## IGBO STUDIES: FROM THE PLANTATIONS OF WEST INDIES TO THE FORESTLANDS

### **OF WEST AFRICA, 1766-2008**

### ΒY

### INNO UZOMA NWADIKE

Every language represents a finished product, a perfect system in the sense that each tongue is wholly adequate to all human situations. The ideas that a language can express are in some measures. dependent on the preoccupations of the society which develops it.

Hobel, D.H. (1966).

### **IN RETROSPECT**

## IGBO LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE BEFORE THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

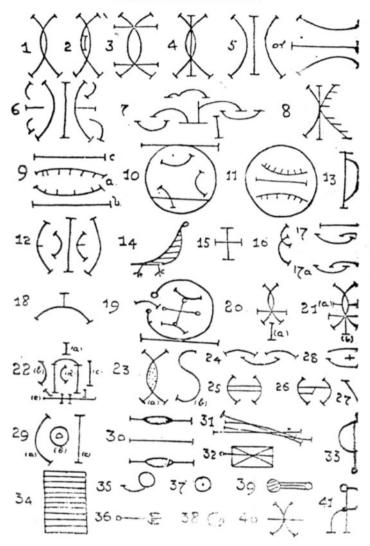
Before the advent of Christian Missions and contact with Western civilization through whose influence and efforts Igbo language was reduced into writing, Igbo language was an unwritten one. Like the language, the rich corpus of Igbo literature – folktales, myths, legends, anecdotes, riddles, drama, songs and poems were orally transmitted from generation to generation, from parent to child. Because the language, the literature and the culture of the people were one and the same, no institution was set apart for teaching them to the young and the strangers. But this does not suggest that instructions in these were not taken seriously. So serious was this that traditional education in all its ramifications in the society started from infancy. The world of lgbo folklore was opened to the young through which they gained a lot in linguistic expressions, common knowledge, honesty. industry, courage, endurance, devotion to duty, industry, courage, endurance, devotion to duty, philanthropy, respect, truthfulness, common rules and the established etiquette, and the entirety of good morals of lgbo society. They were taught the literature, history, geography, civics of their communities through stories, songs and dances, myths and legends end contact with the environment. They were taught every lesson in the society in practical terms. They were encouraged to observe, explore and interpret their local environment by knowing the names and species of plants, mammals, reptiles, birds, fishes, insects, as well as the description of appropriate periods and seasons, and the forecasting of the weather.

Some aspects of education in Igbo language and culture came very close to the formal school system of the western world. Specific training in different spheres of life and trades such as home training, farming, blacksmithing, carving, painting, pottery, weaving, medicine etc. came under the scrupulous overseer of the appropriate The lgbo evolved sign writings like the authorities. Egyptians and the Sumerians through which they and transmitted information. For example, preserved admission into any secret society such as the Mmgnwx, Okgnkg and Ekpe required careful instruction in the script used by such a society in the language through which its secrets and rituals were put across. Apart from these esoteric writings of the societies, accounts and records were kept through the means of signs on the walls and floors of houses, the trunks of live trees and some other convenient places. The Achebe narration in Things Fall Apart where Okoye went to Unoka to collect the debt he owed him one early morning is a good example of one of such records. The most well-known of these writings was the NSIBIDI script which was greatly used by many lgbo communities of the south east and their Ibibio neighbours

of the present Cross River and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

