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Okoro:

The Shared Name Across Igbo, Isoko, and Urhobo Cultures

By Idenze Ezeme

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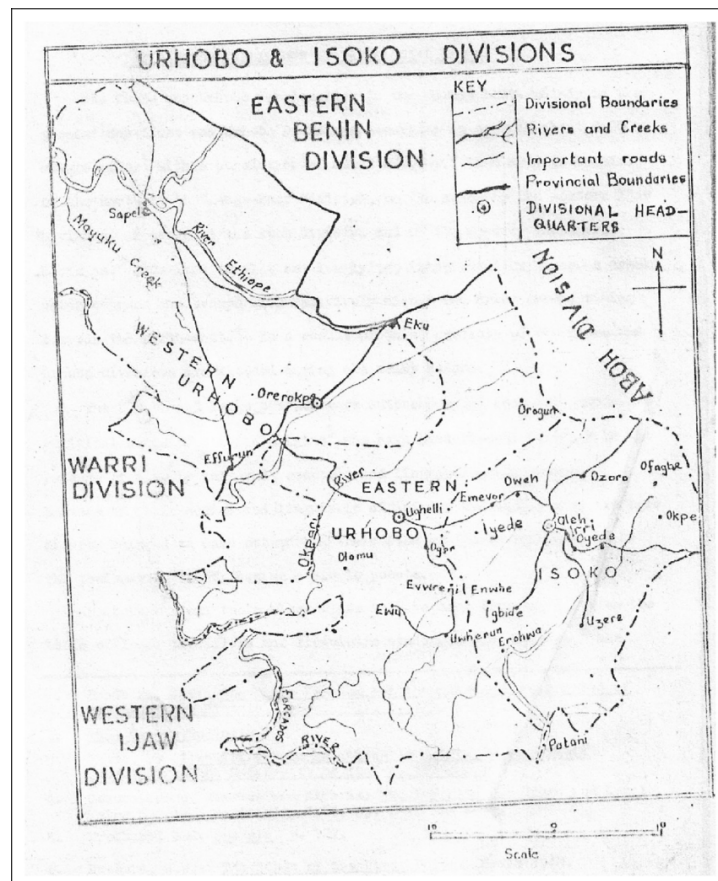
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Map of Urhobo and Isoko Divisions. Photo: ResearchGate

Many people are curious about the name Okoro because it is common among the Igbo, Isoko, and Urhobo ethnic groups despite its obvious Igbo origin. Interestingly, the meaning of Okoro remains the same among these cultures.

Okoro is a surname of Igbo origin that means “young man.” It is a short form of Okorobia. Variant forms include okoroafo, meaning a young man born on afo market day.

How Did this Igbo Name Become Integrated into the Isoko and Urhobo lexicons?

The answer is found in migration and blending of cultures. The Igbide community of the Isoko ethnic group gives a very important clue. Historical accounts trace the Igbide people's ancestry to Mgbidi, a community in the Olu zone of today's Imo State, part of the Isuama Igbo sub-group. In time, these migrants settled among the Isoko, intermarried with them, and became part of a unified cultural identity.

The Isuama Igbo were known for their extensive migrations. Some clans like Isu and Agbaja spread across Igbo land and beyond. For instance, the Igbo settlements of Igboṣṣṣ, now Ibusa/Ibuza in Delta State, trace their ancestry to Isuama Igbo. Another case is that of Mgbidi, which was part of the Isuama group; it contributed to the migration that led to the founding of Igbide among the Isoko.

With these migrations, there was an exchange of culture and language. The Igbide introduced words like ọmụgwọ, a postpartum care practice deeply ingrained in Igbo tradition, to the Isoko people. This cultural assimilation explains why Isoko communities observe practices similar to the Igbo.

The name Okoro is a linguistic marker of these historical ties. Among the Isoko and Urhobo, Okoro carries the same meaning as Igbo, which is evidence of a shared heritage. Many who carry the name in these areas may not know its origins in Igbo.

However, the influence of Okoro does not stop there. It is also found among the Akwa Ibom people, where it retains the same meaning, and among the Idoma, probably due to the migrations and interactions of the Arọ people. Similarly, the Igbanke people of Edo State, an Igbo subgroup, use Okoro as part of their naming traditions. Their dialect, packed with Igboid elements, further underlines these cultural connections.

Okoro is more than just a name; it represents migration, connections between different ethnic groups, and shared histories among the Igbo,

Isoko, Urhobo, and others.

SOURCES

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The article's own bibliography, set as it appears in the record.

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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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