

IYE AJA (Umbilical Cord) Project

FATTENING ROOM

In some Sub-Saharan African communities, a fattening room is a place where training is given to young women while they are in seclusion to prepare them for marriage and womanhood. In Nigeria, the practice is common amongst the Efik, Ibibio and Ibo people.

During this period the girl is being cared for by older women and is not allowed to come in contact with other people. She is put in a room where on a daily basis, is massaged three times, fed about six large portions of food (like porridge, ekpang, assorted pepper soups), water three times and gets plenty of sleep. This process ensures the bride gets a healthy waistline. According to the Efik people, they believe a woman who is full figured with a healthy waistline is beautiful.



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In the Fattening Room the girl goes through domestic training of home economics (like cooking and housekeeping), childcare and how to respect and make her husband to be and his family happy. The older women give advice about their experience in marriage to ensure a successful one.

Another important parts of Efik cultural training are the cultural dances (Ekombi), folklore, folktales, songs and other forms of entertainment. Skills in artistic designs on Calabash and other materials are taught as well.

At the end of the seclusion period, people all over are invited to witness the graduation ceremony to honor her success in passing through this ordeal. This ceremony is celebrated with traditional Efik dances (Ekombi) and other forms of entertainment. This big feast and merriment continues through out the whole day and night as families, friends and well wishers express their joy and happiness with gifts and donations to the bride. Finally she and her future husband embraces and dances welcoming everybody that have come to join the celebration. Everybody cheers the happy couple.

Source: www.maobongoku.com

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