

**THE SEIGBEIN FESTIVAL: CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE  
TO THE KABO ETHNIC GROUP.**

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**BENIN CITY**

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**BEING AN ORIGINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGIONS, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN RELIGIONS.**

**OCTOBER, 2025**

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by **ARIREDIEGHA OBIBO  
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## **DEDICATION**

This work is humbly dedicated to God Almighty, the source of divine wisdom, knowledge, and inspiration.

I also dedicate this work to my beloved big sister, Mrs. Joy Gane-ere (Mummy Trump), and my younger brother, Emmanuel Godwin Obibo, whose immense support, encouragement, and consistent love have been invaluable throughout my academic journey.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the cultural significance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival and its relevance to the Kabo ethnic group of Patani Local Government Area, Delta State. The research aims to examine how the festival shapes the identity of the Kabo indigenes, fosters community cohesion, and promotes cultural preservation amidst modern influences. Specifically, the study investigates the historical origins and evolution of the festival, examines its impact on social integration and community development, analyzes the cultural practices and traditions showcased during its celebration, and assesses its relevance to younger generations and its potential for sustaining indigenous heritage.*

*A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study, combining both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with community leaders, festival custodians, and participants, as well as through direct participant observations by the researcher, who possesses an insider's perspective of the event from personal experience. Additional data were obtained through online communications with key informants to verify observed practices. Secondary data sources, including relevant literature, festival documents, photographs, and videos, were analyzed to provide contextual depth. The data collected were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and underlying meanings within the cultural framework of the festival.*

*Findings reveal that the Seigbein Festival transcends mere performance; it represents a vital instrument for cultural preservation, spiritual renewal, and social unity among the Kabo ethnic group. The festival embodies ancestral valor and divine guardianship, reinforcing traditional values and collective identity. It also serves as a platform for intergenerational knowledge transfer, community development, and cultural tourism. Ultimately, the Seigbein Festival remains a living testimony of the Kabo indigenes' resilience, spirituality, and rich cultural heritage in an era of increasing globalization and religious transformation.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The Kabowei Seigbein Festival is a vibrant celebration of the rich cultural heritage of the Kabowei ethnic group in Patani, Delta State. This annual festival honours Oprozaowei, the revered founder of the Kabowei kingdom, who migrated from the Gbaramatu creeks and established a thriving community in present-day Kabuo Bulu. The festival showcases a kaleidoscope of traditional activities, including the majestic Pere Ogele (King's Procession), the Azo Masquerade's energetic performances, and the Apia Ogele's captivating dance displays.

The Kabowei Seigbein Festival is an integral part of the Kabo people's identity, reflecting their history, values, and traditions. It serves as a platform for the community to come together, celebrate their heritage, and pass down cultural practices to younger generations. The festival is a testament to the community's resilience and determination to preserve their cultural heritage.

The Kabo ethnic group have a rich cultural history, with a strong emphasis on their race or society. Their cultural practices and traditions are deeply rooted in their history and are reflected in their festivals, music, and art. The Kabowei Seigbein Festival is a significant

part of this cultural heritage, and its celebration is essential to the community's sense of identity and belonging.

Despite its significance, the Kabowei Seigbein Festival has received limited scholarly attention. Most studies on cultural festivals in Nigeria have focused on more prominent festivals, such as the Osun Osogbo festival or the Eyo festival, leaving a gap in the literature on smaller, community-based festivals like the Kabowei Seigbein Festival. *This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the cultural significance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival and its relevance to the Kabo ethnic group.*

The study of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival is also important in the context of cultural preservation and promotion. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, many traditional cultural practices and festivals are facing the threat of extinction. The Kabowei Seigbein Festival is no exception, and efforts need to be made to document and preserve it for future generations.

*This study will provide a comprehensive examination of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival, including its history, cultural practices, and significance to the Kabo people. By exploring the festival's cultural significance, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural festivals in promoting community development and preserving cultural heritage.*

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The Kabowei Seigbein Festival is facing challenges that threaten its continuity and cultural significance. The increasing influence of modernization and urbanization has led to a decline in interest among younger generations, who are more attracted to Westernized forms of entertainment. Most importantly, the lack of proper documentation and preservation efforts has resulted in the gradual loss of cultural knowledge and practices associated with the festival.

This study aims to address the problem by exploring the cultural significance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival and its relevance to Kabo society. By examining the festival's history, cultural practices, and impact on community development, this research will provide valuable insights into the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

## **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

### **Aim:**

The aim of this study is to explore the cultural significance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival and its relevance to the Kabo ethnic group of Patani Local Government Area, examining its role in shaping their identity, fostering community cohesion, and promoting cultural preservation.

### **Objectives:**

1. To investigate the historical origins and evolution of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival.

2. To examine the festival's impact on community development and social cohesion in Patani.
3. To analyze the cultural practices and traditions showcased during the festival.
4. To assess the festival's relevance to younger generations and its potential for cultural preservation.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural festivals in promoting community development and preserving cultural heritage. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the role of traditional festivals in shaping identity and fostering community cohesion.

The study will also benefit the Kabo community by documenting and preserving their cultural heritage, promoting cultural awareness, and providing recommendations for the festival's sustainability. Furthermore, the research will contribute to the field of cultural studies, providing a framework for understanding the significance of cultural festivals in Nigeria and beyond.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

##### **Scope:**

This study focuses on the Kabowei Seigbein Festival, its cultural significance and relevance to the Kabo ethnic group. The research will explore the festival's history,

cultural practices, and impact on community development, with a specific focus on Patani, Delta State.

**Limitation:**

The study is limited to the Kabo Society of Patani, Delta State, and may not be generalizable to other cultural festivals or communities. Additionally, the research is limited by the available literature and resources on the Kabowei Seigbein Festival.

**1.6 Research Methodology**

This study will employ a qualitative research approach, using a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods.

**Primary Data Collection:**

- Interviews: In-depth interviews have been conducted with key stakeholders, including community leaders, festival organizers, and participants.
- Observations: Participant observations have been made as the researcher has an insider's view while growing up during secondary school days and a few years after secondary school, taking knowledge of the cultural practices, rites and traditional displays within the festive period.
- Online Communications: To further confirm the researcher observations, Online calls have been made and discussions were held with community members, leaders and active organizers of the festival to gather more information on their perceptions and experiences of the festival.

### **Secondary Data Collection:**

- **Literature Review:** A comprehensive review of existing literature on the Kabowei Seigbein Festival and cultural studies was conducted.
- **Documentary Analysis:** Relevant documents, including festival programs, photographs, and videos, have been analyzed to provide additional insights.

The data collected has been analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying patterns and themes that emerge from the data.

### **1.7 Definition/Clarification of Terms:**

- **Cultural Significance:** The importance or value of a cultural practice or tradition to a community or society.
- **Kabowei Seigbein Festival:** A traditional festival celebrated by the Kabo indigenes of Patani Local Government Area in Delta State.
- **Relevance:** The degree to which something remains meaningful, useful, or connected to a group or context. In this study, it refers to the present-day connection, usefulness, and impact of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival on the lives of the Kabo indigenes — explaining why the festival still matters today in the modern Kabowei society.
- **Kabowei** is derived from two words, "Kabo" and "Owei". Kabo is the name of the Kingdom and is said to mean "Truth" or "Uprightness". Owei simply means

"Man" or "Person". So, Kabo-wei simply means "Man of Truth" or "Upright man", or better still, "a man from the Kabo Kingdom".

Kabowei, put together, simply translates to "A Man from the Kabo Kingdom" or, better still, it's a name used to refer to indigenes of Kabo Kingdom.

- **Segbein** is simply the annual festival of the Kabo society, showcasing their rich cultural heritage and traditions.
- **Kabo indigenes:** An ethnic group residing in Patani Local Government Area of Delta State and also in Adagbabiri community and New Patani, among other surrounding locations in present-day Bayelsa State, with the Kabo clan spanning across the River Niger, which serves as a boundary between Delta State and Bayelsa today.
- **Ethnic Group:** An ethnic group is a community of individuals who share a common culture, language, ancestry, and traditions that make them distinct from other groups.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW.

#### A CAREFUL REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

##### 2.1 Brief Overview of this Chapter

This chapter reviews existing scholarly works, oral traditions, historical accounts, and cultural studies that are relevant to the Kabowei Seigbein Festival. It provides a framework for understanding the cultural significance of festivals in African societies, particularly within the Niger Delta region, and situates the Seigbein Festival within the broader discourse of cultural identity, communal solidarity, and socio-religious practices.

##### 2.2 Concept of Festivals in African Societies

Festivals play a vital role in African cultural and religious life, serving as avenues for communal interaction, spiritual renewal, and the preservation of heritage. They reflect the belief systems, social values, and collective identity of traditional societies. Several scholars have examined the significance of festivals in African contexts, offering diverse perspectives on their functions, meanings, and contributions to communal life.

In **Jacob K. Olupona**, *“Ceremonies, festivals, and rituals”* in *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (2014) — He asserts that festivals honour divinities or cultural heroes, renew bonds with ancestors, and carry the community’s legacy forward.

**Loretta Asare-Kumi**, “*Examining the Place of Values in Traditional African Festivals*” (2020) She argues that traditional African festivals carry moral and social values, and are embedded in belief systems and communal life.

**Agaba Orngu & other authors**, from a study in *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* (2024). Their work notes that festivals create a sense of community, shared identity, historical continuity, and cultural survival.

**Ogbenika & Mbalisi**. Their studies highlighted the “relational” and “cohesive” nature of African festivals, explaining how festivals strengthen kinship, neighbouring relations, and communal bonds.

**Nwanaju Uzoma T.**, “*CAN CULTURE UNITE? An Explorative Gestalt of Iwa Akwa and Seigbein Festivals*” Shows festivals as vehicles of unity, identity formation, and economic/communal benefit.

According to **Nwachukwu (2001)**, “Festivals in African societies are organized communal events that bind people together, reaffirm their shared values, and strengthen the social fabric of the community.” Nwachukwu stresses that African festivals are instruments of unity and communal renewal.

**Mbiti (1990)**, in his influential book *African Religions and Philosophy*, stated: “Festivals are moments when the invisible world of the spirits, divinities, and ancestors is brought

into communion with the visible world of human beings.” This highlights the religious dimension of African festivals, where rituals link the physical and spiritual realms.

**Opoku (1978)**, in *Festivals in Ghana*, observed: “African festivals are avenues for transmitting history, morality, and cultural identity from one generation to another through music, dance, and drama.” Opoku’s view underlines the educational function of festivals as tools of cultural continuity.

**Durkheim (1912)**, though a Western sociologist, offered a broader perspective in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*: “The collective effervescence experienced in festivals reaffirms the solidarity of the community and strengthens the bonds between individuals.” His theory supports the idea that African festivals function as mechanisms of social integration.

**Edeh (1985)** asserted: “Festivals in African settings are a celebration of life, a collective expression of gratitude to the divine and ancestors for protection, fertility, and sustenance.” Edeh emphasizes the thanksgiving dimension embedded in African ritual celebrations.

Similarly, **Okpewho (1992)** argued: “Festivals are dramatizations of a people’s worldview; they encapsulate myths, values, and the ideals of the society in symbolic forms.” For **Okpewho**, festivals are cultural texts that must be interpreted to understand African philosophy and identity.

Finally, **Falola (2003)**, in *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*, stated: “Festivals are a cultural compass, reminding communities of their origins, affirming their identity, and providing a sense of continuity amidst change.” He situates festivals as anchors of identity in a rapidly modernizing society.

Thus, festivals in African societies embody the interplay of religion, culture, and social life, making them indispensable to communal survival and continuity.

### **2.3 Festivals in the Niger Delta Region**

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and elaborate festivals. Among the Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko, and other ethnic groups, festivals serve as platforms for expressing communal pride, religious devotion, and political authority. Common features of Niger Delta festivals include masquerades, boat regattas, traditional dances, drumming, sacrifices, and communal feasting.

The Ijaw ethnic nationality, to which the Kabowei belong, celebrates several festivals that are connected to water deities, ancestral spirits, and ecological cycles. These festivals often highlight the people’s intimate relationship with rivers and waterways, which are central to their livelihood, spirituality, and social organization.

### **2.4 Concept of Festivals in Kabowei Communities.**

Festivals hold a central place in the traditional life and cultural consciousness of the Kabowei (Kabo) society. They are not mere occasions of entertainment but structured

socio-cultural and spiritual events through which the people express their collective identity, reinforce their communal values, and honour their ancestral heritage. In Kabowei communities, festivals serve as an avenue for uniting different quarters and villages, strengthening kinship ties, and transmitting indigenous knowledge across generations.

The Kabowei indigenes, like many Niger Delta groups, view festivals as a reflection of their cosmology and worldview. These celebrations are tied to specific historical experiences, environmental realities, and religious beliefs. Festivals often coincide with the agricultural calendar, the fishing season, or the commemoration of heroic ancestors and deities. Among the Kabowei, festivals are also a medium through which oral traditions, songs, dances, and ritual performances are preserved and showcased in their authentic forms.

According to scholars of African traditional religion such as Mbiti (1990) and Idowu (1973), festivals in African societies are “time markers” that help communities to remember the past, live meaningfully in the present, and prepare spiritually for the future. This interpretation aligns with the Kabowei understanding of festivals as a symbolic bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. During festival periods, the people believe that ancestral spirits return to commune with the living, bless the land, and ensure fertility and prosperity for the coming season.

