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The Sacred Law of the Land: *The Isuikwuato Pregnancy Taboo*

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

**Small boys masquerade in Ovim
Village, Isu Ikwa Ato [Isuikwuato].”
- G. I. Jones, 1930s**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

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THE SACRED LAW OF THE LAND

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By Chuka Odié · Religion and Spirituality · Ozikoro.com

In the heart of Isuikwuato LGA, Abia State, lies an ancient and unyielding tradition that governs the lives of its young men, a sacred law that demands respect, lest it unleash fatal consequences upon an entire family.

Among the Oguduasaa people, it is considered a grave taboo for an unmarried man to impregnate a woman without first paying her bride price. This act is seen as a desecration of the land, an unforgivable affront to the gods. If such an event occurs, the man has only two choices: he must hastily pay the bride price before the pregnancy becomes visible, or he must undergo a ritual cleansing known as ikwa ala to appease the spirits of the land. To ignore these demands is to invite death itself.

The repercussions of failing to act are swift and unforgiving. The gods do not strike the offender directly; instead, they take their toll on the brightest male in the family. Death comes silently, yet relentlessly, and will not cease until the necessary rituals are performed.

There are chilling stories that serve as cautionary tales within the community. One such tale is of a devout Catholic mother who refused to allow the ikwa ala ritual after her son impregnated a woman in Benue State. Despite receiving money from her son to perform the cleansing, she withheld it, citing her position as the President of the Catholic Women Organization. The price of her defiance was steep: within two months, her brightest son was electrocuted in Abuja, and shortly after, her husband died mysteriously. Only then did she relent, pleading for the ritual to be performed, but it was too late to undo the devastation.

Even religious leaders have not been spared. A pastor, resolute in his belief that faith alone could absolve the transgression, fell victim to a mysterious stroke that left him mute, only to pass away within days.

To avoid the shame and peril that come with breaking this sacred code, young men of Isuikwuato are taught to tread carefully in matters of intimacy. Condoms are a must, and the withdrawal game is honed to perfection, no one dares to take risks. Yet, strangely enough, there are exceptions to the rule. If an unmarried man impregnates a married woman, there are no consequences. Similarly, if a married man fathers a child outside his marriage, the gods turn a blind eye.

For those who dare to test fate and remain silent after impregnating a woman, the gods provide a warning, a frightening precursor to the looming catastrophe. One man, during his days as a student at Abia State University, bore the scars of such a warning, a constant reminder of the power of the tradition.

The ritual of ikwa ala itself is no secret. Conducted in the open for all to witness, it is a moment of public reckoning and humiliation. Different communities demand different offerings, some require the sacrifice of a male dog (nkita Igbo ekuke), while others opt for a female goat (ewu Igbo). Regardless of the specifics, the ritual is a spectacle, a solemn reminder to all young men of the consequences of their actions.

In Isuikwuato, sex is not just a private affair, it is a matter of life, death, and sacred duty. The weight of tradition looms heavy, and for those who value their lives and their families, the lesson is clear: tread carefully, or be prepared to pay the ultimate price.

Folklore Narration from Oforkansi Chris, 2025.

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I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explores ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



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