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CULTURAL HERITAGE

## Ada Nshi and Okpala Nshi: *The Role Nri traveling Priests played in Building Anioma's Ritual and Cultural Practices*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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**ADA NSHI AND OKPALA NSHI**

# Ada Nshi and Okpala Nshi: The Role Nri traveling Priests played in Building Anioma's Ritual and Cultural Practices

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Ndi Anioma, like other Igbo groups, have long kept deep cultural and spiritual ties to Nri, an ancient aristocratic and theocratic kingdom dated from 9th century.

An important part of the connection was made possible by male and female ritual specialists of Nri, Okpala nshi (male priest) and Ada nshi (female priestess).

Eze Nri sent them to travel accros every community that could listen and understand them, to spread the theocratic and aristocratic system of life and governance of Nri, he instructed the communités to do things the way it's done in Nri kingdom.

He told them to take Eze Nze'Ozo titles, this stands as a vindication of holiness and sign of justice, it was not only a manifestation of someone's afo ojuju, but the importance of Ozo lies in the portraying of holiness and justice. The priests also asked them to observe the taboos.

The priests were instructed to hand the ofo and olo to every Igbo titled chief.

The role played by these itinerant priests, helped in building the spiritual, cultural and governmental practices of ndi Anioma there by reinforcing the influence of Nri in their culture.

The priests and Priestesses represented the spiritual authority of Nri, not only did they meditate between the people and the divine but they also conducted rituals for them.

One of the things they helped to keep its importance was the iwa ji (new yam festival) alongside other rites related to agricultural process.

The priests would most times carry out rituals that called for god's favor and big harvests, reflecting the belief of the crop as a gift from Chukwu (The Great Creator) in accordance with Nri religion.

The priests also came with (ogwu-ji) the tradition of yam medicine which guarantees good harvests and soil fertility.

The role of Ada Nshi and Okpala Nshi in Anioma areas underscores the deep spiritual ties between Nri and Anioma.

Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1981). An Igbo civilization: Nri kingdom & hegemony.

Ohadike, D. C. (1994a). Anioma: A social history of the western igbo people. Ohio University 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.



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