Kabowei festivals also function as instruments of social regulation. Certain rituals and taboos guide the celebration, reinforcing moral conduct and respect for communal authority. The community uses the festival season to reaffirm loyalty to the Pere (traditional ruler), elders, and sacred institutions. These events often feature masquerade displays, drumming, dancing, libation, and boat regattas, which are deeply embedded in the identity of the riverine people.

In addition, festivals provide significant socio-economic benefits. People from different Kabowei communities and beyond gather for trade, cultural exchange, and social interaction. Markets boom during these celebrations, and visitors from neighboring ethnic groups participate, enhancing intergroup relations and economic integration.

In essence, festivals in Kabowei communities are not isolated cultural practices but complex social systems that blend spirituality, governance, economy, and identity. They remain crucial for sustaining the collective memory, solidarity, and cultural continuity of the Kabo people in both Delta and Bayelsa States.

## **2.5 Review of Related Works on Kabowei Seigbein Festival.**

Several scholars have examined the role of festivals in Nigerian and African contexts. For instance:

Studies on Ijaw cultural festivals highlight their connection to water deities and ecological cycles.

Research on Niger Delta heritage emphasizes the role of festivals in communal peace-building and conflict resolution.

Literature on intangible cultural heritage stresses the need for preservation amidst globalization and modernization pressures.

The Kabowei Seigbein Festival, a traditional celebration of the Kabo communities, has garnered limited scholarly attention despite its cultural significance. However, after a rigorous research, I was able to engage in a brief literary review from a written work on Kabowei Festival by "EKPOTUATIN CHARLES ARIYE" that was sent to me by my cousin brother "Hon. Michael Ebiowei Matthew", providing a theoretical framework for understanding the importance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival. Hon. Michael Ebiowei, a true son of the soil, also helped in disseminating accurate information as regards the festival to me as we both grew up in Patani, and I was a part of the festival at some point "for like three consecutive years" before relocating to Benin City for work and also to further my education.

Based on Charles Ariye's 14-page work titled "*The Seigbein (Festival) and Its Significance in Kabowei Kingdom*," he drew inspiration from Emmanuel Ebiowei Guanah's work titled "*A Short History of Kabowei Kingdom*." This source explicitly provides a brief historical background of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival. His assertions are as follows:

*“According to Guanah’s account, when Oproza the father of Gbarainwei, Kumbowei and Kabowei died, Kabowei was unavailable, having ventured to foreign lands engaged in piracy and other nefarious activities up the Niger River, for Kabowei was said to be a giant of a man with enviable strength. Upon his return however, he was informed of his father’s demise, and that he Oproza – had already been buried by his other children, Gbarainwei and Kumbowei. On hearing this development, Kabowei is said to have wept bitterly not ostensibly over the death of his beloved father alone, but mainly because of self recrimination over his Kabowei’s – bad deeds against his two brothers, Gbarainwei and Kumbowei. Tradition has it that; Kabowei was highhanded towards his siblings, often being disrespectful and insolent in his relationship with them, and selling away their daughters into slavery.<sup>15</sup> For all these, it is said that Kabowei fell into intense sorrow and deep distress, and only came out of it following the advice of his own children to organize his own befitting funeral ceremony to honour his departed father (Oproza).*

*Thereafter Kabowei is said to have picked up courage, quickly accepted the suggestion of his children, and proceeded to make appropriate preparations to honour his father and make peace with his brothers. It is this organization of a befitting burial for his father over dissatisfaction with how his brothers had buried Oproza in his absence, according to one account, is what transformed subsequently in the following year after the first*

*celebration to become the yearly Kabowei Seigbein.<sup>16</sup> One of the first steps Kabowei took was to reach out to his brothers, Gbarainowei and Kumbowei and begged them for forgiveness. He also asked them to support and join him to bestow further honour on their late father with his planned burial ceremony. The brothers obliged his request, but advised Kabowei to desist henceforth from his atrocities, and thereafter they proceeded to forgive him and prayed for him. Hence, it has been explained that the name Kabowei Seigbein was formulated by his brothers Gbarainowei and Kumbowei, implying that Kabowei was throwing away his sins and bad deeds. (Seigbein Tangbei). Consequently, having made peace with his brothers, Kabowei engaged in the elaborate preparations to honour his father with an unforgettable ceremony which would translate as earlier said to an annual event subsequently. Activities were shared among his sons and grandsons, with Taware, responsible for dictating and announcing the commencement of the burial ceremonies. After the annunciations, Taware was also responsible for performing special ceremonies known only to him for twelve days, referred to above as the Amateri Ritual. After the Amafini with a gunshot, all activities were unfolded and the festivities proceeded in full swing. Guanah has offered a veritable explanation on the implicit meaning of the Seigbein festival to the people of Kabowei. According to him, in the time of Kabowei, when the ceremonies were in full swing, leading his children in procession, Kabowei danced from one end of the community to the other professing his misdeeds and asking for forgiveness*

*in the following words, 'Enemieseimene akene ebuomo, enemieseimene ke emo tangbeiyo, enemieseimene pua teinfa'. These wordings when translated conforms to, 'Forgive me for all my sins, I am throwing away my sins, my sins should disengage from me and flow away with the river waters and tides'. Guanah has suggested that it is discernible that the Seigbein festival is for yearly repentance on the one hand, and for blessings on the other hand. He has also offered that the Seigbein does not in any way represent a fetish ceremony, or a process of idol worship as misconstrued in some quarters, but rather it has become more of a remembrance ceremony in honour of Oproza, the father of Kabowei. Clearly, the import of this suggestion by Guanah cannot be overemphasized within the framework of this discourse."*

The present researcher aims to bridge the gap in existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival, a cultural celebration of the Kabo people that has been largely undocumented in written form. Given the scarcity of scholarly work on this topic, this study seeks to contribute meaningfully to our in-depth understanding of the festival's significance in shaping the cultural identity of the Kabo people."



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE KABO ETHNIC GROUP: HISTORY AND CULTURE.

#### 3.1 The Historical Origin of the Kabo Society

The Kabowei, also known as the Kabo people, are part of the larger Ijaw ethnic nationality, one of the oldest and most widespread groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Oral traditions trace their ancestry to Oprozaowei, a revered patriarch who migrated from the Gbaramatu creeks in present-day Delta State. From there, he led his followers across rivers and creeks until they settled at Kabuo Bulu, which later developed into the nucleus of what is known today as the Kabowei Kingdom.

The Kabowei indigenes speak the Kabo version of the Izon “Ijaw” language, and they see themselves as descendants of men and women of truth and uprightness, reflected in their name: “Kabowei” derived from Kabo (truth/uprightness) and owei (man/person). This etymology embodies the moral values they hold in high esteem. Through successive generations, the Kabowei have expanded across the River Niger into parts of Patani (Delta State) and Adagbabiri, New Patani (Bayelsa State), forming communities that remain interconnected by shared ancestry, kinship, and culture.

Historically, the Kabowei indigenes have maintained strong ties with other Ijaw clans such as the Gbaramatu, Egbema, and Ogbe-Ijoh, while also interacting with Urhobo, Itsekiri, and Isoko neighbors. These interactions shaped their identity and fostered a reputation for resilience, adaptability, and cultural pride.

### **3.2 The Geographical Location of Kabo Land**

The Kabowei indigenes are primarily located in the Patani Local Government Area of Delta State and parts of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The Niger River serves as a natural boundary, splitting their settlements across two states. Their environment is predominantly riverine and coastal, characterized by creeks, swamps, and wetlands typical of the Niger Delta ecosystem.

This geographical setting has played a significant role in shaping their lifestyle. The rivers not only serve as avenues of communication and transportation but also as sources of livelihood, spiritual inspiration, and cultural symbolism. The Kabowei's close connection with the waterways explains the prominence of boat regattas, water-related rituals, and fishing festivals in their cultural celebrations, particularly during the Seigbein Festival.

The location of Kabowei communities along trade routes of the Niger has historically encouraged inter-ethnic contact, migration, and economic exchange, making them an important part of the socio-cultural landscape of the Niger Delta.

**Communities under Kabowei Kingdom are as follows:**

*Under Delta State, Patani LGA:*

- Koloware
- Aven
- Taware

- Water-Mass
- Akoware
- Ogeinware
- Ekise
- Osou-ware
- Okruware
- Afenaware
- Oruware
- Oyoware
- Opu-Kabu (Patani)
- Pereware
- Asedeni
- Abare

***Under Bayelsa State, Sagbama LGA:***

- Asamabiri
- Ekperi-ware
- Elemebiri (Ofonibeingha)
- Trofani Aduku.
- New Patani (Kabokiri)
- Adagbabiri

### **3.3 The Political Structure of the Kabo Ethnic Group**

The political system of the Kabowei is deeply rooted in traditional institutions that have been preserved across centuries. At the apex of authority is the *Pere (King)*, who serves as the custodian of the people's culture, traditions, and ancestral values. The Pere is supported by a *council of chiefs and elders*, who represent the various communities and clans within the kingdom. These chiefs advise the Pere, settle disputes, and ensure that communal harmony is preserved.

Below the central authority, each community within Kabowei is led by *Amadaowei and Amakosowei* "Village Head and Eldest Men" who exercise authority on local matters. Decision-making is typically collective, emphasizing consultation and consensus, which reflects the people's democratic ethos.

Traditionally, political leadership is intertwined with religious authority, as rulers are seen not only as administrators but also as spiritual mediators who maintain the bond between the people, the ancestors, and the gods. The annual Seigbein Festival, for instance, reaffirms the Pere's legitimacy, as he plays a central role in rituals and ceremonies.

### **3.4 The Socio-Economic System of the Kabo Society**

The economy of the Kabowei society is primarily shaped by their riverine environment. Fishing has historically been their dominant occupation, with men and women engaged in

catching and processing fish for consumption and trade. Canoe-making, net-weaving, and related fishing crafts are also integral to their economy.

Alongside fishing, the Kabowei practice farming on fertile riverbanks, cultivating crops such as cassava, yam, maize, and plantain. Palm produce (oil and kernels) also forms an important part of their agricultural economy, contributing both to local use and external trade. Women are particularly active in farming and local markets, where they sell fish, farm produce, and handicrafts, thereby sustaining household economies.

The proximity of the Kabowei to major waterways positioned them as traders and middlemen in inter-ethnic commerce, exchanging fish, palm produce, and other goods with Urhobo, Itsekiri, and Isoko neighbors. In modern times, civil service, education, and migration to urban areas have expanded their economic profile, though fishing and farming remain the backbone of their traditional economy.

### **3.5 The Belief System of the Kabo Indigenes.**

The traditional religion of the Kabowei centers on the veneration of ancestors, divinities, and natural spirits, with water deities occupying a particularly significant place due to their riverine environment. The most important of these is Seigbein, revered as both a protector and symbol of truth, justice, and communal wellbeing.

Rituals, sacrifices, and festivals are central to their spiritual life, serving as avenues to seek protection, fertility, prosperity, and peace. The Seigbein Festival, celebrated

annually, represents the high point of this belief system, bringing the community together in thanksgiving and renewal.

In addition to indigenous spirituality, the Kabowei have long embraced Christianity, especially since the colonial era, leading to a blending of Christian practices with traditional customs. Today, while many identify as Christians, traditional rites, festivals, and belief systems continue to play strong cultural roles, especially during communal ceremonies.

The Kabowei worldview emphasizes the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical worlds, with the ancestors and divinities believed to actively influence the fortunes of the living. This belief reinforces moral order, social harmony, and respect for traditions within the community.

The Kabowei indigenes, through their history, geography, political institutions, economic activities, and belief systems, present a vibrant cultural identity that remains resilient in the face of modernization. Their historical origin in the Gbaramatu creeks, their settlement across the Niger, their strong political institutions under the Pere, and their socio-economic reliance on fishing and farming, all underline their uniqueness as an Ijaw subgroup. Above all, their enduring belief system — expressed most prominently in the Seigbein Festival — continues to define who they are and the values they uphold.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SEIGBEIN FESTIVAL: ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE TO THE KABO ETHNIC GROUP.

#### 4.1 The Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival

The Kabowei Seigbein Festival usually spans a total of 23 days of rich cultural, spiritual, and communal activities. The festival typically commences from the month of March and extends into the month of April. Towards the end of March, the town is declared closed, marking the beginning of the Days of Solemnity. These 12 solemn days often stretch from late March into early April, sometimes concluding in the first week or extending into the second week of April, depending on the year's cultural calendar.

According to *Chief Oyinkro Sunday Bomabebe, the Twelve Days of Solemn actually span eleven days, though the twelfth day is traditionally included in the count. This twelfth day holds special significance, as it marks the official opening of the town by the Taware Quarters, signifying the transition from solemnity to celebration.* From this point, the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival unfolds vibrantly over the next 12 days, featuring a series of diverse and symbolic festivities, each carrying its unique meaning, significance, and cultural expression. The twelfth day marks the beginning of the main festive ceremonies, starting with the *Amayanri-Ogele*, which serves as the first major event of the Seigbein celebrations.

This progression from sacred stillness to jubilant celebration, beautifully reflects the Kabo indigenes deep spiritual consciousness and communal unity, blending reverence, renewal, and rejoicing into one of the most majestic and meaningful cultural events in the Kabowei Kingdom.

