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The Heart of Anioma Kinship and Igbo Heritage Across the Niger River

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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OGWASHI-UKU

Ogwashi-Uku: The Heart of Anioma Kinship and Igbo Heritage Across the Niger River

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Ogwashi-Uku, is one of the biggest towns in Aniocha south local government area in Delta state, Nigeria. They are part of the Anioma people. They are among ndi Igbo that live in Delta state, west of the Niger River. Ogwashi-Uku is never a small place; its history, culture, and strong family background connect...

Ogwashi-Uku, is one of the biggest towns in Aniocha south local government area in Delta state, Nigeria. They are part of the Anioma people. They are among ndi Igbo that live in Delta state, west of the Niger River.

Ogwashi-Uku is never a small place; its history, culture, and strong family background connect it with the other Igbo people like it in Ogbaru, Ndoni, and even some of the Ukwuani people. These towns show how the Igbo people were connected across the river state through blood, marriages, and tradition.

Ogwashi-Uku is located in the heart of Anioma land, Delta state. It is close to towns like Ibusa (Igbuzo), which is 10 kilometers away; Ahaba is the capital of Delta state (25 kilometers); and Ubulu-Uku, which is not very far.

The town is on a high land, not the riverside like the Ogbaru or the Ndoni people, but they still have links with the Niger River because of how the Anioma people relate. Ogwashi-Uku has a total number of over 30,000 people, and they mostly speak Igbo, which is one of their sweet dialects mixed with the central Igbo with a small Anioma twist.

The people are farmers from the old days- yam, cassava, maize, and

vegetables are their own. But now, most of them are doing business and working in the office because it is close to Ahaba, which is bubbling. Christianity is their main religion, with the Anglican and Catholic churches that are strong, but they still respect their old ways, like the masquerade and festival period.

How kinship is working in Ogwashi-Uku

Kinship in Ogwashi-Uku is about their family, which extends from the top down to the Anioma people, Ogbaru, Ndoni, and even the land of southeast Nigeria, blood, marriage, and culture that hold them together.

The family of Anioma: Ogwashi-Uku is among the core of Anioma towns, so it got so tight with other Anioma people like Ahaba, Igbouzor, Okpanam, and Ubulu-Uku. They call themselves “Ndi Anioma” or “Western Igbo,” and they share one root that comes from the Igbo land in the Niger River East. Some people said the people of Ogwashi came from the Nri or other Igbo kingdoms a long time ago, and the blood is still flowing between them and their Anioma brothers.

The connection of Ogbaru: Ogwashi-Uku is linked with the people of Ogbaru in Anambra state because of the Niger River that joined the Anioma and the people of Ogbaru. Even though Ogwashi is not located in the river like the people of Atani, they do business and get married to the people of Ogbaru from the old times. The way they are farming and take care of their family system (umunna) are matching, and you may likely see the men of Ogwashi cousin in Odekpe or Atani.

The Ndoni link: Ndoni in Rivers state is another kinship to the people of Ogwashi-Uku. Both of them are Igbo, even though the people of Ogwashi are not close to the water. Their business is happening along the Niger River, which makes the Ndoni and the people of Ogwashi meet, Ndoni business owners settling in the land of Anioma started centuries ago, so it joins them with marriage and blood.

The side of the Ukwuani: The people of Ukwuani (Ndokwa) in Delta

state are too close.

Towns like Kwale and Obiaruku are very close to Ogwashi-Uku, and they speak Ukwuani dialect of Igbo Language, which is not too far from the Ogwashi language. Marriages are more between them, and the people of Ogwashi have roots in Ukwuani.

In Ogwashi, kinship is very strong in the town. They have Umunna, a family group that came from their ancestor and controls the land, marriages and traditions.

The people of Ogwashi divided the town into quarters, like the Ogbe, Umu Dei, and others. Each quarter had its own family tie that connected the whole town.

The people of Ogwashi-Uku lived very long before the colonial times. The oral story talked about how they came from the Nri kingdom or other Igbo places east of the Niger River, and they settled in Delta state because of traveling and farming. The name “Ogwashi is great” shows that it is important. They have a king that they call “Obi of Ogwashi-Uku,” and he rules with the elders who know the tradition.

The Niger River marketing was helping Ogwashi connect with the people. Even if they do not use boats like Ndoni or Ogbaru, they send yam and goods to the river markets like the Aboh or Atani. When the white people came, they made Ogwashi part of the Aboh division in southern Nigeria and later joined Delta State in 1991 when they carved new states. The history of marketing and movement helps them to build kinship with the people of Ogbaru, Ndoni, and the Ukwuani.

The people of the Ogwashi-Uku are farmers, but they know how to do business and have a good education. They use the Igbo marketing system days, Eke, Orie, Afor, and Nkwo for their market, and you will see people from Igbuzor, Ukwuani, or even the people of Ogbaru coming to buy and sell.

Festivals like the new yam festival (Iri Ji) are the big thing that they do with their kinship family from Ahaba and Ndoni, and they can show up to eat yam together.

Their language is another glue to them. The Igbo that the people of Ogwashi speak is close to what they speak in Ogbaru and Ndoni, so they can talk easily anytime they meet.

Masquerade dances, like Atilogwu or the Egwu Amala, show their culture, which they share with the people of Anioma.

Today, Ogwashi-Uku is growing because it is close to Ahaba, which is the capital. Most of the young people are going to the polytechnic in Delta State, and some people are combining their education, farming, and business together. But their kinship is still strong. Most of the time, marriage, is joining the people of ogwashi and ogbaru, Ndoni and the people of Ukwuani, and are doing the ofala festival to show their obi and celebrate their roots.

They have problems like bad roads or the flood not disturbing the people of Ogwashi, like river towns, but they are holding on to their family. The people of Ogwashi from abroad, like in the UK or USA, formed a group to send money home to fix things and keep their culture alive.

The Ogwashi-Uku people are strong in Anioma town, which has a big family. Their kinship with the people of Ogbaru, Ndoni, Ukwuani, and the other Igbo people is like a thread that the Niger River and history put together. They are farmers, traders, and also those who know their roots, and the love of family keeps them going.

Even in the market, festival, or marriage, Ogwashi-Uku is showing that the Igbo blood does not fade, no matter where the situation puts them.

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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.



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