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By Idenze Ezeme

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Ubulu Uku Cultural Carnival

The ancient Ubulu-Uku society, like several traditional African societies, lived under a set of guidelines that were moral, spiritual, and social. Usually, these codes are from deep philosophical and spiritual beliefs; they ensure harmony, respect, and adherence to culture. Below are some significant practices and ethical guidelines defining the moral fabric of ancient Ubulu-Uku society:



1. Not Responding to a Call at Night

It was forbidden in Ubulu-Uku tradition for anybody to respond to a call, no matter how far away, when it was night. This was predicated on the belief that night was not only for the living but also for spirits—some of which might be evil.

It was believed that the evil spirit was able to call one's name in order to draw the person away from others. Should one find one's self responding to such a call by mistake and find no one around, a purification act would immediately be performed: One would circle the hand above the head, snapping fingers, saying "Okwu'm azane" or "I did not respond." This saves one from any disastrous situation where they would have responded to a call made by a spirit.

2. The Taboo of Crossing a Woman's Legs

In the traditional setting of Ubulu, it was an abomination to cross over a woman's outstretched legs, whether she was a maiden or married.

To a married woman, crossing people's legs symbolized adultery, and was considered one of the worst violations against tradition. The understanding of such a belief rests on a pact between two legendary figures in Ubulu history, Anugwe and Ezemu. To unmarried male and female alike, crossing people's legs was an abomination and disrespect.

This practice underlines the respect the society has for marital fidelity and personal boundaries, placing the sanctity of relationships and moral conduct at the heart of its values.

Another important practice in the Ubulu-Uku tradition involved ropes. An Ubulu man was forbidden from walking under a rope or removing a rope left on a path or land unless they had undergone a ritual fortification called *İcha-aka*.

This was based on the belief that ropes could be used in spiritual traps or rituals that were meant to harm an unsuspecting individual. The



fortification ceremony ensured that a person was spiritually protected from such dangers.

4. Handling Objects Used in Suicide

Suicide was such a tragic and spiritually significant occurrence in society that something used in the act, like rope, tree, or whatever was considered defiled had to be destroyed or thrown away to cleanse the land.

In addition, the person who first found a suicide victim had to be taken through some traditional cleansing rites. The reason behind this was that the act was considered to bring spiritual uncleanness or bad luck. If the object used for hanging was a tree, it was cut down and disposed of properly to avoid further utilization or contact with tragedy.

5. The Significance of Numbers in Offerings and Presents

Numbers are symbolically used either in presenting sacrifices to the gods or in gifting others. In Ubulu-Uku culture, the number required to be used for presentation must be a prime or odd number: 3, 5, 7, or 9. Even numbers should not be used except when the even numbers are to be coupled into symbolic groupings such as tying two sets of five tubers of yam to make up to ten.

For example, when carrying one tuber of yam from the farm to the house, one had to tie it with a rope. All these show the level of respect society holds for balance, order, and spiritual harmony.

The normative and non-normative ethics of Ubulu-Uku traditional society show a deeply spiritual and morally aware community. These practices were not random; they helped create peace, respect for both the living and the dead, and a bond with the spiritual world.

By following these rules, the people of Ubulu-Uku kept a balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, ensuring their community's well-being and success. Today, these traditions provide a glimpse into



the rich culture and moral values of ancient Ubulu-Uku.

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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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