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The Spiritual and Economic Importance of Yam Crops in Anioma: *A Connection to Influence of Nri kingdom*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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Yam holds an important and general position among Anioma people, aside being a staple food, it's also a vital representation of spirituality, economic power, and status. This crucial traditional practice with yams mirrors the traditional practice from Nri kingdom, an ancient Igbo kingdom which played crucial role as the cultural...

Yam holds an important and general position among Anioma people, aside being a staple food, it's also a vital representation of spirituality, economic power, and status.

This crucial traditional practice with yams mirrors the traditional practice from Nri kingdom, an ancient Igbo kingdom which played crucial role as the cultural and spiritual source of most Igbo practices till date.

In Anioma communities, yams were regarded as the master of crops. The cultivating of this crop defined the calendar of Agriculture, and the success of it completes the prosperity level of the communities.

In Anioma, men got most of their social status from their efforts to successfully cultivate this crop, and yam was also important to the area's trade and monetary systems.

This concentration on yam crop mirrors the spiritual importance that Nri tradition placed on it.

In the traditional folklore of Nri, earliest set of yams was given to the



people by the great creator (Chukwu) and Eze Nri the first was chosen to share them.

The Iwa ji (yam festival) is a ritual that exalted the gods for a bountiful harvest and the ritual marks the beginning of new planting season.

Ilei jioku (the yam cult) was also created accros Anioma and other Igbo communities where Nri is accounted to be the source of (ogwu-ji) the sacred medicine of yam.

Every season, they would journey to obtain this medicine from Nri and it's regarded to ensure bountiful harvest and soil fertility,

Many people of Anioma in this present day may not remember these specific traditions of Nri, however elders most times speak of "Children of Nri"(okpala Nshi and ada Nshi),priests and priestesses who traveled accros Igbo land, they played crucial roles in spreading the spiritual authority of Nri across Anioma and other parts of Igbo land.

These messengers helped in shaping the festivals and rituals that surrounded the yam cultivation in Anioma and beyond,reinforcing the spiritual influence of Nri across all Igbo regions.

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

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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