

The Water Goddess. Ogbuide of Oguta Lake

Elliott P. Skinner Book Award Honoree, Association of Africanist Anthropology, American Anthropological Association Meeting 2008. *Anthropology Newsletter* 49 (9), Dec. 2008.

Testimonials:

“To the best of my knowledge, this is the most informative study yet on the Water Goddess in Igbo cosmology, and it seems poised to remain for a long time, the most authoritative work on the subject.”

(Ernest N. Emenyonu, University of Michigan, Flint)

“This evocative study of a water Goddess among the Igbo of Lake Oguta in southeastern Nigeria, thoroughly explores the rituals, beliefs and social organization associated with rituals of women's power. A form of *Mammy Wata* found through coastal Western Africa ... the analysis of this powerful Goddess, based on many years of research, is a notable contribution to African female ritual studies, long neglected by scholars.”

(Simon Ottenberg, University of Washington, Seattle)

“Jell-Bahlsen’s book is, like the Igbo water deity it describes throughout its pages, much more complex than it may initially seem. Based on the author’s twenty-five years of research in southeastern Nigeria, this work is actually an ethnographic study of indigenous Igbo religion, epistemology, and social practice. It is by far the most comprehensive and carefully researched work to date on the female water deity known as Ogbuide in the town of Oguta, Nigeria—more popularly known throughout sub-Saharan Africa as *mami Wata*. Jell-Bahlsen’s work is also a major contribution to religious studies, to African studies, and especially to Igbo studies. ... This work is invaluable for its commitment to describing both the ideological and practical dimensions of *Mami Wata* worship, and for demonstrating the importance of this worship for women’s empowerment and the sustainability of the local community and environment as a whole. Most of all, the author has certainly done her part in honoring the mother of waters.”

(Christey Carwile, Warren Wilson College, Asheville, NC)

“This brilliantly researched and documented book is a must read for all serious scholars and researchers of Africa and its various cultures, religious beliefs and practices especially the adulatory worship of the Water Goddess in the Oguta Riverine areas of southeastern Nigeria.”

(Michael C. Mbabuibe, Hostos Community College, CUNY)

“Produced with the cultural sensitivity and thoroughness of a seasoned ethnographer and an accomplished filmmaker, this long-awaited interdisciplinary work is a study of confluences on a grand scale. *Ogbuide* (the Lake Goddess) holds sway in an environment where the force and flexibility of water determines commerce, artistic expression, gender relations, and communal life. Located at the confluence of the rivers Niger and Urashi, *Ogbuide* (Oguta Lake) stands as a metaphor for where worlds meet; revealing the

intertwining of numerous registers—myths, symbols, aesthetics, customs, medicine, spirituality, religion, history/histories, literature, and ecology.”

(Obioma Nnaemeka, Indiana University, Indianapolis)

“This book as I have reviewed it is exciting to read and invaluable for its commitment to describing both the ideological and practical dimensions of *Mammy Wata*’s significance and challenges for men and women. The assessment of *Mammy Wata* life and culture particularly for women’s empowerment and sustainability of the local community and environment as a whole is evident in the fact that the firewood of a people cooks their feminism, masculinism, ambivalence, belief, religiosity, food and identity. ... In short, *Mami Wota* reinforces the fact that the gender and cosmology of creatorship in a given culture is strongly correlated with feminism and the status of men and women in the changing equilibrium in the world of that population group.”

(Patrick Iroegbu, Canada)

“An important aspect of this book is that it does not silence the voices of numerous individuals whose life and knowledge of the subject matter were an important source for the author. The realities of Igbo aesthetics, as reflected in the art, culture, and nature and its relationship to Igbo cosmology are vividly captured throughout the book. The book is greatly enriched by the addition of a glossary on Oguta. Despite the fact that the book took on many themes, this is a very welcome addition to the growing corpus on Igbo scholarship.”

(Chima Korieh, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI)

“People who want to learn about diversity and communication among the races, as well as tolerance for different groups around the world would find this book a great resource. *The Water Goddess in Igbo Cosmology. Ogbuide of Oguta Lake* should be in every home, school, and library throughout the world. It is an excellent book; a twenty-first century milestone.”

(Marie Umeh, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY)

Patrick Iroegbu. *Kwenu*: July 29, 2009.

http://kwenu.com/publications/iroegbu/2009/feminism_culture...

Christey Carwile. *African Studies Review* 51 (3), Dec. 2008: 172-173.

Francoise Ugochukwu. *Journal des Africanistes* 78 (1-2) 2008: 346-347 (In French).

Chima Korieh. *Mbari: The International Journal of Igbo Studies* 1(1), 2008 : 150-151.

Marie Umeh. *NYASA Newsletter*, spring 2008.

Misty L. Bastian. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42 (2), 2009.