

**AN EXAMINATION OF TRADITIONAL MURAL ART OF THE OBINGWA**

**M. A. DISSERTATION**

**BY**

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FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN  
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**DECEMBER, 2015**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this Dissertation entitled “**An Examination Of Traditional Mural Art of the Obingwa**” was carried out by me in the Department of Fine Arts. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any institution.

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**Theophilus ObiomaNWOGU**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

## **CERTIFICATION**

This Dissertation entitled “**An Examination Of Traditional Mural Art Of the Obingwa**” by **Theophilus Obioma NWOGU**”, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts History of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This Dissertation is dedicated to my late mother, Mrs. Rhoda Nwaukwa Nwogu (1943-2010), whose intelligence, hardwork, vision, sacrifice and kindness contributed immensely to the upliftment of the less privileged and humanity. Though, she was not privileged to live to a “greater measure”, I honour her with this work, that she would always be remembered.

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To the Head, Department of Fine Arts, Dr. G.G. Duniya, Postgraduate Coordinator, Dr. Gushem Philip, Professor Ahmed Rafai Saliu, Dr. (Mrs) Ladi Agada, all lecturers in Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, I thank you for your immeasurable contributions. My gratitude also goes to my course mates in Art History including Mr. Samuel Obadofin (Baba Naija) for their supports. I am indebted to my father, Elder Reuben Nwogu, my siblings- Patricia, Uche and Chibuzo, what can I do without them? I am very grateful to my beloved wife, Nkem Nwogu and children- Enyioma, Udochukwu and Abuoma. Your love and encouragement gave me strength and determination.

## **ABSTRACT**

Modernization and globalization have caused changes in the mural art tradition of the Obingwa. The presence of modern trends in architecture and wall decoration with the use of industrial materials and contemporary designs have made the people of Obingwa to have contempt on traditional architecture and traditional wall decoration; which had not attracted any scholarly attention. In view of this, the study examined the Traditional Mural Art of the Obingwa. Chapter one focuses on the introduction, background of the study and statement of research problem. Furthermore, it states the objectives of the study which include: to identify the mural artists, mural art materials and motifs used in the traditional art and to enumerate the functions of the mural art, as well as to examine the present state of the traditional mural art of the Obingwa. Chapter two is an incorporation of some scholarly views, positions, arguments and analysis regarding the origin and practice of mural art from the Paleolithic through the contemporary traditional periods, where it is argued that the oldest mural ever discovered was on the soil of African continent. The procedure for collecting and analyzing relevant data is outlined in chapter three, with the employment of Ethnographic of qualitative research as design. Chapter four on the other hand contains the analysis of information obtained from field work and the discussions based on the objectives of the research. In addition chapter four discloses among others, the functions of Obingwa traditional murals which include religious worship, aesthetics, communication, advertisement, ceremonial invitation, historical narration, education and curing of ailments. Chapter five focuses on the summary, conclusion and recommendation. The researcher recommends among others that the people of Obingwa should collectively pass a resolution on cultural revival and involve the existing Christian missions in the campaign, for the survival of traditional arts. This could allow the mural tradition to function simultaneously with Christian beliefs.

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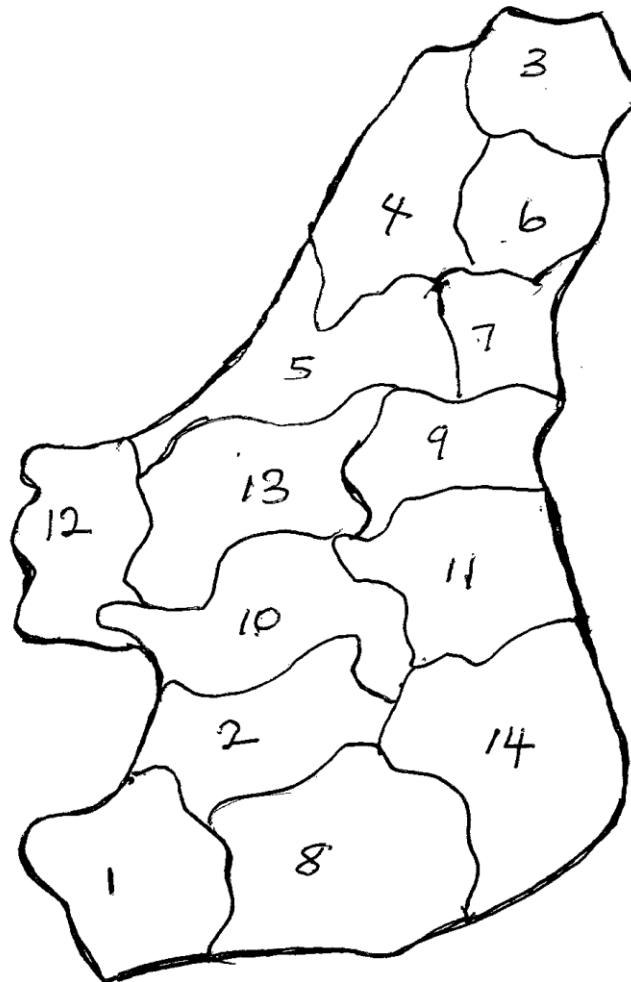
## MAP OF NIGERIA SHOWING ABIA STATE



Source: [www.mapsofworld.com](http://www.mapsofworld.com) (2014)



## MAP OF OBINGWA



### Legend

1. Abayi II
2. Abayi I
3. Mgboko Umuanunu
4. Mgboko Amairi
5. Ahiaba
6. Mgboko Umuanunu 2
7. Mgboko Itungwa
8. Akumaimo
9. Ndika Amairiabuo
10. Ntighauzo Amairi
11. Ibeme
12. Itukpa
13. Alaukwu Ohanze
14. Akpa Mbato

Scale: 0 ——— 5  
Kilometers

Source: Theo Nwogu, 2014

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Mural art along side body adornment, wood carving and weaving are the age-long traditional arts of Obingwa of Abia State, Nigeria. The mural art called "*Agwugwa Ulo*" meaning wall inscriptions is practiced by women. The art formed part of the architectural design of the people. They depict geometric and natural motifs, designs, indigenous styles, techniques, modes and functions of the art. The traditional architectural patterns of Obingwa are similar to those of other Southern Igbo communities, which are areas in present Abia and Imo States as delineated by Isichei (1977). This uniformity is due to the climate condition of the area. The design is done on mud walls and incorporate with delta leaves or raffia as roofs.

Mural art which is also seen as wall decoration is a work of art that decorates a wall or ceiling of a building. This could be done in the interior or exterior walls of the building. Iriwieri (2003) states that various motifs that are either geometric, botanical, human, zoomorphic, abstracts and indigenous motifs are employed to create art works and narrate stories on a subject matter, thereby projecting an idea inherent in it. According to Kleiner(2011),“the origin of mural art is traced to prehistoric rock and cave paintings and engravings, some of which dateback to 30,000 years”.The author opines that the early men made use of materials from plants, blood and dung of animals for their paintings on the walls of caves. He further opines that the functions of the rock art include religion and magic. Early humans believed that such works of art would help them overpower the animals during hunting expeditions. Pletcher (2014), adds that “Such prehistoric art is found in Birnin Kudu, Jigawa state Nigeria, discovered in 1954 by a colonial touring group.” Birnin Kudu town is

best known as the site of Dutsen Habude, a cave containing Neolithic mural paintings of cattle which bear strong resemblance to some found in Central Sahara.

Apart from Obingwa, mural traditions appear to be common within other southern Igbo communities. In these areas, the art is also preserved for women. In some southern Igbo communities like Owerri area towards Northern Igbo, (Northern Igbo are present Enugu, & Ebonyistates including the Northern part of Anambra State as delineated by Isichei, 1977) there is the '*Uli*' tradition and the erection of '*Mbari*' houses. Duniya (2009) notes that "*Uli* became an art movement '*Ulism*' in University of Nigeria Nsukka, in the 20th century, through the '*Nationalistic Spirit*' of '*Natural Synthesis*' as art concept and style". Though, mural art traditions within the *Igbo* nation are mainly religious, cultural, identification, informative and aesthetic purposes; It suffers serious threats from Christianity, modern trends in architecture and globalization. Similarly, the Ebira also have a mural art tradition. The Ebira are specifically found in Nassarawa, Kogi and Edo states, including Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Saliu (2010) affirms that the works are done in the houses of traditional chiefs and wealthy individuals, which indicate social and political functions within the communities.

Among Yoruba of South West Nigeria, traditional murals are executed, mainly for religious worship. The mural art in Yoruba is dominated by women. Most of the paintings are found in the Oba's Palace, and influential individuals, as well as the ancestral shrine walls known as "*Ojubo*". Within Northern Nigeria, there are outstanding wall decorations in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zaria, Dutse and most towns in Northern Nigeria. Iriwieri (2003), states that such architecture with mural designs are status symbols in the society and in most cases, they belong to the nobles and the ruling class.

Apart from Nigeria, within South Saharan Africa are Ndebele people of Nguni in Zimbabwe, who have an enviable mural art tradition enriched with coloured geometric designs. Ndebele artists use mural art to communicate effectively with much regards to communal identity and aesthetics. Also, within the Southern African region is Pedi, a Bantu speaking North Sotho people, who maintained the mural decoration culture with geometric patterns. Vogel (1986) declares that “Pedi mural is so developed that an iconographic analysis of Pedi mural yields further insights into Pedi culture”. In addition, the Moorish wall reliefs in Southwest Mauritania, the rich decorated walls of Kassena and Tiebele people of Upper Volta, the mural paintings in Sirigu Ghana and most regions of Africa, attest to the diversity of mural art practice alongside their functionalities.

In Obingwa, mural art is found in a few private and public buildings. The designs on private buildings are meant for identification and to express specific messages to passers by. The existing mural art are mostly painted and the practice is strictly reserved for the women, who hand over the art from generations to generations. The materials used for the art are created from natural sources found within the environment. The colours used are usually black, red, brown, yellow, green and White. The Obingwa mural paintings are not restricted to walls alone. The women also paint on trunks of trees in the open, especially at locations where ancestral shrines are designated within the communities. In addition, they decorate bodies with dark dye extracted from a plant called “*uri*”.

## **Background of the Study**

Abia State Government Official Website (2014) states that “*Obingwa* is a Local Government Area in Abia state with its headquarters at *Mgboko*. It was created in October, 1996 out of the former *Obioma Ngwa* Local Government Area, by the military regime of late General Sani Abacha”. The official website stresses further that “*Obingwa* is situated in the tropical rainforest of southern *Igbo* of Southeast Nigeria”. The area has boundaries with *Isiala Ngwa* North and *Isiala Ngwa* South Local Government Areas in the North, *Ukwa* East Local Government Area in the South, *Aba* North, *Aba* South and *Ugwunagbo* Local Government Areas in the West and *Akwa Ibom* State in the East. *Obingwa* is among the 6 local government areas in Abia South Senatorial Zone and one of the 17 Local Government Areas of Abia State. According to United Nations Population Fund (2014), *Obingwa* occupies an area of 395 square kilometers and has a population of 295, 680 with a literacy rate of 77 percent. *Obingwa* has 14 electoral wards, 53 autonomous communities, 237 villages and 1,185 kindreds (*Obingwa* Council Information Unit, 2014). The people live separately on nuclear family basis or extended families in a compound. Each compound has an entrance that is at least 40 meters from the building units to the road, while arable land separates one compound unit and the other.

Historically, origin and waves of migration of *Obingwa* people were in two folds. Oriji (1991) explains that the *Ibeme* group migrated from Bonny Island in the present Rivers State and settled in the area about 1,300 years ago while the *Ngwa* group migrated from *Umunoha* in present Imo State and also settled in the area about 1,100 years ago. Akwaranwa (1988) notes that in view of the migration order, the *Ibeme* group occupied the area before the coming and settlement of *Ngwa* group.

Obingwa is among the 7 Local Government Areas of Ngwa clan in Abia State, namely: Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, Obingwa, Osisioma Ngwa, Aba North, Aba South and UgwunagboN.A. Ogboma (Personal Communication on September 7, 2014) describes; Obingwa in the following manner:

*Amongst the Local Government Areas of Ngwa, Obingwa is different in terms of culture and tradition, because of the dominated influence of Ibeme group who were more in number during the initial migrations and settlements when they occupied most of the areas in Eastern Ngwa which is known today as Obingwa. Due to the difference in culture and tradition of the Ibeme settlers, from the early period of settlement to the present, most communities in Obingwa do not cultivate or eat trifoliate yam (ono). In the same vein, they do not rear bitches (nnenkita), which means that there are no female dogs in these Obingwa communities, but any female dog that erroneously enters the forbidden communities must be killed and allowed to rot away. These traditions are being observed till today, no matter the religious faith of any individual within these communities. On the contrary the people in the remaining 6 Local Government Areas of Ngwa cultivate and eat trifoliate yam and domesticate bitches. The peculiar cultural and traditional beliefs and practices of the Obingwa made them distinct as a people amongst other Ngwa areas. Apart from the aforementioned, other traditional peculiarities include the arts, dance cultural societies and dialect.*

Obingwa people speak Igbo language and they are predominantly Christians, with a handful of adherents of African Traditional Religion and worship “Chineke” as supreme God. The major communities in the area include *Ibeme, Ohanze, Ovom, Akpa-mbato, Ntighauzo, Ukpakiri, Ehere, Onicha- Ngwa, Nenu, Itungwa, Umuanunu, Mgboko, Osa Ukwu, Abala and Ndiakata*. In order to facilitate economic activities in Obingwa, the people maintain the four

traditional Igbo market days of “Nkwo”, “Eke”, “Orie” and “Afor” which also constitute the Igbo calendar. There are major markets which include “Orie- Abala”, “Orie-Nenu”, “Nkwo Nwaelechi”, “Ehere daily market”, “Orie-Ntighauzo,” “Afor- obete Ukwu”, “Eke-Umudu”, “Afor- Itungwa” and “AforAkpa”.

