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Adorned Identities: *Traditional Hairstyles of Igbo Women and Girls (1900-1930)*

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

**Igbo women and girls and their
hairstyles, 1900-1930. Photogrid by
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In Igbo culture, hairstyles signify beauty, status, and spirituality. Between 1900 and 1930, women and girls showcased intricate designs, adorning their hair with various ornaments.

The crested hairstyle Ojongo remained popular until the mid-20th century and is a distinctive element in Igbo art representing women. Women adorned their hair with various ornaments such as thread, feathers, shells, bone, wood, beads, Igbo currency, coins, or cloth.

They also used mud mixed with colorful ores, yellow and red camwood powder or paste, palm oil, and charcoal for styling. The threaded hairstyle Isi/Ishi Owu remains popular among married women in rural areas even today.

1. Ojongo (Crested Hairstyle): Popular until mid-20th century, characterized by raised patterns. 2. Isi/Ishi Owu (Threaded Hairstyle): Enduring popularity among married women in rural areas. 3. Egbodo (Braided Hairstyle): Intricate patterns, often with cowry shells or beads.

1. Thread 2. Feathers 3. Shells 4. Bone 5. Wood 6. Beads 7. Igbo currency (Manillas) 8. Coins 9. Cloth

1. Mud mixed with colorful ores 2. Yellow and red camwood powder/paste 3. Palm oil 4. Charcoal

1. Represented marital status 2. Symbolized spirituality 3. Demonstrated artistic expression 4. Reinforced community affiliation

Thomas, N. W. (1913). Anthropological Report on the Igbo-speaking People's of Nigeria. London: Harrison and Sons.

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Ugwu, A. (2009). Igbo history and culture. Onitsha: Africana Publishers.

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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