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Ugbo: *A Living Archive of Ancient Igbo Civilization and Cultural Resilience in Enugu State*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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UGBO

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Ugbo has been in existence since ancient times. It is said that people have been residing there as far back as 3000 BC. Ugbo is one of the first communities that settle east of river niger. They believe it is a man they call Ewa who is the ancestor of many towns like Amoli, Agbudu, Isu-Awaa, Ituku, and Ogbaku. Ogulugu, the first child of Ewa, created Ugbo, and from there, it divided into two: Ugbo and Obeagu. They, along with another group called Ntuegbe, joined together to create a body called the Mbanabor clan for Awgu LGA.

Historical Origins of Ugbo Ugbo is situated on a hill on the northwest side of Awgu Local Government Area. Because it is at the top of the hill, people see it as a place with strong cultural and spiritual meaning. The hills, caves, rivers, and fertile land around the area help them with their farm work, trade, and worship of their gods. They have found old pots and stone tools in the area, which shows that the place is really old, but they still need to do more digging to learn everything that happened before the arrival of the colonial people.

Before the arrival of white men, Ugbo was a centre for trade and culture. They do business with other Igbo towns and people from groups like the Igala and Idoma. The land that was good for farming helped them grow plenty of food, and they used rivers to transport it for sale. Ugbo also has a large oracle that they worship, called Anu Ogulugu, in Umu-Ewa, and this oracle is a significant part of Ugbo religion.

When the British people arrived in the late 1800s, they knew that Ugbomiro was an important place, so they included it within the Southern Nigeria Protectorate. Missionaries came later, but the Ugbo people initially did not agree for them to enter because they wanted to protect their traditional religion. It was till 1917 that they finally entered, built churches and schools, and started changing how people lived.

Socio-Political Organization Ugbo uses the Igbo way of governance, which does not have a king over everybody. Instead, each of the three communities, Ugbo Okpala, Ugbonabor, and Ngene Ugbo, has its traditional ruler (Igwe or Eze) and council of elders (Ndichie). These leaders solve quarrels, protect tradition, and are respected because they come from the Ewa family and are connected to Anu Ogulugu.

Apart from the fact that Ugbo is still under the Awgu local government, which works with Enugu State. The government builds roads, Health Centres, and other public works, and the traditional rulers oversee them.

Ugbo also has an age-grade system. People of the same age form a group that does community work, such as road repair and festival planning. Women's groups are also created, such as Umuada and Inyom Ugbo, which help promote peace and support women's welfare.

The colonial rule shook things when they brought warrant chiefs, and the Ugbo people were not happy with that. Some Ugbo women joined the Aba Women's Riot in 1929 to protest against taxes and oppression. After independence, the traditional rulers learned how to work with the government to bring schools, hospitals, and preserve culture.

Economic Foundations The Ugbo people engage in farming, trade, and are now also trying to enter the education and healthcare sectors. The good land helps them grow yams, cassava, maize, and palm produce. Yam has a special meaning, and they celebrate it with the Iri Ji festival, where they praise harvest and ancestors.

They have a market where they buy and sell items such as food, handicrafts, and animals. Before, they used the river to carry palm produce and other goods to far places. Today, Ugbo is growing small, small. They have two secondary schools, one campus of the Federal College of Fisheries and Marine Technology, and a police secondary school that they built. They also have primary schools and a computer centre.

Concerning the hospital, they have health centres in each community, and the one for Ngene Ugbo works with UNTH. But if the person needs serious treatment, they would have to travel to Enugu or Awgu.

There is still an issue, though, such as bad roads, no lights, and a lot of young people moving to the city. Traditional handwork, such as pottery and weaving, started to fade. The government is trying to develop roads and tourism projects to boost the economy. A particular place that can be of help is the Ululo water area, which is set to become a park, fishing school, resort, and water sports center.

Cultural contributions Ugbo culture is a very strong one. They have festivals, masquerades, dances, and a strong respect for visitors. Despite Christianity having reduced some traditional things, Ugbo still hold their culture tight.



Aju Ugbo festival

Festivals and Rituals Iri Ji Ohu is their big yam festival. They always pray, cook yams, and dance. Another festival, Aju or Iwa Ekwa, happens every three years, where young boys and girls enter adulthood with dance and ritual.

Olili Anu Ogulugu is a major festival for their main god, Anu Ogulugu, but it has been reduced due to Christianity. Churches like Emmanuel Anglican (191, St. Anthony catholic (1993), and St. Bridget catholic (1935) are where they celebrate Christmas and easter now

Another festival, Iwa-Akwa, occurs every three years, and many communities in Enugu and Imo participate in it. Its significance is that someone has become a MAN, with plenty of dance, ritual and enjoyment.

Masquerade and dances Masquerading and dancing in Ugbo is a serious matter. Ogba Agu in Ugbo-Okbala, Okobolo, and women's dance groups perform. They use the Ogene and Ekwe drums. Festivals

like Ogbako Mmanwu attract many people to watch masquerades that hold their meaning and power.

Hospitality and community values. Ugbo people know how to welcome visitors. Once you arrive, they would present food like ofe oha, ukwa, and palm wine. Places like Awgu Civic Centre (Ugbonabor), Ugbo Dam Resort, and Toskana Bar (Ugbo Okpala) are great for resting and eating. They believe in the truth, “Eziokwu by ndu,” meaning that truth is life, and they show great respect for their elders.

Artistic Traditions Before, they did pottery, weaving, and carving. Even Mbari art, which uses clay and wood to create images, has been around for a long time, but Christianity and modern life have reduced its presence. Currently, people are trying to revive it with the help of cultural groups and the African Leadership Library and Museum project.

Ugbo in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras. When the British were ruling, they joined the Igbo in the Southern Nigeria Protectorate. Missionaries brought to the school and the church. And some Ugbo people started having knowledge that helped Nigeria gain independence. Ugbo helped produce palm products also.

During the Biafra war in (1967_1970), Ugbo suffered but didn't really fight for Enugu city. After the war, they rebuilt with the help of the community and the government.

Since Enugu State was established in 1991, Ugbo has benefited from state projects, but it still faces issues like poor roads and a lack of electricity.

Ugbo today: challenges and opportunities. Presently, Ugbo has a better culture, but development is slow. Bad road, no job, and the youths are running to the town. Some festivals, like Olili Anu ogulugu, have been reduced due to the church and modern way of life.

But Ugbo's future is bright. The Ululo Water Project can bring tourists

and jobs. The African Leadership Library and Museum would help show the Igbos' leadership history and bring books to people. The School and health centre help the community despite a good hospital still being very far away. Community groups like Ugbo Development Union are pushing for groups that support people who live abroad.

Ugbo is one of the places that shows the real Igbo story. From ancient times to the present, the people are strong, they have a great knowledge of the community, and they take pride in their roots. Festivals, dance, and strong values, Ugbo culture cannot die. If they protect their past and use their blessings very well, Ugbo would stand strong. As an Igbo proverb says, "a person who knows where he is coming from cannot get lost."

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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.



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