In recent years, the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival has undergone a remarkable transformation under the dynamic leadership of *His Royal Majesty, Barr. (Dr.) Peremobowei Shedrack Erebulu, Aduo III*, who was formally *coronated on the 16th of August, 2017* as the *Pere of Kabowei Kingdom*. As a young, handsome, vibrant, and visionary monarch, who also embraces the Christian faith, His Majesty has successfully refined and modernized the festival to create a more inclusive, peaceful, and joyous atmosphere.

The Pere's decision to hold one of his annual thanksgiving services at the Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Patani, reflects his commitment to fostering harmony between the traditional institution and the Christian community. In addition, during one of his public appearances in a church setting reportedly within an Anglican Church environment the Pere was publicly honoured with an award in recognition of his positive leadership and contributions to the Kabowei Kingdom. This cordial interaction between the Pere and the Christian bodies has continued to strengthen the bridge between tradition and faith, contributing to the rebranding and modernization of the Seigbein Festival while preserving its cultural depth and spiritual essence.

The festival now emphasizes peace, unity, and the eradication of evil practices—values that resonate deeply across both traditionalist and Christian circles. Under the Pere’s leadership, the Seigbein Cultural Festival has become a platform that harmonizes cultural heritage with modern spirituality, demonstrating that traditional customs and Christian faith can not only coexist but also complement one another beautifully.

The festival’s success is further reflected in the enthusiastic cooperation of churches and Christian groups within the community. Even during the traditional “lockdown” period, local churches respectfully comply with cultural directives by moderating their sound systems and conducting worship in quiet reverence. Once the town is officially declared open, both Christians and traditionalists freely participate in the communal dances and festivities, demonstrating a renewed spirit of harmony and mutual respect between the two spiritual spheres.

Indeed, the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival stands today as a shining example of how culture, faith, and leadership can intertwine to foster unity and progress. The Pere’s visionary reign since 2017 has left an indelible mark on the community, and his continued leadership promises an even brighter future for the Kabowei Kingdom.

#### 4.1.1 The Amateri and Amafini: Locking and Opening of the Town

One of the most symbolic and spiritually charged aspects of the Seigbein Celebration is the Amateri and Amafini, which translate to the “locking” and “opening” of the town — marking the official commencement of the festival cycle.

*The term **Amateri** is derived from two Izon words: **Ama**, meaning “town” or “community,” and **Teri**, meaning “to close” or “to lock.” Hence, **Amateri** literally means “locking the town.” Conversely, **Amafini** combines **Ama** (town) and **Fini** (open), translating as “opening the town.” This process is also referred to as **Amayanri**, meaning “loosening, opening” or “setting the town free,” symbolizing renewal, liberation, and preparedness for celebration.*

The Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival officially begins with the **Amateri** the formal locking of the town for twelve days, a period marked by solemnity, reverence, and observance of traditional restrictions. Once the town is declared locked by the **Taware quarters** (*the traditional custodians of this ritual*), an official town crier announces the decree, warning against loud music, drumming, or the use of sound systems. The entire community then enters a sacred phase of quiet reflection and ritual observance.

In earlier times, this solemn period sometimes resulted in tension between Christian churches who often used loud speakers during worship and traditional custodians enforcing silence. Youths devoted to cultural preservation occasionally stormed church premises to enforce compliance, seizing or destroying sound equipment to uphold

traditional reverence. However, in recent times, under the leadership of the young and visionary Christian Pere, such conflicts have been peacefully resolved. The organizers now ensure harmony by officially notifying churches reportedly through formal letters while the Pere personally leads by example. His annual thanksgiving service, often held in the church, serves as a symbolic gesture of unity between Christianity and traditional heritage within the Kabowei Kingdom.

On the ninth day, a transitional ritual known as ***Kala Amafini*** (*Kala meaning “small”*) translated as “*small town opening*” is performed. This partial opening permits limited activity and signals the community’s gradual preparation for the forthcoming grand celebrations.

During this stage, the Kabowei community engages in two culturally significant fishing exercises: **Onise-Tubo** (*small-scale or children’s fishing*) and **Onise-Eyin** (*large-scale or mother fishing*). These practices carry deep symbolic meanings of sustenance, unity, and hospitality. The fish caught during these activities are prepared as communal meals for the festival, embodying the Kabowei ideals of generosity, abundance, and shared joy.

At the end of the twelve-day solemn period, the Taware community performs the Amafini the full opening of the town. This act is heralded by the firing of ceremonial gunshots, historically executed using the ***Okirizi*** a traditional device made of gunpowder and carbide. *The Okirizi is fired seven times, announcing that the town is officially open, thus signaling the commencement of the vibrant Seigbein festivities.*

*The principal ceremonies and events that follow include:*

- The Amayanri Ogele led by Osuoware Community
- The Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele Ceremony, Led by the Ekibiri Communities  
Friendly Football Match between the Kabowei and Kumbowei Kingdoms.
- Tukpa Ogele led by Okruware Community
- The Pere-Ogele led by the Pere of Kabowei Kingdom.  
The Trafentu
- Biri Ogele displayed by the three Akubo communities
- Riverside Events - featuring  
Emuarou (War Boat Regatta)  
Swimming and canoe-pulling competitions  
The Pere's Cup Finals
- Homage Day – by all ethnic groups within Kabowei Kingdom
- Ekise-Omenjor / Owusei
- Kena-Bai – by Adagbabiri Community
- Awigiri Boat Cruise  
the Awigiri Love Boat Cruise  
the Awigiri Reggae Boat Cruise
- Kabowei Day – which features the display of Opu-Obori and Azo (celebrated every three years)

*Each of these ceremonies encapsulates aspects of the kingdom's social, spiritual, and cultural identity, contributing to the grandeur and continuity of the Kabowei heritage.*

#### **4.2 The Amayanri-Ogele Led by Osuwari Clan**

The Amayanri Ogele, led by the Osuwari Clan, is a vital cultural event that officially marks the opening of the town after the twelve days of solemn observance. The term “Amayarin” can be etymologically dissected into two Izon components: “Ama,” meaning town, and “Yanri,” meaning open or set free. Thus, Amayanri Ogele literally translates to “town-opening ceremony.”

According to Mr. *Matthew Ebipua the Karowei (Chief Priest) of Osuware Clan* the Amayanri-Ogele marks the ceremonial proclamation that the Kabowei Kingdom is officially open to festivities and communal celebrations. It serves as the ritual declaration that ushers in the period of jubilation, signaling the commencement of the Seigbein Festival's cultural and spiritual activities across the kingdom.

Mr. Ebipua, as the spiritual custodian of Osuware Quarters, customarily leads this grand procession alongside other chiefs and elders of the Osuware community, guiding the people in traditional chants and songs of invocation, gratitude, and joy that announce the dawn of the kingdom's festive season.

During this sacred event, the Osuware community takes the lead in the ceremonial parade, offering songs dedicated to their revered deity, Osubogidi—whose divine power is invoked to sanctify and bless the celebration.

*The traditional chants are rendered as follows:*

*Call: Osubogidi Amayanride\_yo!!*

*Response: Amayanri...!!*

*Call: Amayanri-Amayanri doh\_oh!!*

*Response: Amayanri\_deh!!*

*Translation:*

*Call: Osubogidi has opened the town!*

*Response: The town is now opened!*

*Call: The town is open, oh yes!*

*Response: The town is now free!*

The vibrant procession moves through various parts of the Patani community, which serves as the headquarters of the Kabowei Kingdom and home of the Pere's palace. The procession begins at the Osuwari quarters, proceeds through Taware quarters, and concludes at the Pere's Palace in Okuruwari quarters, where His Majesty blesses the participants before they return home.

The Amayanri-Ogele symbolizes liberation, joy, and renewal transitioning the community from a period of solemnity to one of jubilation. The atmosphere during this period is charged with excitement as both Christians and traditionalists participate in the dancing, drumming, and singing. Modern sound systems and traditional drums blend harmoniously, filling the air with songs that celebrate unity and thanksgiving.

*Significantly*, this ceremony not only marks the formal opening of the town but also serves as the spiritual prelude to the entire Seigbein Festival, setting the tone for the subsequent Ogele ceremonies that follow.

*Note: In Izon orthography, the letters “i” and “e” can often be used interchangeably. Similarly, “ware” or “wari” means house, while “Yanri” or “Yanre” means open or set free. The name “Osuwari” or “Osuware” derives from “Osuo-ware” — meaning “Osuo’s house,” with “Osuo” translating to rain, hence “Rainy House” or “House of Rain.”*

### **4.3 The Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele Ceremony, Led by the Ekibiri Communities**

The Fouwusa Ogele ceremony, popularly known as Apia Ogele, stands as one of the most remarkable traditional celebrations in the Kabowei Kingdom. While the name Apia Ogele is widely associated with martial valor and warrior heritage, the traditional term Fouwusa Ogele more accurately conveys its spiritual and ancestral significance.

According to *Mr. Court Kabowei*, the Chief Priest of the *Agadagba Shrine* in the Kabowei Kingdom, *Fouwusa Ogele* translates as “*a ceremony that drives demons, evil spirits, and negative forces away from the market.*” It symbolizes a ritual act of spiritual purification and victory over evil, followed by *the celebration of the Kingdom’s warlords and arch-deities.*

This Apia-Ogele Ceremony is preceded by the *Olou* a midnight ritual performed by naked women between 12am and 1am, who move around the community offering fervent prayers for the expulsion of evil forces. During this sacred hour, the youths participating in the Apia Ogele watchnight activities respectfully take a break, and everyone outside is expected to remain indoors, allowing the women to perform their prayers undisturbed. Before this sacred rite, an official announcement is usually made warning that no one should come out or attempt to spy during this period, as anyone who does so may experience unforeseen consequences. This observance serves to prevent harm from befalling those unaware of the sacredness of the night.

It is believed that after this ritual, the *Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele* is demonstrated by the men early in the morning to drive out any lingering negative forces from the community and marketplace, marking the spiritual commencement of the main Apia Ogele celebrations.

Through its *historical evolution*, the *Fouwusa Ogele* has come to *embody both a spiritual purification of the land and a grand celebration of warriors, warlords, and deities honouring courage, strength, and divine guardianship within the Kabowei Kingdom.*

Over time, the event came to be popularly called *Apia Ogele* from *Apia* (meaning “cutlass”) and *Ogele* (meaning “festival” or “celebration”) literally translated as “Cutlass Festival” or “Cutlass Celebration.” This name reflects its dual nature as a festival of victory over evil forces and a powerful display of martial symbolism, cultural pride, and ancestral remembrance, all central to Kabowei identity.

The custodianship of the Fouwusa Ogele presently lies with the *Ekibiri communities*, a coalition of culturally interconnected quarters/clan comprising *Ogeinware, Akoware, and Afinaware*. Together, these form the *Ekibiri bloc* the principal bearers of this vibrant cultural heritage.

*According to Hon. Michael Ebiowei Matthew: Historically*, the ceremony originated from the *Ekise quarters*, who were the original custodians, but it was later entrusted to the Ekibiri communities after their performance brought greater vigor, organization, and popularity to the celebration. Since then, they have preserved and reinterpreted it, ensuring its continuity as a living emblem of Kabowei spiritual and cultural identity.

The ceremony traditionally begins on the *night* of the *Amayanri Ogele*, which heralds the commencement of the broader Seigbein Festival. On this sacred night, the traditional

youths of the Ekibiri communities assemble to perform preparatory rituals — chanting ancestral war songs, rhythmically striking their cutlasses, and dancing in symbolic invocation of their forebears’ strength and protection. However, as earlier noted, they take a respectful break between 12am and 1am. for the *Olou prayers* before resuming early the next morning for spiritual fortification ahead of the main Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele celebrations. This moment marks the spiritual awakening of the entire festival, embodying unity, valor, courage, strength, and the enduring ancestral bond of the Kabowei nation.

#### ***4.3.1 The Spiritual Fortification***

A defining aspect of the Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele ceremony is the **ritual of spiritual fortification**, an indispensable rite that underscores the union between the physical and metaphysical dimensions of Kabowei spirituality. This ritual process serves to imbue participants—particularly warriors, youths, and elders—with divine strength, resilience, and invincibility before they partake in the main ceremonial displays.

The spiritual fortification rite is performed at the **Efieh Shrine**, a sacred site located near the waterside within the Ogeinware community. The shrine, revered across the Kabowei Kingdom, is currently under the custodianship of the **Oba of Ogeinware**, a distinguished spiritual leader responsible for the community’s ritual sanctity and moral harmony. In

accordance with traditional law, the presiding priest of the Efieh Shrine is forbidden from consuming snails, as such dietary restriction symbolizes purity, discipline, and total spiritual dedication to the deity of the shrine.

During the fortification ritual, participants undergo a ceremonial purification process that involves immersion in *sacred water infused with spiritually potent herbs and leaves*. This sacred bath symbolizes rebirth, cleansing, and the invocation of ancestral protection. The ritual water is believed to possess supernatural efficacy, conferring upon participants a state of spiritual immunity against physical harm and malevolent forces.

Following the bathing rite, participants perform a **demonstrative test of invulnerability**. Each participant uses his cutlass to strike his own body, often on the arms or shoulders, to verify the success of the fortification. In accordance with communal belief, if the ritual has been properly performed, the blade does not pierce the skin. This public demonstration reinforces communal faith in the divine potency of the rite and in the unseen protection granted by ancestral spirits.

The fortification process continues at the **Agadagba Shrine**, situated by the Ogeinware roadside, where the participants receive final blessings and empowerment. This concluding ritual is presided over by **Mr. Court Kabowei**, popularly known as the *Onowu of Kabowei Kingdom, who currently serves as the priest of the shrine*. The Agadagba Shrine is regarded as the invincible seat of warrior power within the

community, where the participants' fortification is sealed through incantations and offerings.

