

AN IBO FESTIVAL

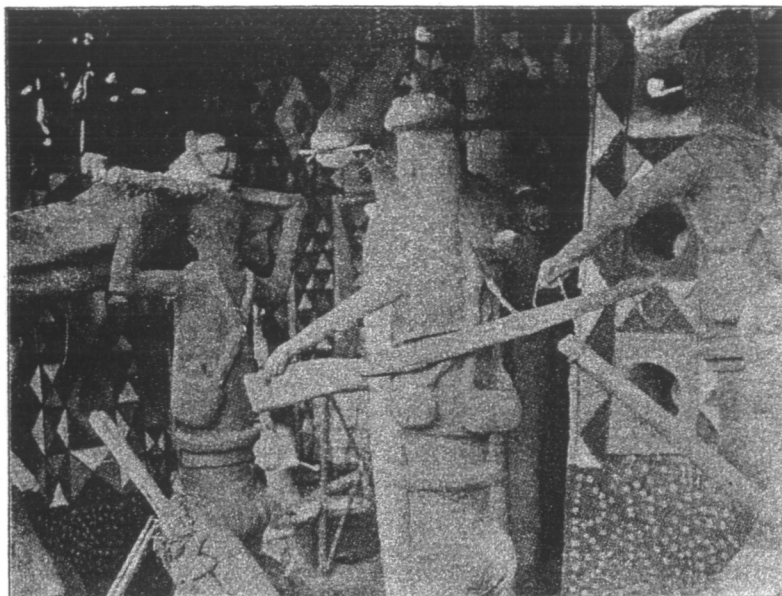
IN the principal villages of the Owerri District there is a yearly festival held, called *Mbari* (beautiful), which lasts for some weeks, and in which the most comely young women take part. For some time before the play these girls are busily employed modelling figures of clay and wood representing familiar objects and native customs. These are placed round the verandahs of the house which they occupy during the festivities. The walls of this house are gaily decorated with many-coloured pigments in elaborate designs, which may be seen in the photographs.

During the period of the play these women are allowed great license. In the course of the day they visit the different quarters or compounds, dancing and singing, and receiving numerous presents from their friends and admirers. At night there is absolutely no restriction placed upon them, and they visit where and whom they wish. Even women who are married and living away return to their native towns on these occasions.

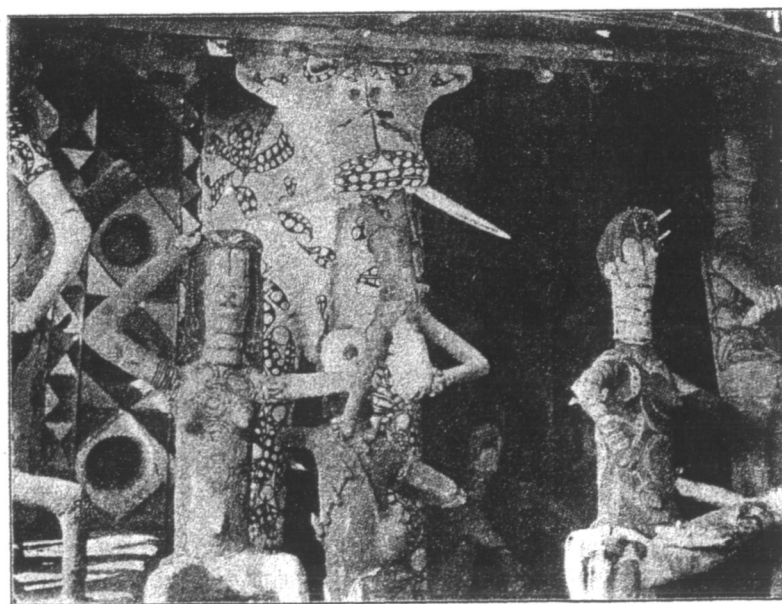
The play is held in honour of the particular Fetish or Juju that the town favours, and is arranged by the Juju men, who nominate the girls who are to participate.

Photo No. 1 shows a European being carried in a hammock, followed by his armed escort. Do not fail to observe the house!

No. 2.—This represents a hippopotamus devouring a child, to the intense horror of the despairing mother. The unfortunate victim also appears unpleasantly surprised. Notice should be taken of the elaborate way in which the hair is dressed. The woman on the right, judging from the



EUROPEAN CARRIED IN A HAMMOCK.



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FIGURE OF HIPPOPOTAMUS DEVOURING A CHILD.

sharp instrument in her hand, would appear to be tattooing her child.

No. 3.—The only explanation I could obtain of this subject is that the girl lying down is about to have her teeth cut or sharpened; but it does not seem probable that a matchet would be used for the purpose. The hairpins as worn by the lady presiding are made by the blacksmiths in the Nkwerri country, north of Owerri.

No. 4.—This is of interest, as it shows the manner of dressing the back hair. This hair is collected by the prospective husband on betrothal, and he not only contributes his own hair, but also purchases some to make up the required quantity, as the marriage cannot be celebrated until the hair is dressed in the approved manner. It is worn low down on the neck as shown, or sometimes in two long braids.

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