



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Oke-Aku Festival: *A Celebration of Harvest, Unity, and Renewal in Ezza Ezekuna Culture*

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
OKE-AKU FESTIVAL

Oke-Aku Festival: A Celebration of Harvest, Unity, and Renewal in Ezza Ezekuna Culture

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com

Oke-Aku Festival is the New Yam Festival that Ezza Ezekuna people do, and it is one big celebration in their culture that brings everybody together to thank God for a better harvest, unity and their community, and a better life that is yet to come. They do it every year as they start their traditional calendar, and it is not just because they want to eat new yams—it's a deep celebration of who they are, as people who know how well to farm, who are strong in war, and help settle problems. The festival is full of tradition, visiting, and heartfelt acts. It shows how they live, how they hold each other like family, and how they respect God, who provides for them.

The Ezza Ezekuna People: A Legacy of Valor and Agriculture Ezza Ezekuna is the child of Ezekuna, the first son of Ekumenyi. Their history is full of courage, movement from place to place, and strong cultural pride. They know how to farm, and they are strong like warriors. People know them for knowing how well to settle fights, and because of that, people have given them land for farming in plenty of places like Enugu, Benue, Kogi, Cross River, and Anambra—apart from their main home in Onueke at Ebonyi Central. In Ezza Ezekuna, farming—especially yam farming—is life. Yam is the king of all crops. The Oke-Aku Festival comes from this lifestyle, as they celebrate when the yams mature. The festival now starts with the traditional New Year, so that is when people think back, make peace, and start fresh.

The Oke-Aku Festival: Structure and Rituals The Oke-Aku Festival runs through the first traditional week in the Ezza Ezekuna calendar, which has market days such as Orie, Afor, Nkwo, and Eke. The final

celebration happens in Orie Mbi-eka in the second week. Every day, they engage in various activities ranging from prayers and food sharing to visiting and dancing.

Day 1: Orie – The Commencement of Festivities Everything started on Orie, the first day of the New Year. Joy filled the whole place. Everybody greets each other with prayers and blessings. The father of the house collects gifts from his wife, children, and relatives. Then he prays for everybody, blesses the kola nut, and everybody shares it. They also eat uza ukpara, which is a special pepper sauce. One important thing they normally do is share nsa aku—leftover yam and palm kernels from before. This means that the hungry time has ended, and plenty of food has come. After this prayer and sharing, women cook special food, and men bring palm wine and better drinks. It is a day full of enjoyment.

Days 2-4: Afor, Nkwo, and Eke—Strengthening Social Bonds. The next three days—Afor, Nkwo, and Eke—are the time to show love. People visit their in-laws, help the poor people, and greet the elders and leaders. All these activities help strengthen the community bond.

Second Week, Orie Mbi-eka: The Grand Finale The last part of the festival happens on Orie Mbi-eka. That morning, people will do small farm work (Mbi-eka ewu), like checking crops or feeding animals. It means that the celebration had ended and was ready to go back to work. By afternoon, everybody will come back home, eat and drink, then go to the village square to dance, greet old friends, and enjoy traditional music, dance, and masquerade. This is the time people showcase Ezza Ezekuna culture and enjoy as one big family.

Transition from Scarcity to Abundance: The festival marks the end of hunger, when they manage leftover yams and kernels, and the beginning of harvest. The sharing of nsa aku shows that God carried them through the hard time.

Stock-Taking and Redirection: Oke-Aku is a time to reflect on the past and plan for the new year. It helps people grow in life and community.

Reconciliation and Unity: The festival brings peace. It's a time to forgive, settle quarrels, and visit those who matter. It makes everyone feel at home.

Thanksgiving and Spiritual Gratitude: The heart of the festival is to thank God for protection and blessings. The father of the house normally prays for his people and blesses the food and kola nuts.

Cultural Preservation: The festival normally keeps Ezza Ezekuna's culture strong. It teaches young people about tradition and brings those who have traveled back to celebrate together.

Oke-Aku in the Context of Ezza Ezekuna Leadership Oke-Aku Festival also shows respect to Ezza leaders. For example, in 2019, they used the festival to thank the former Governor, Engr. David Nweze Umahi (generally called Ikenga Ezza Ezekuna). They thanked him for the good he had done—roads, jobs, and support for the people. It shows that the festival is also a time to celebrate people who make the community better. Oke-Aku is not only for the Ezza people. It teaches lessons to the whole world about unity, forgiveness, and thanking God. In 2019, Ezza people even used the festival to beg everybody in Nigeria to forgive, show love, and work together. The farming part of the festival also reminds us that agriculture and food security are very important in today's world. Yam, celebrated as the "king of crops," reminds us not to forget our farming work. It encourages young people to continue farming and keep the culture alive.

Upholding the Oke-Aku Legacy Oke-Aku Festival is a big proof that the Ezza Ezekuna people are strong, have a rich culture, and are united. The festival teaches us to share, forgive, thank God, and celebrate together. Even as modern life moves fast, Oke-Aku remains important. It connects people to their roots, teaches love, peace, and gratitude, and shows young people who they are and why they are supposed to be proud of their culture. As they continued to celebrate Oke-Aku, the Ezza Ezekuna people protected tradition and built a better future that will inspire others worldwide.

- Afigbo, A.E. (1981). Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture. University Press.
- Isichei, Elizabeth (1976). A History of the Igbo People. Macmillan.
- Okpata, Felix (2012). "The Significance of Yam in Igbo Traditional Religion and Culture." African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Vol. 11, No. 2.
- Ebonyi State Government (2019). Ezza Cultural Documentation Report.
- Ezzama Youth Assembly, Lagos Branch (2019). Oke-Aku Festival Celebration and Cultural Unity Report.

Photo Reference ADAMAZI TV youtube channel(Oke-aku Ezza Ezekuna 2023: A Festival Of Love And Peace In Ezza Land |Ebonyi | Igbo Cultures)

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
