



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Iwa Gi:

The New Yam Festival and the Soul of Ika Heritage

By Chukwunwike Ossai

Ozikoro.com · Cultural Heritage · 5 min read

FEATURE
IMAGE

NO FEATURED IMAGE IN THE RECORD

The article carries no featured image, so this panel is left as an honest empty space rather than filled with one.

Ozi Ikòrò
IWA GI

Iwa Gi: The New Yam Festival and the Soul of Ika Heritage

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com

The Ika people, who are a subgroup of the Igbo Ethnic group, living mostly in Ika South and Ika North Local Government Areas in Delta State, Nigeria, have a rich culture that connects very well with farming, traditions, and how they live together. One big festival that the Ika people celebrate is the Iwa gi...

The Ika people, who are a subgroup of the Igbo Ethnic group, living mostly in Ika South and Ika North Local Government Areas in Delta State, Nigeria, have a rich culture that connects very well with farming, traditions, and how they live together. One big festival that the Ika people celebrate is the Iwa gi festival, also called the New Yam Festival. This festival is an old tradition that shows the conclusion of the farming season and the beginning of harvest, especially for yam, which is the main food in that area.

01

History and cultural meaning

The Iwa gi Festival is not just about the yam harvest but has a deep meaning that shows how the Ika people connect with their land, ancestors, and spiritual beliefs. Yam serves as the king of crops in most Igbo-speaking communities, including Ika; this festival is a means of saying thank you to the gods and ancestors for giving them plenty of harvests. It is also a time of asking for blessings for the next season and cleaning the community from any bad luck or negative vibes. This festival has existed since ancient times, when the people of Ika depended solely on farming. Yam is not just food but a sign of wealth, respect, and a good life. If you are able to plant and harvest enough yams, you will be seen as a hardworking person with skill and blessings from the gods. So, the Iwa gi festival is a way of honoring farm work and the spiritual powers for an abundant harvest.

02

Preparations for the Festival

Cooking of traditional foods: The festival is a time of excess feeding, thereby making different conventional meals with the New Yam. You can see pounded Yam, yam porridge, roasted yam, and other Ika special delicacies.

Cultural Show: The festival is a time for cultural display involving masquerade dance, traditional music playing, and performances by cultural groups. Masquerades, believed to be ancestral spirits, also play a big role. The sounds of drumming, dancing, and singing make everything lively.

Time for Kola Nuts and Palm Wine: An important part of the ceremony is breaking kola and sharing palm wine. Kola Nuts mean hospitality and unity, and they are presented to visitors to welcome them. Palm wine, a traditional drink, helps people feel good and friendly with each other.

Challenges Faced and Solutions to it

The Iwa gi is proof of the strong culture in Ika. Their culture celebrates their farming skills, their spiritual beliefs, and how they live together. It reminds them to give thanks to the land for blessings and to stay connected to their history. As Ika people face modernity, the Iwa gi festival still shines as part of who they are. It gives them the time to think, celebrate, and start a fresh life. It helps preserve the traditions and values that have held the Ika community together for years. Though Iwa gi, Ika people don't just respect their past but also look forward to a stronger future for the sake of their culture.

- Okafor, E. C. (2022). *Ika Heritage: The Cultural Significance of the New Yam Festival*. Asaba: Delta State University Press.
- Nwankwo, J. I. (2020). "Agricultural Traditions and Spiritual Practices: The Iwa gi Festival in Ika Communities." *Journal of Igbo Studies*, 15(3), 78-92.
- Ika Cultural Association. (2019). *The Iwa gi Festival: A Celebration of Yam and Unity in Ika Land*. Agbor: Ika Heritage Publishers.
- Eze, C. O. (2021, August 10). "Iwa gi: Reviving Ika Traditions in a Modern World." *The Delta Guardian Newspaper*.
- Umeh, P. A. (2023). *Yam and Society: Rituals and Economy in Ika Culture*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chukwunwike Ossai

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.



Ozi Ikòrò

History worth reading.

African history · culture · indigenous knowledge
