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The Sacred Guardian of Okposi: *The Legend of Aka, the Ancestral Snake*

By Chuka Odike

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THE SACRED GUARDIAN OF OKPOSI

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By Chuka Odiwe · Religion and Spirituality · Ozikoro.com

Long before the arrival of Christianity and the dominance of modern religious beliefs, the people of Okposi in Ohaozara LGA, Ebonyi State, held deep reverence for a sacred guardian, the Aka snake. This vibrant green, non-venomous serpent was more than just an ordinary creature; it was believed to embody the spirits of the ancestors, serving as a protector and harbinger of blessings to the people of Okposi.

Aka was known to make its presence felt during the most significant moments of life, births and burials. Whenever a newborn arrived home or a burial ceremony was about to take place, Aka would mysteriously find its way to the location. Whether slithering across the floor, coiling on the ceiling, or lingering near the baby, its silent presence was a sign of ancestral approval and protection. One unmistakable sign of Aka's visit was the delicate skin it shed and left behind, a symbolic blessing for the household.

In Okposi, killing Aka was unthinkable. To do so was a grave taboo that required a detailed burial ceremony, complete with offerings to appease the gods and elders. The punishment for harming the revered serpent was severe, as it was seen as an affront to the spirits of the land.

Aka was also averse to being captured by modern technology. Tales abound of foreign missionaries and white explorers who sought to document the sacred snake through photographs, only to find their efforts futile. No matter how many times they clicked their cameras,

the images always came out blank, reinforcing the snake's mystical status.

Palm and mango trees were sacred to Aka, and every compound in Okposi had at least one of these trees, ensuring a space for their ancestral guardian to dwell. The sight of Aka after a bountiful harvest or upon returning from the farm was considered an omen of prosperity, an assurance of flourishing trade and an even richer harvest in the future.

Though modern influences have overshadowed many traditional beliefs, the legend of Aka remains deeply woven into the fabric of Okposi culture. It is a reminder of the ancestral bond, the unseen forces that watch over the land, and the reverence the people continue to hold for their roots.

Folklore Narration from Ochie Victor, 2025.

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 explore 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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