the Izon people are an amalgamation of the Igbo, Yoruba and Benin migrants who lived together for a very long time. Prof. E.A. Alagoa, a doyen of Izon history, had asserted that the Izon must have migrated from the Northern fringes of the Sahara (Sudan) to the delta area. It was believed that the central delta made up of Ogobiri, Oporoma, the Apo Creeks and Obiama were the points from where Izon set out to diverse places. These migrations were said to have occurred before 1000 AD.

### **Canoe Craft and the Nembe Lifestyle General World-view**

Izon men and women employ different methods to catch fishes. Women fish using lines, traps and baskets. The average woman manufactures between sixty and a hundred traps each season, adjusting the spacing of the struts to suit various preys, including prawns, lobster, tilapia and other types of swamp fish (Anderson, 2002). Apart from fishing, which is the main occupation of the people of Nembe, other activities have been closely clustered along canoeing and water craft rowing. Such activities include waterside food stuff trading, sea animals hunt competitions, tent weaving and mending, canoe building, water transport and other waterside festivals in which crafts and arts are exhibited. According to Angba (2015), learning to paddle seems to be largely a practical matter without religious or mythic significance. But the process plays a critical role in shaping the way people view the environment. Angba (2015) says that the Izon child first experiences canoeing at the age of two to three months, when mothers begin taking their infants on almost daily trips to their riverside farms and for fishing. From the foregoing, it becomes clear that Nembe lifestyle is built around the canoe and its uses.

### **The Mobile Performance Stage**

Funfair is a great aspect of Nembe recreational lifestyle. Apart from transport, canoes become useful when advantage of the river space is taken for performance by the natives. In this case, canoes and other watercrafts become mobile stages for performances. Carnivals, victory parades and their likes can be celebrated on floating (paddled) wooden platforms and canoes. But even more figuratively, the canoe, according to Alagoa (2009), serves as a “vehicle for ideas” for the Izon. There are different types of canoes based on purposes.

### **The War Canoe and Nembe Communal Conflict Attitude**

The war canoe or boat also known as *Omongu-Aru* in Nembe dialect is till date displayed during regatta competitions and young men mimic war prances in the boats. There are specific costumes that are worn to reflect this cultural gesture (war). Black and blue are the most used costume colours for re-enacting regatta battle. The two colours signify battle readiness. The trunks of the canoe contain the chief's court, mystic charmer and armed warriors. In what seems to be the entertainment angle of coastal battle, the war canoes are laden with talking drums. These talking drums, usually placed at the rear angle of the canoes are used to charge the warriors to action. While the talking drums are played to charge the warriors much the same way as trumpets and gongs do in other parts of the country, there is need for camouflage sometimes. At this point, the charmers come in handy. During coastal communal wars also, according to Angba (2015), charmers are eventful. The responsibility of the charmer is to invoke dew or fog during battle to prevent the opponents from seeing the approaching boat. The charmer fortifies the warriors by putting a white cloth with the charm (*osei*) on the front deck of the boat, and then the warriors begin to jump over it. Any warrior who falls in the process is relieved of his battle right, meaning that he is not battle ready. According to Ganagana (2011), there is also a principle that a war canoe does not and never turns around or back. This means that the paddlers turn when it becomes necessary to retreat or paddle in reverse order. Because there are always as many as twenty and above paddlers, in case of eventuality or retreat, the paddlers quickly turn and face backwards, making those hitherto behind to become the front paddlers, paddling home. In this case those who were in front before now become the rear paddlers. The implication is that the war canoe does not reverse but the paddlers do. This philosophy of "never turn the boat" also strengthens the warriors. Although the war canoes carry guns and cannons, the ceremonial regatta may not carry them. This is because excessive show of warriors' exploits in which cannons and local explosives are shot may call off the show if a spectator or participant gets shot.

