

## **PREFACE**

The production of this painting is to enable the society to know and understand the positive effects and the needs the Opoto festival in Enugu Agidi Village. The Opoto festival which is been held every third months of the year march plays a very vital role in Enugu- Agidi.

However its sociological important lies in the effort of the masquerade for cattail anti-social behaviour and evil in the village and neighboring town. Though much research has not been done over this festival, but its important drew near the research need to fell the public about this masquerade event. Where men and boys of the village secret society in costume act out and sing calypso styles about actual or purported event in the village. Any body glancing at the painting itself need not to doubt if the village that has masquerade have a very good cultural heritage or not.

This work will help to attract every reader of this project to the village at least to witness the event and the event and festival for once. The work also is to tell people how entertaining the festival could be because of its dramatic nature.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1.BACKGROUND HISTORY OF ENUGWU-AGIDI**

The Opoto festival belongs to an Igbo group in Southeastern Nigerian called Enugwu- Agidi it is at the center of Awka and Onitsha in Anambra state.

The people are known for farming because of their fertile land. Then also, they are known for timber trading

because of the thick rain forest that surrounds them.

Enugu –Agidi has so many festivals which are known for its significance but the main cultural festival celebrated by Enugu Agidi is the “Opoto Festival”. Opoto festival is a celebration which is held every third month of the year i.e. March. This festival is annual and is done to bring all the people of Enugwu- Agidi people from far and wide together to thank the gods of land and ancestors for keeping them throughout the past years and also for the new farming season which they are about to begin. “Opoto” is a festival which after the celebration, anybody can now start to cultivate yam and if at all anybody has old yam in his farm it is entitled to anybody who comes across it.

The celebration starts with the chief priest of “Eke” (Eke Eke) making some consultation with the gods in which he asks when they want to have the festival has been fixed and it must be “Eke” which is the day of the market in Enugwu- Agidi, the festival lasts for four days the first day is the day to buy all the things needed for that day.

The next day, is the main day when the festival starts with some local food which are used in celebrating the festival properly prepared by that second day is the day in which the “Mgbu Udo” masquerade will perform in the market square when manhood is being tested among various groups, using “Agba” then the “Ufuo” will be used in playing some melodies for them to dance to the tune of the music. The third day is also the day when young boys who also come to pour libation to the gods by bringing yams, kola nut, palm wine, alligator pepper and some other things to the chief priest which he blesses and gives them traditional chalk to draw at the center of the shrine (ITU NZU). The grand finale is the day for Afo Mmumi) by masquerade both from my farm and from other towns’ such as Ukpo, Abagana Nnewi, Ukwuli etc. around us that is the day that women watch the way they move around because they are not expected to look at a masquerade directly. It is the men’s world now.

The music played the last day is known as “Abia” and no woman dances to its melody. If done, it is known as sacrilege and some sacrilege here to be done to appease the gods on behalf of the festival.

The reason or significance of celebrating Opoto” Festival in Enugwu- Agidi are so many but the main ones to mark the beginning of the farming season in which the gods of the land are appeased for keeping them to see and also to beg the gods of the land to give them more beautiful harvest farming season. This is done by making many sacrifices to the god of the land before this festival commences. It is the chief priest of Eke who announces the date of the festival which he always knows by the reading of the moon and consultation of the god on when they want the festival to take place.

Opoto is also meant to know the man that are men which means it is when methods are being tested this is done by the boys which are of certain age grade to show who it is the king among them. They display some masquerade’s (Iga) which is known for (Ipa agba) this will be done when music from “Ufo” is being played. There is a special step for dancing “Ufo” which is known by every male child in my town. The name “Ufo” is a wooden gong that is made up of wood and its stand is made up of metal. It is also during this festival that boys at the age of fifteen are initiated into the Mmanawu cult which means that the person is fit to display any type of masquerade in the market square during the festival such as Izaga, Evava, Obulu Nyi Mbulu Udo, Osiasili etc.

The masquerade has many costumes that are made to make up the masquerade for example cowrie, beads, Uvugwu Nza (Nama fail) Elephant tusk and masks. Some masquerade, however, do not employ masks or headpiece but their faces are hidden by the costume in which pig nut beads or skin. Some masks are

carved to represent the human faces while other show grotesque features of criminals features like here in Enugu Ojonu, Okwonma, Izaga Ijele, Simeon Ottenberg (1968) etc.

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