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The Acculturation of Benin derived titles in Ubulu-Ukwu kingdom

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Onishe Ezemu Ubulu-Ukwu

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Ubulu-Ukwu is a prominent Igbo kingdom in Anioma, with a rich history of interrelationship with her neighboring powers, mostly old Benin kingdom.

Some titles in the traditional hierarchy of Ubulu-Ukwu were adapted via their interwoven with Benin, some of which are reflections of exchanges which culturally occurred via warfare, migration, and diplomacy. Although these titles has been acculturated into Igbo culture and Ezemu is credited with many innovations in the Kingdom, the kingdom of Ubulu-Ukwu borrowed these titles were eventually indigenized them.

Ojeani which means the traveler and Ojiba, which means prosperity in travels, were the first, Ezemu gave respectively that was borrowed from old Benin kingdom, Ojiba and Ojeani were loyalists of Ezemu's party,

However, Ojiba might have been derived from the Unwague title of Benin which is a senior chief in the palace that is responsible for give the successor to the Benin throne their names.

Ojeani likewise might have been derived from Eribo (called Alibo in Ubulu-Ukwu), was assistant to Unwague and also held an important influence over the regalia of the royal house.

The Onishe title was the second in command to Obi, this title might have been influenced by Benin but Ezemu Institutionalized it the



history of Ubulu-Ukwu. Initially this title was tied to the Osume decendants, eventually it was conferred on an indigenous Okpanam man, highlighting how titles were reassigned over time after adaptation. The Odogwu title which is held by the lineage of Umuonichaugbo, is of Igbo origin but the emerging of this title was also traced to the Ubulu-Ukwu/Benin war, when the first Odogwu, Mokpai earned him the honor after he captured Benin soldiers that was sent to invade Ubulu-Ukwu. The descendants of the war prisoners captured by Mokpai was joined together to form the lineage of Idumu-idu, this further shows the deep connections between Ubulu-Ukwu and Benin.

Iyase title, another war title that is held by the Umu Nshi immigrants from Ogwashi-Ukwu. Just like Odogwu, the Iyase title signifies militaristic position which was adopted shaped by Ubulu-Ukwu interactions with Benin, because Iyase is also a title in Benin that is connected to war. Lastly, Ozoma title. This title is reserved for the immediate younger brother of the Obi, it's likely to have been conferred during the reign of Obi Olise, the Ozoma title further also further suggests that the adapting of Benin-inspired titles in Ubulu-Ukwu occurred over period of centuries, and has become integral to Ubulu-Ukwu's system of governance. These Benin derived titles, have all been fully acculturated into the unique political and cultural structure of Ubulu-Ukwu.

The adaptating of these foreign titles portrays how the kingdom of Ubulu-Ukwu was able to skillfully absorb external influences while they still preserve their deeply rooted Igbo traditions and identity.

The Benin Factor in the west niger Igbo history: The example of Ubulu-Ukwu* Emmanuel Nwafor Mordi (Phd) Delta State University. Docslib. (n.d.).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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