### **Regattas as Lone Festivals and Parts of Other Festivals**

The Izon people have vibrant cultural and artistic heritage which culminate into festivals and social activities like the regatta. The regatta festivals have become veritable home-coming and converging pivots for the people of the coastal areas. In Nembe Kingdom, boat regatta is displayed during the installation and burial of kings, chiefs and people of nobility. During great festivals in Nembe, regatta is used as the concluding event. This translates to the fact that regatta could be an event on its own as well as a

part of other cultural events. Either way, regatta embodies the rich artcultural heritage of Nembe and by extension, the Izon nation.

### **Implications of Reviving Regatta for Art, Culture and Tourism**

Art is educational if well harnessed and education is artistic if well imbibed. There has been a poor understanding of the dispositions of art forms used to convey the values of the people. Some of such art works are full of complexities which stir pervasive or long-lasting experience on the beholders. Most of Africa's so-branded primitivism by the Europeans are the enshrinement of her culture; culture that is likened to a skeleton, the flesh of which is art. In the words of Asogwa and Okwudili (2015), culture may be defined as the totality of a people's way of life. It is believed that the culture of an individual influences his thought-process and pattern. In this context, regatta is part of Nembe culture, and art is the language that communicates the culture. Industrial revolutions came with a great deal of promises and possibilities.

Coastal parts of the world are given to utilizing their topography in ways that generate income and attract tourism. In the United Kingdom, the *Mainsail* is a regular boat racing event featuring participating teams from many parts of the world. The Olympic Games have also consistently included water and snow based activities like rowing, skiing and boat racing to the litany of water based sports for which prizes are worn. In Nigeria we have the Abuja regatta, the Lagos regatta, the Calabar regatta, the Uyo regatta, the Osogbo regatta, etc, which are annual marine sports showcasing the rich art-cultural base of the people. During regatta competitions, boats are colourfully decorated, even the paddles. Costumes, headgears and ornaments are worn in different colourful appearance from contingent to contingent. If regattas are explored as veritable avenues for exhibiting visual arts, the festivals will become more culturally worthwhile and tourism will be encouraged on a broader scale. Without art, every culture is like a mere scarecrow. There is nowhere in the world that culture is discussed without art, they are inseparable arms of a common philosophy. Regatta culture is a complex web of symbolic and realistic art in motion. But in the tourist context, it would not make a wrong assertion to state that a lot needs to be done to raise the regatta tourist and art culture to the expected positions.

Anunobi and Anyanwu (2017) succinctly affirm:

*Despite all these endowments, tourism industry has suffered from neglect, and the resultant effect is poverty amidst plenty. The need arises to develop the numerous cultural heritage-based tourism, nature-based resources and hospitality opportunities in the region into a vibrant and viable tourism industry. Tourism development in the*

*region can trigger regional economic growth. The growth of the region's resources and business sectors will attract more investors, tourists and equally drive economic growth in the cities, states and region*

### **Artistic Imports in Nembe Regatta Festival**

Nembe regatta, like every other culture, showcases broadly, both the performing and visual arts in great and memorable ways. While the performing art aspect covers all the dance, drama, choreography, acrobatics and singing feats, the visual art aspect exhibits touchable artistic elements across the Fine and Applied arts in Sculpture, Painting, Graphics, Fashion and Textile designs. According to Egbujie (1976; 151), art is educational; through the events of encountering art works, a young person is initiated into the culture, themes, meanings and ideas. He buttresses further that the adult individual finds cultural confirmation on his assertion within the culture. Colours have been used to convey religious, psychological and emotional meaning to different people at various places and time. Ganagana (2011) states that the Ezon people's belief in and play on colour, knowing how to use them to attract nature's immediate consent, to interpret the relationship between mortals and the divinities could be mysterious yet inspirational and exciting. In actual war situations, the yellow palm fronds placed around the rear and front of the canoes symbolize death mission; while the warriors dress in dark loin skirts, head bands and shirts with charcoal smeared over their faces. But in modern regatta display, war reenactment shows a range of vibrantly coloured costumes and body decorations. The costumes of the paddlers are designed to complement the colour of the boats. There are usually no prizes to be given to the best costumes contingent, although prize giving may not be ruled out in recent times. The bulk of the cheer persons are women and children who also appear in colourful festival attires.

