

# THE LEGEND OF A NOBLE TOWN



EDEH CHRISTOPHER ONYEMA



# Foreword

**L**ife can neither be complete nor delightful without history. One of the essential ingredients or what I call character retention in every given society is for the citizenry to understand their origin and culture. These help to retain the unique nature of their cultural heritage and highlight those who in one way or the other contributed to have made things happen, for there is no history without a people. History gives direction and acts as a Catalyst for people to learn and come to a level of knowledge and I strongly believe that this piece succinctly put together is no difference.

Few other people had tried in the past to put Nara Unateze in the torch light of history but none has been as in-depth as this artistic work as the writer being an erudite history Scholar has clearly demonstrated in this book through research.

Therefore, without any reservation, I strongly recommend this book not only to Nara indigenes but to all lovers of history and also for research purposes. The major character here is Eze Nathaniel Ogbu (The



# FOREWORD

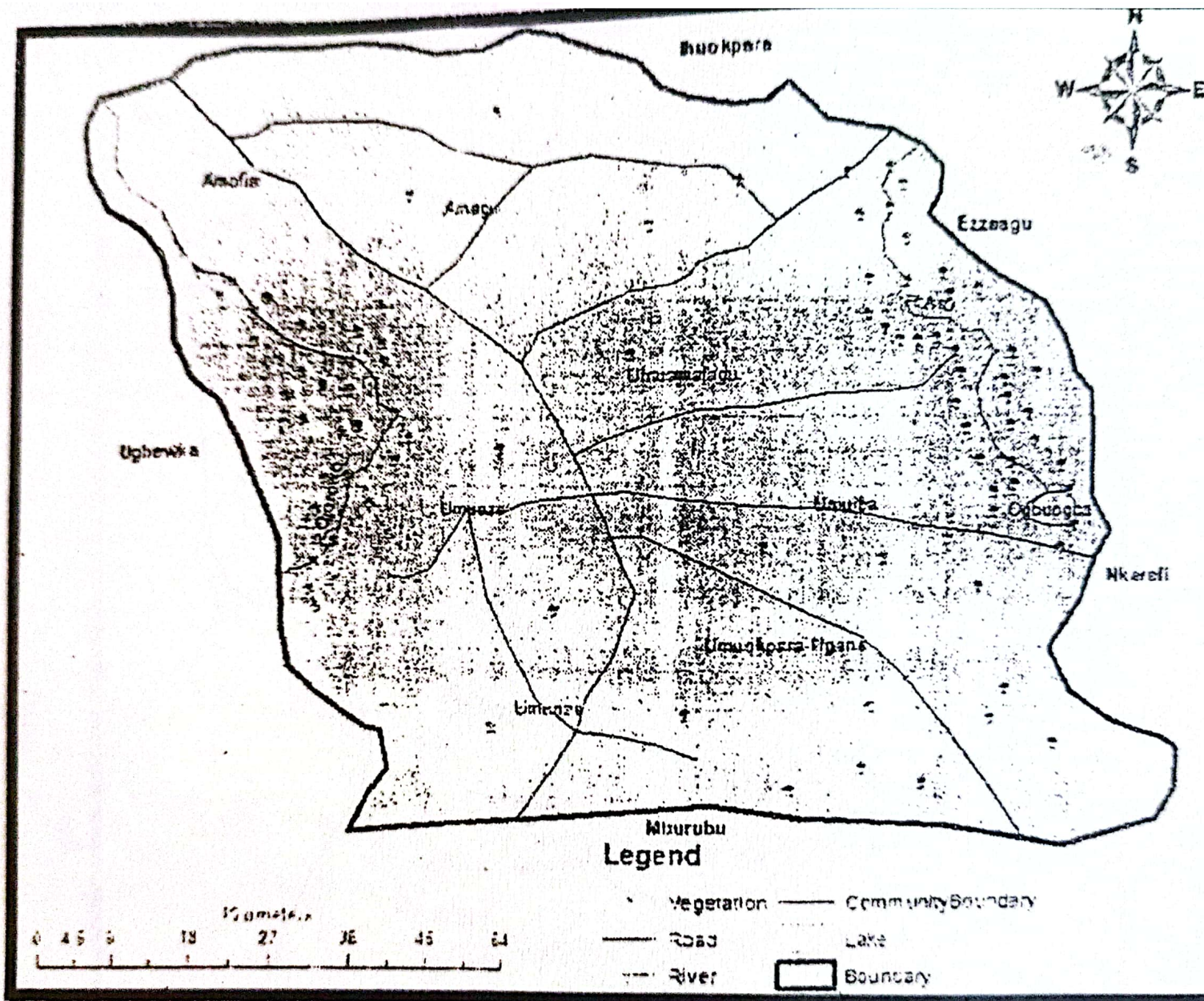
Odenigbo I of Nara- Unateze).