According to *Mr. Court Kabowei*, the *Agadagba Shrine* is regarded as the most revered and feared shrine in the Kabowei Kingdom. It is considered the spiritual seat of the Agadagba deity, often perceived as the most powerful and supreme deity of the Kingdom. The shrine holds profound religious and cultural importance, commanding deep reverence and respect from the indigenes of Kabowei, who view it as the ultimate symbol of divine authority and protection.

A personal experience further attests to the perceived efficacy of this ritual. During one such fortification, The Researcher (myself) —along with his companion “my friend”, *Oyinbrakemi* (popularly known as *Blackmehn*)—participated in the sacred bathing ceremony. Immediately afterward, as a test of faith, *Oyinbrakemi* struck my arm with the sharp edge of his cutlass. To our astonishment, the blade bounced off without breaking the skin. Though I felt a brief sting, there was no bleeding or wound. This extraordinary occurrence reaffirmed the community's belief in the transformative and protective power of the ritual.

This personal encounter provided profound insight into the inseparable connection between **faith, ritual practice, and spiritual empowerment** within Kabowei society. It demonstrates that the essence of the fortification ritual extends beyond physical

invulnerability it is also a manifestation of **spiritual consciousness, ancestral communion, and cultural affirmation**. For the participants, such experiences symbolize the triumph of divine power over human limitation, and for the community, they reinforce collective faith in the continuity of ancestral protection and the potency of indigenous spirituality.

#### *4.3.2 The Symbolism and Significance of the Fortification Ritual*

The spiritual fortification rite within the Apia Ogele ceremony holds profound **symbolic and sociocultural significance** for the Kabowei community. It embodies the traditional belief that physical might alone is insufficient without divine endorsement and ancestral empowerment. In Kabowei cosmology, human strength must be sanctified through ritual if it is to serve communal harmony and spiritual order.

Anthropologically, the fortification ritual functions as a rite of passage — a ceremonial transition from ordinary social identity to a state of ritual invincibility. It not only prepares participants for the physical enactment of warrior displays during the ceremony but also reaffirms the unity of the community under the guardianship of their deities and ancestors. The act of striking oneself with a cutlass without sustaining injury becomes a **metaphorical declaration of faith**, symbolizing the victory of spiritual power over material vulnerability.

Moreover, this ritual embodies a **moral dimension** teaching discipline, restraint, and reverence for ancestral traditions. Those who undergo the fortification are not only physically strengthened but are also reminded of their duty to uphold the values of courage, loyalty, and communal integrity that define the Kabowei society.

Through this ritual, the Apia Ogele ceremony asserts the enduring relevance of **indigenous spirituality** in contemporary Izon cultural life. It continues to connect the Kabowei ethnic group to its ancestral heritage, reaffirming that spirituality, tradition, and identity remain inseparable in the collective consciousness of the people.

#### ***4.3.3 The Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele Celebration: A Cultural Extravaganza***

The Apia Ogele main celebration commences immediately after the spiritual fortification rituals, marking a pivotal moment in the festivities. As the youths, warriors, elders, and chiefs have been ritually fortified, they proceed directly to the celebratory segment of the ceremony. The procession begins at the main road adjacent to the Agedaba shrine, traversing through the thoroughfares of the New Taware community and back to the Ogeinware quarters, before culminating at the Pere's Palace in the Okuruware community for royal blessings.

During this vibrant celebration, the youths and participants, accompanied by well-wishers, spectators, and indigenes of the Kabowei Kingdom from far and wide, engage in exuberant dancing and merriment. The core participants regale the audience with war

songs, extolling the virtues of war deities and venerating present-day warlords across the Izon ethnic group and the wider Niger Delta region. Notably, the celebrants invoke the names of revered figures such as Isaac Boro, Adaka Boro, Ateke Tom, Tompolo, and other militant generals who have fought for the freedom of the Niger Delta and the Izon nation at large.

This festive celebration transcends the boundaries of the Ogeinware community and Kabowei Kingdom, evolving into a grand celebration of Izon culture that resonates across the Niger Delta region and beyond. The spectacle stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the Izon ethnic group, showcasing their history, mythology, and collective values. The performances of the warriors, youths, and other participants remain a source of wonder and awe to spectators, who are captivated by the energy and dynamism of the event.

*During the celebration, the core participants of the Apia Ogele ceremony engage in ritualistic singing, invoking rhythmic chants that include phrases such as:*

*> Call: Akagboin-gboin!!*

*Response: Gboyaka!!*

*Call: Gborogoro!!*

*Response: Gboyaka!!*

*Call: Gboingboin!!*

*Response: Gboyaka!!*

*Call: Gologolo!!*

*Response: Gboyaka!!*

*Call: Asawana!!*

*Response: Wana!!!*

*Call: Wana!!*

*Response: Wana!!*

According to **Hon. Ebiowei Michael**, most of these songs possess deep spiritual meanings and symbolic significance. Their interpretations cannot be publicly disclosed, as they are regarded as sacred war incantations that serve as catalysts — energizing and revitalizing the participants' spirits. This heightened spiritual state enables them to perform extraordinary feats, including striking themselves with cutlasses, which remain harmless due to their ritual fortification and temporary invincibility.

#### ***4.3.4 The Climax of the Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele Celebration: Royal Blessing and Culmination***

At the climax of the Apia Ogele celebration, the entire participants converge at the Pere's Palace for royal blessing. Upon their arrival, the atmosphere intensifies — the war songs, chants, incantations, and dances reach their highest pitch. The air vibrates with rhythmic drumming, spirited chants, and the resounding echoes of jubilation. The Pere, as the paramount ruler of the Kabowei Kingdom, eventually emerges to the delight of the crowd.

He joins the dance briefly, bestows his royal blessings upon the celebrants and the Kabowei community, and invokes the ancestors for continued peace, protection, and prosperity.

Following the royal benediction, the celebration heightens further dancing continues, people drink, eat, and socialize freely. The scene becomes one of collective joy and cultural unity, symbolizing the oneness of the Kabowei society. After the climax at the Pere's Palace, participants gradually begin their return procession, dancing back through the streets toward the Ogeinware quarters where the procession had initially begun. This return symbolizes a cyclical completion the end of the ritual journey.

Traditionally, at the close of the day's events, core traditionalists and spiritual custodians return to the *Agadagba shrine to offer thanksgiving and sacrifice* to the revered deity for a successful and peaceful celebration. This act of gratitude reinforces their connection to the spiritual realm, ensuring continuity, fertility, and harmony within the Kabowei ethnic group.

#### ***4.3.5 The Friendly/Unity Football Match***

In the early evenings of the Fouwusa-Ogele, also known as Apia-Ogele, around 4:00 p.m., the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival assumes a more recreational and unifying tone through sports and social interaction. One of the major highlights during this period is the friendly football match traditionally held at the Opu-Kabu Primary School Field in Patani Community, Kabowei Kingdom.

This symbolic football encounter features two renowned local teams the Kabowei United F.C. and the Kumbowei United F.C. representing the two brotherly Ijaw kingdoms. The match serves not merely as a form of entertainment but as a symbolic gesture of brotherhood, peace, and inter-kingdom unity. Spectators from both kingdoms gather in large numbers, cheering passionately and supporting their teams, transforming the field into a vibrant arena of festivity, music, and cultural solidarity.

While this unity match unfolds during the evenings of the Fouwusa-Ogele, another competitive sporting event known as the Pere's Football Tournament continues simultaneously. The Pere's Cup is a major contest that begins in the early days of the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival even before the conclusion of the Twelve Solemn Days—and progresses through the main phase of the festival.

The Pere's Cup traditionally concludes on the seventh day of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival, coinciding with the **Emuarou**, meaning *War Boat Regatta*, as well as the ***Swimming and Canoe-Pulling Competitions***, collectively referred to as the ***River Side Events***. This timing adds both symbolic and festive significance, blending cultural reverence with youthful vigor and communal excitement.

Through these sporting activities, the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival transcends traditional ritual performances to embrace modern expressions of unity and togetherness reaffirming that cultural celebration in Kabowei Kingdom is not only spiritual and traditional, but also social, physical, and communal in nature.

#### **4.4 The Tukpa Ogele (Festival of Light) Led by the Okruware Community**

The Tukpa Ogele, translated as the Festival of Light, occupies a distinguished position within the broader framework of the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. This luminous ceremony, under the leadership of the Okruware Community, symbolizes illumination, transformation, and the ultimate triumph of light over darkness both in the physical and spiritual dimensions of communal life.

In the Izon (Ijaw) language, the term Tukpa literally denotes “light,” while Ogele refers to a festival, celebration, or ceremonial performance. Together, the phrase Tukpa Ogele embodies not merely a festive gathering but a profound cultural and spiritual expression of enlightenment, renewal, and communal rebirth for the Kabowei Kingdom.

The Okruware Community holds a position of central importance within the Kabowei sociopolitical and cultural hierarchy. It is recognized as the seat of the Pere of Kabowei Kingdom, serving as the royal base and administrative nucleus of the kingdom’s traditional governance. From this sacred center, the Pere (King) presides over both spiritual and temporal affairs, and it is from here that the Tukpa Ogele derives much of its ceremonial significance and authority.

Although the festival is hosted and coordinated by the Okruware Community, the dance and procession extend through the entire Patani community, symbolically uniting all its quarters under the shared light of divine presence. The ceremony culminates with the

return of the procession to the Pere’s Palace, where the royal father offers his blessings—a gesture that seals the festival’s spiritual and cultural essence.

A distinctive and visually captivating aspect of the Tukpa Ogele is the *white-on-white attire worn by the Okruware Community and all participating groups*. The white garments, representing purity, peace, and spiritual illumination, enhance the radiant beauty of the celebration as participants carry their lights in harmonious procession around the community. The collective sight of white-clad celebrants moving with glowing lamps transforms the night into a living symbol of divine light and communal unity.

Traditionally, the Tukpa Ogele begins around 7:00pm, during the evening of the Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele Festival. This nocturnal celebration marks the climactic and most symbolic moment within the larger Seigbein Festival. The ceremony signifies not only the physical illumination of the community but also a profound spiritual transition from darkness into light—symbolizing collective purification, thanksgiving, and renewal. Through this sacred act, the entire Kabowei Kingdom is united in reverence, harmony, and the shared hope of continued growth and enlightenment.

#### ***4.4.1 The Celebration and Procession***

As night descends on the Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele Festival, the Kabowei Kingdom becomes illuminated in a magnificent display of light and devotion. The Tukpa Ogele

unfolds under the leadership of the Okruware Community, symbolizing the transition from darkness into illumination a sacred and communal act of renewal.

By around 7:00 p.m., the entire Patani community and surrounding areas come alive as participants dressed uniformly in white-on-white attire—carry lanterns, lamps, candles, and other radiant objects, symbolically dispelling darkness and ushering in divine light. The uniform color of the attire reflects purity, peace, and harmony, while the glowing lights carried by each participant signify the spiritual and moral enlightenment that the festival celebrates.

The procession moves through various quarters of Patani, accompanied by rhythmic drumming, singing, and traditional instruments, creating a deeply spiritual atmosphere that resonates through the kingdom. The streets glow with dancing lights as celebrants move joyfully, their songs of thanksgiving and ancestral invocation believed to awaken divine and ancestral presence. These chants are said to bring peace, prosperity, and spiritual fortification to the Kabowei Kingdom.

The Okruware Community, custodian of the Tukpa Ogele, ensures that the ceremony retains its cultural sanctity and authenticity. Elders provide guidance, chiefs maintain decorum, and youths radiate energy and vitality, embodying the strength and continuity of Kabowei tradition.

The procession, led by the Okruware Community, concludes at the Pere's Palace, where the Pere offers royal blessings upon the participants and the entire kingdom, reaffirming unity, divine favor, and continuity of tradition.

#### **4.5 The Pere-Ogele (The King's Festival)**

The Pere-Ogele, meaning The King's Festival or Festival of the Pere, stands as one of the most vibrant and revered events within the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. The term Pere in Izon (Ijaw) language translates to "King", denoting the sovereign ruler and spiritual custodian of the Kabowei Kingdom, while Ogele signifies "festival," "celebration," or "ceremony." Thus, the Pere-Ogele represents the royal celebration of the King, embodying divine authority, communal unity, and spiritual renewal.

The Pere serves not only as the political head of the Kabowei Kingdom but also as its spiritual nucleus a living symbol of ancestral wisdom, prosperity, and divine order. Among his traditional titles, the Okuru-Pre-agbe (meaning the Great Custodian or Foundation of the Land) holds special significance. It is from this title that the royal seat Okruware derives its name, denoting the sacred base of the Pere and the heart of Kabowei traditional administration.

The Pere-Ogele Festival is an annual royal celebration, but the Pere himself publicly leads the grand procession once every three years. On these occasions, the entire Kabowei society bursts into grandeur and jubilation. The Pere, dressed in full royal

regalia, emerges from his palace to lead a majestic procession that moves through the Patani community and returns ceremonially to the royal palace at Okruware. His movement symbolizes divine visitation, renewal, and blessing for the land and its indigenes.

In the intervening years, when the Pere does not personally lead the procession, the highest-ranking chief appointed by him takes up the mantle of leadership, ensuring that the spirit of the festival remains intact. Regardless of who leads, the procession always begins from the Pere's Palace, reinforcing the unity, continuity, and authority of the throne.