The Nembe regatta is a rich art exhibition piece in a melodramatic package. One who wishes to learn the basic art of the Nembe people should simply attend a regatta. The Nembe regatta is a cultural document of the Kingdom and deserves to be well harnessed for art and culture learning and enhancement. Learning is characterized by complexities of rituals and social activities as seen in the initiation of the young into various phases of development (Majason, 1976; 23). The regatta culture in Nembe Kingdom apart from entertainment and historical reminiscences is a form of art orientation. Brasford, Brown and Cocking (2000; 217) argue that all new learning involves transfer based on previous learning. This explains why history is not just written but also handed down to latter generations. In fact,

oral history was in existence in Africa before the white colonialists brought written historical documentations. It is good to know the event of the past and the attendant shortfalls because, according to Fafunwa (1974), a people

without the knowledge of their past are suffering from collective amnesia. Regatta has come to be clearly understood as a competition of culture, sport and artistic creativity. It is a historic re-enactment of the past and prescriptive prospectus for the future. Apart from dramatization, choreography and singing which are the core performing arts aspects of the Nembe regatta festival, there are also visual art contents as shown on the following table;

**Table 1: Distribution of Visual Art Contents of Nembe Regatta Festival**

	<b>Sculpture</b>	<b>Painting</b>	<b>Graphics</b>	<b>Textile/Fashion</b>
1	Canoe building/carving	Make-up art	Flexes/ banners	Costumes/ Embroidery
2	Paddle carving	Body painting	Boat inscriptions, crests	Ornamentation; beads, bracelets, ivory and rattle bands.
3	Pendants/ ivory carvings	Boat painting & decor	Contingency designation inscriptions	Crocheting; garlands, crests, arm bands, ankle bands, head gears, hairstyling.
4	Awards, plaques		Vest printings, Awards, plaques	Vest printings, Boat decoration

### **The Problem**

The research problem stems from the tepid assessment so far given to regatta festivals in coastal regions. Regatta whether as a festival on its own or as part of other ceremonies is not yet enlarged enough to showcase visual art especially because the layman ordinarily sees regatta as a festival of the performing arts in which the culture or history of a people is showcased. It has become pertinent for scholars to show why certain cultures should not be devalued in order for preferred ones to be installed. Sometimes, acculturation naturally evolves due to inter-trade or other social relations between people of different cultural backgrounds. According to Mbiti (1971), the mistake of the early missionaries was, therefore, not that they preached the gospel through a culture that they were familiar with, but that they first discredited the African culture before preaching the gospel. Consequent

upon this, the rich cultural and artistic ideals of Africa was eroded along with everything the white colonialists hated in order for 'civilization' to take place. It was in the light of such imperialist impunity that traditional regatta

was overtaken by the Whiteman's transatlantic slave and oil trades. And to worsen matters, what is left of regatta is now being perceived as traditional performing arts or simply, competitive sport.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions; 1. What were the historical events that influenced regatta in Nembe Kingdom? 2. What are the aspects of visual arts exhibited during regatta festivals? 3. What are the prospects of repackaging contemporary Nembe regatta for art and heritage studies?

### **Objectives**

This paper attempts to identify the visual art contents of regatta in Nembe kingdom and propose same for art and heritage studies. The specific research objectives were:

1. To find out the historical events that influenced regatta in Nembe Kingdom
2. To figure out the aspects of visual arts exhibited during regatta festivals,
3. To investigate the prospects of repackaging contemporary Nembe regatta for art and heritage studies.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Design**

The descriptive-survey research design was used for this study because it suits. According to Anikpo (1986), the descriptive research refers essentially to a research that tries to unravel the major elements and characteristics of any phenomenon or attribute. To put more clearly, the descriptive research design tries to find out and explain prevailing practices beliefs or attitudes, methods and approaches on ground over peculiar phenomena with a view to analyzing and interpreting them contextually.