#### **NSIBIDI CHART**

SOME NSIBIDI SIGNS



Source: E Isichei, A History of the Igbo People, pp. 36-37

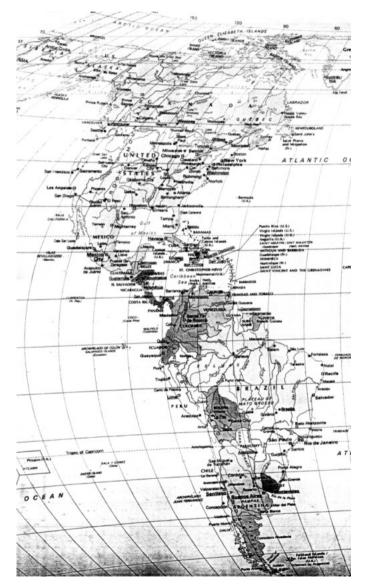
Key

- 1-2 Married love (2, with pillow)
- 3 Married love with pillows for head and feet a sign of wealth
- 4 Married love with pillow
- 5 Quarrel between husband and wife, indicated by the pillow being between them
- 6 Violent quarrel between husband and wife
- 7 One who causes a disturbance between husband and wife
- 8 A woman with six children and husband, a pillow is between them
- 9 Two wives with their children (a), of one man (b), with the roof-tree of the house in which they live (c)
- 10 A house (a) in which are three women and a man. The dots have no meaning
- 11 Two women with many children in the house with their husband
- 12 Two women on each side of a house. One on each side has a child
- 13 A woman with child (general sign)
- 14 The same; if a man writes this sign on the ground, it means that his own wife is with child
- 15 Palaver, the general term, by no means confined to marriage palavers
- 16 A woman who does not want her husband any more
- 17 A woman who wishes to put away her husband
- 17a Embracing? (unconfirmed interpretation)
- 18 A harlot
- 19 Two women who live in the same house have palaver every time they meet. A third woman is entering by the door

- 20 A man (a) who comes to a woman who has a husband and asks her to live with him
- 21 (a), (b), and (c) are three men who sought the same married woman, and quarreled because of her
- (a) is a man who committed adultery with a woman (b), who now lives apart from her husband (c). The guilty man has to pay compensation to the woman's family and her husband. (d) is the money paid, (e) are the parties to whom the money was paid.
- 23 A man and a woman were 'friends'. The man wished to leave her, but she would not agree. One day he wrote this sign all over her house, and took his departure. (a)

## IGBO STUDIES IN THE WEST INDIES AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MAP SHOWING WEST INDIES AND USA

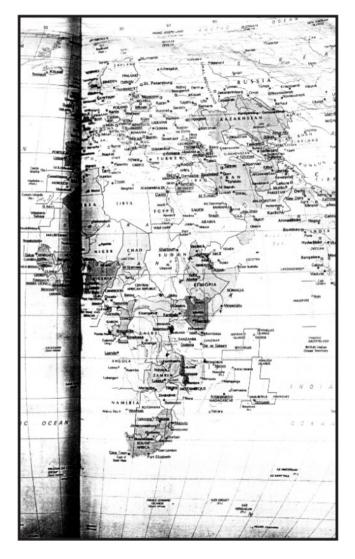


If the slave trade was of any advantage at all, it was in connection with the writing down of lgbo language for the first time in faraway West Indies and Pennsylvania in USA. In 1766/67. Rev. G.C.A. It was really accidental. Oldendorp, a German Pastor of the Moravian Brethren visited the West Indies to collect materials for a history of the Caribbean Mission of the Brethren. He became interested in the slave population he encountered, and wrote at length about their African origins and languages. From the lgbo slaves, Oldendorp collected some numerals and thirteen nouns in lgbo. Those represented the earliest information in print. He did not only collect these vocabularies, he also provided two sentences in Igbo. He later visited Pennsylvania, USA, where he met some lgbo and others from other ethnic groups whom he interviewed about their origins and languages.

Oldendorp's vocabulary collections could be said to have been motivated by sheer interest since nothing very significant was done with them after their publication in Germany in 1777, but there was no doubt that they threw little light on the geography of the Delta region and anthropological information on the Igbo.

### **IGBO STUDIES IN WEST AFRICA**

### MAP OF WEST AFRICA



From the little beginning of Igbo Studies in the West Indies and the USA, our attention is turned to the forestlands of West Africa where such studies flowered and blossomed into an enviable subject of study. The study is broken into periods or epochs as we shall see shortly.

## 1. The Freetown/Sierra Leone Studies Period (1828-1857)

The Freetown Studies of Igbo covered a period of about 30 years, from 1828 when the first wordlist in Igbo appeared in Freetown to 1857 when such studies shifted to Onitsha in Igboland. It all happened during the Niger Expeditions. Having liberated the slaves in its territories, the British Government founded Freetown in Sierra Leone in 1787 as a home for the liberated Africans. Having been converted to Christianity, the Christian missionaries accompanied these liberated Africans to their new home to minister unto them lest they relapsed into traditional worship. During this period, various attempts were made by different people and organizations in Sierra Leone, Overseas, Fernanda Po, Cameroons or Igbo homeland to put lgbo in print. The greatest achievement of this era was the establishment of in 1832 an Igbo girls' primary school in Charlotte village by Mrs Hannah Kilham of the