On another note, I vehemently recommend that every family in Nara should as a matter of importance makes sure they secure at least a copy of this book. It is always good to be in touch with one's origin and cultural heritage.

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**A sketch map of Nara Unateze, showing the seven clans.**



# Chapter Three

## BIOGRAPHY OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, EZE NATHAN ANYI OGBU, 1937-2013.

### BACKGROUND

**T**here exists documented accounts by historians on the lives and time of great men like **Abraham Lincon of America, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana**, etc based on their contributions and legacies. This research examines the life of a great man and a one-time ruler of Nara Unateze, His Royal Highness, Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu, Eze Odenigbo I of Nara Unateze in Nkanu East Local Government, Area of Eungu State, Nigeria, who contributed Immensely to the development and greatness of Nara Unateze.

Though he was not the first Igwe that ruled Nara, but the very contribution he made during his life time made him outstanding. In writing the biography of Eze Nathan, the researcher looked at his background, his early life, his ascendance to the throne, his achievements, as well as the challenges he faced as he piloted the affairs of the community.

### PURPOSE OF THIS WORK

The purpose of this research work is an attempt to give honour to whom honour is due by documenting the life



and times of Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu in recognition of his numerous contributions to Nara community in particular, the state and the nation in general, To expose his social, political and enterprising ingenuity that endeared him to people. It will also serve as the first attempt by a Nara indigene to put down in writing the activities of this their illustrious son.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK**

This book presents a practical guide to people of the contemporary world of a courageous man who did his best to help his people. It will also serve as a lasting and exemplary foot-print to other traditional rulers to serve their people selflessly. It will also attempt to show how much development, peace and unity can take place when a good ruler takes the mantle of leadership in a community or State. It will also serve as a good reading material to the general public as well as add to the body of existing knowledge. It will help future researchers working on similar topics.

To the best knowledge of the writer, there was no published work on the life of Eze N.A Ogbu, even his personal autobiography was not available. However, there are few unpublished materials on him by some government officials, business colleagues, relative and other associates but none of these publications has been



documented as a book in any standard.

However, related literatures exist written by great authors, giving credence to the life and time of Eze Nathan Ogbu in collaboration with this work.

There were many interesting factors in the life of Eze ogbu that need to be mentioned because according to Brian Brown in his work, scratch the sky "There is no beauty in a song unsung"

He was a man who determined to succeed in life despite his poor economic and educational background. He did not see it as a reason to fail in life. As Nwabude asserted in his book "Glory for sale" that many people had blamed failure in life on their place of birth, saying they were born to 'a poor family' and that has been the reason for their failure in life. They blame God, their parents, and everyone around them. However, they seem not to find any fault with themselves; he advised that "**success requires decision, disciplining oneself until it become a part of the person**" This had been the secret of success of Eze N.A. ogbu till death

Val Obienyem in his work, Ojukwu the last patriot, said about him that, "it is impossible to divorce a man from his background to study him like a virus in isolation without taking into account the subtle interplay of parentage,



culture, traditions and heritage. These factors help to shape a man's outlook and his concept of reality”.

Niccolo Machiavelle in his book the Prince said that, man nearly always follow the tracks made by others and proceed in their affairs by imitation even though they cannot entirely keep to the tracks or emulate the prowess of their models. This has been the situation now as Eze Nathan ogbu had set a high standard of leadership in Nara Unateze community that may not be so easy for his successors to attain to. But Niccolo Machiavelle still advised, **“So a prudent man must always follow in the footsteps of great men and imitate those who have been outstanding”**.