Importantly, the Tukpa Ogele (Festival of Light) led by the Okruware community serves as the spiritual and symbolic prelude to the Pere-Ogele. Held on the preceding night, the Tukpa Ogele illuminates the community with light and prayer, spiritually preparing the land and its indigenes for the Pere's royal emergence and blessings during the Pere-Ogele.

#### ***4.5.1 The Celebration and Procession***

The Pere-Ogele is renowned as one of the largest, most colorful, and most inclusive celebrations within the entire Seigbein Festival. It draws participation from all sectors of Kabowei society — Christians, Muslims, and Traditionalists alike uniting the community in shared pride and reverence for their king and heritage.

The festival begins at the Pere's Palace in Okruware, where the Pere, adorned in rich royal attire signifying dignity, authority, and cultural majesty, steps out to the thunderous

sound of traditional drums and songs of praise. Chiefs, elders, women, youths, and visitors accompany him in diverse, beautifully blended traditional garments an expression of the Kabowei Kingdom's cultural richness and aesthetic identity.

The procession winds through the Patani community, filled with rhythmic drumming, flute sounds, and chants that extol the Pere's leadership and pray for divine favor. The streets become alive with colors, music, and dance, as the indigenes irrespective of faith or background join the king in celebration. The procession ends back at the Okruware Palace, where the Pere offers royal prayers and blessings for peace, fertility, prosperity, and unity.

The Pere-Ogele usually features great Izon musicians, and the 2025 edition of the festival was particularly spectacular, graced by the renowned King Alfred Izonebi and the "De Because of Love Crew Band." Their dynamic performance masterfully blended traditional Izon rhythms with contemporary sounds. The music electrified the event, making it both a sacred and entertaining experience, and further strengthened the festival's prestige as a unifying celebration of heritage and faith.

#### ***4.5.2 Symbolism and Interpretation***

The Pere-Ogele symbolizes the divine covenant between the Pere and his subjects a sacred bond of protection, prosperity, and continuity. The Pere's movement through the community is viewed as both a ritual journey and a spiritual visitation, bringing divine blessings to the land and fortifying the Kabowei society against misfortune.

The royal attires and colorful garments worn by participants symbolize the glory, diversity, and vitality of the Kabowei Kingdom. Unlike the preceding Tukpa Ogele where participants appear in white-on-white attire to represent purity and spiritual preparation the Pere-Ogele's radiant blend of colors expresses joy, royalty, and the fullness of life. It is a visible representation of the kingdom's prosperity, unity, and cultural pride.

The songs of praise, prayers, and dances performed during the celebration signify gratitude to God, the ancestors, and the Pere. The blending of Christian, Muslim, and traditional elements highlights the kingdom's inclusive and adaptive worldview, showing how modern faiths coexist harmoniously with ancestral customs within Kabowei culture.

#### ***4.5.3 Significance and Relevance of the Pere-Ogele***

The Pere-Ogele carries profound spiritual, cultural, and social significance for the Kabowei Kingdom. Spiritually, it embodies renewal, divine visitation, and royal blessing. The Pere's participation symbolizes the descent of divine favor upon the community, reaffirming the sacred order between leadership and society.

Culturally, it represents the apex of Kabowei identity and artistry. Through its royal regalia, traditional music, and colorful processions, the Pere-Ogele preserves the oral, performative, and visual traditions that define the Izon-speaking society. The vibrant costumes reflecting both unity and individuality express the aesthetic and spiritual richness of Kabowei heritage.

Socially, the Pere-Ogele stands as a moment of total unity and cultural diplomacy. It brings together all members of society traditionalists, Christians, and Muslims in one collective expression of loyalty and pride. The event also promotes cultural tourism, drawing visitors and dignitaries from within and beyond the Niger Delta. The participation of musicians such as King Alfred Izonebi and De Because of Love Crew Band enhances the festival's prestige, showcasing Kabowei's cultural dynamism to the wider world.

Ultimately, the Pere-Ogele represents the radiant heart of the Seigbein Festival a royal celebration where faith, culture, and community converge in honor of the Pere and the enduring spirit of the Kabowei Kingdom. Even today, the Pere-Ogele serves as a living link between the Kabowei people and their heritage, promoting communal solidarity, cultural pride, and continuity of traditional governance

#### **4.6 The Biri-Ogele: Celebration of Womanhood and Circumcision**

The Biri-Ogele, also referred to as the Celebration of Womanhood, is a culturally significant ceremony within the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. According to *Mr. Court Kabowei, the Priest of Agadagba Shrine*, it marks the passage of young girls from childhood into womanhood through circumcision, while simultaneously celebrating their new social status within the community.

The term “Biri”, in Izon (Ijaw), literally means “to bathe”, symbolizing ritual purification the cleansing away of childhood innocence and immaturity as one transitions into adult responsibility and dignity. This ceremonial act of purification is closely intertwined with communal festivity, featuring joyful dances, music, and expressions of solidarity that celebrate both the young women transitioning into adulthood and the mature women who embody womanhood within the Kabowei Kingdom.

Mr. Kabowei further emphasized that the Biri-Ogele is exclusively a women’s celebration, encompassing unmarried young ladies, married women, mothers, and elderly women alike across the Patani community of the Kabowei Kingdom. Its observance emphasizes cultural continuity, communal unity, and female empowerment, while reinforcing social recognition of maturity, fertility, and womanly identity within the Izon cultural framework.

#### ***4.6.1 Structure and Division of the Celebration***

To ensure inclusive participation across the numerous quarters of the Patani community, the Biri-Ogele is organized over three consecutive days by different quarters in Patani Community divided into Akubo A, Akubo B, and Akubo C.

According to Mr. Court Kabowei, this structure was introduced by the present vibrant Pere of Kabowei Kingdom to streamline participation and reduce the logistical burden of organizing quarter-by-quarter processions especially considering the series of elaborate ceremonies held during the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. This structure also

maintains the vibrancy, ceremonial integrity, and fairness of participation among all quarters.

*The grouping is as follows:*

*Akubo A: Okruware and Ekise quarters*

*Akubo B: Oruware, Afinaware, and Osuoware quarters*

*Akubo C: Ogeinware, Akoware, and Taware quarters*

Each Akubo takes its turn leading the day's celebration, as women from the represented quarters participate in processional dances, ritual displays, and communal rejoicing. Newly circumcised young women receive special recognition for their initiation into womanhood, while mature women also participate to guide, mentor, and support the younger ones, thereby reinforcing solidarity and intergenerational continuity.

#### ***4.6.2 Processional Practices and Communal Participation***

The Biri-Ogele is inherently interactive and communal, characterized by vibrant movement and cultural expression. As the procession moves through the Patani community, participants journey from quarter to quarter, visiting relatives, performing dances, and engaging with spectators.

During these processions, women receive monetary gifts and tokens of celebration from relatives, admirers, and well-wishers acts that symbolize communal joy, generosity, and social acknowledgment.

Music remains a central and energizing feature of the celebration. While traditional drumming continues to evoke the ancestral rhythms of the Izon people, many groups now employ modern Dick Jockeys (DJs) or live bands, blending indigenous musical patterns

with contemporary beats. The rhythmic interplay of drums, chants, and songs inspires expressive and symbolic dances—reflecting beauty, vitality, and womanly pride.

The procession culminates at the Pere’s palace, where participants receive royal blessings from the Pere of Kabowei Kingdom, signifying the sacred approval of womanhood and the integration of women into the full spiritual and social life of the community. This royal benediction closes the cycle of celebration, emphasizing unity, honor, and divine grace.

#### **4.7 THE RIVERSIDE EVENTS (The Emuarou “Warboat Regatta”; The Swimming and Canoe-Pulling Competition).**

The Riverside Events constitute one of the most captivating and symbolic highlights of the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival, encapsulating the aquatic heritage, communal unity, and festive spirit of the Kabowei Kingdom. *These events are traditionally held along the Ogeinware–Akoware/Taware Waterside in Patani—adjoining quarters that share a common boundary within the heart of the kingdom.* This historic riverfront, situated on a major tributary of the River Niger, serves as the ceremonial arena for the festival’s aquatic displays and collective celebrations.

During this period, the tranquil riverside is transformed into a vibrant epicenter of cultural expression adorned with vivid colors, rhythmic music, and spirited movement. The resonant beats of traditional drums, the chants of jubilant spectators, and the sight of

elaborately decorated canoes gliding across the water create an atmosphere of profound excitement and cultural pride. Participants and cultural enthusiasts from across the Kabowei Kingdom, neighboring communities, and distant towns converge at the Patani waterside to witness and partake in this grand spectacle.

Gracefully arranged canopies line the riverbank, providing comfort and order for the large gathering. While general canopies accommodate the enthusiastic public, special pavilions are reserved for dignitaries—most notably the Pere of Kabowei Kingdom, his royal envoys and guests, traditional chiefs, community leaders, and other distinguished visitors, including attendees from beyond Nigeria who come to experience the Seigbein Festival firsthand. Their presence adds an aura of prestige and symbolizes the enduring bond between leadership, culture, and the Kabowei society.

The Riverside Events are meticulously coordinated under the supervision of Mr. Court Kabowei, the revered Priest of the Agadagba Shrine and a distinguished custodian of Kabowei tradition. Residing in the Akoware quarters the central hub of the riverside festivities he oversees both the ceremonial and spiritual dimensions of the event. Beyond logistical coordination, he performs the sacred rites and sacrifices essential for ensuring safety, peace, and success throughout the water-based activities. His spiritual authority commands reverence, and the Kabowei indigenes entrust him with maintaining harmony between humanity and the river spirit.

The Patani River, vast and majestic, forms an integral part of the River Niger system. Its broad expanse provides an ideal natural stage for the aquatic competitions and ceremonial performances that define the Riverside Events. Fortunately, the festival is celebrated annually in April, during the dry season, when the river’s current is calm and its level is low. This seasonal timing not only enhances safety and ease of participation but also creates an atmosphere of serenity and beauty conducive to celebration.

In essence, the Riverside Events embody a living testament to the Kabowei Kingdom’s enduring connection with its ancestral waters—celebrating valor, unity, and cultural identity through a harmonious blend of tradition, spirituality, and festivity.

*The Riverside Events are divided into three major segments:*

- **The Emuarou (Amaru) – Warboat Regatta**
- **The Swimming Competition and**
- **The Canoe-Pulling Competition**

#### *4.7.1 The Emuarou (Amaru) – Warboat Regatta*

The **Emuarou**, popularly pronounced as **Amaru** or **Amarou**, stands as one of the most spiritually charged and visually compelling components of the **Riverside Events** within the **Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival**. The Amaru is not merely an exhibition of aquatic prowess; it is a **sacred warboat regatta** that commemorates the heroism of the kingdom’s ancestral warlords and venerates the deities of the riverine frontiers. Deeply

embedded in the traditional faith and ritual life of the **Kabowei Kingdom**, the Amaru serves as a symbolic reenactment of the kingdom's martial valor and spiritual heritage.

The ceremony is performed by *core adherents of Kabowei traditional culture*, devoted to the spiritual essence of the **Seigbein Festival**. These adherents represent the ancestral warriors of the waterways. On this day, they appear in striking attire *blue skirt-like garments with matching blue, white, or black tops, their faces boldly marked with black or white pigments*, depending on individual or group symbolism. These facial markings transcend mere aesthetics; they embody ritual and spiritual significance, *symbolizing strength, courage, and consecration to the river spirits*.

The **warboats** employed in the Amaru are grand and beautifully adorned with **palm fronds**, emblematic of *victory, fertility, divine protection, and harmony with nature*. Typically, **two or three boats** are prepared for the ceremony, though in certain instances, a single large vessel may be used. Each boat is expertly paddled by a team of fortified men whose rhythmic strokes synchronize with the *beating of drums and the chanting of ancestral war songs*.

On rare occasions, contingents from other Kabowei settlements most notably from the **Adagbabiri axis** also take part in the ceremony. They arrive through the distant waters of Adagbabiri, connected to the Patani waterfront via the **Ogeinware–Akoware waterway**, joining the festivities with their own warboats. Such intercommunity participation

reinforces solidarity among the **Kabowei indigenes** and reflects their shared reverence for the riverine heritage that binds the kingdom together.

At the forefront of each warboat stands a *principal dancer, often a spiritually fortified devotee who leads the performance with vigorous, trance-like movements. During the dance, he may hold a small ritual calabash or palm fronds*, maintaining a miraculously steady balance—no matter how intense his movements, the calabash never falls into the boat or river. In recent years, this dancer is most often seen holding **two palm fronds**, one in each hand, symbolizing purity and divine connection. For safety, an attendant among the warriors discreetly secures him with a rope, preventing accidents when spiritual energy overtakes his movements.

A remarkable element of the Amaru is the **display of spiritual invulnerability**. In some traditional demonstrations, the principal dancer may be symbolically fired upon with bullets that fail to penetrate his body a testament to his ritual fortification and divine protection attained through sacred pre-festival rites. This act, deeply symbolic rather than theatrical, manifests faith in **ancestral power, divine guardianship, and the indomitable spirit of the Kabowei Kingdom**.

Throughout the performance, the air resonates with **chants and sacred songs** that recount ancestral exploits, invoke protective deities, and honor the spirits of the river. The entire riverside reverberates with the rhythmic harmony of **drums, paddles, and**

**voices**—a captivating soundscape that embodies reverence, valor, and communal celebration.

When the regatta reaches its climax, the atmosphere transitions into jubilant applause and traditional music as the boats glide back to shore. The conclusion of the **Amaru** seamlessly ushers in the next stage of the **Riverside Events**—the *Swimming and Canoe-Pulling Competition*, continuing the spirit of endurance, unity, and festivity that defines the Seigbein celebration.