Quaker Mission. The version of Igbo used during this period was Isuama/Isoama, an esperanto - the brand of Igbo fashioned out and used by the emancipated Igbo slaves in Freetown. It was this Freetown lobo that Rev. J.F. Schon and Rev. Samuel Adjai Crowther (all of the CMS) mastered so well that gave the former the impetus to address the Obi of Aboh and his citizens in Igbo in 1841 but which turned out to be the first major tragedy that the voung study experienced. The Obi had to interrupt the address because Schon's lgbo was not understood by the Igbo at home. Here, the humiliated and dismayed Schon abandoned lgbo studies to its fate, and turned his full attention to Hausa, a language he gave so much to academically. It will be remembered that Schon collected the greatest number of wordlist in Igbo - 1600 words, which, if they were published, could have been the first labo dictionary by 1840.

#### 2. Onitsha/Isuama Studies Period (1857-1900)

In 1857, the seat of Igbo studies shifted to Onitsha, in Igboland, when the CMS on the Niger was founded. To prepare for the Onitsha Mission and Igbo education, Crowther, the head of the Mission with the help of Simon Jonas, a liberated Igbo grandchild, wrote the first ever book in a lower-Niger-Benue language. This was the **Isoama – Ibo Primer** in 1857. This was a toy 17-page book of much significance which Emenyonu (1978) describes in the following words:

The Primer was more than a linguistic text. It also formed the basis of labo written The literature. extracts it contained were the first literary creations in Igbo language. With it. schools began under private shadv trees. in dwellings and other improvised 'school room'. It served the purpose of introducing reading and writing to the lgbo and remained the major text book for several decades.

Having founded the Onitsha Mission on the Niger, Crowther left its administration in the hands of Rev. J.C. Taylor, a Sierra Leonean Igbo. With his fellow Igbo Sierra Leoneans, the mission moved forward in achievements – founding schools and putting materials into print. Over 50 works were produced consisting of translations, tracts, sermons, primers, catechisms, hymns, dictionaries, grammar. The version of Igbo was still Isuama. The Isuama studies crumbled when it did because of the following reasons:

(a) The exit of Taylor, the engine power house of the mission, in 1871.

(b) The death of Crowther, the spirit and founder of the mission in 1891.

(c) The disastrous fire of 1867 which engulfed the entire mission and the loss of many academic and church materials.

(d) The use of Isuama dialect which was only used in the school and church premises.

(e) The attitude of Igbo people who preferred English to their mother-tongue which can best be appreciated in the words of Hair (1967):

> the Ibo experienced . . . an upsurge of interest in literacy but it was not a genuine and interest continuing in VERNACULAR literacy. Ibo children, having been taught to read vernacular primers, were hurried on by their parents to acquire, and to read English, the language of opportunity; in this way the Ibo gained a position of power in the colonial and post-colonial social and administrative order in Nigeria,

but the Ibo language was neglected ....

(f) The ill-fated British Education Ordinance of 1882 which made English language the medium of instruction in schools and discouraged the use of indigenous languages.

(g) The Sierra Leonean returnees were disappointed at the attitude of their brothers in Igbo homeland who did not want to accept and integrate them into their fold as the Yorubas did to Crowther and his fellow returnees. With the exception of a few who stayed back to form the Saro Quarters of Onitsha today, the rest returned to Freetown in frustration and disappointment.

### 3. The Onitsha/Union Igbo Period (1901-1929)

The Isuama period gave way to the Union period, a period characterized by greater and more scientific contribution to linguistic work in which many Igbo people of Igbo homeland participated actively. The period is referred to as Union Period because Union Igbo was in vogue, at least, within the Protestant circles. This time, the leadership of the mission was in the hands of European missionaries who had greater competence in linguistic dispensation.

