



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Igbo Market Days: *A Window into the Region's Rich Cultural Heritage*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

Ozikoro.com · Anthropology and Ethnography · 4 min read

FEATURE
IMAGE

NO FEATURED IMAGE IN THE RECORD

The article carries no featured image, so this panel is left as an honest empty space rather than filled with one.



Ozi Ikòrò
IGBO MARKET DAYS

Igbo Market Days: A Window into the Region's Rich Cultural Heritage

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Anthropology and Ethnography · Ozikoro.com

The Igbo people, who live mostly in southern Nigeria, have a rich culture that includes a unique market day system. This system controls how they live, trade, and even pray. The Igbo market day is a four-day calendar with its own name and meaning, guiding their activities. It's not only for buying and selling; it also shows how Igbo people see life with the spirit and the community. Let's walk through it properly.

The Igbo week consists of four days: Eke, Orie (or Oye), Afor, and Nkwo. These days rotate continuously, and it's called "Igbo week." Each day has its own significance and activities, like how the market happens in different towns or villages. A long time ago, the system was in place before the arrival of the white men, and it showcased the Igbo people's ability to organize time and community.

It is not only used for trade; it has spiritual meaning too.

Igbo people connect with one god or power each day, which controls what happens that day.

This mix of spirit and everyday life is what makes Igbo Culture deep.

1. Eke: Eke is considered the first day of the week in many Igbo communities, although it can change a little depending on the village. It's for the creation of new beginnings.

Markets are bustling with activity, selling goods like yams, vegetables, goats and more. Big towns like Onitsha have popular Eke markets.

Cultural Side: In some places, Eke is the day for a big community talk or juju work. They do not bury anyone on that day because it's holy.

2. Orie (Oye): Dedicated to the god of justice, fairness, and food, Orie markets focus on foodstuffs like rice, fish, and palm oil— things needed at home.

Cultural Side: They can perform small juju to thank ancestors or settle issues that day. It's good for meetings, too.

3. Afor: Connected to the god of fertility, power, and land, Afor markets offer a wide range of goods, including farm produce, clothing, and tools. Traders from different villages stop by to join.

Cultural Side: It's the day farmers perform a small ritual, and it has energy.

4. Nkwo: Associated with the god of wisdom and rest, Nkwo is considered the last day of the week. Markets sell specialized goods like pots, beads, and crafts.

Cultural Side: Most people use Nkwo to think back or thank God. It can be a day for naming ceremony.

Importance of the Market Day System

This system came from how Igbo people arranged trade before the use of cars and mobile phones.

Every village has its own market day, so traders can walk from one place to another—Eke today, Orie tomorrow. The market is not only for buying and selling; it's a place for hearing the news, planning marriage, or even settling a fight. Even when the slave trade and white men started, this system helped the Igbo.

The market days collide with Igbo spirituality very well. Each day has its god that decides what is good or bad. For example, on some days, you cannot plant a yam or start a new thing because of the god that

controls it. Dibia checked this calendar to fix the time for juju or read the sign. Number 4 is very important in Igbo. It means “everything is complete,” like the four corners of the world.

The four-day system is everywhere in Igboland, but how people do it can change a little. For example, in ABA or the Nnewi, the Nkwo market can be bigger because of trade. In the village, a market day can join the festival or ancestor worship. Even the name sounds different—some say “Oye,” and some say “Orie,” which is the cause of the dialect.

Now that Nigeria is a modern country, this market-day system still exists, but it has been adjusted. Big cities like Lagos or Port Harcourt have markets every day, so the four-day thing isn’t that strong there. But in villages and small towns, it still runs things. Like Nkwo Umunneochi or Eke Onuwa market in Imo, people still go there on the right day. Tourists come to enjoy Igbo food, music, and culture.

Even Igbo people abroad, like in America or the UK, use the names for events, even if there is no market on that day.

To preserve this cultural heritage, Igbo communities, elders, and organizations are working together. They promote the market days as an essential part of Igbo identity and encourage younger generations to participate.

The Igbo market day—Eke, Orie, Afor, Nkwo—is a big proof of how the Igbo people plan strongly. It mixes trade, juju, and community into a four-day beat that has lasted for many years. Even if it doesn’t control everything again, it still means much in Igbo Culture, showing how they see time, business, and traditions. Whether the Onitsha market noise or the village’s quiet, this market day legacy still breathes into Igbo life, both real and deep.

References •Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann, 1958. •Isichei, Elizabeth. A History of the Igbo People. London: Macmillan, 1976. •Basden, George T. Among the Ibos of Nigeria. London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1921. •Njoku, Onwuka N. Economic History of Nigeria: 19th and 20th Centuries. Enugu: Magnet Business Enterprises, 2002. •Uchendu, Victor C. The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chukwunwike Ossai

An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



Ozi Ikòrò

History worth reading.

African history · culture · indigenous knowledge