Eze Odenigbo was an accomplished leader, a great achiever and the champion of his time. He achieved much in life as an individual and as a traditional ruler. This is true that he cannot be forgotten easily: That is why David Illuebe, asserted in his work Immortal words of Notable Mortal, that, **“When a man plays his part well, his image looms very long after death. His deed like sumptuous diet, are eaten, and digested and they are sought after again”**. Eze Odenigbo achieved much in life because of the adversity he first passed through in life as rightly reflected by Napoleon Hill in his work, How to sell your way through life, that **“Before opportunity crowns a man with a great**



**success, it usually test him out through adversity to see what set of mettle he is made”** He derives happiness in making others happy as general Olusegun Obasanjo stated in an address that, **“A man pursuing happiness exclusively may never find it and may die frustrated but a man who is concerned with the happiness of the society in which he lives, has greater chance of finding happiness because it will be contradictory and absurd to be unhappy in a happy society”**. Added to his joy always is his family and children. **“The joy of every couple is to have children, who in future, would take care of them when they get old”** Nnamdi Chukujindu

As Nnamdi and Emmanuel rightly stated in their work Nnewi in history 1924-2004. **“He is a very kind man, very compassionate and the good adjectives you know, use it to qualify him. When you talk of philanthropy, some people do it because they have money, He does it because he feels somebody needs this and I am in a position to do it, he just does it even if it is the last money he has”** these credible statements rightly described the man Eze Nthan Ogbu

Regrettably, however, this legend died on 14th Dec. 2013, as it is appointed to all living because according to Austine Augustus .in his writing: Fear secret Revealed to All, **“In life no one can run from death, and there is nothing fearful**



***about it, it is an inescapable exit point of mortality”.***

## **THE MAN NATHAN OGBU, BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE**

In the words of Val Obienyem, ***“It is impossible to divorce a man from his background, to study him like a virus in isolation without taking into account the subtle interplay of parentage, culture, tradition and heritage. These factors help to shape a man's outlook and his concept of reality. What type of father did he have? What sort of people did he grow among? Was his childhood idyllic? What were his early likes and dislikes? What informed his early choices?”*** In the light of the above statement, the author will at this juncture give account of the early life of the Man Nathan Anyi Ogbu.

According to Elder Johnson Ogbonna, Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu, the Eze Odinigbo I of Nara Unateze was born on 13th May 1937 into Umu-Ogbu Nwede family of the Umuekwesuaryi larger family. The Father was Ogbunwanyi Ogbu-nwede and the Mother was Ogo nwede Ogbu. Both Parents were from Nara in the present day Nkanu East Local Govt. Area of Enugu State.

His Highness Nathan Ogbu was the last of the four Children of his Parents (two males and two females) whose



only means of lively-hood like many others of their folks then was subsistent farming. In due time, he joined the Parents in the farm work.

According to Chief Okoro Egbo, (now late) who is nephew to Eze Nathan Ogbu, the father died early and the mother could not afford sending him to school if not for Col. Rufus, a member of their family, who joined the British army to fight in the World War II. After the War Rufus returned home and enrolled Eze Nathan and his Siblings into School. After the first one year in Standard (Primary) School, Col Rufus could not continue funding their education because the military no longer pay him after the war. Then the father of Chief Okoro Egbo, Mr Egbonwonu Nweze, sent him back to School. He was enrolled into Methodist Primary School, Nara, which is today known as Central School Nara. Later he continued at Central School Agbani where he stopped at Standard four. Though his Parents were financially poor, his thirst for education refused to be quenched, until he had by dint of personal hard-work taken tuition courses for G.C.E ordinary level, preparatory for admission into the University of Buckingham United Kingdom, where he intended to study either Political Science, Economics or Law. He could not achieve this as marriage and arrival of children set in.



## **FAMILY LIFE AND PERIOD OF APPRENTICESHIP**

According to Chief Sunday Ngene, Eze Odenigbo I of Nara, married to Helen, daughter of Anyionwuta, of Umu Agbala Family in Obinagu Etiti Nara. The father-in-law had died earlier before Odenigbo met Helen in Asaba where she was living with the mother Mrs. Ogo Nwede Anyi. The marriage was blessed with six children, three boys and three girls! The names of the children are; Ifeanyi, Brown, Adaku, Ogo, Ginika and Ogbanyi, who later died in USA in 2001. These children are all doing well in their various fields of endeavour and the daughters have all happily married after their academic carriers.