The Economy of the area is majorly based on Agriculture. Staples include cassava, yam, coco-yam, pumpkin, melon, maize, cucumber, plantain, banana and avocado, while cash crops include palm oil, coconut and delta palm wine. They also engage in livestock farming. Other economic activities are trading, brewing of native gin and arts, such as carving of musical instruments, weaving of baskets and mats, mural art, hairdo, hunting, carpentry, metal fabrication and manufacturing of local guns which are used by hunters. Among the arts of the traditional *Obingwa* society, Mural paintings, weaving of baskets, mats and manufacturing of guns have been very outstanding. J. Ulelu (Personal Communication on November 15, 2014) describes *Obingwa* mural painting as:

*An old architectural tradition of Obingwa, which has existed for centuries before the coming of Europeans. As my grandfather told me, the art tradition started in Obingwa after the “great migrations” when the forebears of the Ngwa left Umunoha in the present Imo state when crises erupted in the area and crossed the banks of Imo River and settled in the present Ngwa land. The Ngwa inhabited alongside Ibeme group who initially settled in Obingwa before the Ngwa. In order to continue the religious culture as practiced in their former communal traditions and innate urge for aesthetics, mural art became a tradition of the Ibeme and the Ngwa in Obingwa. Though, the already settled Ibeme had their religious art which were majorly carved wooden images. The blending of the two cultures in many spheres of communal life ushered in a unique art tradition. The wall decoration normally called “agwugwa Ulo” serves a number of purposes in Obingwa society which include aesthetics, religious worship and communication.*

Within the area, a great farmer who has the title of “*Ezeji*” could commission the artist to incorporate yam leaf and yam tubers motifs on the walls of his buildings, thereby informing members of the public that a great farmer lives there. On the other hand, the walls of some communal and private architecture and some outdoor designated abodes like ancestral shrines (*Ihuala*) and village squares (*Amaukwu*) are also decorated with the art. Such shrines are regarded as abodes of ancestral spirits and deities which are dedicated to the mother earth “*Ala*”. As a tradition, the motifs and symbols painted or rendered in relief to beautify the shrines walls are meant to appease the spirits known as “*umummuo*” who inhabit the shrines. The appeasement is believed to invite and lure the spirits to answer when invocations are made to them. As a rule, the chief priest as the custodian of shrine and spiritual activities, has the responsibility of commissioning the art work, as well as directing the artist about what the mural art would look like in terms of motifs, colours and sizes.

In addition, many cultural and social groups exist in the area. Some of such groups are ‘*Okonko*’, ‘*Ekpe*’, *Mmanwu*, ‘*Ese*’, ‘*Ukom*’, ‘*Ekeravu*’, ‘*Anyantolukwu*’, ‘*Mgbede*’, ‘*Pelenma*’, ‘*Ituanya*’, and Age Grades. Each of these groups has definite roles and functions ranging from entertainment, spiritual and religious worship, initiation rites, funeral rites, divination, women and marriage rites, rites into manhood, maintenance of law and order to communal infrastructural development. Traditionally, the people of *Obingwa* believe in the existence of supreme God “*Chineke*”, the ancestors “*Ndiche*”, the mother earth “*Ala*”, god of thunder “*Amadioha*”, god of fertility and good harvest “*Ahianjoku*”, and god of righteousness and conscience “*Ofo na ogu*”. The gods and deities serve as agents, channels and media through which the attention of the supreme God could be attracted depending on the

prevailing circumstances. Afigbo (1992) affirms that the deities also contribute immensely to abundant harvest, well being, good health, progress and security of the people.

In decision making and administration, *Obingwa* people are republican in democratic participation. The eldest man in the kindred is the head and holder of staff of office “*ofo*”. He is assisted by the kindred assembly known as “*Umunna*”. *Umunna* is a group of male adults from different compounds and families within the kindred. In ascending order, the village head administers with able councilors who represent various kindreds within the village. Major decisions are subject to the approval of village assembly “*Amala*”. In this structure, women are exempted from the kindred and village decision making process, except in their women association meetings where they make rules for good conduct during communal activities like sweeping of village paths, village squares and attending of marriage and funeral ceremonies. Furthermore, the affairs of the autonomous community is overseen by a traditional ruler “*Eze*”, who is the chief custodian of the culture and tradition of the people, which include arts and crafts as well as the chief security officer of his kingdom. He is ably assisted by the Eze-in council “*Oso-Eze-achi*”, which comprises the traditional prime minister and other titled chiefs who represent the various villages within the autonomous community.

It could be opined that mural art formed part of most traditional architecture of many cultural regions and clans in Africa. However, due to the influence of Christianity, colonization and globalization which ushered in modern architecture with new techniques and materials in wall decoration, the existence of traditional mural art in these areas is threatened. In *Obingwa* only few of such murals could be found. As a result, most youths who are indigenes of *Obingwa* are not aware of the functions of the mural art. Unfortunately, there are no available

literature through which these youths could be informed. It is in the light of these that the study intends to among other things, investigate the functions of traditional mural art of the *Obingwa*.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There are literature on Igbo mural art, but the specifications and uniqueness of some communities in terms of traditions and culture have not been emphasized . It is observed that many authors have written about the *Igbo* mural art including Cole (1982), "Mbari Art and Life among the Owerri Igbo", Isichei (1977), "The Igbo worlds", Itanyi (2014), "Archaeology and Traditional Mural Painting in Nsukka Area of Northern Igbo Land", Ejiogu (1971), "Body Decoration and Mural Painting in Orafiite and Aguleri: Their Growth and Adaptation", Oziogu (2012), "Building Mbari Home in Igbo Land", Aniakor (2002) "Igbo Architecture", Ikwuemesi and Areh (2007), "Uli: History, Essence and Prospects". The existing literature are mostly on "Uli" wall decoration, which is the mural art tradition of some Southern Igbo Communities such as *Owerri* area and Northern *Igbo* land, while no literature has been documented on the traditional mural art of the *Obingwa*.

The continuous existence of traditional mural art *of Obingwa* is being threatened, due to the effects of modernization and globalization. The presence of modern designs in buildings and decoration materials has made the people to have contempt on traditional architecture and traditional wall decorations. In view of this, the problem of this study is the lack of literature in documenting the traditional mural art of the *Obingwa*.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this research is to examine the traditional mural art of *Obingwa*, while the objectives are to:

- i. identify the mural artists, materials and motifs used in the murals.
- ii. highlight the process of creating the murals.
- iii. enumerate the functions of traditional mural art among the *Obingwa* communities.
- iv. ascertain the present state of mural art of the *Obingwa*.

### **Research Questions**

- i. How can the mural artists of Obingwa, their art materials and motifs be identified?
- ii. What are the procedures for creating Obingwa murals?
- iii. How can the functions of *Obingwa* traditional murals be enumerated?
- iv. Is the present state of the *Obingwa* murals going into extinction or evolving?

### **Justification of the Study**

*Obingwa* has a number of art traditions. Among them is the traditional mural art (*Agwugwa Ulo*) which according to oral traditions is an age-long practice; which has existed alongside "*Uli*" art tradition of part of southern *Igbo* like *Owerri* area and Northern *Igbo* land that has attracted various scholarly attentions. In *Obingwa*, the new trends in architecture has posed serious threat to the continuous existence of traditional mural art. As a result, only a few of the art exist today. In this regard, the neglect, possible extinction, stagnation and lack of literature of the *Obingwa* murals justify this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research brought to light the singular motifs design devoid of background colours, which makes the *Obingwa* mural art unique from other mural traditions within Nigeria and South Saharan Africa, such as *Owerri* Northern *Igbo*, *Yoruba*, *Pedi* and *Sirigu*.

The research is expected to serve as a relevant literature for the younger generations, the artists, historians and the general public who are not aware of the significance of the mural art. Thirdly, subsequent researches could be based on the recommendations of this research. Fourthly, it could be a guide for studio artists who are interested in adapting and drawing inspirations from motifs and designs derived from traditional mural art of the *Obingwa*. Finally, the materials used for the mural design of *Obingwa* are sourced within the immediate environment from natural sources, which remains a tradition to this day.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study is *Obingwa* Local Government Area in Abia South Senatorial zone. Majority of the murals are on the exterior walls of buildings while a few of them are on the interior walls. Similarly, most of the works are painted with colours while some are created with incisions and low relief with the use of mud or cement.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

<i>Afor</i>	-	The fourth Igbo market day
<i>Agwagwaulo</i>	-	wall inscription, wall decoration or mural art. A name ascribed to the mural tradition of the <i>Obingwa</i>
<i>Ahianjoku</i>	-	god of fertility
<i>Aja ngwu olu</i>	-	red laterite
<i>Ajaoto</i>	-	mud slip (watery mixture of mud)
<i>Aja</i>	-	sand or earth

- Akrika* - thatch roof made with raffia palm-leaves
- Akwukwougo* - a kind of leaf with wide and thick features
- Ala* - mother earth
- Amadioha* - god of thunder
- Amala* - village assembly
- Amaukwu* - village square where communal activities are held.
- Anyantolukwu* - a kind of dance
- Chineke* - supreme God and creator of universe who dwells in heaven
- Eke* - second Igbo market day
- Ekeravu* - a kind of dance group
- Ekpe* - traditional society
- Ekpete* - a drum covered with animal skin or membrane
- Ekwe* - slit wooden drum, a musical instrument also use by town criers
- Eruonyi* - a plant where ochre is extracted
- Ese* - traditional musical band usually performed during burial rites of a titled man.
- Eze* - traditional ruler and head of autonomous community.
- Ezeji* - king of yams: a great farmer who have upto 20bans of yams and is

- honoured with prestigious title of *Ezeji*
- Ichunta* - hunting expedition
- Igbo* - a major Nigerian ethnic group that occupies South East Nigeria  
language speak by the ethnic group
- Ihuala* - ancestral shrine, the abode of deities, spirits and gods
- Inyi* - charcoal
- Ituanya* - a kind of secret cult.
- Mgbede* - maiden's kind of dance
- Mmanwu* - a kind of masquerade society
- Ndiche* - ancestors
- Njagwa* - a plant where yellow ochre is extracted
- Nkwo* - the first Igbo market day
- Nnenkita* - a female dog (bitch)
- Nmayioku* - locally brewed gin
- Ntite* - clothe rag.
- Nzu* - white clay
- Ogele* - metal gong, a kind of musical instrument
- Oja* - aerophone made of animal horn, a kind of musical instrument

<i>Ono</i>	-	trifoliate, a forbidden kind of yam by Ibeme group
<i>Opi</i>	-	aerophone made of animal bone, a kind of musical instrument
<i>Ofo na ogu</i>	-	god of righteousness and conscience
<i>Obingwa</i>	-	the area of study. A Local Government Area in Abia State
<i>Ojubo</i>	-	Shrine in Yoruba Language
<i>Oba</i>	-	Traditional ruler in Yoruba
<i>Orie</i>	-	third Igbo market day
<i>Ofo</i>	-	staff of office
<i>Okonko</i>	-	Traditional society for maintenance of law and order
<i>Oso-eze-achi</i>	-	members of traditional rulers cabinet
<i>Pelenma</i>	-	A kind of dance for maidens
<i>Ukom</i>	-	musical band performed during the burial rites of a titled woman
<i>Uli</i>	-	the mural art tradition of the Oweri area and northern Igbo
<i>Ulo blok</i>	-	a house built with concrete
<i>Umummuo</i>	-	spirits
<i>Umunna</i>	-	assembly of male adults within a kindred
<i>Uri</i>	-	a plant where black is extracted

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Mural art as a tradition was done for centuries in the world including Africa, before the Neolithic period into the advent of Christianity and Islam, as well as Western imperialism and colonization. The art form part of the traditional architecture and serve aesthetic, religious, curative and informative purposes in many regions including Africa in which the mural art of *Obingwais* part of. Though with minor differences regarding styles and processes employed by different ethnic groups and geographical entities, these mural traditions across the world, Africa and Nigeria share many similarities in areas of the mural artist, art materials, motifs, and functions.

