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Celebrating Ukwuani Heritage: *The History, Meaning, and Resilience of the Ukpabor Festival*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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Celebrating Ukwuani Heritage: The History, Meaning, and Resilience of the Ukpalabor Festival

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Ukpalabor Festival is a big cultural festival celebrated in Ukwuani, a clan within the Igbo-speaking region in Delta State, Nigeria. Even though few books carry their stories, they signify a lot to those in the community as they show their tradition, history, and how they associate together. We are going to talk about its origin, what it means, what they do, and how it is important to the Culture of Ukwuani.

Ukpalabor Festival has existed for a very long time, even before colonialism came to Ukwuani. The name “ukpalabor” is meant to come from Ukwuani, but its full meaning is being told by mouth. In areas like this, festivals do come from things like farming, unity, respect for ancestors and gods, and looking after the land. Since it is celebrated in Ogbe-Ogume, a village inside Ndokwa West, bringing people together and preparing for a new farming season is the aim of the festival.

Ukpalabor Festival is a big deal to Ogbe-Ogume and many Ukwuani communities. It is a time when they display who they are and bring families, friends, and even nearby villages together to remember their origin. In a place where stories and memories are big deals, this type of festival is like a living book, keeping their music, dance and way of life fresh.

It helps people unite. The people of Ukwuani like being together as one, so this festival serves as a means of settling quarrels, making

friendships stronger, and enjoying being a community. It is also used to respect elders who function as their leaders, as they pass on the old ways to the younger ones.

Spiritually, it can be connected to honoring the ancestors or local gods. They can conduct a little prayer or offering to ask for blessings, good health, and protection. Even though most people in Ukwuani are now Christians, they still mix their traditional religion with Modernity in the event.



Men of Ogbe Ogume during Ukpabor festival 2025

Ukpabor Festival is filled with different kinds of actions that show how rich Ogbe-Ogume culture is.

From our point of view, like how Captain Dennis Abamba Eke-Eke 1 performed on January 26, 2022, music and dance are the main things. A popular highlife music in Southern Nigeria takes the celebration, with artists who keep the crowd active. Drums, flutes, and ogene (metal gong) can also be used to make everything interesting.

Dance: Traditional dance is done by groups, with fine steps that tell

stories of their community or gods. They put on fine clothes like rapper, beads, and headgear that shows Ukwuani style. Everyone from the list to the top, do join, so it is not just for viewing but to feel the spirit.



A man blowing the traditional flute during Ukpabor festival in Ogbe Ogume

Food Is Compulsory In The Festival: Foods like pounded yam with egusi or vegetable stew, ukodo(pepper soup, yam and plantain), and palm wine will go round. They prepare it together, making the love and unity grow stronger. A market or a little fair can be enough, where people sell crafts, clothes, and other things, making cash to go round.

It tends to happen yearly, on a special day chosen by the community's people. In most Nigerian Cultures, festivals coincide with the moon or the farming season, but Christianity might make it fall on a particular day. Depending on the size of the festival, it can be one day or even two to three days.

Presently, Ukpalabor Festival has been mixed with the old and new ways; they record it, just like the video Ukwuani records sent to YouTube, so people from afar, even some Ukwuani staying abroad, tend to come across it. This technology helps keep the festival alive in the eyes of the world.

People like Captain Dennis Abamba Eke-Eke 1, a big name in their community, use it to display their culture, combining local sounds with modern ones to attract the youth's interest.

Problems And What Is Likely To Happen In The Future The Festival faces problems like people relocating to cities, insufficient funding, and youths no longer staying in the village. All these can make it difficult to celebrate. But the way they express happiness while celebrating shows they won't let it go. If they can bring in visitors or make it more popular online, it will grow bigger.

To keep it going, things like workshops to teach about their culture, bringing in artists from outside, or probably join hands with cultural groups, can also be added. As Ukwuani faces modernity, the Ukpalabor Festival will still stand as a sign of their strength and love for their culture.

Ukpalabor Festival is not just a party, but a bigger way for the people of Ogbe-Ogume to show who they are, what their history is, and how they relate together. With music, dance, food, and tradition, they are being joined with their past while they keep going. It has a great meaning to the people of Ukwuani, and as it grows, Ukpalabor will remain a strong thread in Anioma culture, tying tradition, happiness, and oneness in the future.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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