#### **Participants and Data Collection**

A Likert-scale structured questionnaire was designed, tested and adopted as primary source of data collection. The questionnaires were distributed among a selection of Nembe chiefs, farmers, traders and tertiary institution students, involving all the age brackets apart from infants and

some teenagers. Initially, 100 copies of questionnaire were distributed but 90 were returned from all categories of respondents; 30 tertiary institution students living in and outside Bayelsa State, 30 Nembe residents

(semiliterate fishermen, farmers and petty traders), 20 Non-Nembe residents (civil servants and city traders) and 10 Nembe chiefs resident in Bayelsa State. The following is the demography of questionnaire distribution and percentage equivalents;

**Table 2: Percentage rating of questionnaire distribution**

	Participants (%)	No of questionnaires given out (%)	No of questionnaires returned (%)
1	30 tertiary students	30 (30%)	30 (30%)
2	35 Nembe residents	35 (35%)	30 (30%)
3	25 Non-Nembe residents	25 (25%)	20 (20%)
4	10 Nembe chiefs	10 (10%)	10 (10%)
	TOTAL	Given; 100 (100%)	Returned; 90 (90%)

### Procedure for Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using simple percentage calculations. There were 15 answer or guide options under each research question, from where objective responses were pulled viz- a-viz their percentage rating equivalents. Each table bears collated response data and is followed by corresponding discussion.

### Data Analysis

#### Research Question 1:

What were the historical events that influenced regatta in Nembe kingdom?

**Table 3: Percentage grading of likely historical events that influenced regatta in Nembe kingdom (n=90)**

	Options	S/Agree (%)		Agree (%)		Disagree (%)		S/Disagree (%)	
1	Trans-Atlantic slave trade	72	80%	18	20%	0	0%	0	0%
2	British/Portuguese oil trade	69	76.66 %	19	21.11%	2	2.23%	0	0%
3	Gender inequality	0	0%	6	6.67%	0	0%	84	93.33%

4	Commercial transport	30	33.33 %	20	22.22%	28	31.12%	12	13.33%
5	Niger-Delta amnesty	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
6	Communal warfare	90	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
7	Traditional boat racing sport	36	40%	20	22.22%	14	15.56%	20	22.22%
8	Fishing and farming	55	61.11 %	25	27.77%	5	5.56%	5	5.56%
9	Polygamy and Polyandry	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
10	Title taking system	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
11	Lack of hospitals and clinics	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
12	Distilling & trade in local gin	38	42.22 %	18	20%	30	33.33%	4	4.45%
13	Security from sea pirates	22	24.44 %	34	37.78%	30	33.33%	4	4.45%
14	Paganism	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
15	Family doctrine	0	0%	0	0%	10	11.11%	80	88.89%

Out of the 15 likely historical events stipulated on the above table, *Trans Atlantic slave trade* with 72 respondents (translating to 80%) strongly agreed and 18 (20% merely agreed) shows a strong affirmative response as a historical event that influenced regatta in Nembe land. *British/ Portuguese oil trade* had 69 (76.66%) respondents who strongly agreed to it while 19 (21.11%) agreed and a paltry 2 (2.23%) disagreed. *Communal warfare* was a highly acceptable historical influence with all 90 respondents (100%) ticking in the affirmative. In the mid-range, *commercial transport* had 30 respondents (33.33%) who strongly agreed while 20 (22.22%) merely agreed. However, 28 (31.12%) disagreed and 12 (13.33%) strongly disagreed. *Traditional boat racing sport* was also in the mid-rung with 36 (40%) strongly agreed, 20 (20.22%) agreed and strongly disagreed apiece while 14 (15.56%) merely disagreed. *Fishing and farming* had a near even distribution with 55 (61.11%) strongly agreeing while 25 (27.77%) agreed. A paltry 5 (5.56%) disagreed and strongly disagreed apiece. *Distilling and trade in local gin* had 38 respondents (42.22%) who strongly agreed and 18 (20%) who merely agreed whereas 30 (33.33%) disagreed. However, only 4 (4.45%) strongly disagreed. *Security from seas pirates* which is closely associated with *communal warfare* had 22 (24.44%) strongly supporting while 34 (37.78%) agreed. 30 (33.33%) disagreed and only 4 (4.45%) strongly disputed. The rest of the options had massive disagreement or rejection as shown on the table. The implication is that out of the 15 options, three (options 1, 2 and 6) were strongly accepted, five (options 4, 7, 8, 12, and 13) were ordinarily accepted while seven (options 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14 and 15) were massively rejected or disputed.