This study is on the survey of traditional mural art of the *Obingwa* in Abia State. The incorporation of some scholarly views, positions, arguments and analysis into this study give a good understanding on the subject matter. In view of this, the chapter reviews the literature relating to “A survey of Traditional Mural Art of the *Obingwa*”. The review is however concerned with the origin of mural art, mural artist, mural art materials, motifs used in murals, functions of murals and contemporary mural art.

#### **Origin of Mural Art in Europe**

Mural art is among the first forms of art practiced by mankind. By 35,000BCE, the activities of early humans had given rise to a culture known as Paleolithic. They fashioned bone and stone tools and began to produce artifacts and decorated walls (Boyd and Silk, 2003).

During the period, human was able to artistically represent animals, humans and some social activities on the walls of their habitations. Kleiner (2011)states that “figurative paintings and engravings were executed about 30,000 BCE on the walls and ceilings of caves, where early humans used as shelters”. According to Curtis (2006), the earliest discovery of paintings within the precincts of a cave was in Altamira, Spain in the year 1879 by an archeologist, Don Marcelino Sanzde Sautola and his daughter, Maria. The work was a painting of a bison on the ceiling of the cave as shown in figure I.



**Figure i:***Bison, detail of a painted ceiling in the cave of Altamira, Spain. 12,000 – 11,000BC*  
**Source:***Kleiner F.S. (2011)*

Apart from Spain, many archeological discoveries were made in so many sites in France and other areas in Europe, which includes Pech- Merle in France. The Pech- Merle murals as

shown in fig ii, depict figurative paintings of spotted horses and negative hand imprints of the early humans dating back to 22,000 BCE.



**Figure ii:** *Spotted horses and negative hand imprints.*  
*Cave of Perch- Merle, France, 22,000 BCE.*  
**Source:** *Kleiner F.S*

Another example of European cave art is in the cave of Lascaux in France, which painting represents Rhinoceros, man and bison and dates 15,000 BCE. Ian (2004) posits that the cave paintings were located in areas that were so difficult to access. Through this position, the researcher could assume that the prehistoric humans produced the murals as part of their inner religious temples. Contrary to this position Guthrie (2006) views Paleolithic cave art among the earliest forms of human communication, through which the early humans developed more skills for hunting, agriculture and inter-personal relationships. On the other hand, Kleiner (2011) aversthat the paintings could have served magical functions as a way of overpowering the animals thereby increasing success during hunting expeditions, as well as serving as teaching aids for apprentices, who were taught basic hunting skills before introducing them to the hunting fields.

Progressively, the Paleolithic era gave way for the emergence of Mesolithic period which was later succeeded by Neolithic period. Guthrie (2006) further states that during the Neolithic period 15,000- 5,000 BCE, humans were encouraged by the warmer climate and started forming agrarian societies, cultivating new crops, domesticating animals and wanderers began to settle in groups as hamlets and villages. As a result, there were improvements in art, architecture and other advancements.

It is important to note that the prehistoric discoveries and developments were not restricted to Europe alone, they were simultaneously carried out in all parts of the world. There were similar cave arts and other discoveries within the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods in America, Australia, Asia and Africa. In addition, the researcher opines that the functions ascribed to early cave paintings in Europe are the same with other parts of the world and the study of Obingwa murals would reveal more on this opinion.

### **Cave Art in North America**

The prehistoric arts in America were executed by the natives and Archaeological findings have shown that some of the rock and cave arts are dated more than 6,000 years ago (Sullivan, 2011). Some of the archaeological sites are located in Tennessee's Cumberland plateau, in the Southern Region of the United States of America. According to Simek, Cressler, Herman and Sherwood (2013), there are about 21 counties within the Cumberland plateau in Tennessee and contains 280 caves where the discoveries were made. The discoveries were in two parts with the open air rock art discovered in 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the Dark Zone Cave art was discovered in 1979.



**Figureiii:** *Animals, Tennessee Cumberland Plateau, 4,000 BCE*  
**Source:** *Cressler and Simek,*

As shown in figure iii, the art works depict hunting activities, animals, birds, mythical creatures such as quadrupeds and reptiles, including representation of spiritual activities of the native Americans. Cressler and Simek (2005) state that most of the works were pictographs with either black, red or combination of the two colours. The black colour was derived from charcoal, while the red was from mud and blood of animals. On the execution of the works, Sullivan (2011) states that:

The Tennessee cave art represented the prehistoric world of the native Americans in three ways: the upper section of the art are celestial, which represent the religious beliefs. The middle depict plants, animals and the world they lived. Thirdly, the arts in the lower section of the caves represent danger, darkness and death.

In view of the above, the author maintains that “animals like scorpions and snakes are represented as native Americans lower world because they were discovered in the lower caves and not in the upper section, which are regarded as the celestial walls”. The researcher therefore suggests that the religious worship and sustenance of belief system were among the functions of Tennessee’s Cumberland plateau art. In addition to the prehistoric cave and rock art of Tennessee Cumberland is the rock art of the Chumash, located in present Sancta

Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties in Southern California. According to Whitley (2009), the Chumash was a hunter gatherer society that developed skills in fishing and execution of rock art in form of pictographs and petroglyphs. Whitley adds that majority of the Chumash art sites are located within the Ventura and Sancta Clara Rivers as well as San Rafael and Sierra Madre mountains in Southern California. He also reports that a radio carbon test reveals that the Chumash prehistoric rock arts are estimated 2500 years ago.



**Figureiv:***Geometric and Abstract Symbols, Chumash Culture, Southern California, United States of America 500BCE*  
**Source:** *Whitley D.S.*

Penny (2004) states that The Chumash rock arts are dominated with human and animal forms, celestial bodies, geometric and abstract shapes and patterns which vary considerably. The author further states that the colours used range from monochromes of red and black to polychrome of wide range of colours, which are sourced from plants, soil, stone mortar, blood of animals and charcoal. Whitley (2009) also highlights that “the religious priests of Chumash ethnic group, known as ‘Alchuklash or Shamans’ executed the rock art. Churmash religion allows the Shamans to have direct interaction with the supernatural realm and the spirits for the well being of the entire Chumash community”. They considered Rivers, rocks

and caves as abodes of certain spirits through which communications with the supernatural could be easier and more potent. The art works serve as appeasements, thereby made the spirits to be more friendly and become intermediaries between the Shamans and Chumash people in one hand and the supernatural forces on the other. Onge, Johnson and Talaugon (2009) opine that geometric shapes, stylizations and abstractions in the Chumash art tradition were considered as celestial bodies. Combination of human and animal features represented stages of transformation, while animals like snakes and frogs were helpers to the spirits. The researcher comments that the source of art materials for Chumash art tradition has not differentiated from the sources of the traditional art cultures in Nigeria. This comment points to the fact that plant, soil and charcoal are sources of colours within the immediate environment in Nigeria art cultures and were same with Chumash culture. *Obingwa* mural art attests to this claim.

### **Cave Art in South America**

There are various sites that house prehistoric cave and rock paintings and engravings in South America. Notable among these archaeological sites include Serra da Capivara mountain range in North-East Brazil and “Cuevas de las Manos” meaning “cave of the hands” located in Santa Cruz province of Argentina (Gradin, 1999). The cave arts in Serra da Capivara in present Piauí state is as old as 25,000 years. Human figures and wild animals, human activities of hunting, sex, fighting and dancing dominate the prehistoric art of Serra da Capivara (Nash, 2014). The works are either engraved or painted with earth and mineral colours, ranging from yellow, ochre and black as shown in figure v.



**Figure v:***Fighting Scene Painting, Serra da Capivara Mountain Range, Brazil 23, 000 BCE*  
**Source:***Nash G.*

Similarly, Neumark (2002) states that the cave of the hands is rated among the oldest cave paintings in America, about 10,000 BCE, which were occupied by the forebears of Tehuelches ethnic people of Patagonia in South America who executed the prehistoric works.



**Figurevi:***Hand Paintings, Cave of the Hands, Santa Cruz, Argentina 7,000 BCE*  
**Source:** *Neumark V.*

As in figure vi above, the works are represented hands painted in silhouette, probably using blowing pipes or blowing with mouth. Other works include human and animal forms, hunting scenes, geometric shapes, zigzag patterns, representation of the sun and red dots (Gradin, 1999). The colours were in various shades of ground minerals, mostly iron oxides for red and purple, Kaolin for white, natrojarosite for yellow and manganese oxide for black.

Though,Neumark (2002)establishes that magic and ritual could have been the main functions of the hand paintings, the researcher suggests the painted hands could be the hands of initiates during initiation ceremonies into manhood and cultural societies.

### **Prehistoric Murals in Australia**

Prehistoric murals and other forms of art were created by the aborigines of Australia. The art has remained an unbroken tradition, spanning a long period of time. Flood (1997) affirms that the oldest aboriginal rock arts of Australia are found in Pilbara Region of Western Australia and Olary District of Southern Australia. Most of the works depict wild animals and paintings of human activities estimated about 40,000 years ago as shown in figure vii below.



**Figurevii:***Dancing Scene, Pilbara Region, Australia, 37,000 BCE*  
**Source:***Flood J.*

In the same vein, Caruna (2003) explains that apart from Olary and Pilbara Regions, other old murals include a rock drawing with charcoal at Narwala Gabarnmang in SouthwestArhem Land of Northern Australia, which date is firmly put at 28,000 years ago and predates the earliest European cave arts of Lascaux, Perch-Merleand Chauvet. In addition, Doring (2000) describes the art of Gwion Gwion aboriginal people of Kimberley

region in Western Australia as having numerous rock and cave paintings which are first reported in 1891 by an European archaeologist Joseph Bradshaw. Doring further explains that the colours employed in the prehistoric murals range from yellow, Ochre, red, brown to black, which are sourced through plants, soil, minerals and blood of animals.

However, the art tradition was so beneficial to the Aborigines. Flood (1997), opines that the art served religious functions in line with belief system. They believe that art works inspire dreams, which in turn fosters success during hunting expeditions. On the other hand, they believe on the curative potency embedded on the arts which they regarded as messengers of the supreme being.

### **Early Murals in Asia**



**Figure viii:** *Men riding on Horses, Bhimbetka, India 28,000 BCE*  
**Source:** *Javid A. and Javeed T.*

Mural art tradition as one of the earliest forms of art created by mankind is a universal activity. In Asia, India has one of the notable traditions in prehistoric cave and rock paintings and engravings as shown in figure viii. Javid and Javeed (2008) state that an archaeological site of the Paleolithic period, Bhimbetka rock shelters served as home to the early humans on the Indian subcontinent, hence the origin of stone age in South Asia. The authors also explain

Bhimbetka as “sitting place of Bhima, a hero of the epic Mahabharata”. It is located in Raisen District, Madhya Pradesh state of India. According to Mathpal (1984), “some of the areas were occupied by Homo erectus more than 100,000 years ago”. David and Javeed (2008) further explain that Bhimbetka site was formally discovered in 1957 by V.S. Wakankar with a team of archaeologists who confirmed a group of orderly stone age cultures and traditions, thereby classifying the artworks into different periods and cultures. In categorization, Pathak (2014) itemizes the periods as “upper Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Chalcolithic, early Historic and medieval”.

The works depict animal and human figures, as well as hunting scenes which differ from one cultural period to another. Pathak affirms that the Paleolithic period which featured representations of very big animal figures such as tigers, bisons, horses, and rhinoceroses executed with green and dark red colours. Mathpal (1984) avers that during the Mesolithic period, animal figures became smaller and the introduction of human figures and hunting scenes, with the weapons employed in hunting, as well as representation of pregnant women and dancers. David and Javeed (2008) additionally opine that Indian prehistoric paintings served religious and curative purposes and argue that the revealed continuous sequence of cultures is not peculiar to India cultures, rather most prehistoric traditions went through the stages which are necessary for developing modern communities.

Apart from India, Indonesia houses various archaeological cave and rock paintings. In Sulawesi Island of Indonesia, cave paintings discovered are dated 40,000 years old, which challenges the idea that the oldest cave arts are found in Europe (Salleh, 2014). The cave paintings in Sulawesi are mainly hand stencils and animals, bearing colours of ochre, red,

brown and black. In this regard, the researcher agrees with Salleh over his view on the age of cave arts found in Europe.

### **Prehistoric Murals in Africa**

Africa, as in other continents of the world has numerous prehistoric cave and rock arts across the continent which are in Saharan Africa and South of Sahara. Mori (1998) explains that in the Saharan region, there are about 3,000 archaeological sites which were discovered. Notable among these sites is Tassili n' Ajjer, which was discovered in 1933 in the South East of Algeria and shares borders with Mali, Niger and Libya; with an area of 72, 000 square kilometers. Holloway (2014) states that "Tassili n' Ajjer contains prehistoric paintings and engravings as old as 10,000 BCE which depict evolution of mankind, migration of mankind and animals as well as changes in the climates". The art numbering more than 15,000 on rock surfaces are representations of domestic and wild animals, humans, mythical creatures, ancient scripts and geometric designs. Some represent human activities, actions and gestures such as man with spirits, gods or animals (Mori, 1998).

