



# Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

ETHNOHISTORY

## Ofo ná Ogu: *Spiritual Foundation of Igbo Religious Belief.*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

Ozikoro.com · Ethnohistory · 3 min read

FEATURE  
IMAGE

**Ofo, uxurhe, and other pieces,  
including Ikenga, from North Ika  
Igbo, present-day Delta State.  
Photograph by G. I. Jones in the  
1930s.**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

Ozi Ikòrò  
OFO NA OGU

# Ofo ná Ogu: Spiritual Foundation of Igbo Religious Belief.

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Ethnohistory · Ozikoro.com

**E**very group in Igbo society has its own Ofo. The Family Ofo is different from the village Ofo, and the village Ofo also differs from the Ofo of many villages joined together. It is the Okpara (first son) who holds the family Ofo. That is why he leads the religious and political matters in the family.



A ritual object (ofo) cast in brass, cylindrical in form, with four supports. Features anthropomorphic details and two small quadrupeds standing on the top surface. Found in Western Igbo, near Agbor, dating to the 20th century.

Ofo is a very powerful symbol in Igbo religion. It is not just a staff of authority; it also means of connection with God and humans, the dead and the living, and the ones who have not been born. It represents justice, righteousness, and truth.

Ogu, on the other hand, means innocence. If a person wants to prove his or her innocence, Ogu is called upon. That is why they said that Ofo and Ogu work hand in hand. If you carry the Ofo, you should also carry the Ogu. When finding justice in Igbo tradition, your hand is

supposed to be clean.

In Igbo traditional religion, they have beliefs that can join both monotheism and pantheism. They believed there is a Supreme God, Chukwu, and still believed they had other small gods and spirits. 1. Chukwu, the main God, is present 2. Minor gods that relate to nature are present 3. Good and bad spirits are present 4. Reincarnation is present 5. Life after death is present 6. Good that brings reward, bad that brings punishment These beliefs guided the Igbo people in their lives. They still believed that if a person followed the good road, he or she would see good things and escape danger. From this belief, they built the cultural idea called the Ofo na Ogu.



Right: Ofo from Anam, present-day Anambra state, Nigeria. Made of wood and iron. Length: 52.7 cm. Left: Ofo from Aguleri, present-day Anambra state, Nigeria. Length: 90 cm. Collected by M.D.W. Jeffreys in 1930 in Aguleri. Photographed by Jerome L. Joss.

In Igbo land, they have different types of Ofo: • Ofo dibia – is a dibia (native doctor) who holds it • Ofo Isi-Opara – is the first son or oldest man in the family who holds it • Oke-Ofo – is the one that the oldest

man in the kindred or community uses for big issues.

Not all Ofo have the same level. They divided the Ofo into two: •  
Ancestral Ofo, which is passed from generation to generation •  
Individual Ofo – A man would get it once he is mature.



WORSHIP OF ANCESTORS NZE, QFQ AND IKẸŃGA (ONİČA OLONA). See page 27.

WORSHIP OF ANCESTORS NZE, OFO AND IKENGA (ONİČA OLONA).

A Person who holds the Ofo seriously would pray daily and put the Ofo on the floor when praying. Even though the Ofo is mostly seen on the male hands, women have what they use that resembles the Ofo; they call it umune. If a woman is a dibia, she can get the same kind of Ofo-dibia that the male dibia uses.

They still have a tree that produces the Ofo seed, from which they get the real Ofo stick. Ofo and Omenana (Igbo tradition) are on the same level. It is like a natural religion. As Umeh said, the Sacred Ofo of Ekwo, which they said God gave first to Nri, is what they use to cleanse any abomination in Igbo culture.

- Ekwunife, Anthony Nnamdi O. A. A Consecration in Igbo Traditional Religion. Nsukka: Jet Publishers, 1990.
- Njaka, Elechukwu N. Igbo Political Culture. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974.
- Asigbo, Alex Chinwuba, and Kelechi Stellamaris Ogbonna. "Theatre and Cultural Education as Panacea for Nigeria's Fractured Peace: Ofo na Ogu as Paradigm."

#### 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

---