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Craftsmanship and Spirituality: *The Role of Ikenga in Igbo Blacksmithing Traditions*

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

**Ikenga in House of Chief Okku of
Idu — Two Small Ikenga used as
blacksmith mascots.**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article



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In Tribes of the Niger Delta by P.A. Talbot, the Ikenga figures mentioned in the house of Chief Okku of Idu, particularly the two small Ikenga used as blacksmith mascots, provide an interesting insight into (Okoba/Alensaw) Ogbia-Igbo spiritual and cultural practices. The Ikenga, a personal deity or shrine associated with a person's strength, achievement, and success, holds deep significance in Igbo cosmology.

The fact that these two small Ikenga were used as mascots for blacksmithing highlights how Igbo craftsmen integrated spiritual elements into their trade. Blacksmiths were highly regarded in many Igbo communities for their skill in working with iron, which was crucial for farming tools, weapons, and other essential implements. By placing Ikenga figures in their workspace, they likely sought protection, inspiration, and success in their craft, believing that the Ikenga would bring them strength and victory in their endeavors.

Chief Okku's house, containing these Ikenga, would have been a place of both spiritual significance and professional pride, reflecting the Igbo understanding of craftsmanship as a divinely guided and respected pursuit. Talbot's documentation of these mascots provides valuable evidence of how spiritual beliefs and daily professional activities were closely intertwined in Igbo society.

Talbot, P. A. (1932). Tribes of the Niger Delta.

**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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