David and Campbell (2001) categorize the Tassili art into five periods, with each having a distinct stylistic characteristics. The first in the order is the "Wild Fauna period" or "the Naturalistic period" estimated to have existed about 12,000- 6,000 BCE. The authors add that it represents the mankind who inhabited the savanna when it was wetter as well as wild animals like hippos, giraffes and elephants.

The Wild Fauna period was followed by "Round Head" or "Archaic Period" from about 9500 BCE – 5,000 BCE. David and Campbell (2001) further explain that the Round Head was a

period of creating of schematic figures with more magic – religious functions. It depicts round head figures in profile and heads without features.

The “Pastoral Period” or “Bovidian Period” of 7,200 BCE- 3,000 BCE has the highest number of paintings, with representations of daily life. The paintings are more naturalistic and are rated as one of the good examples of the early mankind mural art (Mori, 1998). Similarly, Braddley (2000) examines that the fourth in the sequence, the “Horse and Libyan Warrior” or “Equidian Period” spanned 3200BCE- 1000BCE and corresponds with the end of Protohistory and Neolithic periods. The period was characterized by disappearance of numerous animals and plants species due to progressive desiccation effects and the appearance of the horse.



**Figure ix:** *Camels of Sahara, Tassili n' Ajjer, Algeria, 2000 BCE.*  
**Source:** *David C. and Campbell A.*

The “Camel period” which succeeds the Horse and Libyan warrior period dates 2000 BCE- 1000BCE. David and Campbell (2001) maintain that camel period as shown in figure ix corresponds with the time of hyper- arid desert climate and the appearance of camel. Much as

most scholars agree on the sequence of the prehistoric art periods, Mori (1998) argues that the actual dates given to each of them may not be distinctive.

In addition to rock arts in Saharan Africa, the prehistoric murals in South Saharan Africa are diverse and the archaeological discoveries cut across the countries within the sub-region. There are rock archaeological sites in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and other nations of the continent. Notable among these archaeological discoveries are in Southern Africa. Southern Africa rock art is the art of the “San”, the indigenous hunter – gatherer people who occupy the present Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The San depicted human and animal figures, hunting scenes, half- human and half-animal hybrids.



**Figure x:** *San Rain Makers with Animal, Drakensberg, South Africa 7,000 BCE.*  
**Source:** *Garlake, P.*

According to Gall (2003), the hybrids were medicine men known as “Shamans” and rain makers who through dances and entering into trances cured various ailments. The rain

makers capture animals in their trance, while the blood and milk of the animals become rain when the animals are killed. In the same vein, Garlake (2002) states that the San rock arts are as old as 10,000 years and were narrations of communal and daily life activities of the prehistoric humans. The San people disguised as animals in order to get very close to grazing animals to shoot them. Gall (2003) maintains that notable among the rock art archeological sites of the San is Drankensberg, meaning “ Dragon Mountain” in the native Afrikaans language. Drankensberg is located in Kwa-Zulu Natal province of South Africa with over 35000 rock paintings, which are described as most concentrated in terms of number of works in South Africa.



**Figure xi:** *Detail from a San Mural Painting of a Shaman bleeding from the nose, 6,500 BCE.*  
**Source:** Garlake P.

Apart from the presence of paintings depicting everyday's life of the San, including hunting expeditions, Hollman (2007) reports that there are mystical paintings which are only seen by the Shamans while on their trance dance, while some paintings represented nose bleeding shamans who may have sustained body injuries during the trance, as in figure XI. Similarly, Garlake (2002) submits that the issue of animals brings to the fore, the process of the San who strongly believe that animals have powers which could be used to a great advantage through dance- induced trances. The author maintains that in classification of the spiritual powers and potency of animals, the eland was the greatest and was described as an animal of plenty for its large size, as well as symbolizes peace, beauty, healing and well being. On the other hand, LewisWilliam (2008) maintains that the paintings in Drakensberg give a deeper understanding of the content and context, especially as it concerns the lifestyle of the San people in the display of their belief and spirituality through man, animal and God. At this juncture, the researcher states that certain spiritualities under- lie the traditional mural art of *Obingwa*, especially in the ancestral shrines.

In addition to Drakensberg, another notable archaeological site in Africa South of Sahara is the Apollo II cave, located in the Haus mountain, Karas region of South West Namibia. Apollo II cave was discovered by a German archaeologist, Wolfgang Erich Wendt in 1969 (Mason, 2006). Vogelsang (2010) states that “Wolfgang named the cave Apollo II, in celebration of the successful return of Apollo II crew to earth on July 24, 1969”.



**Figurexii:***Painting on Stone Plaques, Apoll II Cave, Namibia.*  
23,000BCE.  
**Source:***Kleiner F.S.*

Kleiner (2011) maintains that the Apollo II cave contains pieces of stone plaques painted with charcoal, ochre and white including animal representations as in figure xii. Similarly, Mason (2006) describes the contents of Apollo II cave as some of the oldest arts discovered in Africa, which are dated about 23,000 BCE through charcoal radiocarbon test. However, Vogelsang (2010) states that recent discoveries which include 2 rib pieces with 26 notches and 12 notches respectively are dated to 100,000 BCE, thereby making Africa the domain of the oldest artworks in the world. The researcher views that if more archaeological discoveries are made in African soil, older art works would be found more than what Vogelsang comments.

### **Prehistoric Murals in Nigeria**

Within the shores of Nigeria is Birnin Kudu, a town in Jigawa State where the oldest rock paintings and drawings were discovered in Nigeria. Birnin Kudu cave contains Neolithic arts that depict animals, hunting scenes and rock gongs.



**Figurexiii:***Rock Paintings, Birnin Kudu, Nigeria, 2,000BCE.*  
**Source:***Mangut J. and Mangut B.N.*

Mangut and Mangut (2012) state that archaeological discoveries were made in 1954 and 1955 by a touring group whose findings are dated 2,000 BCE. Similarly, Samuila (2014) gives a description of Birnin Kudu cave art in this manner:

Dutsen Habude is an open cave located in the town of Birnin Kudu of Jigawa state, which houses rock paintings. The entire town is punctuated with piles of rocks and caves, among such is Dutsen Habude which is located adjacent the Rock Art Interpretation Centre, National Museum Birnin Kudu. The Centre is saddled with the responsibility of protecting, preserving and interpreting all the rock paintings and carved rock gongs found in Birnin Kudu. It is for this purpose that in 1961, the commission built a large wall round the rock shelter to prevent unwanted visitors coming to tamper with the rock paintings at Dutsen Habude. The paintings are depicted on the ceiling of the cave. Most of the paintings have been weathered due to the open nature of the cave. Only two cow paintings are neatly preserved from the harsh weather and rain, because the area where the two cows are painted is hidden from sunlight and rain.

It is suggested by the researcher that the period of execution of the Birnin Kudu cave art corresponds with the period of transition from Neolithic to metal age in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, subsequent researches on Obingwa mural art may discover more hidden treasures that could be older than Birnin Kudu rock paintings.

## **The Mural Artist**

The artists who executed the Murals across history were the indigenous people of various cultures within the continents of the world. The Chumash people of Southern California in Northern America, strongly believe that their religious priests known as Shamans are the artists who create the paintings for the interests of Chumash people but recent studies have shown that the murals were not created by men alone. Women and children were also involved in the execution of rock paintings of the prehistoric period. Subbaraman (2014) explains that “most of the hand paintings on the cave walls in Spain and France were that of women, due to the sizes and feminine structures of the fingers”. Similarly, Snow (2013) states that the male archaeologists who discovered the rock paintings across the world were gender biased and rigid by concluding that the works were executed by men alone.

In traditional African society, it is widely assumed by scholars that most of the mural artists were women. According to Hall (2014), the women executed the wall paintings with symbols that communicate to indigenes about the culture and survival of Ndebele ethnic group of Zimbabwe in Southern Africa. In the same vein, women decorate walls in Pedi kingdom of South Africa, with the art being handed over from generation to generation. Vogel (1985) affirms that “a husband builds a homestead for his wife upon the birth of their first child. The homestead is enhanced by decorated walls, painted by the wife or any other initiated female painter”.

In addition, the Igbo wall decorations in the Southeast Nigeria is practiced by women. Adenaike and Omotayo (1982) note that the wall decoration of the Owerri area and Northern *Igbo* is called “*Uli*”, and the practice is reserved for women who paint both the interior and

exterior walls of the compound in addition to body painting and adornment. The researcher opines that the mural artists in the prehistoric and historic traditional societies were not after economic benefits, but to fulfil the call for duty; unlike mural paintings and decorations in contemporary period.

On the contrary, the murals of the Hausa in Northern Nigeria are created by men. Marchand (2008) explains that “the oldest and most prestigious wall decoration in Hausa are the low relief geometrical patterns created by ‘Magina’, meaning (builders) who exhibit a thorough sense of proportion in their craftsmanship”. The researcher believes that in the contemporary times the artists are commercial oriented, whose main aim is to get commissions that would enhance financial profit. Some of the artists are academically trained male and female artists, while some went through informal apprenticeship programmes. Available literature shows that most traditional murals in Africa are executed by female artists. The researcher’s survey of Obingwa mural art gives the true perspective of the artist of Obingwa murals including other characteristics.

### **Mural Art Materials**

The materials used by the mural artists during the prehistoric periods were based on availability. It involved sourcing the materials from the immediate environment. During the Paleolithic period, early humans created paintings with natural available materials. Kleiner (2011) reiterated that the Paleolithic artists used pigments of red and yellow extracted from leaves and soil, which they ground and mixed for painting. They employed a wide range of minerals which attest to the sophistication of the technology of that time. According to

Cressler and Simek (2005), pictographs and paintings were executed with red colours which are sourced from mud and blood of animals, while black was derived from charcoal.

Similarly, Kleiner (2011) maintains that “early humans used flat stones as palettes, as well as reeds, twigs and fingers as brushes. Reed and hollow bones were used as blowpipes during spraying of pigments”. In addition, Doring (2000) states that a wide range of colours like yellow, Ochre, red, brown and black were used by the early rock painters. The pigments were sourced from minerals, soil, plants and blood of animals. During the period of traditional murals in Africa, natural materials were still sourced for painting. In this regard, Ochonu (2003) explains the importance of ashes mixed with gravel and “Bagaruwa” (Egyptian Mimosa) in painting long lasting murals in Northern Nigeria. In the same vein, Yoruba mural art materials are obtained from the immediate environment. Folaranmi (2002) states that:

Shades of browns and ochres are derived from clay and soil, reddish pupa are derived from vegetables such as “*ibuje*” leaves (*Randa maculata*). Osun carm wood and *elu* leaves give indigo, while black is sourced from charcoal. White is obtained by heating egg shell to a certain temperature and grinding it into fine powder. White is also derived from Kaolin, while congealed pap is used as a binder for the colours to adhere to the walls.

However, in the contemporary murals, most of the materials are no longer sourced from the natural environment, rather, the mural artists make use of manufactured enamel, emulsion paints, ceramic tiles, marbles, wall paper, nylon flex, precious stones and terrazzo (Willsdon, 2000). Contemporary murals also make use of digital imagery techniques for advertisements. Nevertheless, all art materials through the ages serve the purpose of beauty and function, regardless of the medium, source, age and the artist. Through the research study, *Obingwa* art tradition conforms with the universality of mural art materials.

## **Mural Motifs**

Motifs are a unit and major recurring theme or dominant element in a design and work of art. Motifs can be formed from natural and man-made objects, as well as abstract, geometric, regular and irregular shapes (Banjoko, 2009). Formation of motifs could be influenced by belief system, period, mythology, religion, geographical entity, culture and wave of migration. Motifs as units of art traditions are handed down from generation to generation by communities involved, thereby establishing a continuation in the iconography of such motifs. In this regard, Uhumwagho (2008) explains that there is no clear cut distinction between the arts of the prehistoric, ancient, precolonial, colonial and post colonial periods of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in Africa.

The motifs in the early human art within the precincts of the rocks and caves were dominated by figurative motifs of animals and humans. Kleiner (2011) opines that the prehistoric humans painted animals and hunting scenes due to their belief that such murals could bring success during hunting of such animals painted. Apart from animals and humans, motifs of celestial bodies like moon, sun and stars were evident in the murals of the prehistoric native Americans. Sullivan (2011) states that the presence of these motifs was influenced by the religion and belief system of the native Americans.



**Figurexiv:** *Human Hand Motif,Sulawesi, indonsia*  
**Source:** [www.google.com/m?h/en\\*source=human+hand+motif](http://www.google.com/m?h/en*source=human+hand+motif)

In addition, human hand was a motif in many prehistoric cultures like the cave of the hands in Patagonia South America, Sulawesi Indonesia in Asia and the San Culture of Southern Africa as shown in figure xiv. Salleh (2014) suggests that most hand motifs were created to satisfy religious and curative purposes. Similarly, Onge, Johnson and Talaugon (2009) maintain that geometric shapes, Zigzag and abstract motifs were used by the Tehuelches ethnic people of South America, Sahara region of Africa and San of Southern Africa, due to their belief in the progressive transformation of life.

