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ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Lejja Sacred site, Nsukka, Enugu

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

Onu Oshuru (lit. Oshuru Bottomless Pit), one of several structures found at the Lejja communal sacred solar plaza, Nsukka. Utu-Udele-Igwe, a solar-tree deity of justice in this locale is said to rise from the pit each day. Image source: Acholonu and Davis (2013).

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The Lejja sacred site, located in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. This site, including the Onu Oshuru (Oshuru Bottomless Pit), is an ancient structure believed to be tied to spiritual and cultural practices among the Igbo people. According to local lore, the deity Utu-Udele-Igwe, associated with justice and cosmic order, is said to rise from the pit each day. The image reveals some of the stone formations typical of the Lejja solar plaza, a significant archaeological and spiritual location thought to date back to early iron smelting activities and religious rituals.



Odegwoo, the conical fertility mound of Lejja community Nsukka can be sighted in the inset of the image above.

The Lejja archaeological site in Nsukka is dated to approximately 2,000–3,000 BCE, making it one of the oldest known sites of early

human civilization in West Africa. The site contains remnants of ancient iron-smelting furnaces and slag deposits, indicating advanced metallurgical practices. Radiocarbon dating of materials from Lejja suggests that iron smelting activities there could have begun as early as 2000 BCE.

Lejja is particularly significant for the evidence it provides of early technological development, predating the Nok culture and other West African iron-working sites. Researchers have also tied the site to the broader history of Igbo culture and religious practices, which incorporate stone formations like the ones seen here.

This early date places Lejja among the oldest ironworking centers in the world. This place ties into Igbo history, as Lejja is one of the oldest known sites of human civilization in West Africa.

Leopards of the Magical Dawn Science and the Cosmological Foundations of Igbo Culture. – Nze Chukwukadibia E. Nwafor.

They Lived Before Adam: Prehistoric Origins of the Igbo – Catherine Acholonu

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuka Odiike

I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explores ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



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