**Research Question 2:**

What are the aspects of visual art exhibited during regatta festivals?

**Table 4:** Percentage distribution of the aspects of visual art exhibited during regatta festivals (n=90)

	Options	S/Agree (%)		Agree (%)		Disagree (%)		S/Disagree (%)	
1	Canoe building (carving)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
2	Canoe painting & colouration	90	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	Make-up art; body painting and motifs	80	88.89%	10	11.11%	0	0%	0	0%
4	Rowing or paddling speed competition	4	4.45%	4	4.45%	10	11.11%	72	80%
5	Ornamental art; pendants and beads	60	66.67%	25	27.77%	5	5.56%	0	0%
6	Charming competition	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
7	Graphic art; banners, flags, vest printings & boat inscriptions	85	94.44%	5	5.56%	0	0%	0	0%
8	Gun and cannon shooting	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
9	Sculpture/textiles; bracelets, anklets, diadems, beads, crests, crochets	80	88.89%	5	5.56%	5	5.56%	0	0%
10	Distilling of local gin in the canoes	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
11	Sculpture/graphics; awards, plaques, gun dummies.	67	74.45%	10	11.11%	10	11.11%	3	3.33%
12	Drumming, dancing and choreography	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
13	Dropping babies into the sea	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
14	Ceramics; pots and vessels for fetching water	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
15	Sculpture; statues of Nembe kings & queens	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%

For research question 2, the above table revealed a surprising distribution of responses. Out of the 15 options, affirmative responses were given to *Canoe painting and colouration*, with all 90 respondents translating to 100% who strongly agreed that it is an aspect of visual art being exhibited. *Makeup art* also had a high positive response in that 80 (88.89%) strongly agreed whereas 10 (11.11%) agreed. *Ornamental art* had 60 (66.67%) strongly agreed, 25 (27.77%) merely agreed and only 5 (5.56%) disagreeing. *Graphic art* had 85 (94.44%) strongly agreeing with 5 (5.56%) closely agreeing. *Sculpture*

and textiles polled 67 respondents (74.45%) who strongly agreed, 10 (11.11%) apiece agreed and disagreed while only 3 (3.3%) strongly disagreed. In the mid-range, there were no resposerows classifiable as such but on the lower rung, *Rowing and paddling speed* had only 4 respondents (4.45%) who strongly agreed and agreed apiece, 10 (11.11%) disagreed and a whopping 72 (80%) strongly disagreed. The rest of the options were negatively responded to. Cumulatively, there were six options massively accepted (options 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11), non in the mid range of acceptance and nine (options 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15) were massively rejected as aspects of visual arts exhibited during regatta.

**Research Question 3:**

What are the prospects of repackaging contemporary Nembe regatta for art and heritage studies?