On the other hand, the combination of human and animal motifs as one prevailed in the rock art of San people of South Africa and Chumash people of North America, who believe in the curative prowess of such hybrid motifs. Whitely (2000) posits that the Shamans who serve as link between the prehistoric humans and the supernatural forces used human- animal motifs for effective communication with the spirits and wading off evil forces, as well as healing of certain diseases. Progressively, the historic art traditions across the globe and within the Sub-Saharan Africa assumed the continuation of the prehistoric rock art of the

early humans. Some of these traditions include the Sirigu, Ndeble, San, Hausa, Yoruba and *Igbo*.



**Figure xv:** *Sirigu Geometric Motifs*  
**Source:** [www.google.com/m?h/en&source=sirigu+murals](http://www.google.com/m?h/en&source=sirigu+murals)

Mural art in sirigu, upper East region of Ghana is characterized by the use of figurative and geometric motifs and a combination of the two motifs. Wemegah (2009) explains that “the figurative symbols depict stylized human and animal figures, while the geometric motifs depict crescents, rhombuses, triangles, hatchings, vertical and horizontal lines”. Wemegah further explains that in Sirigu mural tradition, designs are either painted or moulded in low relief on the walls. Each of the motifs has a definite meaning, for example snake python motif symbolizes protection. Schneider (1985) states that in Ndebele, geometric motifs and few representational symbols dominate the mural designs. The mural artists of Ndebele usually depict geometric motifs and representational symbols which go a long way in providing useful information to the aborigines of Ndebele, concerning their oneness and culture as a people.



**Figurexvi:***Northern Knot “Dagin Arewa”*  
**Source:***Ochonu M.*

Similarly, Hausa wall decorations are enriched with geometric and Arabique motifs. According to Ochonu (2003), some of the motifs and symbols employed in Hausa murals are lifted from designs and materials brought from holy pilgrimage, Qur’an, ablution Kettles and scent containers. Ochonu (2003) maintains that in some Emirs Palaces, one important motif is the Northern Knot “Dagin Arewa” which he describes as:

One recurring motif in the paintings on the walls of both the old and new palaces is the Northern Knot (Dagin Arewa). This motifs, a familiar fixture in many Northern Nigerian artistic works, is a weave of intricately intersecting knots that signify the bonds of political unity envisioned for Northern Nigeria. The symbol was adopted in the 1950s, when Nigerian elites were preparing for political indepenence from Britain. This unity in diversity is encapsulated in the “One North” philosophy that was used to fight for representation and privileges for Northern Nigeria and to counter what was perceived as Southern Nigerian persecution and political domination. Ahmadu Bello’s approval of the knot for use as a Northern Nigerian coat of arm and seal of authority when he became the premier of Northern Nigeria gives the symbol additional importance.



**Figure xvii:** *Uli Mural Motifs*

**Source:** [www.google.com/m?h/en&source=Uli+murals](http://www.google.com/m?h/en&source=Uli+murals).

In the same vein as shown in figure xvii, the *Uli* mural tradition of Owerri area and Northern Igbo employ geometric patterns, house hold objects, plants, leaves, animals and celestial symbols as motifs in wall decoration (Owusu 2000). The motifs are not only used on architectural walls, Igbo women also use it on their bodies for beautification, especially in preparation for certain events such as marriage ceremonies, title taking and funerals.



**Figure xviii:** *Yoruba Wall Decoration Symbols*

**Source:** *Obadele K.*

On the other hand, the Yoruba of South West Nigeria depict a wide range of symbols on their mural arts seen in figure xvii, Obadele (2008) notes that the numerous symbols used for Yoruba murals are from the Yoruba cultural values, religion, mythology, tales, folklore and oral traditions, while the mural painters claim to be inspired by the spiritual powers of “Orisa” the supreme being in creating such arts. It is note worthy that the Yoruba mural motifs have also been adopted in Ife school by “Ona group”. while the motifs of Uli of Igbo are fused into Nsukka school for studies in contemporary painting. The researcher views motif as a design unit that is influenced by various factors which makes the motif to differ from one geographical entity to other. In this regard Obingwa mural motif may differ from other traditions.

### **Functions of Mural Art**

All human activities are useful in one form or another, which becomes the essence for such activities. Mural art therefore serves many purposes especially within the communities they are created. Through history, murals have served religious, magical, ceremonial and therapeutic purposes. In certain areas, it is meant to enhance aesthetics and communication among the members of the community. Kleiner (2011) concludes that cave art was used for magic and religion, due to the inaccessibility of such paintings and engravings which were executed at very narrow chambers of the caves.



**Figurexix:** *Rhinoceros, Wounded Man and Disemboweled Bison, Lascaux, France 15,000 – 13,000 BCE.*  
**Source:** *Kleiner F.S*

Boyd and Silk (2003) view the paintings as being used for communication and narration of stories, for example as it concerns the “Rhinoceros, Wounded Man and Disemboweled Bison” in figure xix, a painting in the wall of the cave at Lascaux, France which is dated 15,000 – 13,000 BCE. The researcher observes that the functions appropriated to the prehistoric arts were universal among the regions of the world where rock arts have been discovered. The researcher maintains that the historic mural art traditions are the offshoots of the prehistoric era and their functions are also the continuation of the prehistoric art in different ways by having direct impact on the people. The art serves religious functions among other functions in the traditional societies. Folaranmi (2002) explains that the traditional mural art of Yoruba has been executed in most cases in veneration of the deity “Orisa” and most of the art works are in shrines, Obas palaces and the homes of the rich and influential individuals.

Murals are also created for the celebration of certain festivals and events in the traditional societies. In this regard, Isichei (1977) states that mural designs dominated by Yam motifs and geometric patterns were created for the celebration of new yam festivals in Igbo, especially in the compound of influential farmers with the prestigious title of “Ezeji”, meaning king of yams. Furthermore, Olaosebikan (1982) posits that apart from aesthetics as one of the major functions of Hausa wall decoration, religious messages are passed through Quranic inscriptions as wall decorations.



**Figurexx:** *Ndebele Mural Art*  
**Source:** [www.google.com/m?h/en&source=ndebele+murals](http://www.google.com/m?h/en&source=ndebele+murals)

In addition Schneider (1985) explains that mural art of Ndebele involves a more complex form of communication by announcing to other Ndebeles that their kin lives within and provides information about the kingdom to which the family belongs, thereby distinguish them from non Ndebeles. The researcher comments that functions of art differ from one culture to another. Therefore this study reveals the peculiar functionality of *Obingwa* mural art.

## **Conclusion**

The painting of murals over the years started with the early humans during the Paleolithic culture, when they fashioned tools with bones and stones. The tools were used in creating artifacts including wall decorations in the caves. The discovery of these murals were made later after they have been created. Curtis (2006) states that the earliest discovery of cave paintings was in Altamira, Spain by Don Marcelino Sanz de Sautola in 1879.

Apart from Europe, early wall paintings were executed in rocks and caves in other continents of the world which include North America, South America, Australia, Asia and Africa. As the literature reveals, majority of the works were paintings and engravings of animals, human figures and daily activities of the early humans. This attest that murals are expression of “a universal language” innate in all races and ethnic groups across the globe. Against the opinions of some scholars that Europe is a continent where the oldest cave paintings are located, cave paintings and engravings of early humans in Africa are believed to be older than those discovered in Europe. Vogelsang (2010) admits that recent discoveries in Namibia, Southern Africa of stone plaques which include 2 rib pieces with 26 notches and 12 notches respectively are dated to 100,000BCE. Similarly, Halloway (2014) states that African prehistoric paintings and engravings depict evolution and migration of mankind and animals.

The materials used for the cave arts were sourced from the immediate environments of the early man. These materials include colours extracted from soil, plants and blood of animals, as well as reeds and sticks which were used as painting brushes. The use of these materials across the continents of the world transcended to the traditional mural arts in Nigeria, Africa

and other parts of the world. The mural artists who were not commercial oriented were highly respected in the prehistoric and traditional societies due to the importance of the art works they created. They used motifs and designs according to the cultural background and belief system to create numerous murals and other forms of art, whose functions have not drastically changed over time. From the prehistoric era through the traditional period, religious worship has been an important function of mural art, alongside communication, education, aesthetic, healing and identification functions.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures the researcher used in collecting and utilizing relevant data for the research on "An Examination of Traditional Mural Art of the *Obingwa*". The qualitative research method is used in this study. This chapter therefore covers the research design, research population, sources for data collection and procedure used for data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

Research design is a systematic blue print that specifies how data of a given investigative problem should be collected and analyzed. Creswell (2012) states that research design is an organized outline for the conduct of any given investigation. Ethnographic approach of qualitative research is used as a design for this study. Ethnography as a design is the study of a group of people or community in relation to their culture and tradition which includes the arts and linguistic identities, in the same vein, "qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in various academic disciplines, mostly in the social sciences and humanities. It studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them" (Dezin, Lincoln, 2000).

Ethnographic approach was used by Sobers (2010) in a cultural study of a people including their arts. This approach aided the researcher in investigating and examining the beliefs, culture, philosophies, attitudes, practices and functionality concerning the Traditional Mural Art of *Obingwa*.

## **Research Population/Sample**

Research population refers to the entire group of persons, objects or events whose characteristics are being studied within the researcher's area of study. *Obingwa* has a population of 295,680 (United Nations Population Fund, 2014). The population of this study covers the various compounds where the architecture bearing the traditional murals are situated across the Local Government Area, together with the occupants and attendants of such buildings and ancestral shrines with murals. The women who are the traditional mural artists are also part of the population, as well as the elders and traditional rulers of selected communities who are custodians of the traditions and culture of the people.

The sample for the study is systematically gotten from this population. Sample is a smaller group of elements which are drawn through a definite procedure, representing only a portion of the population. Purposive sampling is employed in selecting the buildings, compounds, shrines, artists, elders and traditional rulers within *Obingwa*. Purposive sampling is used primarily when there is a limited number of people that have expertise, or when objects and situations are limited in the area being researched. Oliver (2010) describes purposive sampling as a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals or objects to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue or capacity and willingness to participate in the research.

Purposive sampling is employed due to the fact that the traditional mural paintings are not located in all the communities of the area. The limited number of the traditional murals and mural artists is attributed to lack of patronage, occasioned by the popular choice of modern media and styles of mural decoration in recent times. As a result, thirteen (13) buildings

which include out door traditional murals were purposively selected among the 14 wards of the Local Government Area namely *Abayi I, Abayi II, Mgboko Umuanunu, Mgboko Itungwa, Ahiaba, Mgboko Amairi, AlaukwuOhanze, Akumaimo, Ndiakata Amairinabuo, Ntighauzo Amairi, Ibeme, Akpa Mbato, Itukpa and Mgboko Umuanunu II*. Apart from the buildings, twenty three occupants and attendants of such buildings as well as three mural artists, eleven elders and seven teen traditional rulers within the communities of the selected architecture are also part of the sample.

### **Source of Data Collection**

Sources of data collection are the systematic gathering of data for a particular purpose from various sources. The process is usually preliminary to analysis of data. The sources of data collection of this work are primary and secondary sources. The primary sources comprise of the fieldwork, which entails oral interviews, personal observations and photographs, while the secondary sources include information from textbooks, journals, magazines and internet.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher. During the exercise, observations, interviews and photography were carried out at three selected locations in *Obingwa* namely: *Ibeme, Akumaimo and Itukpa*. One mural artist, one shrine priest and two traditional rulers were interviewed. The pilot study was done in order to help validate or invalidate tools and research instruments such as tape recorder, digital camera and interview schedules for oral interview.

### **Fieldwork**

Fieldwork is an exercise of information gathering outside lecture rooms, library, laboratory and workplace setting, Fieldwork methods and approaches differ across disciplines. In

humanities and social sciences, field research involves interviews, observations, collective discussions, participation, questionnaires, photographs and audio-visual recordings (Burgess, 1984). In the same vein, Hobbs (2014) explains that fieldwork engages the world of others, in order to make a close study of them. In this regard, the researcher obtains an understanding of everyday operations and mechanism of a particular way of life, within a particular environment, tradition and culture. In order to achieve the aim of the subject matter through fieldwork, the researcher employed the use of oral interviews, observations and photographs.

With the use of unstructured interview schedules, the researcher interviewed the respondents individually in their various homes on specific appointments within the area of study, as mentioned in Research Population/Sample above. Apart from interviews, the researcher observed a traditional religious worship session at an ancestral shrine with murals, located in Obete Ukwu village, Ibeme autonomous community on December 29, 2014. In the same vein, photographs of buildings with murals were taken with digital camera by the researcher within the area of study which were used for analysis of data in chapter four of this study.

### **Research Instruments**

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, oral interview schedules and participant observation as research instruments were employed by the researcher.

