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Shared Cultural Similarities Between The Ogbá and Oguta People

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Owu mask, Ugwuta (Oguta) area, 1940s. Photo via Sabine Jell-Bahlsen.

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

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The Ogba people of Rivers State and the Oguta people of Imo State also known as the “Riverine Igbo”.

(Oru/Olu) which they call themselves and share several cultural similarities rooted in their geographical proximity within the Niger Delta region and their historical ties to the broader Igbo culture. Here are some key cultural similarities:

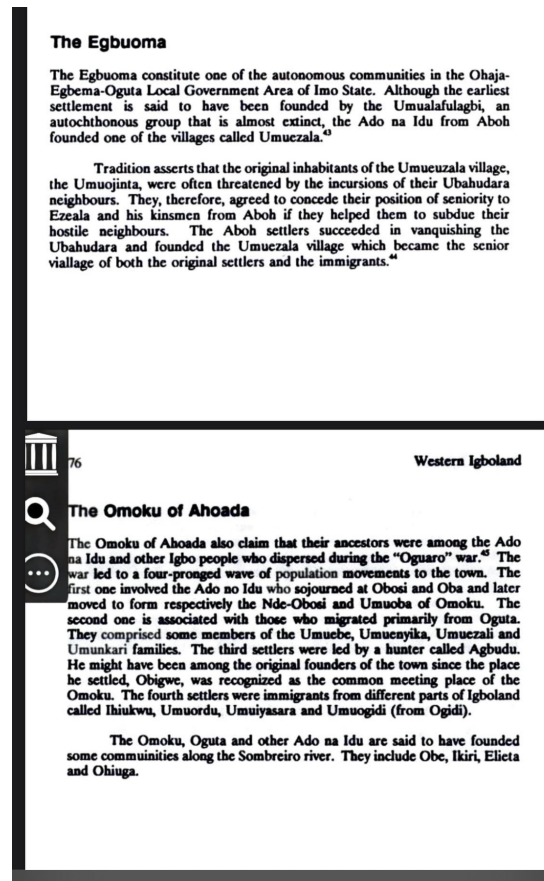
TABLE IX				
(C) RIVERAIN IBO				
Name	Tribe (T) Sub-tribe (ST) Group (G) Village Group (VG)	Number of local communities where reported	Approximate number of active adult males (1935-40)	Political Division
1. Nzam	T or VG	8	1,200	Onitsha
2. Anam	T or VG	7	2,800	"
3. Asaba	T or VG	1	1,700	"
4. Oko Okwe	G	2	1,000	"
¹ Chadwick, 2, 1937; Jones, 9, 1945; Talbot, 1926, Vol. III, pp. 592-3.				
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50 THE IBO-SPEAKING PEOPLES				
Table IX—contd.				
Name	Tribe (T) Sub-tribe (ST) Group (G) Village Group (VG)	Number of local communities where reported	Approximate number of active adult males (1935-40)	Political Division
5. Atani	G	5	800	"
6. Osomari	G	10	1,500	"
7. Ossissa	T or VG	1	1,200	Aboh
8. Abarra	T or VG	3	1,000	"
9. Umuabarra Utchi	T or VG	3	1,000	"
10. Okpai	T or VG	1	900	"
11. Aboh	T	—	2,100	"
12. Ndoni	T or VG	1	500	"
13. Afor	T or VG	6	1,200	"
14. Ase	T or VG	3	900	"
15. Ashaka	VG	1	600	"
16. Ibrede	VG	1	700	"
17. Eight unclassified villages		8	2,300	
18. Oguta	G	8	4,100	Owerri
19. Izombe	G	6	2,700	"
20. Awarra	T	3	2,500	"
21. Egbema	T	15	2,600	Ahoada
22. Oba	T	38	6,500	"
23. Ekpeya (Ekpaffia)	T	72	6,800	"
Approximate total active adult males			46,600	

Ethnographic survey on The Ibo and Ibibio speaking people of South-eastern Nigeria. Darryl Forde and G.I. Jones.



The Riverain Igbo call themselves Oru, some of the communities found in Ogba today can trace they ancestry to Oguta northwards of them, communities like Umuebe, Umuenyika, Umuezali and Umunkari. Showing an interwind descents between the two groups.



Traditions of Igbo Origin · A Study of Pre-Colonial Population Movements in Africa. J.N. Oriji.

While the Ogba people speak a distinct Igbo dialect, their language shares many similarities with the Igbo spoken by the Oguta people. This linguistic overlap facilitates mutual understanding and reflects shared cultural heritage.

Both the Ogba and Oguta people traditionally practiced forms of animism and ancestor veneration. They believe in a supreme deity and recognize various lesser gods or spirits linked to natural forces, such as Idemili and Ala. Water deities, especially given the riverine environment, play a significant role in their spiritual practices.

Both communities celebrate traditional festivals that honor deities, ancestors, and the agricultural cycle. Masquerades such Owu and



Ogbukele are a significant part of these celebrations, symbolizing spirits from the ancestral world. These masquerades also serve social functions, such as providing entertainment, enforcing community norms, and representing the spiritual world.

Both the Ogba and Oguta people have traditional title systems that confer respect and authority on individuals who have achieved significant status within their communities. Titles such as Ozo and other chieftaincy titles serve to maintain social order and are accompanied by specific responsibilities are shared between the two.

Both groups practice extended family structures, and marriages are community-centered events, often involving elaborate ceremonies with dowries, bride price, and traditional rites that can be found among other Igbo cultural area. The sense of communal involvement in marriage, family support, and shared responsibilities is a shared cultural trait.

Oil exploration is a significant part of the economy in modern times, both groups have traditionally been agrarian societies, with farming and fishing playing a key role in their livelihoods. Agricultural festivals such as “Iwa-ji/Iri-ji” to celebrate harvests are common.

Forde, D., & Jones, G. I. (1950). *The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking peoples of south-eastern Nigeria*. Oxford University Press.

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Nzewi, O. M. (2001). Social hierarchies in Igbo traditional societies. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 74(3), 412-431.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR****Chuka Odi**

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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