**Table 5:** Percentage allocation of the prospects of repackaging contemporary Nembe regatta for art and heritage studies (n=90)

	Options	S/Agree (%)		Agree (%)		Disagree (%)		S/Disagree (%)	
1	Repackaging cultural events that have war backgrounds will encourage youth restiveness in the Niger delta	70	77.77%	4	4.45%	1	1.11%	15	16.67%
2	Regatta is better left in its traditional state because modernization will dilute it	12	13.33%	17	18.9%	25	27.77%	36	40%
3	With prizes and award giving for the most artistic and culturally endowed contingents, regatta can be repackaged.	84	93.33%	0	0%	3	3.33%	3	3.33%
4	Naval and marine security policies may obstruct the project	36	40%	30	33.33%	4	4.45%	20	22.22%
5	Christian leaders may view the move as encouraging paganism	50	55.56%	25	27.77%	10	11.11%	5	5.56%
6	Banners and flags will make the re-packaging look like a land affair. E.g. School match past/parades	10	11.11%	3	3.33%	10	11.11%	67	74.45%
7	The repackaging must re-enact full gun and cannon shooting between opposing warriors	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	90	100%
8	It's risky to involve shooting of guns and cannons. Instead, gun dummies can be used	90	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
9	Let the contingents be allowed to use garlands and costumes	38	42.22%	4	4.45%	18	20%	30	33.33%

	copied from carnivals from other places								
10	In projecting the regatta culture, art exhibitions and expos could be staged by the sea banks while regatta war is re-enacted on sea simultaneously	60	66.67%	5	5.56%	0	0%	25	27.77%
11	It is good to re-package regatta but not in the creeks. Sea pirates and vandals may take advantage and strike.	40	44.44%	1	1.12%	9	10%	40	44.44%
12	The problem is that the participating artists may not be good canoe men while the canoe paddlers are not artists. So exhibiting art fully would be difficult	4	4.45%	38	42.22%	18	20%	30	33.33%
13	Visual art should reflect on the costumes, body adornment and make up art of the canoe paddlers.	80	88.89%	0	0%	5	5.56%	5	5.56%
14	The same way water canoes and floating timbers serve a mobile stage for performing art, they can also serve for visual art exhibitions	90	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
15	Visual art works should be presented under themes that reflect the coastal wars and other activities that originated the regatta culture	90	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Data on table 5 above shows a good prospect for repackaging regatta with the first option polling 70 respondents (77.77%) who agreed that *youth restiveness* may be reawakened because regatta has a war-like historical background; 15 (16.67%) however disagreed while 4 (4.455%) agreed. Only 1 responded (1.11%) merely disagreed. On using *Prizes and awards* to revive regatta, 84 (93.33%) strongly supported while 3 (3.33%) apiece disagreed and strongly disagreed. 12 (13.33%) supported that regatta is better left in its *traditional state* and 17 (18.9%) agreed. However, 25 (27.77%) merely disagreed and 36 (40%) strongly disagreed. On the fear for *Naval and security policy disruptions*, 36 (40%) strongly agreed and 30 (33.33%) closely agreed. However, 20 (22.22%) strongly disagreed while 4 (4.45%) disagreed. On the fears that *Christian leaders may view repackaging regatta as encouraging paganism*, 50 respondents translating to 55.56% strongly agreed, 25 (27.77) closely agreed, 10 (11.11%) disagreed, while 5 (5.56%) strongly disagreed. Sixty Seven (74.45%) respondents strongly disagreed with the option that *banners and flags will make regatta look like a land affair*. To this end, 10 (11.11%)

