

FESTIVALS

The Kalabari people have a rich cultural heritage with several festivals that celebrate their traditions, history, and community life. Here are some notable Kalabari festivals:

1) **Owu-Aru-Sun:**

This festival is known for its vibrant masquerades and traditional attire, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the Kalabari people.

2) **Alali:**

This festival is a 25-year ritual cycle where masquerades are presented in honor of village heroes, ancestors, and water spirit.

3) **Ebiye Festival:** This festival is celebrated to honor the spirit of the river and is marked by cultural performances, masquerades, and traditional rites.

4) **Oru Festival:** An important festival that celebrates the end of the fishing season and the abundance of fish, often involving rituals for blessings and gratitude.

5) **Polo Festival:** This is a unique festival that involves traditional games, sporting events, and cultural displays, fostering community spirit and showcasing local talent.

6) **Obon Festival:** A ceremony that pays homage to ancestors, where the Kalabari people express their respect and remembrance of their forebears through various rituals.

7) **Ida Festival:** A celebration that marks the end of certain agricultural seasons, focusing on community bonding and thanksgiving for successful harvests.

These festivals not only provide an opportunity for cultural expression but also play a significant role in the social cohesion and identity of the Kalabari people. They are often marked by vibrant performances, traditional attire, and a display of local cuisine.

THE KALABARI DISTINGUISHED FASHION FROM INCEPTION TILL DATE.-

The distinctive aesthetic of the kalabari people derives from the geographic, historical, and social conditions of the Niger delta, where they have held a strategic position in trade since the 1400s (Jones 1963). Situated near the coast of southern Nigeria, the Kalabari acted as intermediaries between hinterland communities and the larger world. The East-west routes that were well established prior to the influx of Europeans in the sixteenth century connected them with other west African groups such as the Ewe of Ghana and the Yoruba and Igbo of Nigeria. The North-south routes brought involvement with the Western Europeans such as the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English (Alagoa 1972:297). This trade provided the resources for the unique kalabari dress ensembles, an assemblage of borrowed and indigenous Western and non-Western elements. The creative composition of these materials and artistic techniques "is their ethnic identity and genius".

Typically the ensembles includes cloths in the form of wrappers, blouses, head ties, shirts, and handkerchiefs, corals, gold, and glass beads fashioned into jewelry such as necklaces, bracelets, rings, armbands, Kneelbands, and earrings; additive material, including beads, feathers, sequins, and miniature Christmas ball ornaments; sandals and shoes; cosmetic chalk and pomades; and other accessories like handheld items such as purses, fans, canes, elephant tusks, The basic ensembles for women includes an imported lace or eyelet blouses worn with what is called " up and down" wrapper combination, that is, a knee length wrapper worn over an ankle length one. These comes in varieties of materials such as the stripped imported indian madras (injiri), the printed woolen flannel (blangidi), handwoven Ewe strip cloth (Accra), and the stripped indian silk (loko). For men, an indian madras wrapper combined with a loose jumper or shirt known as woko is standard. More expensive and complex assemblages are usually the privilege of age. Older kalahari ladies may add accessories such as head ties, jewelry, and purses. Older men may also wear costly jewelry, don, a distinctive hat like a bowler or top hat, and carry a cane.

Ancient method of writing and recording information.

Written records comprise the eye-witness accounts as recorded by visiting Europeans in their

I) also narrates the journey of Perebo-kala-ibari(Kalabari) from the Central Delta to the Eastern Fombo.

i."Tribes of the Niger Delta" by P. Amaury Talbot

iv."A History of the Niger Delta "by Professor E. J. Alagoa

1932, includes a very short sentence about the founding of Kalabari in Obu-Amafa in about 1400 AD.

Amafa have been made by modern historians in the following books :

Delta. All these modern-day references to Obu-Amafa are unutterably brief to stand alone as the
of those interested. When the Kalabari were in Obu-Amafa, the art of writing had not been
view of the unavailability of such information, only very short passing references to Kalabari
in Obu
introduced in the eastern Delta nor was the town visited by European merchants who could
have
written down in their diaries what they actually saw. Thus, from the above-mentioned two
most
v."A Chronicle of Grand Bonny" by Professor E. J. Alagoa and Mr. A.
The publication, "Kalabari Clan Conferences at Abalama On The Intelligence Report -1935"
(Volume
publications and other records such as books. These are usually kept in national archives
for the use
diaries, court proceedings and other government records, town minutes of meetings,
newspaper
important sources, no record on Kalabari affairs has yet been discovered in the nationa
archives.
vi."The Heritage of West Africa "byNorah Latham
In addition to the above, "The Nigerian Observer", PortHarcourt, Vol. 3, No. 49, of 3rd
December,
iii."The Trading States of the Oil Rivers"by G. I. Jones
ii."The Peoples of Southern Nigeria", Volume 1. by P. AmauryTalbot
vii."The Story of Nigeria"by Michael Crowder.
history of the first Kalabari town.