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Ojei Masquerade: *Symbolism, Performance, and Spirituality in Ndokwa Culture*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Ojei masquerade, Ashaka

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Ojai Masquerade: Symbolism, Performance, and Spirituality in Ndokwa Culture Ojei Masquerade is a cultural symbol in Ndokwa Area of Delta State that is being celebrated, specifically in the communities of Ashaka and Aboh, The Ojei masquerade is deeply grounded in mythology and Spirituality because it is connected to the river gods Ojei and Elishi. According to the oral traditions of Ndokwa people, these gods sprung out from the river during a communal clash in which the gods played key role in bringing back peace, blessings, and unity to the community. The Ojei masquerade has a vibrant costume that is spectacle to see, the costume is characterized with colorful fabrics, accessories, and a mask that is anthropomorphic. The Ojei mask features a double human face, decorated with *ébúbá úgó* (eagle feathers), which represents a symbol of ancestral power and spirits. Each performance by the Ojei masquerade represents a fusion of the supernatural and natural realms, thereby celebrating mythical ancestors in their human forms. The festival in which these masquerade performances takes place occurs annually between February and March.

While the Ojei masquerade performs on land with bold and elegant dance steps, Elishi, on the other hand complements the season with performances in a canoe on the river, showing a sign of harmony between land and water spirits. Together, they both capture the mind of audiences and rekindle communal values, artistic heritage and spirituality.

S. Omoera, O., & Epochi-Olise, R. E. (2022a). Mediatization of

NDOKWA masquerade performances: The Aesthetic Dynamics of an african indigenous carnival. Journal of Cultural and Creative Industries, 3 (1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.21134/jcci.v3i1.1763>

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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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