### **Oral Interview Schedules**

The unstructured method of oral interview on respondents was employed. The use of unstructured interview method reduces the rigidity of structured method of interview. As a result, respondents are encouraged to express their thoughts freely and the order of prepared questions could be altered to suit a particular respondent or occasion. With the unstructured

interview schedules as instrument, the researcher was able to obtain reliable information from the respondents during the field work in different communities of *Obingwa*.

### **Participant Observation**

In addition to oral interview schedules, personal participant observation was used by the researcher in the course of this research. Kawulich (2005) defines observation as the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) state that observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in their natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. In view of this, the researcher employed participant observation for data collection during the field work.

### **Research Tools**

Photography for data collection during fieldwork was achieved through the use of digital camera as a research tool, while a tape recorder was also used for covering the oral interview sessions. This procedure has been successfully used by Wemegah (2009), Ejiogu (1971) and Duniya (2009). The researcher's adoption of the use of digital camera offered him the convenience in taking the photographs of the selected buildings with murals within Obingwa. **Procedure for Data Analysis**

The information collected during the course of the study were analyzed using categorization and descriptive approaches as used in Duniya (2009). In this regard, the information are classified into three categories namely, interior murals, exterior murals and out-door murals. In addition, the descriptive approach is used by the researcher in analyzing the information gathered concerning the functions and present state of *Obingwa* mural art, including the materials, motifs and processes used by the mural artists in executing the murals.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### **Introduction**

This chapter contains the analysis of information obtained from the field work on “An Examination of Traditional Mural Art of the *Obingwa*”. Firstly, the information are classified into three categories: i. interior murals, ii. exterior murals and iii. out-door murals. Interior murals are those executed on the walls or ceilings of rooms or inner apartments of a particular building. Exterior murals on the other hand are created on outside walls, ceilings and fence of a building or compound; while out-door murals are created on objects which are not enclosed within a given architectural piece, rather in the open where there is no shield against rain or sun. Secondly, the analysis is also concerned with the mural artist, materials, motifs, processes of execution, functions of the murals and the present state of *Obingwa* murals.

## Analysis of Obingwa Murals

### Interior Murals



**Plate i:** Ichu nta, 1947, Plant and Earth Colours on wall, 220cm x 105cm, Ohaobu, Ibeme

**Photography:**Theo Nwogu, 2015.

Plate i is a mural titled “*Ichu nta*” meaning hunting, located in *Ohaobu, Ibeme* in *Obingwa* Local Government Area executed in January 1947. The name of the artist is not known. The painting is in the interior wall of *Ohaobu* village council hall. It measures 220cm by 105cm and depicts a hunting expedition, showing hunters and their dogs hunting for wild animals. The mural is rendered in naturism. The hunter holds a gun in a standing position which could be referred as the centre of attraction. The hunter with knife at the right foreground is smaller than the hunter with gun at the background, due to the importance attached to hunters with guns; they kill animals at a distance than hunters with knives. The “red hue” on the antelope’s abdomen region at the background of the mural and the light brown colour strokes on its body, signifies that the animal is the main target of the hunters due to its big size.

It was revealed during the research that the materials used for the mural are sourced from the local environment and the colours have stood the test of time because the hall has undergone series of wall coating sessions. The mural was executed to serve the purposes of decoration and narration of a communal activity, as well as to serve as a teaching aid for young men who are interested in hunting skills and expeditions. This function agrees with the position of Kleiner (2011) about cave art in Europe that “the animal representation may have served as teaching tools to instruct new hunters about the character of the various species of animals they would encounter or even to serve as targets for spears”.



**Plate ii:** Civic hall mural, 1967, Plant and earth colours on wall, Akpa mbato  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2015

Plate ii is an interior mural located in the civic hall of *Umuomai, Akpa Mbato* in *Obingwa* Local Government Area. The building was constructed in 1951, while the mural was executed in 1967, before the outbreak of Nigerian civil war. The artist is not known.

The mural depicts roots, stems, tubers of various plants which are used for curing of different kinds of ailments such as malaria, waist pain, asthma, impotence, weak genital erection in men and convulsion. Apart from aesthetics, the mural educates and informs especially the younger people about the plants used for traditional medicine.

## Exterior Murals



**Plate iii (a):** Four-rayed star and eye, by Nwafor Nwobu, 1972, Plant and earth colours on wall, 38cm and 18cm, Amaku, Mgboko Amairi  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014



**Plate iii (b)**

The mural art of a four-rayed star and eye is on the wall of a residential building. The building was constructed with mud as wall and metal sheets as roof, located in *Amaku* village in *MgbokoAmairi, Obingwa*. As informed by the occupants of the building, it was

constructed in 1966 with raffia roof “*akrika*” before the roof was changed to metal sheets in 1971 after the Nigerian civil war, due to incessant water leakages occasioned by poor maintenance and absence from home during the war. The mural was painted in 1972 by ‘*Nwafor*,’ a female mural artist within the village.

The star motif measures 38cm circumference, while the eye motif is 18cm horizontal width. The colours used are black, reddish-brown and white which are sourced from the immediate environment. Black is obtained from seed of a tree called “*uri*” which is ground and mixed with water. Reddish-brown is from laterite “*aja ngwu olu*” mixed with cam wood tree extract, while white colour is obtained from white clay “*nzu*”. Apart from the colours, the application is made with wooden stick which is pound by one end and serves as painting brush, in addition to the use of fingers to apply colours. The artist used bold lines in giving “strength” to stylized objects. The style of the mural is linear stylization.

The art has some socio-cultural interpretations attached to it. The star stands for enterprise and trade. It also represents the four delegates of God who were sent to earth on the four Igbo market days of “*Nkwo*”, “*Eke*”, “*Orie*” and “*Afor*”, which are very significant in the trading activities and economy of the *Obingwa* society as well as the basics of Igbo calendar. The star also communicates to the public that a trader lives in the building. In addition, the eye which is painted with Reddish-Brown and black outline is believed to see all the activities of men, women and spirits and protects the inhabitants of the building from evil spirits and enemies.



**Plate iv(a)** Musician, by Ikenna Uzoma, 1961, Cement on wall, 840cm x 240cm,  
Umuokea, Ahiaba  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014.



**Plate iv(b)**

Plate iv is a mural on a building which is located in *Umuokea* village, *Ahiaba* in *Obingwa* Local Government Area. The work is a low relief cement sculpture and dates 1961, the same year the building was constructed. The sit out wall toward the flower vases were rendered with stylized geometric shapes which give stones effect. On the fence by the right is also a relief sculpture depicting a traditional titled chief blowing an aerophone made of animal horn “*oja*”. The wall is painted with yellow emulsion paint by the occupants with the permission of the land lord, who has rented out the building for trading activities. The relief was executed by late *Ikenna Uzoma* a male artist who was an indigene of the village.

The mural has advertising, aesthetic and historical functions. Through the research, it is revealed that the former owner of the building Late Chief *Omenka Uzo* was a traditional chief who had a music and entertainment group which was so famous across *Obingwa* in the performing arts industry. In this regard, Late Chief *Omenka* commissioned *Ikenna* to create the mural as a form of beautification, advertisement for his entertainment business and establishing a historical narration about himself.



**Plate v:** Mural of Uprightness and Protection, 1970, Plant and earth colours on wall, 50cm x 28cm and 170cm, Umuaguma, Ntighauzo Amiri  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014.

The mural in plate v is located in *Umuaguma* village, *Ntighauzo Amairi* in *Obingwa* Local Government Area of Abia State. The owner of the building informed that he could not remember the name of the artist. The art is a painting of a halfmoon at the left side of the wall, which forms part of the background and a snake with three horizontal lines against it. The moon measures 50cm by 28cm coloured with ochre and black and the snake is 170cm and represented with red colour, while the head and the horizontal lines are painted with black. The mural was executed in November 1970, when the Igbos were resettling to their indigenous homes after the 30months civil war which engulfed Nigeria. The paintings are rendered in flat and outline colours which are sourced locally within *Ntighauzo Amiri*. The ochre is obtained from a plant called “*njagwa*”, red from laterite “*aja ngwu olu*”, while black

is sourced from “*uri*” plant. The motifs of snake and moon is by the discretion of the house owner papa *Egwuonwu*, who is about 85years old.

The paintings are created for different purposes which include spiritual protection and long life. In line with the belief in simplicity and moderation of the Obingwa, the half-moon signifies humble beginning in life pursuits and gradual growth which could guarantee longevity. The snake with the horizontal lines against it denotes an enemy who came to attack an opponent, but was defeated. It was revealed that these works have been a source of protection for the family members everywhere they reside. They wade-off evil spirits and exempts the family members from physical danger. On the other hand, it is believed that the half-moon mural has been a source of inspiration to the family members who pursue their goals with dignity and uprightness, which they believe guarantees long life.



**Plate vi:**Ezeji's House, 1943, Plant and earth colours on wall, 45cm, 43cm and 175cm x 100cm,  
Ntigha Oriebe, Abayi II  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2015.

*Ntigha-Oriebe* is in *Abayi II*, *Obingwa* Local Government Area where the building in plate vi is located. The architectural piece bears a mural on the wall painted in 1943 during the Second World War, while the building was constructed between 1938 and 1941. The owner of the building was a wealthy farmer, late *Ezeji Nwulu Okafor* and the artist's name is unknown.

The mural is a painting of yam tuber, yam leaf and zigzag design on the front view of the building. The yam and leaf motifs measure 45cm and 43cm height respectively, while the zigzag design is 175cm by 100cm. The composition of the mural design is asymmetrical. The yam bears brown and black colours, the leaf with ochre and black, while the zigzag is coloured with white, ochre and black. The colours and lines of the mural have faded out due to aging and atmospheric properties since 1943. As a result, the design lost its brilliance,

clarity and sharpness. The materials used for the painting are sourced within *Ntigha-Oriebe* village by the mural artist.

The mural has a socio-cultural and religious functions as informed by *James Okafor*, one of the occupants who inherited the property from their late parents. The yam tuber and yam leaf signify large scale farming and communicates to passers- by that a great farmer lives in the compound. As a result, people come from within and beyond the community to buy seed yams for cultivation during the farming seasons. The compound is always full of visitors and guests during the annual new yam festival of *Abayi* community. On the other hand, the study reveals that the Zigzag design stands for dignity and hardwork. *EzejiNwulu Okafor* believed during his life time that pouring libations with locally brewed gin “*nmayi oku*” on the ground close to the mural created more chances and opportunities for him to be more prosperous in his farming activities.



**Plate vii:**Celestial mural, Nkiruka Ekeke, 1971, Plant and earth colours on wall, 140cm and 95cm, Akpa mbato  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2015.

Plate vii describes a mural on a native residential mud architecture in Akpa Mbato of Obingwa Local Government Area, Abia State. The building was constructed in 1968 while the mural was created in 1971, by Late Nkiruka who hailed from neighboring Abala community. The sun-rayed design by the right background of the picture plane measures 140cm circumference and painted with white, reddish-brown and black colours. Similarly, the five-rayed star at the left background of the picture is 95cm circumference in size and colours used are white, red and black. The symbols are created on the wall without any background colour, while the artist's use of bold lines to outline the painting gives it a definite style.

The motifs are celestial bodies of sun and star. Though they are meant for aesthetics, there are other indept interpretations about the art. The sun signifiespower, healing prowess and energy, while the star symbolizes wisdom and ingenuity.According to the a traditional ruler

of Akpa Mbato community, a sick person who is having fever and headache can be healed by leaning on the wall close to the sun motif for at least two hours at night while memorizing certain incantations. Though the belief system has been eroded due to embrace of Christian religion by majority of people in Akpa mbato.



**Plate viii (a)**Protective Eagle, by Ohuka Nwankwo, 1977, Plant and earth colours on wall,105cm x 28cm, Itukpa  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014.



**Plate viii (b)**

Plate viii is a mural painting on a residential building in *Itukpa, Obingwa* Local Government Area. The art depicts a stylized bird in a flying posture and rendered on a white background. It is painted with ochre, white and black, also measures 105cm by 28cm. The mural was

created in 1977 which coincided with the celebration of Festival of Arts and Culture “FESTAC 77”. (The Second world Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, Lagos Nigeria).It was informed that *Ohuka Nwankwo*, the famous female muralist from the neighbouring *Umuobiakwa* community executed the work with materials sourced from their community.

Although the mural serves a beautification purpose, the occupants of the building believe that the bird painted on the wall is a spiritual eagle with protective powers which protects the family members from the negative effects of witch craft.



**Plate ix(a)**Eluama Kindred Shrine, by Helen Ohuonu, 2009, Plant and earth pigments on wood, 25cm x 13cm and 25cm x 13cm, Eluama, Onicha  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014



**Plate ix(b)**

Plate ix is a mural design on a wall-less shelter. The mural is categorized as exterior wall decoration because there is a roof that provides a shield against rain and harsh rays of the sun. The structure is an ancestral shrine of *Eluama* kindred in *Onicha* village, *NdiakataAmairinabuo* of *Obingwa* Local Government Area. The shrine has existed for about 120years, but due to the temporal nature of the open structure, it is rebuilt whenever it becomes necessary, may be when termites destroy the wooden pillars or when wind blows off the thatched roof. The mural on the wood is a replacement of the former ones which were destroyed alongside the wood and was painted in 2009 by *HelenOhuonu*, a mural artist who hails from *Owoelu* village.