#### **4.7.2 The Swimming Competitions**

The Swimming Competition constitutes the second phase of the Riverside Events and serves as one of the most dynamic expressions of strength, endurance, and unity within the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. It brings together skilled swimmers representing various quarters and communities across the Kabowei Kingdom, showcasing both athletic prowess and communal pride.

The contest is structured in progressive rounds designed to ensure fairness and excitement. In the preliminary stage, several quarters—sometimes six or seven at a time—compete simultaneously across the river. From each session, the best two or three swimmers, depending on the arrangement of the organizers, advance to the next round. This process continues until the finalists emerge, typically representing the three strongest quarters.

Given that the Kabowei Kingdom comprises over twenty communities, participation in the swimming contest is broad and competitive. When, for instance, eighteen communities are represented, the heats are grouped systematically—usually six communities per session—with the best-performing contestants from each group progressing through successive stages. From the semi-final round, the top two or three swimmers advance to the grand finale, where the ultimate winners are determined.

The competitors who secure first, second, and third positions receive cash prizes and other gifts, the nature and value of which vary according to the prize tags approved for that year or as determined by the benefactors and dignitaries present. The event is often graced by the Pere of the Kabowei Kingdom, who presides over the occasion from a reserved canopy alongside his chiefs, royal envoys, and other distinguished guests. His presence elevates the prestige of the competition, reinforcing its status as both a sporting and cultural highlight of the festival.

Beyond its recreational appeal, the Swimming Competition symbolizes courage, unity, and youthful vitality within the Kabowei Kingdom. It embodies the indigenes' enduring relationship with the river and reflects the balance between tradition, skill, and festivity that defines the Seigbein celebration.

### **4.7.3 The Canoe-Pulling Competition.**

The Canoe-Pulling Competition constitutes the final and most energetic phase of the Riverside Events in the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. It is a vibrant aquatic contest that often runs concurrently with the Swimming Competition, sustaining the rhythm, excitement, and festive energy that characterize the entire riverside celebration.

In most instances, the canoe-pulling races are interspersed between rounds of the swimming contest. After the first round of swimming, the first phase of canoe-pulling usually follows, then the second round of swimming resumes, and so on. This alternating pattern allows participants sufficient time to rest and recover between races while maintaining the vibrancy of the event for spectators. However, in some editions of the festival, the organizers may decide to conduct the canoe-pulling event immediately after the completion of all swimming rounds, depending on time constraints or logistical considerations.

Participation in the canoe-pulling race, much like the swimming contest, depends on the number of quarters and communities represented at the festival. Each community typically presents its own canoe, manned by teams of three to seven participants—depending on the size of the boat and the number of able, energetic competitors available. The competition proceeds in successive rounds, often beginning with five, six, or seven communities per session. From each session, the strongest and fastest teams advance to the next stage, leading up to the final round where the winning quarters are determined.

The excitement intensifies as spectators cheer, clap, and chant passionately for their respective quarters. The canoe-pulling race often draws even greater enthusiasm than the swimming contest, owing to the larger number of participants and the visual spectacle of several canoes gliding, splashing, and racing across the river in rhythmic coordination.

However, in the midst of this excitement, occasional mishaps occur: sometimes, in the heat of competition, a canoe capsizes due to the force of paddling or imbalance. Such moments, though unexpected, often elicit laughter and cheers from spectators, reflecting the festive spirit of the event.

In these situations, the safety marshals—stationed in speedboats—immediately respond. They approach cautiously to prevent creating disruptive waves that could affect other contestants, assisting the crew in recovering both themselves and their canoe. All participants are skilled swimmers, so such incidents are rarely dangerous; rather, they add a spontaneous touch of humor and resilience to the competition.

This high-spirited atmosphere transforms the entire riverside into a scene of cultural exhilaration. Songs of encouragement, laughter, and spontaneous prayers fill the air as indigenes urge their quarters toward victory. The contest becomes more than a test of physical strength; it is a celebration of teamwork, endurance, and the enduring bond between the Kabwei Kingdom and its aquatic environment.

The first, second, and third leading quarters are awarded prizes, which vary according to the arrangements of the organizers or the contributions of dignitaries and sponsors.

present at the event often sparking memorable celebrations among the winners. Both victors and other participants rejoice together, exchanging congratulations and cheer, further strengthening the spirit of camaraderie and unity within the Kabowei Kingdom.

*As one who has closely **observed** these performances, **the researcher notes** with deep reflection that **the canoe-pulling event alongside the Emuarou and the Swimming Competition**—forms a compelling expression of Kabowei heritage. Together, they embody the harmony of courage, unity, and cultural pride that defines the Seigbein Festival, standing as a timeless testament to the vibrancy and resilience of the Kabowei society.*

#### **4.7.4 The Pere’s Cup Finals**

The Pere’s Cup Final, also known as the Pere’s Football Tournament, marks the grand conclusion of the Riverside Events in the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. It stands as a modern sporting climax that beautifully complements the traditional festivities—reflecting the fusion of heritage, unity, and modernization within the Kabowei Kingdom.

Kicking off by 4:00 p.m. at the Opukabu Primary School Field in Ogeinware Quarter, the final match brings together the two top teams that emerged victorious from earlier rounds of the Pere’s Football Competition. As documented earlier in this research, the tournament begins toward the end of the Twelve Solemn Days, around the Onise-Tubo and Onise-Eyin period, and culminates on the evening of the Riverside celebration.

The ninety-minute match attracts large audiences from across the Kabowei Kingdom, neighboring communities, and even guests from distant regions. The atmosphere is electrifying filled with cheering, singing, and drumming—as indigenes and visitors alike unite in shared excitement and celebration.

Beyond its entertainment value, the Pere’s Cup Final also serves as an avenue for youth engagement, empowerment, and the promotion of sportsmanship. The competition provides the Kingdom’s young athletes an opportunity to showcase their talents, discipline, and teamwork before distinguished dignitaries and guests. Winners are honored with cash prizes and trophies including the Golden Cup, Silver Cup, and Bronze Cup symbolizing their dedication and excellence.

The Pere of Kabowei Kingdom traditionally graces this event, which is held in his honor. Often, he personally presents the awards or delegates the organizers to do so, underscoring his patronage and support for the festival’s cultural and recreational dimensions.

In essence, the Pere’s Cup Final not only crowns the festival’s sporting spirit but also strengthens communal harmony and pride. It stands as a fitting finale to the Seigbein Festival—a moment where tradition and modern recreation converge in shared joy, marking the enduring dynamism of the Kabowei Kingdom.

#### **4.8 The Pere Homage Day.**

The Pere Homage Day marks one of the most recent and symbolically significant additions to the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. It was instituted in honor of the young, dynamic, and visionary Pere of the Kabowei Kingdom, serving as a day of collective respect, cultural unity, and reaffirmation of traditional authority.

*According to Mr. Court Kabowei*, the Chief Priest of the Agadagba Shrine and a core custodian and practitioner of Kabowei traditions and culture, *the Pere Homage Day was specifically introduced to provide a formal avenue for the non-indigenes residing within the Kabowei Kingdom to pay their respects and demonstrate allegiance to the royal institution.* This initiative was designed to further strengthen the bond between the Pere and the diverse ethnic societies who, though not of Kabowei origin, have long lived and contributed to the kingdom's social and economic life.

These ethnic groups include the Isoko, Urhobo, Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa, among others—distinct societies and linguistic groups who, while of varied ancestry, have established their presence across different quarters of the kingdom, particularly within Patani Community.

On this day, each of these ethnic groups gathers at the Pere's Palace in Patani to pay homage in its unique traditional form. The palace arena becomes a vibrant stage of cultural expression—drumming, dancing, singing, and symbolic presentations of gifts and homage—all directed in honor of the Pere. Each group appears in its traditional

regalia, accompanied by cultural representatives, showcasing their heritage while reaffirming loyalty and respect to the royal throne.

*As Mr. Court Kabowei emphasized,* the homage is not merely ceremonial but deeply symbolic it reflects the shared reverence for the Pere as both custodian of Kabowei heritage and the unifying figure for all who dwell within the kingdom, irrespective of ethnic origin. It underscores the inclusive spirit of the Kabowei Kingdom, which welcomes and accommodates various ethnic societies that, while maintaining their distinct traditions, coexist peacefully and contribute meaningfully to the kingdom's cultural vitality and development.

The Pere Homage Day thus stands as a testament to the Pere's wisdom and openness in embracing diversity. It reinforces the recognition of his spiritual and administrative authority while celebrating the living mosaic of cultures that enrich the Kabowei Kingdom. Ultimately, it is both a renewal of allegiance and an affirmation of the enduring harmony that defines the kingdom's socio-cultural identity.

#### **4.9 The Ekise Owusei/ Omenjor**

The Ekise Owusei, also called Omenjor, represents one of the most spirited and colorful ceremonies within the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. It is the Ogele that is, the festive celebration led by the Ekise quarters of the Kabowei Kingdom, held annually in the Patani community.

According to *Mr. Michael Matthew*, the Omenjor is a performance unique to the Ekise quarters an event that harmoniously combines song, dance, and communal procession in joyful proclamation of festivity and thanksgiving. In the local sense, ***Omenjor (or Owusei)*** *simply denotes a celebration dance: a sweet/ mesmerising masquerade dance”, expressive movement of joy that accompanies the broader Seigbein Festival. While Ogele is a general term referring to “festival” or “celebration,” Omenjor stands out as the celebratory pulse within it—the dance that embodies merriment, gratitude, and communal unity.*

From a broader interpretive standpoint, however, the Ekise Owusei / Omenjor transcends ordinary festivity. *It serves as a symbolic act of renewal, demonstrating the Ekise community’s devotion to their ancestral heritage and the enduring vitality of Kabowei cultural identity.* During the celebration, the atmosphere is filled with diverse displays of dance and expressive performances. Men from the Ekise quarters often perform stylized movements reminiscent of the *Apia Ogele* displaying symbolic cutlass demonstrations that evoke bravery, strength, and protection while the women, children, and visitors join in graceful dance and song.

The event unfolds as a processional celebration, beginning at the Ekise quarters, extending through the Taware community, and culminating at the Pere’s palace. There, the procession reaches its climax in greater joy, heightened music, and ceremonial

blessings from the Pere of Kabowei Kingdom. The Pere’s benediction symbolizes the kingdom’s collective thanksgiving and the spiritual sealing of the year’s festive cycle.

In essence, the Ekise Owusei / Omenjor is both a physical and spiritual journey—a living theatre of identity, joy, and unity. It manifests the Ekise community’s role within the Kabowei cultural cosmos: to celebrate, to affirm life, and to radiate the beauty of shared heritage. As one cultural reporter succinctly observed, the Omenjor dance “highlights the rhythm, strength, and unity that define Kabowei celebrations.” Yet beyond reportage, its ritual significance lies in the communal pulse it inspires—it is a dance of gratitude, a dance of harmony, and a dance of belonging.

Ultimately, the Ekise Owusei reveals that the Kabowei Seigbein Festival is not merely performative but profoundly spiritual—binding together its indigenes through rhythm, procession, and divine blessing.

#### **4.10 The Kena-Bai (Kina) – by Adagbabiri Community**

The Kena-bai also known as Kina or Kinai is a sacred traditional event performed by the Adagbabiri Community of the Kabowei Kingdom, located in the Bayelsa region of Nigeria. Adagbabiri lies across the riverside from Patani community and forms an integral part of the Kabowei Kingdom’s cultural and spiritual landscape.

The Kena-bai ceremony stands as one of the most revered observances within Adagbabiri society, embodying deep ancestral significance and spiritual symbolism. It is performed

annually as a sacred procession through the community, culminating at the Amanadawè of Adagbabiri—the spiritual headquarters and central point of ritual convergence.

- ***According to Mr. Ekpotuatin Charles Ariye, in his research on The Seigbein Festival:***

> *“The closing act of the Seigbein festivities comes up on the twentieth day of the feast. It holds at Adagbabiri, which hosts the war deity (Kina – the Kabowei god of war). On this day, warrior men of the Adagbabiri community—joined by others from various communities and supported by a strong women and girls’ procession behind the men—process with the deity from one end of the community to the other, beginning from the shrine of the deity. This activity is a display of the military might of the Kabowei Kingdom and involves the use of guns and live ammunition.”*

- ***Based on his personal experience, Mr. Ariye further stated that:***

> *“In my personal experiences of this ceremony, I have witnessed the elements of the weather go dark as the party processes from one part of the community to the other, and as soon as the final procession ends, the heavens open up with torrential rainfall. This phenomenon could be characterized as an inexplicable occurrence associated with the time of the ceremony, which coincides with the beginnings of the rainy season. The plausibility of this line of thought cannot be waved away.”*

However, *some of the earlier assertions made by Mr. Ariye regarding the Kenabai ceremony have been updated, as observed by the present researcher based on more recent accounts and oral testimonies from community custodians.*

Firstly, the Kenabai, celebrated and led by the Adagbabiri community, is no longer the closing act of the Seigbein festivities. It is now usually performed two or sometimes three days before the official conclusion of the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival.