strongly disagreed and merely agreed apiece, but a paltry 3 (3.33%) merely agreed. On the *repackaging re-enacting full gun and cannon shooting*, all 90 (100%) strongly disagreed and the opposite view which says that it is risky to involve guns and cannons, all 90 (100%) now strongly supported. On the *copy of costumes and garlands from other places and festivals*, 38 respondents (42.22%) strongly agreed and 4 (4.45%) merely agreed. 30 (33.33%) strongly disagreed while 18 respondents (20%) merely disagreed. On *staging art exhibitions by the sea banks simultaneously with regatta on sea*, 60 (66.67%) strongly supported while 25 (27.77) strongly opposed but 5 (5.56%) merely agreed. An equal distribution of 40 respondents (44.44%) strongly agreed and strongly disagreed apiece/shared opinions while 9 (10%) merely disagreed. However only 1 (1.12%) supported the affirmative. 4 (4.45%) supported the option that *canoe men may not be artists and artists may not be canoe men*, so the synchrony may not work 38 (42.22 %) closely backed up while 30 (33.33%) strongly rejected the idea. 18 (20%) disagreed. But the opinion that visual arts should reflect on the costumes of regatta, 80 (88.89%) strongly supported, with 5 (5.56%) apiece disagreed and strongly disagreed apiece. The opinion that *art exhibition should be floated on water crafts* had all 90 (100%) strongly consenting. All the population also agreed strongly that visual art themes should reflect the activities that originated regatta. The kind of options originated for question 3 do not require classification of responses into high range (affirmative), mid-range or low range responses.

### **Discussion of Results**

The results highly imply that given good conditions and governmental support, the Nembe regatta culture could be refined for contemporary tourism and heritage studies. Though attention was focused more on the visual arts contents of regatta in Nembe Kingdom than the performing arts, certain visual artistic elements wear a combo of the visual and performing gambits. According to Okafor and Emeka (1998), art is another restless world, for it means human skill, then the creative skills (painting and theatre) all the creative and imaginative arts are grouped together as having something in common. This link sustains in the practice and concept according to which the language of art criticism is the same for all branches and application of arts. But in this context, to achieve this goal, in the words of Anunobi and Anyanwu (2017), it is necessary for (the) Southeast region of Nigeria to upgrade its tourism resources and facilities up to international standard, designate and develop a number of socially and historically significant sites for tourist consumption.

The results of the research revealed that communal warfare was the most accepted historical event that influenced regatta culture in Nembe

Kingdom, followed by Trans-Atlantic slave trade and British/Portuguese oil trade. According to Mondin (1985) culture is a widely used term which historically and currently has three meanings and their uses which can be called Elitarian, Pedagogical and Anthropological. Mondin buttresses that;

-In the Elitarian sense culture signifies a great quantity of knowledge and experiences... Thus, it can be said that a person has vast scientific, philosophical, artistic or literary culture.

-In the pedagogical sense, culture indicates the education, formation and acculturation of man. -In the anthropological sense, culture signifies the totality of customs, techniques, values, ideas, thoughts and thought-patterns as well as the norms that distinguish a social group, a tribe or a nation.

Much as fishing and farming were the mainstays of the people, their influence on regatta was of slightly above fifty percent rating. In effect, from the elitarian, pedagogical or anthropological sense, communal wars, transAtlantic slave and British/Portuguese oil trades stand as a cultural tripod on which one can study the root-base of Nembe people's art and ethnography. The research results further revealed that canoe painting and colouration is the most evident aspect of visual art exhibited during Nembe regatta, followed by make-up and body painting, then sculpture/textiles on even grading. Sculpture/graphics comes next, followed by mere ornamental art. In effect, if the above-mentioned visual art forms and elements are conspicuous during Nembe regatta festivals, it makes it easier for the cultural festival to be harnessed for art and heritage studies. Regatta is therefore no ordinary sport competition; it is like the Nembe people's Olympic Games as well as visual art exhibition spot.

Finally, our findings revealed that while it is expedient to utilize regatta in a modern heritage studies' sense, repackaging cultural events that have war backgrounds can encourage youth restiveness in the Niger delta if not properly packaged. While it is risky to shoot guns and cannons as done in the past, staging art exhibitions by the river banks can create a good visual art fair, and subsequently replace the dangerous game of gun shooting. If it becomes inevitable for the festival to take place in sailing canoes, then art works that majorly reflect the Nembe culture can be exhibited on the sail. It is deducible from data on table 5 that repackaging Nembe regatta culture entails encouraging visual arts that embody the cultural riches of the people while at the same time, doing away with dangerous gun and cannon shooting stunts. Prize giving (monetary or otherwise) should also be made a strong part of the boat racing, rowing, art and culture-bearing coastal

competitions. Previously, artistic concepts that were unimaginable are today pushed beyond limits due to availability of materials, tools and man's ability to craft out technique to achieve his design (Wilbur, 2003).