Much later, in the mid 80's Igwe Nathan Ogbu married the second wife from Adazi Nnukwu. The second wife bore two daughters for him. Ori and Dr. Uzo. Igwe Ogbu was blessed with fourteen grand children before death. Igwe Ogbu was known among his family members as a man who cannot compromise neatness both on the things he ate and on the clothes he put on. He was a loving and caring father who would do everything to keep his family members happy. He cared and loved the family that the wives used to call him friend. In the words of the first wife; ***"I had to have the best of everything be it clothes, Jewelry, Cars before everyone else. He gave me the world. He showed me the world. He made me a queen; His Queen"***. As Nnamdi & Emmanuel rightly put it in their work Nnewi in



BIOGRAPHY OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, EZE NATHAN ANYI OGBU (1937 - 2013)

History' He believed that a proper foundation must be laid for an individual to enable the person understand that life involves survival of the fittest. Igwe Ogbu gave maximum academic training to the children both the males and females to prepare them for success in life as he believed that knowledge is power.



Nathan Anyi Ogbu with the first wife Helen.



## **PERIOD OF APPRENTICESHIP**

According to Deacon Godwin Nwoye, after Nathan Ogbu dropped from School after his Standard four, one of his kinsmen, Anyi Onovo Anyi took him with the Senior brother Edenwa Ogbu. They lived together with the man and were helping him in his farm work. After a while, when the thought of business got into him, he went to serve Mr. Benedith Chukwu, who was dealing on articles. He served him as a store keeper. According to Chief Sunday Ngene he served the man with every dedication and sincerity. Shortly, he left for Oke-Owo in Western Region of Nigeria in the present Ondo State. There he did menial jobs. Later, he returned to Nara and took some boys with him back to Oke-Owo to join him in the Igedu job. Having raised small amount of money, he borrowed some money from One Chief Ngene and one other person and started dealing on Stockfish. He later paid them back peacefully before he again left for Onitsha.



## ASCENSION TO THE THRONE OF NARA UNATEZE

**C**onsidering the Statement of Nicholo Machiavelli in his book, *The Prince* ***“All the States, all the dominion under whose authority Men have lived in the past and lived now have been and are either republic or principalities. Principalities are hereditary, with their prince's family long established as rulers, or they are new.”***

Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu was far from Royalty from birth considering that his father wasn't a king neither was it in their lineage like David of Old, no one would think he would become a king considering his background in life. But because God had predestined him, at the appointed time he manifested. In conformity to the above Statements. HRH Igwe Abel O. Nwobodo in a speech he titled ***“What I HRH Igwe Ezeudo Sir Abel O. Nwobodo know about Late His Royal Highness Igwe Eze Nathan Ogbu, said when he came out for the traditional ruler-ship of Nara Clan, some felt that he was too young. I gave him optimum support although he was younger than myself. I was then a Civil Servant. I stressed that God configured him for the position of a ruler.”*** Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu was not the first Igwe that Nara had. Chief Edeanyi of the pre-Colonial era, and ***Ivurube*** Edeanyi Edeh



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had ruled the town.

According to Chief Sunday Nwodo Ngene, when Eze Nathan Ogbu started being successful in business he used to grade the road linking Nara from Agbani which was then untarred, with Caterpillar single handedly for many years. Therefore, when the Community wanted to appoint their next King he was the only man in the minds of many, seeing him as the man that would attract the much needed development to Nara. However, the son of immediate past King, Prince Andrew Edeh opposed to it as he wanted to be made the next Chief of the town after his father. This disagreement however did not last long, he later agreed with the unanimous choice of the vast majority.

So in 1976, the entire Nara indigenes gathered at Central School Nara and appointed him the next traditional ruler of Nara. This may be to conform with the Local Government Reform of 1976 in which both the Federal and State Governments recognized the traditional rulers. Nara therefore, wanted to appoint someone, who will represent them well and attract development to the town.



**O**n the day of coronation of Eze Nathan Ogbu, Nara hosted the kind of mammoth crowd that had not been witnessed in the history of the town. He was decorated in his chieftaincy regalia by two prominent kings of Nkanu Land; Chief Nwaede Ugbachi of Agbani and Chief Edeward Nnaji of Nike with other titled Chiefs from Nara. He was crowned the Eze Odenigbo I of Nara Unateze. Odenigbo had his first Offala in 1979.

