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Ajibodo and the Owu Masquerade: *Cultural Significance and Social Order in Riverine Igbo Communities*

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

**Ikwerri Ibo, Rumuji village. Owu
masquerade. Mask called 'Ajibodo'
1931**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article



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AJIBODO AND THE OWU MASQUERADE

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“Owu Masquerade at Play” The Owu masquerade, a highly revered cultural entity, originated from Oguta, a prominent town in southeastern Nigeria, known for its rich traditions and strong connection to the riverine Igbo (Oru/Olu) identity. Over time, this masquerade tradition spread across the Oru/Olu Igbo areas, extending into various riverine Igbo communities and even reaching...

Awarra.

Yams are grown for subsistence and export, the men being both farmers and fishermen. Two crops of yams are grown each year, one on the Niger flood plain when the floods begin to subside in October, and one on the higher ground. Oil palms are leased to immigrant Urhobo and Isoko as well as to Isu-Ama and Western Onitsha workers, who export some palm oil and kernels. Cocoyams and cassava are not generally grown. The women engage in trade, and in some groups do no farming.

Oru are not politically unified. They live in compact settlements with their farms at some distance away, often with one house in the village and another on the farm.

In the majority of villages there are red cap (*eze*) titles and masked dances, *okorosia* and *ogbukele*, derived from *owu* dances of the Ijaw. The *ogbukele* secret society has a lodge in every village, which is often an imposing structure several stories high. In the dry season members perform a ceremony impersonating spirits.

In the Ekpeya group the men do no farming but rely on the production of palm oil and on hunting and fishing for their livelihood. Apart from clearing the bush, they leave the rest of the farming to the women. This group has a distinctive style of wrestling in which leg holds are barred.¹

4. EASTERN IBO (CROSS RIVER)

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

LOCATION

Source: Ibo and Ibibio speaking people of Southeastern Nigeria. Darryl Forde and G.I. Jones. 1957.

Forde, D., & Jones, G. I. (1957). Ibo and Ibibio-speaking people of

Southeastern Nigeria.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuka Odike

I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explores ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



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