### **Some Regatta Houses or Contingents**

In the olden days, most boats are owned by head chiefs that are solely responsible for their decoration and maintenance. Each contingent also called a *group* or *house* is often named after the chief or personality who owns it. When a king or chief embarks on a journey, it looks like a royal carnival as he sits under a royal shelter or umbrella in the exquisitely decorated water craft. A typical Nembe ceremonial war canoe is about 25-30 feet long. A bamboo-framed raffia mat roof is often attached in order to provide shade for the paddlers, drummers, warriors and other occupants of the boat. The houses or contingents are usually represented during regatta to commemorate the royal splendor of each royal house. Below are some of the photographs taken during some regatta;



**Figure 1: The Ockiya house celebrating a successful regatta**

Photo: Angba, A.O. (2015)



**Figure 2: The Kolu/Koko house, about to set out during a regatta**

Photo: Angba, A.O. (2015)



**Figure 3: The Gamdede house preparing to sail**

Photo: Angba, A.O. (2015)



**Figure 4: The Amain house during a regatta**



**Figure 5: The Igbeta house in their red dominated colours and flags**  
Photo: Angba, A.O. (2015)



**Figure 6: The Yekrogha Gigi during a regatta**

Photo: Angba, A.O. (2015)



**Figure 7: The Amangi /Ojoko house during the 2014 regatta**

Photo: Angba, A.O. (2015)

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Findings show that the visual art of regatta cut across sculpture, textiles, painting and graphic arts. Net making and mending are other notable occupations in Nembe land and they are art works just like canoe and paddle making. According to Alagoa (1970) canoes seem so fundamental to the riverine lifestyle that some assume the art of canoe making came from heaven. This is because the canoe operates as a common denominator of Izon village life. In regions of Nembe kingdom where roads were non-existent till

date, canoes provide the primary means of transportation and inter-village communication. Indeed the Izon often measure distance by the time it takes to paddle from one point to another. Nearly all traditional practices in the region including fishing, farming, distilling of gin and trading are necessitated by water travel.

The following recommendations were made from this study:

1. Government at state and federal levels, should create enabling environment for modernization of traditional regatta via the exportation of its rich visual art contents. But in doing so, certain foreseeable possibilities must be taken charge of, in order for the perceived objectives not to be miscarried. Socio-cultural problems such as prostitution, drug trafficking, spread of diseases; unwanted pregnancies and culture mutilation that result from large influx of tourists, according to Ukabuili, and Okpoko (2016) constitute serious threats.
2. Regatta should be made to become international tourism attraction by people in authority, de-emphasizing fetish contents and upholding the artistic contents.
3. Coastal war scenarios could be re-enacted during modern regatta but it should be done with gun dummies and not real guns
4. Modern regatta could incorporate art exhibition on land or on sea banks while regatta festival goes on. Such exhibitions could cover Nembe artifacts and relics, new art products that reflect Nembe culture as well as art prospects.
5. Federal government should capitalize on repackaging regatta to assuage youth restiveness in the Niger Delta.
6. Awards and Prizes could be brought into the new regatta for the most artistic and culturally endowed contingents.
7. People of other coastal parts of Nigeria should be invited to participate in the new regatta competition, thereby widening the popularity and contents of regatta.
8. Whereas regatta is already part of some ceremonies like the coronation and burial of Kings in Nembe land, it should be widened to cover national holidays like the October 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Day, May 27<sup>th</sup> children's day and the May 1<sup>st</sup> worker's day among others.

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