The mural depicts a stylized eye, rendered with locally sourced colours of red, white and black, measuring 25cm by 13cm and a drum “*ekpete*” positioned vertically below the eye measuring 25cm by 13cm, also rendered with red, white and black colours. The researcher was informed that the eye spiritually searches every activities and thoughts of men that could

hinder the good health, growth and prosperity of all *Eluama* indigenes at home and abroad, especially when they do not engage in stealing or murder. Similarly, the drum signifies announcement and invocation which help in informing and inviting the ancestral spirits to the shrine. The spirits are attracted by the murals which lure them to answer whenever they are invoked through beating of drums and chanting of certain songs. Furthermore, the colour of red signifies courage, black stands for strength and white signifies innocence and uprightness.



**Plate x:** Umulelu Shrine, 1975, Plant and earth pigments on wall, 165cm, 145cm x 70, Umulelu  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2015

*Umulelu* is a village in *Mgboko Itungwa* of *Obingwa* Local Government Area where plate x situates. The mural is executed on the wall of a building use as shrine by *Okebugwu Ogbonna*, a “native” doctor. The mural was created in 1975 by unknown artist. The mural has lost colours lines, clarities, brilliance and sharpness due to harsh weather conditions on

the exterior art work. The mural is an abstraction which depicts four creatures paddling a canoe. It measures 145cm by 70cm. The colours used are ochre, red and black. At the centre of the wall is a design that represents an eye rendered in a circle shape instead of oval, measuring 165cm circumference and painted with red, white and black colours. The materials are locally obtained from earth and plants within *mgboko Itungwa*.

The mural communicates to the public and advertizes the existence of a shrine in the community. The eye motif sees every evil that wants to befall the community, including the families of clients who come for any assistance whether ill health, ill luck and attack in dreams; which are wade off. The mural is a tool the shrine priest uses in collaboration with other wooden images inside the shrine house to get direct messages from the spiritual world. In addition, the abstracted creatures paddling canoe are representatives of ancestors who represent the four Igbo market days of “*Nkwo*”, “*Eke*”, “*Orie*” and “*Afor*”. Their movement signifies that they engage in all manners of activities in a bid to protect the generations who are alive. The work embellishes the wall in order to give delight to the departed ancestors and lures them to always answer immediately they are invited.



**Plate xi:** Herbal Home Mural, by Ohuka Nwankwo, 1978, Plant and earth pigments on wall, 150cm (height), Agburuike  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014

The mural in plate xi is located in *Agburuike* village, *Alaukwu Ohanze of Obingwa*. The art was executed in 1978, while the building was constructed in 1973. The mural by the sides of a house entrance depicts the graphic symbols of traditional mid-wifery and herbal healing home, owned by Madam Nkechi Ekeke. The artist painted women with geometric motifs arranged in a vertical position with white and black neutrals dominating. The pregnant women at the left side of the entrance and the female figure hybrid with fish features towards the leg region at the right appear to be the centre of interest. The figures are highly stylized that none is painted with legs and hands, rather the heads and other parts of the body are rendered with circles and other geometric shapes. Ohuka Nwankwo, the female artist who executed the mural obtained all the materials locally within *Alaukwu Ohanze*.

The art serves an advertisement function to the public concerning the services rendered by the traditional mid-wife who among other things gives herbs to women having difficulties in getting pregnant.

### Out Door Murals



**Plate xii:**Obete Ukwu Communal Shrine, 2006,Plant and earth pigmentsand clothe,  
Obete Ukwu  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2014

In *Obingwa* tradition, shrines are sacred places where adherents of traditional religion worship and appease the gods and ancestral spirits, as well as receive useful information for the overall wellbeing of the community. The shrines could be in a building, especially for individual shrines or out-door when they are communal shrines. Plate xii is a communal shrine located in *Obete Ukwu* Village, *Ibeme*, *Obingwa* Local Government Area. The shrine is dedicated to “*ala*” the earth goddess who protects the innocence and punishes the wicked depending on the gravity of offence committed.

The mural is created on the tree trunks which represent the building and walls of the shrine where the spirits and deities live. There is a feather motif painted on the clay pot, positioned at the right foreground in the photograph. Secondly, a design in a geometric shape of circle which symbolizes eye is on the tree trunk at the upper level of the picture plane. The colours used are yellow ochre, reddish-brown and black. Thirdly, on the right tree, is a design with diagonal lines rendered in white, which forms part of the background. Fourthly, there is a piece of cloth tied round the trunk of the left tree in such a way that some of the drapery suspend and flank the trunk, looking very interesting and attractive at the background. The colours were sourced from the immediate environment. White colour was sourced from white clay, black from “*uri*” plant, reddish-brown from laterite (*aja ngwu olu*), yellow ochre from “*njagwa*” plant, while painting brushes were manufactured with wooden sticks pound at one end. Feathers and fingers are also used for applying colours.

The shrine has existed for about 135 years, but the murals are replaceable within the periods of five to twenty years especially if the chief priest decides to make use of a particular tree, may be for the reason of a fell tree or any other reason. In this regard, the location of the shrine can be changed, but cannot be more than 80 metres radius. The present mural on the shrine was created in 2006. The white cloth that forms the drapery is usually renewed when the colour changes so much due to atmospheric properties.

The study reveals that the feather painted on the clay pot is meant to facilitate the transportation of certain sacrificial offerings which are put in the pot to the departed ancestors and other spirits, while the eye symbol signifies the power of vision which can see all things spiritually. The drapery signifies inhabitation, meaning that the shrine looks ordinary, but it is being inhabited by ancestral spirits and deities. In the same vein, the

diagonal lines at the right tree are white lines of purity and invitation to the gods, who answer whenever the chief priest make certain coordinated incantations and sounds with an aerophone “*opi*” and metal gongs “*ogele*”. The chief priest is the head of the shrine and decides the motifs to be used on the shrine mural after due consultation with the spirits. He also commissions the work to any artist of his choice. The shrine officially opens every “*Nkwo*” market days. On this days, people come from different communities to seek redress over one issue or the other and also give thanks to earth goddess (*ala*) for doing them one favour or another.



**Plate xiii:** Gate way shrine mural, 2001, Plant and earth pigments and Akumaimo  
**Photography:** Theo Nwogu, 2015

Plate xiii shows a mural in an open ancestral shrine located in *Ovom-Amasa, Akumuimo, Obingwa*. The shrine where libations are thrown for the departed ancestors, and spirits is a gate way to the ancestral forest behind the shrine. The ancestral forest is a reserved piece of land dedicated to the gods, where major sacrifices for the wellbeing of the community take place. In addition, relics that belong to the gods including the skull and right

hand skeleton of a wicked witch or wizard who is mysteriously killed by the earth goddess “*ala*” are deposited in the ancestral forest. The forest has been in existence for about 300years. While there are no murals in the ancestral forest, the present mural at the gate shrine was created in 2011. Murals are changed from time to time depending on its vivid appearance on the tree trunk. In this regard, the designs are scraped with knife and the painting be done on a different tree by the muralist who makes sure she uses local materials obtained within the community. The mural depicts different motifs of animals and round dots of different sizes rendered in brown colour.

The animals represented on the mural symbolizes living creatures and other materials which are usually sacrificed to the gods, the round dots symbolize spiritual eyes that see all things while the brown colour is interpreted as the earth “*ala*”. Secondly, the mural communicates to the non attendants of the ancestral forest and non indigenes of Akumuimo that the area is out of bounds. It also signifies that no human activity like hunting of animals, cutting of trees and farming are allowed within the vicinity of the gate shrine and ancestral forest.

### **The Mural Artist**

The majority of traditional mural artists in *Obingwa* are women who engage in painting of walls of private and communal buildings, including ancestral shrines with the use of locally sourced materials. The practitioners are usually married women who teach the art to their children and wards, thereby handing over the tradition from generation to generation. An old mural artist over 85years of age, *Mama Nworie* in *Ibeme*, informed the researcher that she learnt the art through her late mother, who was a famous mural artist. *C. Nworie* (Personal Communication on April 3, 2015) says “when I was a child, my mother was taking me to her

mural work sites where she was engaging me in various stages of the art”. *Mama Nworie* stopped the practice thirty years ago when she became a member of a Christian faith. All the daughters of *Nworie* whom she trained have also abandoned the art in their various husbands places, due to Christianity. This scenario has caused a major set back on the art tradition.

The preservation of traditional mural painting for women is not peculiar to *Obingwa*. Mural art tradition of “*Uli*” in *Owerri* and Northern *Igbo, Ibibio* mural tradition, Ndebele of Zimbabwe, Pedi in South Africa and Sirigu in Ghana are dominated by women. Apart from women, men are also involved in mural art. In *Obingwa* men engage in sculptural murals which are in low reliefs with mud or cement through which they display a high degree of professionalism. The art is also handed over to their male children and wards. This agrees with the involvement of men in the murals of Hausa in Northern Nigeria. According to Marchand (2008) the “Magina” (builders) are very creative in the use of geometric patterns.

The mural artist in *Obingwa* who paints at the shrines are not necessarily shrine attendants or the priests. They are paid for works done. On the contrary, the chumash in North America strongly believe that their chief priest who are called “Shamans” are the mural artist who create murals for well being of the community. Whitley (2009) affirms that Chumash religion empowers the “Shamans” to have direct communication with spirits, as well as creating murals on rocks.

### **Mural Art Materials**

Materials used for *Obingwa* traditional murals have not deviated significantly from the materials used by the prehistoric rock painters, rather they remain an off-shoot of the later. Doring (2000) maintains that the Paleolithic rock and cave painters obtained their colours

from charcoal, leaves, soil and blood of animals. Across the African continent, mural painting materials have always been obtained from local sources. In *Obingwa*, the mural paintings are executed with materials obtained from natural sources within the area. These materials include colours of black, reddish-brown, ochre, green and white.

Black is obtained from seeds of a tree called “*Uri*”, which are ground and mixed with water. Black is also obtained from charcoal “*inyi*” which is ground to powder form before water is added. Reddish-brown is from laterite “*aja ngwu olu*”, mixed with cam wood extract. Similarly, ochre is obtained by pressing the leaves of “*njagwa*” or “*Eruonyi*” plants, while white is sourced from white clay “*nzu*”.

As revealed by a mural artist in *Abala*, apart from the colours, the application is made by pounding one end of a wooden stick which is used as painting brush, while fingers also aid in application of colours. Before the colours are applied, charcoal is used for sketching the motifs and designs on the wall or any other painting base. In most communities, some colours are interpreted according to their symbolism. Red symbolizes courage, black stands for strength, while white is interpreted as innocence and uprightness. On the other hand, some thick and wide leaves like “*akwukwo ugo*” are used as palettes for mixing of colours before applying to the base. Accordingly, the low relief technique of mural has a different range of materials and tools which include mud, clay, cement, spatula, scrapper, wooden spoon, and water.

## **Mural Art Motifs**

Murals motifs are recurring units of a design in a mural art tradition. Banjoko (2009) states that motifs can be formed from natural and man made objects, as well as abstract, geometric, regular and irregular shapes. This could be influenced by belief system, philosophy period, mythology, religion, geographical entity, culture and wave of migration, which are handed down from generation to generation.

Mural art motifs in traditional mural art of *Obingwa* are influenced by belief system, mythology, religion and culture. The use of sun motif is believed to cure a sick person suffering from headache and fever, while zigzags assure entrepreneurial growth and greatness. However, the use of geometric patterns such as circles, rectangles, ovals and half circles are very popular in *Obingwa* traditional murals. Similarly, lines of zigzags, verticals, horizontals, spirals and curves are also employed as motifs in the designs of the mural tradition. Majority of mural artists interviewed revealed that they use motifs which are linked to the belief system, mythology and culture of *Obingwa* people. The belief system of *Obingwa* emphasizes much on simplicity and moderation as part of code of conduct and activity in all human engagements including the arts, which they believe bring about long life. As a result, most of the stylized objects, geometrical shapes and lines which are used as motifs in the mural compositions are minimally embellished without repetitions and background colours. In the same vein, animal and plant motifs such as dogs, birds, reptiles, yam, colanut and palms, as well as celestial bodies of sun, moon and stars are regularly employed in correlation with beliefs, mythology and culture of the people.

Human motifs including hybrids of human and animal motifs are also found in the mural tradition as shown in plate xi above. This hybrid motif agrees with “San” rock art of South Africa. Gall (2003) maintains that “hybrids were rain makers, who through dances and entering into trances cure ailments”. The motifs are handed down from one generation to another, thereby establishing a continuation in the mural iconography and tradition. Most of the motifs in *Obingwa* murals are stylized, while some are rendered in abstractions. The use of bold outlines on painted motifs is very notable and stylistic. In most cases, no background colour is applied before the motifs and patterns are painted; in this regard, the motifs stand out as independent designs.