*As Mr. Ariye rightly noted, Kina is revered as the Kabowei god of war, whose shrine is domiciled within the Adagbabiri community. During the Kenabai procession, men and women chant lively songs and move rhythmically through the community in veneration of this war deity.*

A significant and spiritually symbolic aspect of the Kenabai ceremony involves the carrier of the Kina deity, which is enshrined in a sacred woven basket. *The individual selected to carry this sacred emblem undergoes a seven-day purification process, which includes strict abstinence from sexual relations, immoral acts, and other forms of ritual impurity. This period of consecration is accompanied by sacrificial rites intended to spiritually fortify the individual against malevolent or hostile forces that might manifest during the procession.*

Upon completion of this fortification, the chosen individual bears the Kina deity throughout the entire community during the festival. Although the deity may appear heavy, tradition holds that through spiritual empowerment, the carrier is divinely strengthened, enabling him to move with ease and endurance. It is also widely believed that only those who have undergone the proper purification rites can bear the Kina without suffering spiritual or physical consequences.

A remarkable aspect of the Kenabai, as corroborated by *Mr. Michael Matthew*, is the display of live ammunition during the procession. Reports suggest that, symbolically, the Kina bearer is shot at several times without penetration, signifying divine invincibility and spiritual protection resulting from his ritual fortification. This dramatic act serves as a testament to the potency of the purification process and to the sacredness of the Kina deity.

However, oral traditions warn that any individual who violates the seven-day purification code may lose this spiritual protection, rendering them vulnerable to harm. While there have been speculative accounts of isolated incidents—such as a supposed hand injury sustained by a Kina bearer believed to have violated the sacred restrictions—such reports remain unverified. To the best of the present researcher's knowledge, no confirmed case of fatal penetration or spiritual failure has been recorded in the known history of the Kenabai ceremony.

The continued reverence for the Kina deity and the observance of these sacred protocols underscore the Adagbabiri community's enduring commitment to ancestral spirituality, discipline, and the collective identity of the Kabowei Kingdom.

#### **4.10.1 Significance and Relevance of the Kenabai (Kina) Ceremony**

The Kenabai (Kina) ceremony of the Adagbabiri community remains a central spiritual institution within the Kabowei Kingdom, symbolizing ancestral continuity, collective identity, and sacred authority. Rooted in the veneration of Kina, the war deity, the ceremony reaffirms the community's custodianship of the kingdom's martial heritage and metaphysical sovereignty. Through the ritual purification of the Kina bearer and symbolic displays of spiritual fortification, Kenabai embodies communal belief in divine protection and ancestral guardianship.

Functioning as a unifying cultural system, the ceremony mobilizes all generations in shared ritual participation, strengthening social cohesion and transmitting collective identity across time. Its martial symbolism expresses vigilance and resilience rather than physical aggression, reinforcing cultural guardianship and moral order. Ecologically, the post-processional rainfall is interpreted as divine approval, land cleansing, and a sign of seasonal blessing.

Kenabai further emphasizes moral discipline and ritual purity, reinforcing ethical responsibility and spiritual accountability. As a cultural archive, it safeguards indigenous knowledge, sacred symbols, and historical memory, ensuring cultural continuity amid

modern influences. Its endurance affirms its role as both a spiritual cornerstone and a living repository of Kabowei heritage, resilience, and values.

#### **4.11. The Awigiri Boat Cruise**

The Awigiri Boat Cruise constitutes one of the most modern, dynamic, and aesthetically vibrant dimensions of the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival. Celebrated along the tranquil yet majestic riverside of the Kabowei Kingdom, the event fuses traditional festivity with contemporary entertainment, thereby illustrating the evolving nature of Kabowei cultural expression in an age of modernization.

The Awigiri Boat Cruise is typically staged on a large open-deck vessel—often described as a ship-like boat without an overhead covering but reinforced with protective iron railings to ensure the safety of participants. The expansive boat serves as both stage and performance arena, accommodating musicians, dancers, and revelers in a rhythmic convergence of sound, water, and movement. The entire atmosphere becomes a floating theatre of celebration where tradition meets modern artistry.

According to field observations and local informants, the Awigiri Boat Cruise features live performances by renowned entertainers such as *“Izonebi”* and *“De Because of Love Band Crew”*, who are widely regarded as the festival’s most featured performers. Their energetic renditions and cultural-infused music electrify the riverfront, drawing enthusiastic participants from across the Kabowei Kingdom and beyond. The event is

often complemented by other local artists who blend indigenous rhythms with contemporary sounds, creating a celebratory environment that reflects both cultural rootedness and artistic innovation.

The cruise itself unfolds in two forms: at times, the vessel remains anchored by the riverside, functioning as a stationary stage for collective dance and revelry; at other times, it gently sails along the river's course, moving rhythmically to the tempo of the music. As it glides through the calm waters, participants sway, sing, and dance in synchrony—symbolizing fluidity, freedom, and communal joy. The gentle movement of the boat against the water becomes emblematic of the continuity and vitality of Kabowei culture, flowing seamlessly between tradition and modern entertainment.

Beyond its performative appeal, the Awigiri Boat Cruise carries cultural and social significance. It represents a contemporary reinterpretation of communal festivity—projecting the image of the Kabowei Kingdom as a society capable of blending heritage with progress. It provides a platform for artistic expression, youth engagement, and cultural tourism, thereby reinforcing the festival's broader aim of uniting tradition with innovation.

In essence, the Awigiri Boat Cruise encapsulates the spirit of renewal and celebration that defines the Seigbein Festival. Through music, movement, and the river's serene embrace, it reaffirms the interconnectedness of Kabowei indigenes and their waters, serving as

both an emblem of cultural pride and a celebration of life's enduring rhythm across generations.

The Awigiri Boat Cruise is typically divided into two segments, though the structure varies depending on the year's organization. It may be celebrated in a single day using two separate large boats, or over two consecutive days, as determined by the event coordinators.

In the 2024 edition, the Awigiri Boat Cruise was held across two days "*after the Kabowei Day Celebration*", each featuring distinct performances and lively participation. However, in the 2025 edition, the Awigiri celebration was condensed into one grand day, marking a unified festivity that preceded the Kabowei Day Celebration.

This variation reflects the organizers' flexibility in scheduling, ensuring that the event maintains its vibrancy and participation regardless of logistical differences from year to year.

As earlier stated, *the Awigiri Boat Cruise is uniquely categorized into two distinct yet complementary segments* **the Awigiri Love Boat Cruise and the Awigiri Reggae Boat Cruise** each reflecting diverse artistic and emotional expressions within the cultural rhythm of the Kabowei Kingdom. This bifurcation not only enriches the entertainment spectrum of the Seigbein festivities but also symbolizes the Kingdom's dynamic fusion of tradition, emotion, and modern celebration.

*The Awigiri Love Boat Cruise* centers on the theme of love—the love shared among indigenes of the Kabowei Kingdom, the unity that binds its various communities, and the affection that sustains relationships among families, friends, and couples. During this celebration, the atmosphere is suffused with warmth, romance, and camaraderie. The Because of Love Band Crew, alongside other featured entertainers, serenade the participants with songs that exalt love in all its forms romantic love, communal love, and the collective love for Kabowei heritage. Participants are seen dancing, laughing, and sharing joyful moments as the boat glides gently along the river, transforming the waters into a moving stage of affection and togetherness. The entire setting becomes a living metaphor for the harmony and emotional unity that define Kabowei society.

On the other hand, *the Awigiri Reggae Boat Cruise* takes on a nostalgic and soul-stirring dimension, celebrating the timeless rhythms of reggae music and its deep connection to themes of freedom, resilience, and spiritual consciousness. This segment revives the old-school cultural essence of the Kingdom, blending it with contemporary expressions of identity and artistry. The performers often accompanied by live bands deliver classic reggae tunes that evoke both reflection and joy, while participants engage in rhythmic dances reminiscent of the golden era of traditional and reggae fusion. The ambiance reflects a communion of generations, bridging the past with the present in a symbolic reaffirmation of continuity and cultural pride.

Whether held on two separate days or simultaneously on two large boats within a single day, each cruise maintains its distinct identity and thematic focus. When celebrated on separate days, the sequence allows participants to immerse fully in each theme—first in the spirit of love, then in the nostalgia of reggae. However, when held on the same day, the dual boats serve as parallel expressions: one dedicated to the Love Cruise and the other to the Reggae Cruise, each drawing its unique audience while collectively reinforcing the unity and diversity of Kabowei festive tradition.

Thus, the Awigiri Boat Cruise through its Love and Reggae dimensions—stands as a living testament to the Kabowei Kingdom’s capacity to blend emotion, culture, music, and memory into a single, flowing celebration that honors both the heart and the heritage of its society.

#### **4.12 The Kabowei Day**

The **Kabowei Day** marks the grand climax of the **Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival**, symbolizing the apex of cultural pride, communal unity, and royal reverence within the Kabowei Kingdom. Introduced as a relatively recent addition to the Seigbein festivities, the Kabowei Day has swiftly evolved into one of the most anticipated and unifying celebrations in the annual cultural calendar of the Kingdom.

This commemorative day is **dedicated not only to the Pere (the traditional monarch)** but also to the **collective heritage, vitality, and continuity of the Kabowei Kingdom**

itself. It serves as a ceremonial reflection of the Kingdom's cultural depth and a platform for the exhibition of diverse indigenous expressions that define Kabowei identity.

Traditionally, the **Kabowei Day celebration is held at the Opu-Kabu Primary School field** in the **Patani community**, a central location chosen for its historical and communal significance. The event features a rich blend of **multifaceted cultural performances**, including **the Azo Masquerade Dance** and **the Opu-Obori Masquerade Dance**, both of which are deeply symbolic within Kabowei spiritual and social traditions. Before these major displays, various cultural troupes perform dances, songs, and dramatizations that echo the thematic essence of the entire Seigbein Festival—valor, unity, ancestry, and communal pride.

The Kabowei Day attracts **a vast audience from across the Kingdom and beyond**, including indigenes residing in the diaspora, who often travel back home to partake in the festivities. The **Pere of Kabowei Kingdom** customarily graces the occasion in full regalia, adding an aura of dignity and reverence to the event. The day's program is marked by **colorful processions, women's traditional dances, musical renditions, and beauty pageants**, all harmoniously woven to celebrate the splendor and cultural resilience of the Kingdom.

Of particular note was the **2021 edition** of the Kabowei Day celebration, which featured a **special empowerment initiative** sponsored by the **Pere of Kabowei Kingdom**, in

collaboration with a **distinguished daughter of the Kingdom** whose contributions significantly enhanced the event's social impact. This act of empowerment added a modern developmental dimension to the traditional celebration, reinforcing the festival's relevance in contemporary society.

So far, the **Kabowei Day** stands as a **symbolic synthesis of heritage, monarchy, and modern community development** a day when the entire Kabowei Kingdom gathers to honor its past, celebrate its present, and envision its collective future under the cultural and spiritual guidance of its revered Pere.

The **Opu-Obori Masquerade Dance** and the **Azo Masquerade Dance** stand as two of the most captivating and spiritually charged highlights of the **Kabowei Day Celebration**. These masquerades embody the mystical and aesthetic essence of Kabowei cultural expression, each representing a unique spiritual dimension within the Kingdom's traditional cosmology.

The **Opu-Obori Masquerade**, traditionally performed by the **Taware Quarters**, is one of the most revered displays of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival. Structurally, it is crafted in an **elephant-like form**, a symbolic representation of strength, majesty, and ancestral authority. The materials used in its construction are **sacred and undisclosed to the public**, preserving the mystery and sanctity of its origin. The masquerade's outward appearance features **white coverings** that give it a **canopy-like form**, vast and

commanding in presence. Within the structure are **concealed performers**, whose rhythmic movements animate the entire form—making the elephant-like figure appear to **dance, sway, and advance or retreat** in accordance with the spiritual rhythm of the moment.

The **Opu-Obori Dance** traditionally begins from the **Taware Quarters**, where the masquerade is prepared, and proceeds through the community in a grand procession toward the **Opu-Kabu Primary School field**, where the **Pere of Kabowei Kingdom** awaits. Upon arrival, the masquerade performs before the Pere, receiving blessings and symbolically paying homage to the royal and ancestral spirits that govern the land. The crowd is often moved by the elegance and sacred atmosphere surrounding this dance, which blends devotion, artistry, and mystery.

Alongside the Opu-Obori performance is the **Azo Masquerade Dance**, customarily led by the **Osuwara Community**. The Azo Masquerade is **towering and imposing**, made with a **tall, fan-like structure** that gives it a distinct and awe-inspiring appearance. Like the Opu-Obori, the internal components of the Azo are **sacred and kept secret**, known only to select custodians of the tradition. While it is widely believed that a human performer controls the Azo from within, this remains within the realm of cultural speculation and reverent mystery.

During the **Kabowei Day celebration**, both masquerades—**Opu-Obori and Azo**—dance with spiritual grace and artistic grandeur, captivating spectators and reaffirming the living connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. Beyond these two major performances, **numerous other masquerades** from different parts of the Kabowei Kingdom also take to the field, each showcasing the diversity of the Kingdom’s cultural expressions.

The day’s celebrations further feature **chiefs, women’s groups, youth dancers, and various cultural delegations**, all displaying their unique identities through music, dance, and attire. The atmosphere is one of **ecstatic cultural pride**, reverence, and unity. As the **grand finale** of the Seigbein Festival, **Kabowei Day** serves as the ultimate tribute—not only to the **Pere**, but to the **entire heritage, resilience, and spiritual depth of the Kabowei Kingdom**.

