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Living Omenani: *How Igbo Traditions Shape Daily Life*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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LIVING OMENANI

Living Omenani: How Igbo Traditions Shape Daily Life

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com

Omenani is the big word that Igbo people use to talk about their tradition, customs, and way of life that came from their ancestors.

It's like a rule book that guides how Igbo people live, marry, give birth, bury dead, farm, trade, and even talk to their gods and spirits.

Omenani is not something that they wrote on paper like law; it is inside the heart and mouth of the people, passed down from father to child, mother to daughter, for many years.

In Igbo land, if you don't follow Omenani, you have lost your roots.

Omenani is an Igbo word that means “the way of the land” or “what the land is doing.”

It covers everything that made the Igbo who they are:

Family Life: How you will marry, who you can marry, and how you will give birth are inside Omenani.

You can't marry your sister or somebody from Umunna (family group). It's too close, and it's taboo.

Community Rules tell you how to behave in the village: Respect elders, don't steal, don't lie, and help your neighbor. If you break them, they might punish you or call Tibia to check what's wrong.

Spiritual Side: Omenani used to join hands with god like Ala(the earth goddess), Amadioha(thunder god) and ancestors.

You will see it in sacrifice, prayer, or when they pour libation with kola nut.

Daily Work: Even how you will farm yam, trade for the market, or build a house follows Omenani.

Like, they don't plant yam for some days because of the gods that are controlling the land.

Omenani is like the spirit that holds the Igbo culture together, it doesn't change easy, and it shows Igbo people know their past and respect it.

Omenani is everywhere in Igbo land. It doesn't hide. Here are some ways it plays out:

Kolanut(Oji): When you enter the Igbo man's house, they will break Kolanut to welcome you. The way they break it, pray over it, and share it is Omenani. The elder will talk, "Onye wetara oji, wetara ndu" (who brings Kolanut, brings life). It shows unity and respect.

Marriage(Igba Nkwu): To marry in Igbo land, you will follow the steps: pay the bride price, carry wine, and bring the family together. Omenani says the man's family will bring things like yam, goat, and cloth, and the woman's people will check if it is okay before they agree.

Burial (Ikwa Ozu): When someone dies, Omenani controls how they bury the person. You mourn, do a second burial (Ikwa Ozu), and make sure the spirit rests well. If you don't do it right, they believe that the dead can get angry and cause problems.

Market Days: The four-day Igbo week- Eke, Orie, Afor, and Nkwo are part of Omenani. Each day has its own vibe, and people are planning trade, ritual, or even planting around it.

Festival: The Omenani festival is a (or Ji) masquerade dance. People

thank the gods for the harvest and invite their ancestors to join the party.

Omenani didn't start one day. It's like something that grew with Igbo people from the time nobody can count. Before the white man came, Igbo people lived by Omenani without a king or big government. Every village has its own elders and dibia that make everybody follow the custom. The gods and ancestors are like police that watch if you are doing the right thing or wrong

When colonial people brought the church and school, they tried to scatter Omenani, calling it "pagan" or "old fashion."

But Igbo people still holds it tight, they mixed with new things like Christianity other spiritual practices.

Some people break Kolanut and pray in Jesus' name, but the style is still Omenani.

Elders: Old men and women know Omenani very well.

They teach the young ones and settle fight that breaks the custom.

Dibia: The native doctors and seers use Omenani to do their work, whether to heal, see the future, or talk to spirits.

Umunna: The family group (Umunna) ensures that everybody in the lineage follows the rules. They might call a meeting to judge the person who didn't respect the tradition.

Masquerade(Mmanwu): the secret society that does masquerade is protecting Omenani, too.

They dance to show the spirit of their ancestors and warn people not to behave.

In Igbo land, Omenani is sacred. It's like the air they breathe.

If you follow it, you are safe, and your family will be blessed. But if you break it like killing somebody or sleeping with your brother's wife, it's a taboo (aru), and the gods might punish you with sickness or bad luck. The village can even chase you if it's too bad.

Some people fear Omenani because it's too strict, but plenty of Igbo people love it because it gives them identity.

It's like what makes them different from the Yoruba or Hausa way.

Even with church, school, and city life that is taking over Igbo areas, Omenani is still strong.

In villages like Ogbaru, Ndoni, or Ogwashi—uku, you will see people breaking Kolanut, doing Igba Nkwu, or calling dibia when problems arise.

Young people who are in Lagos or abroad are still coming to follow Omenani for marriage or burial, showing that it's not is not dying, but it has adjusted a little.

Some Christians don't sacrifice again, but they will still respect market days or pray over yam for Iri Ji.

Nollywood films try their best although sometimes, they will overdo it, but it is keeping the cultural eye.

Omenani is the heart and soul of Igbo culture; it is the way they connect with their ancestors and gods.

It guides them like a compass, from Kolanut to burial, marriage to market.

Even with all the new things coming, Omenani is still standing tall, showing that Igbo tradition cannot be shaken with ease

It's the root that is holding Igbo land, and it will be as long as Igbo

people are breathing.

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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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