### **Process of Creating Murals**

The process of creating traditional mural art in *Obingwa* is the same either on a mud wall “*ulo aja*” or cement wall “*ulo blok*”. The process for execution is as follows:

- a. Sizing the wall with mud slip ‘*aja oto*’ with the help of a rag “*ntite*” in order to cover cracks and crevices which are created by age, insects and atmospheric factors.
- b. Further burnishing with fine pebbles by rubbing against the surfaces to render them more receptive to the primer.
- c. Laterite “*aja ngwu olu*” is used as primer and left to dry properly for few days.
- d. Initial sketches and drawings are made with charcoal.
- e. Commencement of the painting session and finishing.

### **Functions of Traditional Mural Art of Obingwa**

The essence of every human activity is the functionality. Therefore, mural art as an age-long creative activity serves many functions such as aesthetic, educational, historical narration,

advertisement, informative communicative, therapeutic, protective, religious and social stratification purposes. Through the research study, the researcher ascertains that aesthetic is one of the purposes of creating traditional murals in *Obingwa*. Plate ii shows a civic hall in *Akpa Mbato*, which mural depicts a maiden carrying a load, dancer and musical instruments which purpose is to decorate the hall interior walls. In many residential buildings, decoration is a major function in *Obingwa* traditional mural art, though a particular mural could serve more than one purpose such as religious, healing and protective purposes, as in “Protective Eagle” mural in plate viii.

Murals aid individuals to advertise their trades, services and goods, in order to attract more patronage from the public. The relief design of the Musician in plate iv served an advertisement purpose for late chief Omenka Uzo during his career as an entertainer. In addition, the “Herbal Home Mural” in plate xi has advertisement as its primary function. Madam Nkechi Ekeke, the traditional mid-wife commissioned the mural for the purpose of increasing the public awareness concerning her medicinal services.

In the same vein, religious worship and traditional mural art in *Obingwa* are interwoven, because most of the murals have religious significance and interpretations. The wall of the shrines or the trees where certain motifs are painted are regarded as the abode of ancestral spirits and deities who are pleased and attracted with the mural inscriptions. As revealed by *Nwankwo*, chief priest of Obete Ukwu shrine, a bird motif is a medium of information dissemination between the spirits and the living. A feather conveys sacrificial items to the ancestral spirits. On the other hand, the eye motifs see every evil which is planned against the community and assures that a protective measure is applied accordingly. In *Eluama*, *Ndiakata Amairinabuo*, a painted eye on shrine wooden post protects indigenes of

*Eluamakindred* at home and abroad. Religion as a function of murals is also ascribed to prehistoric murals in the caves. Kleiner (2011) maintains that the essence of cave art was magic and religion.

Traditional *Obingwa* murals serve therapeutic purposes. Some of the painted murals are designated as having healing powers when some incantations are made. As a rule, the incantations should be done after sun set. The study reveals that in *Akpa Mbato*, a patient attacked by fever and headache is healed by leaning on the wall where a sun motif is painted while memorizing certain incantations at night. Community leaders in *Akpa Mbato*, *Obingwa* affirm, the healing powers of murals, but regretted the influence of Christian religion which continues to preach to the people that there is no efficacy in painted images.

Some murals are used for narrating a historical event or a communal activity that is so important for the well being of the society. In *Ibeme*, a mural painting of hunting expedition narrates the activity including the handling of the tools and equipment used in hunting. The mural also serves as teaching aid for boys who could be interested in hunting. This agrees with the view of Boyd and Silk (2003) that during the Paleolithic period, paintings were used for communication and teaching aid for the ignorant. Similarly, the murals narrate certain *Obingwa* mythologies which are very important in the traditional life of the society. A traditional ruler in *Akpa Mbato* reveals that the four market days of “*Nkwo*”, “*Eke*”, “*Orie*” and “*Afor*” were brought by four delegates from God, which are represented in a four-rayed star. In this regard, number “4” is symbolical in *Igbo* calendar.

During the annual new yam festivals in *Obingwa*, architectural walls of great farmers are decorated with yam tubers and yam leaf motifs which distinguished them from the homes of

others and serves as invitation to the celebrations of the yam festivals. In this manner, wall adornments are also used to show social status and wealth within the society. It was revealed to the researcher that in recent past, only the affluent could afford to plaster their mud houses and still have the resources to engage the service of a mural artist who were highly honoured.

### **Present State of Obingwa Murals**

Traditional mural art in *Obingwa* has existed for a long period. As attested by traditional ruler of *Ibeme* kingdom and his *Ehere* counterpart, *Eze Onwukwe* and *Eze Nwangwa*, the wall inscriptions (*agwugwa ulo*) was practiced by their fore fathers and state that the practice begun during the "great migrations" when their ancestors initially settled in *Obingwa*. Therefore, *Obingwa* mural art is an old tradition which is handed down from generation to generation. Most of the architecture which were bearing the mural designs are mud houses with thatched roofs and did not stand the test of time. As new architectural designs and materials evolved, the old temporal houses were allowed to fall and their resemblances became out of mind since they were not photographed. In addition, the classification of some of the traditional mural motifs by Christian faithfuls as idolatry prevented most owners of modern architecture from decorating their houses with traditional motifs and designs, rather engage in contemporary wall decoration techniques and use of industrial materials.

Nevertheless, apart from a handful of Christians, there are adherents of traditional religion who continue to cherish and draw much meanings and interpretations from the murals, which they believe is part of their living. Such people are the occupants of the few houses bearing traditional motifs. Similarly, the traditional worshipers have ancestral shrines as their temples and sacred worship places. These shrines embrace the tradition mural art because it is part of the paraphernalia of worship which attract the spirits to answer when they are called. Few

oldcommunal civic halls have also continued to showcase the art on the interior and exterior walls of such buildings mainly for the purpose of aesthetics, historical narration and teaching aids for the younger generation. In this regard, only very few traditional murals exist in *Obingwa*.

### **Findings**

1. The mural artists are mostly female mural painters and few men who engage in relief embellishments. The Art materials are sourced within the environment, while the motifs are dominated by stylized objects and geometric patterns.
2. The processes of executing wall paintings are highlighted into five stages.
3. The functions of *Obingwa* traditional murals include religious worship, communication, advertisement, ceremonial invitation, historical narration, education, curing of ailments and aesthetic.
4. The presence of modern architectural designs and contemporary decoration materials and techniques, coupled with the belief of Christian religion adherents that some traditional mural motifs are idolatry have affected the continuous existence of the tradition. Most of the present day custodians are few adherents of traditional religion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter contains the summary of chapters one to four of this study. The conclusion is briefly highlighted as well as the recommendation.

#### **Summary**

The mural art of the *Obingwa* is an old tradition that has been handed over from one generation to the other. The art has many functions which include religious worship and curing of ailments. The mural artists are mostly women who paint with earth and plant colours sourced from immediate environments, while a few men are wall relief artists with the use of mud, clay and cement. The motifs are influenced by belief system, mythology, religion and culture and are dominated by stylized objects and geometric patterns. The art tradition is almost at its extinction stage due to influence of modernization, globalization and Christianity.

#### **Conclusion**

The objectives of this research “An Examination of Traditional Mural Art of the *Obingwa*” has been achieved. The mural tradition in *Obingwa* is ascertained as old as the period of initial migrants settlement in the area, about one thousand years ago. It has remained part of the belief system, religion, communication and mythology of *Obingwa* society and has also been handed over from one generation to the other. The traditional mural artist is identified as a creator whose creations are so important for the continuous existence of culture and tradition. The artistic style of *Obingwa* mural has stylizations and bold outline without

repeated patterns and background colours which are not common in other mural traditions like “Uli” of Owerri Igbo, Northern Igbo land, Yoruba and Ndebele mural traditions.

Similarly, the functions of the murals have opened new dimensions in understanding the unique continuation of the intents of the prehistoric cave painters especially in religious worship, communication, curing of ailments, education and aesthetic. It is the opinion of the researcher that this study should be useful to researchers who may wish to go into more research studies about *Obingwa* murals and other forms of art within the area. It could also be a guide to studio artists who may be interested in drawing inspirations from the motifs derived from the traditional mural art of *Obingwa*.

### **Recommendations**

1. The people of *Obingwa* through their communal assemblies (*amala*), elders and traditional rulers should pass a resolution on cultural revival and involve the existing Christian missions in the campaign for the survival of traditional arts. This could allow the mural traditions to function simultaneously with Christian beliefs.
2. The mural artists should endeavor to cultivate and rear within their respective homes, various plants through which the painting colours are extracted. This would make the materials to be at their disposal always, especially when the farmers clear the distant bush and cut the plants in preparation for a new farming season.
3. Indigene of *Obingwa* should be educated on the importance of preserving cultural heritage and traditions of their society through mass media, art historians and socio-cultural organizations of various communities in *Obingwa*.

4. Further studies are encouraged in other aspects of art of the *Obingwa* that are on their way to extinction. These include sculpture, music and dance.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix “A”**

#### **Letter of Introduction**

Fine Arts Department,  
Faculty of Environmental Design,  
Ahmadu Bello University,  
Zaria.

17<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.

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#### **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

The bearer, Mr. Nwogu Theophilus Obioma is a postgraduate student of Art History Section, Fine Arts Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He is conducting a research on “An Examination of Traditional Mural Art of the Obingwa”. You are kindly requested to assist him by providing him with the information he may require from you.

It is our assurance that the information collected shall only be used for academic purpose.

Yours faithfully,  
Mr. Samuel Caleb  
Mal. Aliyu Muhammad  
(Dissertation Supervisor)

## **Appendix “B”**

### **Interview schedule: personal data for all respondents**

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your educational attainment?
4. What is your marital status?
5. What is your occupation?
6. What is your religious faith?

## Appendix “C”

### Unstructured Interview Schedule for Traditional Mural Artists

1. How is your family?
2. When did you become a mural artist?
3. How did you learn the art?
4. What motivated you to become a mural artist?
5. How old is the mural art in your community?
6. How do you visualize your concepts, motifs, and designs?
7. What kind of materials do you use for the murals?
8. How do you source and obtain materials?
9. Do you work alone?
10. Do you have apprentices?
11. Are there interpretation given to the murals?
12. Are you paid for your services?
13. What are the functions of the murals?
14. Is the patronage encouraging?
15. What are the problems you encounter in the art practice?
16. Apart from you, how many mural artists are there in your community?
17. What are the challenges the mural tradition is facing?
18. Do you have a definite art style in creating the murals?

## Appendix “D”

### **Unstructured Interview Schedule for priests and attendants of ancestral shrines bearing traditional murals**

1. How is your family?
2. How many people work in the shrine?
3. How old is the shrine?
4. How old are the murals?
5. Who created the murals?
6. Who conceptualize the motifs and designs used for the murals?
7. Where are the mural art materials obtained from?
8. Are the mural artists paid?
9. Who pay the mural artists?
10. What is the process of creating murals in shrines?
11. What are the interpretations given to the murals?
12. Apart from ancestral shrines, which other places are there murals within year community?
13. Is there any definite mural art style peculiar to shrines?
14. What are the functions of the murals in the shrine?
15. Who are the custodians of the murals?
16. What are the problems being encountered for the survival of the mural tradition?
17. How can the problems being encountered be addressed?

## Appendix “E”

### Unstructured Interview Schedule for Traditional Rulers

1. How is your family?
2. How is your kingdom and subjects?
3. Is there traditional mural art on the wells and ceilings of your palace/
4. Who are the custodians of the murals?
5. How old is the mural tradition?
6. Who are the artists and how are they trained?
7. Where are the art materials obtained from?
8. Who conceptualize the motifs and designs used in the murals?
9. What are the functions of the murals in your kingdom?
10. What are the interpretations given to the murals?
11. Are there other kingdoms and communities that have traditional mural art within Obingwa?
12. Is the mural art tradition in your kingdom encountering any problem?
13. How can the problems being encountered by the art tradition be solved?

## Appendix “F”

### Unstructured Interview Schedule for Community Elders

1. How is your family?
2. Is there any mural art on your building?
3. How old is the mural art tradition in your community?
4. Who are the mural artists?
5. Where do the artists obtain the art materials?
6. What are the functions of the art in the community?
7. What are the interpretations given to the murals?
8. Who are the custodians of the mural art?
9. Why is the mural not in every building in your community?
10. What are the problems being encountered to preserve the mural art?
11. What are the ways forward for the survival of the art tradition?

## Appendix “G”

### **Unstructured interview schedule for occupants and attendants of private and communal buildings bearing traditional murals**

1. How are you and the family?
2. When was the house built?
3. When was the mural art created?
4. Who created the mural?
5. Where did the artist source the art materials?
6. Who conceptualized the motifs and designs?
7. What are the interpretations given to the murals?
8. How long does it take to create a mural?
9. Are there other traditional murals within your village and community?
10. What are the functions and roles of the murals to your family, the village and community?
11. What are the challenges faced by the mural tradition?
12. What could be done to ameliorate the challenges faced by the mural tradition?