



Blood on the Tides: The Ozidi Saga and Oral Epic Narratology (Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora)

By Isidore Okpewho

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The Ozidi Saga is one of Africa's best known prosimetric epics, set in the Delta region of Nigeria. Blood on the Tides examines the epic -- a tale of a warrior and his sorcerer grandmother's revenge upon the assassins who killed her son -- both as an example of oral literature and as a reflection of the specific social and political concerns of the Nigerian Delta and the country as a whole. In addition the book considers various iterations of the saga, including a performance of the entire saga in 1963 in Ibadan by the folk artist Okabou Okobolo, which was subsequently transcribed, translated, and edited by the renowned Nigerian poet, playwright, and scholar John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo. The study concludes with a look at the work of contemporary Nigerian creative writers and their connection to the powerful literary and historical currents of the Ozidi story. Isidore Okpewho is Distinguished Professor of Africana Studies, English, and Comparative Literature at Binghamton University (SUNY). He is the author of The Epic in Africa, Myth in Africa, African Oral Literature, and Once upon a Kingdom. An award-winning novelist, he has published four titles: The Victims, The Last Duty, Tides, and Call Me by My Rightful Name.

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Editorial Review

Review

With this book, Okpewho continues the debate over the nature of the African epic. Recommended. CHOICE Blood on the Tides is a labor of love from the distinguished expert on African oral literature, Isidore Okpewho. With sophisticated textual analysis, this work provides social, historical, and political context for The Ozidi Saga. A bonus is his concluding chapter, which not only historicizes but also contemporizes and globalizes the saga, bringing it into conversation with challenges facing contemporary Nigeria. -- Carole Boyce-Davies, professor of English and Africana studies, Cornell University Okpewho taught a generation of scholars to recognize the pleasures and pressures of the aesthetic impulse in African cultures. In this powerful new book, he continues to teach us. Blood on the Tides is a serene tour de force. -- Olakunle George, associate professor of English and Africana studies, Brown University No one knows more, or has written more intelligently, about African oral and written narrative than Isidore Okpewho. In Blood on the Tides he brings together both traditions, along with his equally great knowledge of the cultural contexts from which both derive. Okpewho's book is a magnificent achievement, beautifully written and rich in traditional and scholarly wisdom. -- Bruce Jackson, SUNY Distinguished Professor and James Agee Professor of American Culture, University at Buffalo, State University of New York In all the literature on epics, there is no broader and deeper account of the forces that shape a performance. The voices of the narrator, his chorus, and his audience combine to create a world that is partly mythic, partly historical, and partly contemporary in this masterpiece of the art of interpretation. -- Dennis Tedlock, author of 2000 Years of Mayan Literature

About the Author

ISIDORE OKPEWHO is Distinguished Professor of Africana Studies, English, and Comparative Literature at Binghamton University (SUNY). He is the author of *The Epic in Africa*, *Myth in Africa*, *African Oral Literature*, and *Once Upon a Kingdom*. An award-winning novelist, he has published four titles: *The Victims*, *The Last Duty*, *Tides*, and *Call Me By My Rightful Name*.

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