*Photographic representations of the Kabowei King, the Kabowei Seigbein Festival, and the featured masquerades will be provided at the **Appedix** part of this project to visually complement the ethnographic descriptions above.*

An important observation concerning the **Opu-Obori and Azo Masquerade Dances** is that these particular performances are **not held annually**, but rather **once every three years**. Their infrequent occurrence adds to their sacredness and anticipation, as they are

considered **special ritual performances** that require extensive preparation, spiritual readiness, and community coordination.

It is also essential to note that within the broader **Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival**, several other festivities and ritual observances are conducted at varying intervals some every **five years**, others every **ten years** depending on **traditional decisions, spiritual directives, or cultural scheduling** determined by the custodians of Kabowei heritage.

However, the major **public celebrations** that recur **annually** or **every three years**—such as those already discussed in this research constitute the **core highlights** of the Seigbein Festival. These are the events most recognized by both indigenes and visitors as emblematic of the **Kabowei Kingdom’s living traditions**.

The remaining **periodic or less frequent observances**, while equally important in cultural significance, will be **discussed briefly in Chapter 4.13**, which focuses on **other supplementary cultural activities and traditional performances** within the Seigbein Festival framework.

#### **4.13 Periodic and Non-Annual Festivities within the Kabowei Seigbein Festival**

The **Kabowei Seigbein Festival** traditionally comprises a rich spectrum of cultural activities, sacred rituals, and communal celebrations observed at varying intervals. While certain events occur annually, others are performed at longer, spiritually determined

intervals—such as every three, five, or ten years—depending on divine directives, traditional decrees, or communal consensus. These periodic celebrations reinforce the spiritual rhythm of Kabowei cultural life, ensuring that each generation maintains an active link with its ancestral heritage.

According to **Ekpotuatin Charles Ariye** in his research on *The Seigbein Festival*:

*(It must be pointed out that there are several other activities which are associated with the Seigbein festival that are not necessarily yearly events. Some of these are performed once in a generation while others come up in time differences of ten to twenty years, and when they are performed, they are embedded into the overall scheme of activities within the eight days of celebration of the Seigbein festivities. For instance, the Ekise community performs the Omeinjo Dance, which is celebrated in time differences of as long as twenty to fifty years. Ekise also, performs the Owusei (masquerade dance), as well as the Apia Ogele (a warrior dance involving the use of cutlasses). The Orioware community performs a dance called the Owainbede Kirigbele. In this dance, the people, young and old, men and women dressed in elaborate and expensive fabrics, reaching to the ground, processes around the town. It represents a show case of material wealth. In the same vein, Osuoware which as we have seen earlier with the Amayanrin Ogele, also performs the Azo Dance, a special masquerade performance, while Taware (the one with Amateri and Amafini responsibilities), also performs the Opuobori Dance (Elephant Dance). Otofani*

*community often performs the Oyibowei Dance during the Seigbein festivities, while Abare occasionally performs a special Tuno Dance – a flag performance to honour dignitaries and prominent members of Kabowei society. The communities of Asamabiri, Ekperiwari and Elemebiri, also have their own special performances peculiar to them that comes up occasionally within the time frame of the Seigbein festival. On the whole, these are the main activities that are performed in the process of the Kabowei Seigbein over the twenty days period).*

However, to further **update and contextualize** some of Ariye’s assertions in light of more recent developments and direct field participation, it is important to note that the **Ekise Omenjor** has now evolved into an **annual celebration**. It has been officially incorporated into the recognized **twelve-day sequence of festive activities**, marking a significant structural adaptation that demonstrates the dynamic, living nature of Kabowei traditions. This evolution reflects how the kingdom continually adapts its ancestral practices to contemporary realities while preserving the spiritual depth of its heritage.

Furthermore, the **Azo** and **Opu-Obori** masquerade dances—two of the most visually striking elements of the festival—are now performed **every three years**. Likewise, the **Apia Ogele**, formerly performed exclusively by the Ekise quarters, is now conducted **alongside the Fouwusa Ogele** by the Ogeinware community, although the Ekise still incorporate elements of this warrior display into their **Omenjor** and **Owusei**

performances. This cultural interweaving underscores the unity and shared symbolism that bind the quarters of the Kabowei Kingdom.

Though some published and oral accounts—including the assertion by **Mr. Ariye**—report that the **Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival spans twenty days**, the **present researcher’s insider observation and participatory experience** reveal that the modern observance of the festival now **extends to twenty-three days**. These twenty-three days consist of the **first twelve days of solemnity**—known as the *Amateri* and *Amafini* period—which involve both the ritual closing and reopening of the town. The festival formally begins on the twelfth day with the **Amanyari Ogele**, followed by **eleven additional days of continuous celebration**, as would be visually illustrated in the pictorial documentation attached to this research. Thus, twelve plus eleven days make up a total of **twenty-three days** of vibrant and spiritually infused festivities.

This adjustment in duration reflects the festival’s **expanding scope, cultural innovation, and adaptive vitality**. Over the years, new dimensions—such as musical performances, artistic exhibitions, community empowerment programmes, and social initiatives—have been seamlessly integrated into the traditional framework. These additions not only enrich the cultural identity of the **Kabowei Kingdom** but also underscore its remarkable ability to sustain continuity between its **ancestral past** and the **contemporary present**.

In certain years, as decreed by the **Pere of Kabowei Kingdom**, the **Conferment of Chieftaincy Titles** is also incorporated into the festival's calendar, as was the case in the **2024 edition**. This integration highlights the Kabowei Seigbein Festival's multifaceted nature—serving simultaneously as a platform for cultural expression, traditional reaffirmation, and royal legitimacy

#### **4.14 Cultural Significance and Relevance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival to the Kabo Indigenes of Patani Local Government Area.**

*This section focuses on examining the cultural significance and relevance of the Kabowei Seigbein Festival to the Kabowei ethnic group of Patani Local Government Area, emphasizing its role as a vital instrument of cultural preservation, spiritual renewal, and social integration.*

The **Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival** holds profound cultural, spiritual, and social significance to the Kabowei indigenes of Patani Local Government Area, Delta State. It is not merely a period of festivity but an embodiment of the **Kabowei identity**, encapsulating the **kingdom's ancestral heritage, social values, unity, and continuity of tradition**.

At its core, the **Seigbein Festival** serves as a *spiritual reaffirmation of the Kabowei collective existence, symbolizing the renewal of peace, strength, purification, the putting away of evil, and the utmost reverence for the Kabowei progenitor, Oprozaowei*. The

**Amayanri-Ogele**, which opens the celebration, signifies the formal transition from the twelve solemn days of ritual observance to the ensuing period of vibrant and continuous festivities. *It marks the ceremonial commencement of the celebratory phase of the festival, serving as both a cultural bridge and a spiritual threshold between solemnity and jubilation.*

The subsequent events, including the **Fouwusa (Apia) Ogele** and the **Tukpa Ogele**, further highlight the kingdom's **martial heritage, valor, and communal solidarity**, as they recall the ancient warrior traditions that safeguarded the Kabowei domain. These performances function as both **historical dramatizations and moral symbols**, teaching courage, discipline, and unity among the younger generation.

The **Pere-Ogele** and **Trafentu**, on the other hand, express the **centrality of kingship** in Kabowei cosmology. They reaffirm the Pere's divine and cultural authority as the custodian of peace and development. This is complemented by the **Homage Day**, which fosters intercommunal harmony and reinforces the political unity of the kingdom through collective participation by all affiliated ethnic groups.

In the **riverside events** such as the **Emuarou (War Boat Regatta)**, **swimming**, and **canoe-pulling competitions** the festival celebrates the **Kabowei's maritime heritage** and skill in navigation, which are vital aspects of their historical livelihood and defense

system. These water-related activities not only honor the riverine environment but also symbolize resilience, teamwork, and survival.

The **Ekise-Omenjor** and **Owusei** masquerade displays reflect the **spiritual dimension** of the festival, invoking ancestral presence and blessings. They bridge the material and spiritual worlds, reminding the Kabowei indigenes of their covenant with their forebears. Similarly, the **Kabowei Day**, which features the **Azo and Opu-Obori** performances, emphasizes prestige, artistic expression, and the celebration of communal identity every three years.

Modern innovations such as the **Awigiri Boat Cruise**—featuring the **Love Cruise** and the **Reggae Cruise**—illustrate the kingdom’s openness to cultural dynamism and contemporary creativity. These events integrate entertainment with tourism, promoting the Kabowei heritage to wider audiences and strengthening socio-economic engagement.

Collectively, the Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival represents a **living institution of cultural education**, transmitting moral values, historical consciousness, and communal pride across generations. It unites the various communities—Osuoware, Ekibiri, Okruware, Adagbabiri, and others—under one spiritual and cultural umbrella, reinforcing the shared identity of the Kabowei kingdom.

Beyond its traditional and religious essence, the festival also functions as a **platform for cultural diplomacy and economic interaction**, attracting visitors, scholars, and

dignitaries from within and beyond the Niger Delta. It contributes to **social cohesion**, **tourism development**, and **cultural preservation**, serving as both a remembrance of the past and a celebration of the Kabowei indigenes' ongoing vitality in the modern age.

In essence, the **Kabowei Seigbein Cultural Festival** stands as the **symbolic heartbeat of Kabowei civilization** a convergence of history, spirituality, artistry, and unity that defines the enduring legacy of the Kabowei indigenes of Patani Local Government Area. The festival remains a dynamic platform for communal engagement, cultural tourism, and socio-economic activity, ensuring that Kabowei heritage continues to thrive and resonate in contemporary society.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **EVALUATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 Evaluation**

This study has critically examined the Kabowei Seigbein Festival as a vital cultural institution that embodies the historical consciousness, spiritual devotion, and social identity of the Kabo ethnic group of Patani Local Government Area. Through thematic analysis of interviews, observations, and documentary sources, it becomes evident that the Seigbein Festival serves not merely as an annual celebration, but as an indigenous system of cultural continuity and communal reaffirmation. The festival encapsulates the Kabo worldview — a synthesis of ancestral reverence, environmental spirituality, and evolving Christian influence.

From the evaluation of the data collected, it is observed that the festival's organization and ritual performances, including the Amafini (Amanyare) opening rite, the Ogele processions, and the Tukpa Ogele night ceremony, collectively reinforce the unity and collective identity of the Kabowei Kingdom. The continued involvement of the Osuware Quarters and the sacred observances at shrines such as Agbadagba reflect the depth of spiritual authority and indigenous governance embedded within the celebration. Furthermore, the deliberate effort by the festival's organizers to maintain harmony

between traditional and Christian values — symbolized by the Pere’s annual thanksgiving service in church — demonstrates the adaptive resilience of the Kabo culture in the face of modernization and religious pluralism.

The evaluation also highlights that the Seigbein Festival operates as an informal educational system, transmitting traditional knowledge, values, and artistic expressions such as music, dance, masquerade displays, and oral poetry to younger generations. These activities foster intergenerational learning and social integration. Additionally, the festival’s growing recognition beyond the Kabowei Kingdom has increased its potential for cultural tourism and local economic development. However, it was also discovered that modernization, urban migration, and limited documentation pose threats to the preservation of some ritual elements and symbolic meanings. Despite these challenges, the continued observance of the Seigbein Festival reflects the enduring vitality of indigenous traditions and their ability to evolve within contemporary contexts.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Kabowei Seigbein Festival remains an enduring symbol of the Kabo ethnic group’s cultural resilience, unity, and spiritual identity. It functions as a living archive of ancestral memory, linking the present generation to the values, myths, and heroic traditions of their forebears. The festival’s complex blend of ritual, performance, and social participation underscores its role as both a religious observance and a social

institution that promotes cohesion, moral order, and collective pride among the Kabowei indigenes.

The study concludes that the Seigbein Festival is not merely a cultural event but a holistic expression of the Kabowei worldview — one that harmonizes traditional spirituality with contemporary faith systems, and local heritage with global change. It has sustained its relevance by adapting to modern realities while preserving its core cultural essence. The continuity of this festival testifies to the Kabo indigenes' determination to safeguard their identity in an era of globalization and cultural dilution.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Documentation and Archiving:** There should be a systematic documentation of the Seigbein Festival through written records, photography, and audiovisual materials to ensure the preservation of its rituals, songs, and oral histories for future generations.
2. **Cultural Education:** The Kabowei traditional council, community leaders, and cultural educators should integrate aspects of the festival into local school curricula and community programs to sustain indigenous knowledge and values among the youth.

3. **Tourism Development:** The Delta State Ministry of Culture and Tourism should recognize and promote the Seigbein Festival as a potential cultural tourism attraction, supporting infrastructure, publicity, and funding while maintaining its authenticity.
4. **Intergenerational Involvement:** Elders and custodians of tradition should deliberately mentor younger indigenes in the rites, meanings, and significance of each stage of the festival to prevent cultural erosion.
5. **Religious Harmony:** Continued collaboration between Christian institutions and traditional custodians, as currently demonstrated through the Pere's thanksgiving services and reconciliatory gestures, should be encouraged to maintain unity and mutual respect within the Kabowei Kingdom.
6. **Research and Collaboration:** Further ethnographic and anthropological research should be encouraged among scholars and students of cultural studies to deepen understanding of the Seigbein Festival's evolving dynamics in contemporary society.



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**Chief Sunday Oyinkro Bomabebe, the Opu-obori, Owusei, the Azo masquerade dance, Owigiri Reggae boat cruise, Pere of Kabowei kingdom , Hon Michael Ebiowei Mathew and friends**