Since some of the Isuama studies survived the demise of the Isuama period, some of the works were improved on this time. Like in the early period, the CMS was still the champion of lgbo language development, the coming of the RCM into Igboland in 1885 notwithstanding. This time, missionaries were charged with the collection of Igbo folklore. The result was that in 1927, Crowther's Isoama-Ibo Primer of 1857 was revised and enlarged to include 15 essays on secular topics, 14 short essays on Christian topics, and 18 folktales, and re-entitled: Akwxkwq Ogxgx Ibo, running into 66 pages, and was popularly called 'Agran' (green cover). In addition, the missionaries translated some extracts of the Arabian Nights, Tales From Shakespeare and Pilgrims Progress (lie Onye Otu Kraist). A Methodist, Mr. Udensi Ogan, translated Grimm's Fairy Tales and entitled it Akxkq Ifo Grimm Kqrq. These were widely used in schools for teaching pupils to read and create literature. Thus, they laid the foundation of Igbo creative writing.

The man who championed the course of the new era was Archdeacon Thomas J. Dennis, 'a noted classicist and the most prolific Igbo Language Student'. At Egbu Owerri, from 1905-1909, Dennis surrounded himself with a team of mission translators from 5 distinct dialect areas of Onitsha, Owerri, Bonny, Arochukwu and Uwana (Afikpo), producing a bible in the CMS ideal Igbo dialect – the **Union Igbo Bible**. Union Igbo was an amalgam of the above dialects. It was a sort of an esperanto because the language of that Bible is no language of any particular area or zone of Igboland. Certain constructions entered Igbo language via each of those dialects. For example, the **wo/woro** suffixes in Igbo, come from Uwana (Afikpo) and environs. **O mewo ya. O meworo m ya**. (He/she has done it for me).

With the help of the native members of the Igbo Translation Committee, Dennis produced several works in Igbo which included **Ibo Folklore**, proverbs, translation of the **Pilgrim's Progress** (used as a text for Igbo language examination by Government officials) and some catechisms. It was he who revised and enlarged Spencer's **An Elementary Grammar of the Ibo Language** which was published in 1892 during the Isuama Studies period. He had two other translations: **Union Hymnal** and **Union Reader**.

In recognition of his meritorious and arduous linguistic work in Igbo, Oxford University awarded him an

honorary Masters degree, and on his way to receive the award in 1917, he died in a shipwreck in the Irish Sea during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. His other works which he intended to get printed and published on reaching England on that trip were his Igbo Dictionary which ran into thousands of words and a translation. Dennis untimely death was the next and greatest tragedy to the cause of lgbo studies. His exit was a greater loss than those of Rev. Schon in 1841 and Rev. Taylor in 1871 respectively. His accidental death was a destruction clap of thunder on Igbo studies, for, here was a man who produced so much, and was poised to contribute more for lgbo. This was the man Prof. Chinua Achebe castigated in his 1999 Odenigbo Lecture, accusing him of destroying the lgbo language. What a misjudgment! But I, Nwadike, did not let Achebe to go free unscathed in my reply to him: "The Chinua Achebean Heresy: His 1999 Odenigbo Lecture" (2000).

During this era, two important linguistic works and culture were produced by two French Catholic Missionaries and a Government anthropologist. In 1904, A. Ganot compiled a trilingual dictionary: **English-Ibo and French Dictionary**, and in 1907, Pere C. Zappa published a bilingual dictionary of French-Ibo. Between 1913 and 1914, Northcote W. Thomas, a Government Anthropologist compiled and published a six-volume anthropological report entitled **Anthropological Report on the Ibo Speaking Peoples of Nigeria**. In 1923, an astounding work – **Akuko Ala Obosi** – the first ever historical essay in Igbo was produced by late Isaac Iwekanuno of Obosi, a work produced, not within the mission premises but in a palace. This was the Union Igbo Period.

## IGBO STUDIES AND THE BRITISH EDUCATION ORDINANCES:

There were two education ordinances that had to do with the Igbo language, nay, African languages: the 1882 Education Ordinance and the 1926 Education Ordinance. While the former was very detrimental to indigenous languages, the latter was very favourable. The 1882 one stipulated that "the subjects for teaching shall be reading and writing of English language". In effect, this meant that the teaching of Igbo and other indigenous African languages which the Voluntary Agencies had embarked on had to be stopped if they were to receive grants-in-aid from the British Government. But the Christian missions were not daunted. Grants-in-aid or no grants-in-aid, they went ahead to teach Igbo and other African languages.