HRH Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu, the Odenigbo I of Nara ruled the town with Cabinet members and the Nze-na-Ozo. The cabinet members and the Nze-na-Ozo were selected randomly from clans and villages based on the good behavior and high sense of intelligence and integrity found in the would be member of the cabinet. Another requirement is that a cabinet member or Nze-na-Ozo must be a titled Chief according to the traditions and customs of the community. The cabinet members were mainly the decision making organ of the throne. They help the Igwe in taking major administrative decisions concerning the town. They also ensure that the traditions and customs of the land are not trampled upon. In the other hand, the Nze-na-Ozo group was made up of men of proven integrity. Based on their position as titled men they cannot compromise the truth in any situation. Their duty included settlement of disputes and taking decisions on the punishment to be meted out on anyone that violates



## ACHIEVEMENTS/CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIETY

**A**s a song writer rightly stated *“Fading away like the stars of the morning, losing the light in the glorious sun. Thus would we pass from the earth and its toiling, only remembered by what we have done.”* H.R.H. Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu, Eze Odenigbo I of Nara-Unateze achieved much in life for which he would be remembered continually. This is because he was conscious of the biblical injunction that *“To whom much is given, much is expected”*, Luke 12:48, just as Niccolo Machiavelli said in his work *“The Prince, “A man who was made a Prince by the favour of the people must work to retain their friendship, and this is easy for him because the people ask only not to be oppressed”*. Eze Odenigbo realized that as the traditional ruler of Nara much was expected from him, so he actually worked to meet up with this challenge. Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu played his role creditably both as an individual and a traditional ruler and left footprints on the sands of time.

He achieved much in his life time for the Nara Community, the State and the entire nation at large. He was the first traditional ruler that built a traditional palace that became the centre and cynosure for international tourism East of the Niger.



According to Chief Okoro Egbo *“Eze Odenigbo facilitated the establishment and building of Boys Secondary School, Nara. On the desire of the wife for the education of the girl-child in the community, he also single-handedly built the Unateze Girls Secondary School, Nara because of the enormous value he placed on Western Education. From 1976-1980, Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu, was grading and maintaining the only road to Nara every November from ozala Four-Corners to Nkerefi and to Mburubu neighbouring communities making the road passable for indigenes of those areas.”*

Eze Nathan Ogbu made the name of Nara to be known throughout all the length and breath of the nation and even beyond. Emphasizing on this, Hon John Nwankwo Anichukwu in his tribute said, *“I remember with nostalgia the positive roles H.R.H, Eze N.A.Ogbu played to uplift the status of Nara Unateze Community and Wawa people in general in the community of Nigeria nation immediately after the Nigeria/Biafra civil war. It was by this singular effort that Nara Unateze became a household name in all the length and breathes of Igbo-land.”* In his awareness that health is wealth, Odenigbo contributed Seventy percent of the total cost of the structure known today as the Nara Rural Health Centre. According to Daily Star Newspaper report of 14th April 1976, the Centre cost over N50,000.00 and



was commissioned by the then Commissioner for Health Dr. N.I Esimai

As part of his philanthropy in the area of human resource development, Eze Odenigbo established the Ogbu Educational Foundation in 1976 for Nkanu indigenes in particular and for all others in the old Anambra State in general through which, more than fifty post-graduate students in various institutions of higher Learning benefited. Commenting on this Rtd. AIG Aloysius C. Okorie in a condolence message said "I was a member of the Committee selected to Screen beneficiaries of the Ogbu Educational Foundation in early 70's. Without that Scholarship, a good number of my generation in Nkanu would not have seen the four walls of a university.

Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu, was one of the Enugu indigenes who worked assiduously towards the actualization of the creation of Enugu State under the aegis of Enugu State Development Association (ESDA). Bar. Okey Ezea recalled this giant stride by Odenigbo in his condolence message when he said ***"He joined forces with Veteran Wawa freedom fighters such as Late His Excellency, the former Governor of old Anambra State Chief C.C Onoh, His Royal Highness Igwe Charles Abangwu, CON,(Late), Chief Barrister Enechi Onyia SAN and others who fought doggedly until the actualization of***



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*the dream Enugu State.”*

All these achievements and many more including the ones already mentioned in his social and political life were accomplished by this quintessential Eze in his life time which rated him so high among his pearls. According to Obi Nwabude in his work *Glory for Sale*, “**We don't rate people by what they started, but by what they finished or accomplished.**”

The enormous achievements, contributions of the royal father to the society cannot be over emphasized. Worthy of mention here, is that for these numerous contributions to the society, Eze Nathan Anyi Ogbu received several awards which included that of the year 2000 National award of MFR (**Member of the Federal Republic**) by the President and Commander in – Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in Abuja.

Eze Odenigbo in his generosity introduced many Nara indigenes to the business of Clearing and Forwarding, Importation and Exportation.