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Kinship Relationships and Marriage in Ubulu-Uku Kingdom: *A Sacred Bond*

By Idenze Ezeme

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FEATURE
IMAGE

On the 23rd of January, 2021 pretty looking identical brides, Onyisi Dora and Agiliga Dosia wedded the same day. Both had earlier on the 22nd of January, 2021 celebrated their traditional marriage together.

Collection from @ubuluezemu

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

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KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE IN UBULU-UKU KINGDOM

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Ubulu Kingdom, located in present-day Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, holds kinship relationships as sacred and inviolable, both in ancient times and in modern society. Family ties are revered, and the concept of “half-sibling” or “extended family” does not exist. In Ubulu, family is family, and all male relatives are regarded as “nwanne” (brother), while all female relatives are considered sisters.

Two types of kinship relationships are recognized in the Ubulu-Uku Kingdom:

This relationship arises from marriage between two families, fostering a cordial bond known as “Ọgọ” (in-laws). Lineages involved in such unions can intermarry, but specific restrictions apply:

- **Immediate Offspring Restrictions:** The offspring of the marital union cannot intermarry with members of the lineage from which the wife originates.
- **Generational Rule:** This restriction remains in effect until the third filial generation (F3), referred to as “Ụkwata Atọ” in Ubulu culture.

Consanguinity Kinship Relationship

Consanguinity kinship arises through blood relations and is considered sacred in Ubulu culture. Birth relationships are categorized under “Ebo Anọ we si abia enu”, the “four lineages of birth.” However, in broader terms, lineage can trace up to seven parental genetic bloodlines.



Ubulu Uku traditional prime minister “Onishe”.

Marital relationships are strictly prohibited among blood relatives unless three generations (F3) have passed.

The four primary lineages of consanguinity are as follows:

1. Patrilineal Lineage (Ebo’e Nadi)

This lineage refers to the child’s paternal family: the lineage into which the child is born.

- **Inheritance Rights:** The child inherits patrimony from this lineage.
- **Marital Restrictions:** Marriage or sexual relationships with any member of the patrilineal lineage are forbidden. This includes individuals from other lineages led by the same “*ọfọ*” (traditional staff of authority).
- **Leadership Roles:** A male child may lead the lineage as *Diokpa* (elder) through gerontocracy.
- A female child may lead the women as *Ada* under the same system.



- Special Cases: Children of an Idegbe (a woman kept in her father's home due to the absence of male heirs) are considered fully part of the patrilineal lineage.

2. Matrilineal Lineage (*Ebo'e Nee*)

This lineage refers to the family where the child's mother was married from.

- Alternative Support: If the paternal lineage proves unfavorable, the child may seek refuge and acceptance in the maternal lineage.
- Marital Restrictions: Sexual or marital relationships with members of this lineage are forbidden.
- Leadership Limitations:
 - A male child cannot lead this lineage, even if qualified by age.
 - A female child faces the same limitation.

3. Paternal Grandmother's Lineage (*Ebo'e Nee Nadi*)

This lineage refers to the family from which the child's paternal grandmother originated.

- Marital Restrictions: The child cannot engage in a marital or sexual relationship with individuals connected to this lineage within two generations.

4. Maternal Grandmother's Lineage (*Ebo'e Nee Nne*)

This lineage refers to the family of the child's maternal grandmother.

- Marital Restrictions: Marriage or sexual relationships with individuals within one generation of this lineage are forbidden.

Additional lineages, such as those of the paternal grandfather's mother or the maternal grandfather's mother, may not carry the same strict prohibitions. These extended lineages can, in some cases, permit marital unions.

Severing Consanguinity Relationships

To sever consanguinity ties and allow marriage within restricted

lineages, cultural and ritual processes may be required. These practices, though rare, are deeply rooted in the traditions of Ubulu Kingdom and ensure that relationships align with cultural norms while safeguarding familial integrity.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Nze is an Igbo history and culture enthusiast with an in-depth passion for exploring the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and historical narratives of the Igbo people. His works is mostly focused on pre-colonial Igbo societies, traditional belief systems, leadership systems, and the impact of European colonialism.



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