The imposition of English language on the colonies by the British was a willful act, and could be substantiated by the pronouncements of some British officials. This one by Rev. Metcalfe Sunter, the first Inspector of Schools for the West African Colonies, in 1884 when he arrived Lagos for inspection, testifies:

> I regard these said languages (African) as only interesting to the comparative philologist and never likely to become of any practical use to civilization.

On another occasion he made a more provocative statement over the language issue, this time arrogantly referring to his English mother tongue as the only language capable of serving human purpose:

> The native must and will know English in spite of all wellmeaning diseased notions; it is the language of commerce and the only education worth a moment's consideration.

What was more exasperating was that the Colonial Office was partial in the said Ordinance. The languages that were to suffer this buffeting were Efik, Igbo and Yoruba (all in the South). In the North, the situation was different; there was a different policy for Hausa. Here, instruction was given in Hausa right from the beginning. From Standard Two, children were to have one vernacular and one English reading book.

This was the position in which Igbo saw itself at this period, a period that coincided with the declining position of the Isuama Studies Period. With this cold attitude from British administration, coupled with the unfavourable attitude of Igbo people towards their language, Isuama studies crumbled. But all hopes were not lost as the missionaries who were committed to the cause of Igbo language and literature did not yield to these agents of denudation.

The 1926 Education Ordinance and code which was favourable to the mother-tongue use in African education was influenced by the Phelps-Stokes Fund in its interest in Negro education when it financed two commissions to Africa in 1920. It made very impressive remarks on mother-tongue education which were contrary to the British 1882 controversial code. It said among other things:

... All peoples have inherent right to their language. It is the means of giving expression to their own personality, however primitive they may be ... No greater injustice can be committed against a people than to deprive them of their own language.

The Report of the Commission had tremendous influence on the Colonial office in London which had to reverse its retrogressive stand on the African languages. It had to set up an Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical African dependencies in 1923. In 1925, it stated thus:

> This study of the educational use of vernaculars is of primary The committee importance. suggests cooperation among with scholars. aids from governments and missionary societies, in the preparation of vernacular textbooks . . . Textbooks prepared for use in English schools should be replaced where necessary by others better adapted, the foundations and illustrations

being taken from African life and surroundings ....

With this, African languages got a boost in their use for the education of the African child.

### **IGBO ORTHOGRAPHY CONTROVERSY (1929-1961)**

The 1926 Education Ordinance and Code had immediate consequences. It led to the formation and inauguration in London of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IIALC), a body that had to promote African heritage in diverse ways. Among its achievements were the instituting of a competition among Africans for the production of their creative literature, and awarding prizes for the best essays and coming up with an orthography adapted to African languages. This was the variously called- 'Roman 'Africa Script' Catholic 'New Orthography', Orthography', 'Adams-Ward Orthography' - to replace the age-long Lepsius Orthography of 1854 with which Igbo had been written. The orthography had 8 vowels and 27 consonants - a b c deɛfg gb gh gw hijk kp kw m n ŋ nw ny o ɔ θ p r stuvwyz.

In 1929, this orthography was accepted for use in Nigeria but which caused a lot of damage in Igbo studies because, the CMS, which had a sizable literature in the old orthography, bluntly refused to accept and adopt it. This led to the Igbo Orthography Controversy that raged from 1929 to 1961, the bitterest in literary history of this planet. From 1929-1966, two orthographies – Africa Orthography and Lepsius Orthography - existed side by side in Igbo world of studies, and which set the clock back for the forward march of Igbo studies. From 1857 to now, the Igbo has used three orthographies - The Lepsius, the Africa and the Onwu. Onwu Orthography is a compromise orthography imposed on Igbo by the East Regional Government in 1961, after 17 years of search for a replacement of the former two to save the lgbo nation from The following editorial comment from a a malady. Nigerian daily, The OUTLOOK, expresses succinctly what beset Ndiigbo at that time:

> ... the Onwu Committee on Ibo Orthography has removed one more cankerworm which was eating into the life of a large proportion of the people of the

Region. It is widely known that the orthography issue was becoming a point of contention which went not only into the religious, tribal and social fabrics of our lives but also to the political and could have done harm to the economic ....

Even after the settlement in 1961, the two ousted orthographies continued to be in use until their seal in 1966 when they were finally sent to limbo.

