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Standing strong in midst of Influence: *How Anioma people Maintained their Identity notwithstanding Igala Cultural Interplay*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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FEATURE
IMAGE

A Group of Igbo Warriors

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Anioma people are distinct subgroup of the Igbo tribe, located in western part of Niger River, the people's way of life has been a great display of cultural interplay. Over hundreds of years, different external kingdoms have exercised influence, especially the Igala and Benin kingdoms.

These kingdoms in the past left marks in some of the people's culture. But despite these influences from Igala and Benin kingdoms, the people of Anioma has remained resilient in maintaining their core Igbo identity and language.

In time past, some communities in Anioma, like Illah, Umuolu, and Onya, derived few cultural practices from the Igala people. A cultural practice like the mmo society in Illah, where some Igala traditions played key roles.

Igala mask is being used, and also the presence of Igala-speaking people living in midst of these communities reflects a long-term togetherness with neighbors living Northside.

Among the influence of Igala in Anioma was the installation process of Obi Illah, emissaries were once sent to the Attah of Igala for ceremonial guidance of this tradition. Although looking back since when these influence from Igala was dominant, the Igbo roots and

language of the community has not changed.

The first people to settle in Illah were Nri people from valley of Anambra, this is why the Umunri title systems like Nkpalo, Ichie continued in Illah, despite influence from the Igala group, showing that the presence of distinct ethnic groups playing part in shaping the leadership structure of the people, could not in anyway erase the foundational roles that Igbo traditions has played in the people's life.

Although these external influences on Anioma from Igala was present only in some communities along Niger River, like Aboh, Okpai, and Illah, these places were once under little control by Attah Igala, most especially during the time of Onojo Oboni.

However, these communities in Anioma still retained their old language, social structures, and customs.

The intermarriage connections in some traditions with Igala and alliances like Illah and Asaba connection with Attah Igala highlights the people's strong rooted culture, where external pressures were still allowed to coexist with their existing heritage.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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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