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By Chukwunwike Ossai

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ONICHA UKWUANI

Onicha Ukwuani: A Vibrant Tapestry of Ukwuani Igbo Heritage in Delta State

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Onicha Ukwuani is one fine community inside Ndokwa West Local Government Area (LGA) in Delta State, Nigeria. It is in the South-South part of Niger, near the western Niger Delta, and it's a serious example of how Ukwani people, that are Igbo subgroup, which hold their culture tight. This place isn't just a land— it's where tradition, history, and who dey are. We check it well— where it's located, the history, their culture, the big Ekwensu festival, how they make money, and what it means today.

Onicha Ukwuani is in the southeastern part of Delta State, between latitude 5°83'1 N to 5°87'1 N and longitude 6°25'1 E to 6°45'1 E.

It joined Ike Onicha, Eweshi, Ugiliamai, Amoji, and Ibabu to form one kingdom that is tight together. The north side is Utagba-Uno, the south is Ogume and Utagba-Ogbe, the east is Afor and Utagba-Ogbe, and the west is Ebedei and Umukwata communities. The land is well-leveled, with not too many hills, and it's part of the Niger Delta Basin.

The place is inside a tropical rainforest, with plenty of green forest, climbing plants, and small grass with a few trees here and there. Kwale/Ogwashi-Uku express road is a big tarred road to Asaba; it's the main way to enter, but inside, there are untarred roads and footpaths that they use. This kind of place shows how they live and work.

Onicha Ukwuani's history is tied to the Ukwani people, which is the Igbo group that has a strong name in Niger Delta. "Ukwuani" means

something deep in their language, unlike “Ndokwa,” which the government gave them around the 1950s from the Ndosimili and Ukwuani districts. Before, they were under the Aboh Division, but they disagreed with the Obi of Aboh to type them completely, so by 1976, Ndokwa became an LGA. Still, Onicha Ukwuani people called themselves Ukwuani, proudly holding their Ukwuani Igbo heritage and culture strong. A long time ago, some of them stayed in Benin Kingdom as visitors. But during a crisis called Aha Idu, the war scattered things, and they ran back to Onicha Ukwuani. The people of Benin pursued them back; during that time, it was a big battle that they didn’t forget— it brought the Ekwesu festival, which we’ll talk about later.

The Ukwuani people of Onicha Ukwuani have a rich culture— food, clothes, beliefs, and traditions. Their dishes are Ofe-Isige (vegetable soup), Mpikor (cassava food), Nri-Iji (yam and vegetable mix), and Oto (pounded yam with soup). They use things that grow there, and it shows how farming is important to them. For their wears, men tie six yards of wrapper on their waist and wear native shirts, beads, caps or hats adorned with feathers sometimes, and shoes— with a nice style. Women make use of two wrappers, a blouse, a head tie, earrings, a handbag, and shoes— simple but nice. Before the influence of Christianity and Islam, they practiced the African Traditional Religion, which still exists. It’s about nature and respecting the ancestors, and it shows in their ceremonies.

The Ukwuani Foundation Union (U.F.U), which started in 1937, helped them hold their culture firm, especially when the Nigerian Civil War scattered things. Folk songs, dances, and stories still exist, and the Ekwesu festival is the biggest vibe.

Ekwesu is a big festival in Onicha Ukwuani; it celebrates warriors who fought during Aha Idu. Long ago, some people from here stayed in places near Benin Kingdom. But when the Aha Idu war began, there was trouble, and they ran back home. The army of Benin chased them back to Onicha Ukwuani, but the warriors here stood firm to defend their sourjourning brothers and the community, these warriors fought

and protected everybody. Praises go to Ekwesu the trickster God that came to the community's aid during this historical trying times

Every year, the festival features dance, music, and masquerades that show how they fought. People wear warrior clothes, beat loud drums and sing songs to invoke the spirit of their ancestors. It was a time to remember how they took courage to save the community. The young ones learn from it, and it brings everyone together.

Farming is the primary occupation of the people of Onicha Ukwuani. The fertile land allows them to cultivate yams, cassava, and vegetables. Fishing is also a common practice because water is nearby, and it helps them eat well and sell. The untarred roads are there, but the Kwale/Ogwashi-Uku express road helps them connect to big places like Asaba for trading. Schools and hospitals are also there, but not many— they can go to nearby towns for better ones. The way they work keeps the community going strong.

Onicha Ukwuani remains a proud Ukwuani Igbo community, with a postal code 322106 marking its presence on the Nigerian map. Ike Onicha, Eweshi, Ugiliamai, Amoji, and Ibabu work together as one kingdom, mixing old ways with new life.

Big names like Chief Ochiligwe Ubulu (1949-2004), who was a musician called Augustin Ojinji before, showed that talent can come from here. From repairing shoes to singing big songs, which made them proud.

Despite facing challenges such as poor roads, inadequate educational and healthcare facilities, and the pressures of modern life, Its location near the Niger Delta and the things of the Ekwesu festival offers visitors. If the road is fixed, and there's better tourism and farms, it will grow well.

Onicha Ukwuani is a shining example of Ukwuani Igbo culture and history. From its green land to the vibrant Ekwesu festival, the community proudly showcases its heritage. As Nigeria continues to

move, Onicha Ukwuani deserves greater recognition, serving as a light of community spirit and warrior tradition among the Western Igbo areas.

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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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