When this orthography was in vogue, people rarely failed to spell words correctly unlike the Onwu where failure to dot or diacritic a letter that carries it, leads to. failing the spelling of a word. For example: Cea oce. Atere be ane elo. Aturu bu anu ulo. Chia ochi.

Undeniably, the controversy had very ugly consequences on Igbo language studies. (1) It limited the development of the literary language and the production of literature. (2) Publishers refused to publish in Igbo. Writing to F.C. Ogbalu during the impasse, Rev. T.T. Solaru, the Oxford University Press West African Representative had this to say: 'As Educational publishers, the OUP is interested in questions of accepted Orthography of Ibo language until now, we have had to REFRAIN from publishing in Ibo until the vexed question is (3) Worse than that, Messrs Longmans and cleared'. Green published Igbo books in the new orthography but were unable to find enough buyers because of the divided loyalties to the orthographies. (4) It scared would-beauthors in Igbo, many of whom turned to English. My interview with late Mr. Cyprain Ekwensi in 1982 testified to this assertion when he said that he sent manuscripts in Igbo to a publisher but they were returned to him because of the vexed issue. (5) The dispute created consciousness among the adherents of the Protestants and the Catholic Church.

#### THE CENTRAL IGBO STUDIES PERIOD (1929-1965)

The Central Igbo Period overlapped with the orthography period. With the failure of Union Igbo to satisfy the purpose for which it was structured, Igbo language was again at the crossroads, searching for a viable academic dialect to be adopted in the production of Igbo literature. It fell on Dr. Ward, a research English student to champion the cause of this dialect – the Central Igbo Dialect – 'a dialect that is as near as can be a consistent whole, a spoken, living language with nothing

artificial about it', spoken in the old Owerri Province and some borderline areas of Onitsha Province. With the Central Igbo and the New Orthography, Igbo studies made a very wonderful advancement. The Catholic Mission and the Methodist Mission became very active in lgbo studies. The ascendancy of the Catholic Church became very remarkable as she dished out books, both religious and secular - Mbido Onu Igbo 1, Mbido Onu Igbo II, Igbo Primer I. Jabo Primer II. Akwukwo Ogugu Series (for Standards I-III), Akwukwo Ogugu Igbo Kwenu Series (Standards 1-6), Mary Nne Jesu, Ndu Dinwenu Anyi, Oke Ehi, Katekizim Nke Okwukwe Nzuko Katolik (1941), Katekizm lgbo (1944), and some grammar books. The Methodist Mission with her base at Uzoakoli Institute. made a great effort at publications. By 1940, she had issued a primer and a series of graded readers: Okwu Igbo Nke Mbu, Nke Abua, Nke Ato, Nke Ano, and a new Primer by Mr. K. Achinivu (the father of Rev. Dr. A.K. Achinivu of Music Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka). At the Primer level, Chief S.A. Ahamba of the CMS, wrote two primers - Akwukwo Qgugu Mbu Nke Ibo, nicknamed 'Okeke Tara Ose Qiji' and Akwukwo Qgugu Abua Nke Ibo, while Mrs. A.I. Udoh of

Government School, Opobo, authored **Imu lhe Qmumu Mbu Di n'Qgugu Akwukwu** popularly called 'Kara Ada'.

The Central Igbo Studies period was the era of the emergence of Igbo creative literature when many Africans took part in IIALC's literary contest. In 1933, there were 17 entries in Igbo and Pita Nwana's **Omenuko** won the first prize, and was subsequently published that same year to become the first novel and first biography of the Igbo. Two years later, in 1935, D.N. Achara's **Ala Bingo** made its debut as the Igbo second novel. These two novels had a great impact on Igbo literature. They formed the archtypes and prototypes for other writers to emulate. With them, it was proved beyond reasonable doubt that African languages nay Igbo language, is capable of carrying the weight of the people's literature contrary to Rev. Metcalfe Sunter's heresy.

The Central Igbo Studies period was the era of the Society for the Promotion of Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) and the Ogbalu factor in Igbo education. In 1949, Mz. F.C. Ogbalu and Mz. D.C. Erinne founded the SPILC as a veritable agent for the evangelization of Igbo studies. It was also the period when African scholars were trained in language study in the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The following Igbo people attended SOAS at one time or the other: S.A. Ahamba, K. Achinivu, J.A. Dureke (1946); and from 1947 – L.A. Amadi, J.O. Iroaganachi, S.W. Chianakwalam, G.E. Igwe, Nzebunachi Oji, P.A. Nwachukwu, and E.N. Emenanjo in 1979 for his doctoral research.

