



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Igu Aro:

The Sacred Proclamation of the Igbo Lunar Year from Nri

By Chukwunwike Ossai

Ozikoro.com · Cultural Heritage · 3 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
IGU ARO

Igu Aro: The Sacred Proclamation of the Igbo Lunar Year from Nri

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com

Igu Aro is a significant tradition practiced yearly by the Igbo people in Nri, located in Anaocha LGA, Anambra State, Nigeria. This ceremony marks the start of the Igbo traditional New Year and the beginning of the farming season. It holds deep cultural importance, connecting the Igbo people to their ancestors, present lives, and future.



Eze Nri Tabansi Udene Nrijofo II. reigned from 1938 to 1979

The Sacred City of Nri: The Ancestral Homeland of Nri

Founded around 900 AD, Nri remains the spiritual heartland of the Igbo people. Most Igbo communities trace their origins back to Nri to prove their authentic Igbo heritage.

In his book “The Lower Niger and Its Tribes”, British anthropologist Major Arthur Glyn Leonard wrote: “The lineage of Nri is the lineage of gods; through it, all Igbo spirits pass into the spirit world after death.” This highlights Nri’s sacred role in Igbo spirituality.

The Igbo Lunar Calendar: Structure and Significance

The Igbo Lunar Calendar follows the cycles of the moon. It has thirteen months, each lasting 28 days, plus one extra day, totaling a full year.

Each month consists of seven Igbo weeks (Izu Asaa), with each week containing four sacred market days: Eke, Oye, Afo, and Nkwo. These days are more than just markets—they represent spiritual forces (alusi) with shrines in Nri. The Eze Nri (king of Nri) sent priests across Igboland to establish and bless these markets.

Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the Igbo New Year begins in February, similar to lunar-based calendars in China, Korea, Israel, and other cultures.

The Role of Eze Nri: Guardian of Igbo Tradition

Only the Eze Nri has the authority to announce the New Year and proclaim the Igbo Lunar Calendar. As the custodian of Igbo culture, he holds the Ofo Ndigbo, a sacred staff symbolizing authority.

During Igu Aro, the Eze Nri predicts the year’s weather, farming conditions, and major events. According to legend, the first Eze Nri, Ifikuanim, introduced crops like yam (ji) and cocoyam (ede) to the Igbo. To honor Chukwu (God), he sacrificed his first son, and yams sprouted from the son’s grave. This act, known as Ifejioku (the yam deity), is central to the Nri Origin Myth.

The Igu Aro Ceremony: Rituals and Celebrations

Igu Aro is a spiritual and communal event. The Eze Nri distributes yam seedlings to community leaders, instructing them: “Go, plant, feed your family and your people.” This officially opens the farming season.

In 2008, the 1009th Igu Aro was held on February 16 at the Eze Nri Palace under His Majesty, Eze Nri Obidiegwu Onyesoh, MFR, JP, Nri-Enwelana II. Igbo people worldwide returned to Nri to honor their heritage.

Traditional dances
Wrestling matches between age groups (ogbo)
Cultural displays of Igbo art, crafts, and history

The entire city comes alive with joy and unity during this time.

The Farming Calendar: Seasons and Festivals

After Igu Aro, the months of Onwa Abuo (March), Onwa Ato (April), and Onwa Ano (May) are dedicated to farming. No major festivals occur during this period, as focus shifts to planting.

In May–June (Onwa Agwu), the next major festival begins, featuring Agwu masquerades.



Igu Aro festival, Enugu Ukwu- OU travels and tours

Igu Aro is not just an ancient ritual—it is a vibrant heritage that embodies Igbo identity, resilience, and pride. Even in a changing world, it reminds the Igbo of their roots, values, and shared destiny.

As Igbo communities thrive globally, Igu Aro remains a time to reconnect, celebrate unity, and honor their ancestors.

May the spirit of Igu Aro endure, keeping Igbo culture alive for generations!

- Leonard, A. G. (1906). *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes*. Macmillan and Co.
- Onwuejeogwu, M. A. (1981). *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony*. *Ethnographica*.
- Eze Nri Obidiegwu Onyesoh. (2008). Speech delivered during the 1009th Igu Aro Festival, Nri Palace, Anambra State.
- Nri Museum Archives – Anaocha Local Government Area, Anambra State.
- Nwosu, P. (2010). *The Igbo Calendar and Its Cultural Relevance*. *Nigerian Cultural Review Journal*.
- Ubah, C. N. (1982). “The Institution of the Eze Nri: A Study in Igbo

Kingship.” Journal of African Studies, Vol. 9(3).

- Interviews with Palace Historians and Elders of Nri Community (2023).

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