The Central Igbo Studies period was the era when the Colonial Government in Nigeria introduced and piloted Adult and Mass Education programme throughout the country. The programme came up with about 23 texts in Igbo which also made their inroads into the formal school system thereby increasing the volume of Igbo books. It was also a period when British Administrative Officers into Eastern Nigeria studied lgbo at SOAS before they arrived here. They took serious and tedious examination in Igbo which was in two parts, 'Lower and Higher Ibo' and each part had three papers: Paper 1 -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours: Paper II - 2 hours: Paper III - 11/2. The third part of the examination was oral. And by 1924 and 1927, people like Captain J.N. Hill and R.F.G. Adams respectively, had passed their Language Examination. So serious was the examination that R.M. Batten, Education Officer at Uyo had to write to

the Deputy Director of Education, Eastern Provinces, in November, 1948 requesting;

Please will you permit me to take my Language Examination in Ibo in June 1949. I have already taken a short course in Ibo at SOAS, and I am taking lessons in it now. If permission is granted I should much appreciate it if you would let me have a few copies of previous examination papers.

From 1931 the provision had been made by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate to offer vernacular languages of the colonies in the Senior Cambridge Examination. But because of the set-back Igbo suffered during the Union Igbo Period and the orthographic controversies that ensued, it was not possible for Igbo to start at the secondary school level before 1940 but it had entered the curriculum of some secondary schools like DMGS Onitsha and Methodist College, Uzoakoli. In 1942, Igbo was first taken as an examination subject for the Senior Cambridge Certificate.

From the 1980s, Igbo became a compulsory subject of study in all the Federal conventional Colleges of

Education in the country. And from about that time also, no Unity School in the country fails to teach Igbo.

# THE STANDARD IGBO STUDIES PERIOD (1966-NOW)

What is Standard Igbo? In the words of Nwadike (1981), Standard Igbo is enriched Igbo capable of being spoken and understood by every lgbo person in all parts of Igboland. It is an enhanced Central Igbo. Standard Igbo started informally in 1966 during the mass return of Igbo people from various parts of Nigeria when the Nigeria/Biafra War clouds were gathering. From that period, many lgbo refugees penetrated various parts of Igboland for purposes of trade and settlement, and in the process, there was a cross fertilization and diffusion of dialects. The Standard Period of Igbo Studies is a period of advancement and innovation in Igbo, a period when Igbo Studies has flowered into various dimensions. We can call it the Golden Age of Igbo Studies. It is the age of Igbometrics, Scientific and Technological Terminologies and Metalanguage, an era when

approaches are made to the dialects, and borrowing made from them in order that the Standard should be enriched and enhanced. From 1973, Igbo discarded the old system of numeration **(Ohu, Irineeri, Nnu)** which was cumbersome and limited in scope, and emerged with the decimalization system resulting in Igbometrics. Today, our numeracy is unlimited with the evolution of **nari, puku, nde, ijeri and ijerinde**, borrowings from the dialects.

This is the era that sees scholars of lobo reaching the apex of Igbo Studies through the attainment of first degrees, masters and doctorate in Igbo and reaching the summit of the teaching career as professors of Igbo, just as I am. Nwadike is a professor of lgbo and not that of Linguistics or any other high sounding subject. This is the era that has seen the writing of books in all the areas of lgbo Studies-grammar, literature, proverbs, dictionaries, religion, customs institutions. history. and methodology, metalanguage, essays, dialectology, phonology, explication de texts etc. in Nwadike's latest research (2008) in ascertaining and determining

the number of literature books, there are about 100 novels, 80 dramas and 75 poetic anthologies.

This is the period when Igbo Studies is a **sine** qua non in very many tertiary institutions in the country. Igbo Studies started off in faraway West Indies and not in Igboland, and coming back here to Nigeria, it is funny to learn that in the university setup, Igbo Studies did not again start in Igboalnd; Yourbaland stole the show as U.I. (my alma mater) and Unilag started degree programmes in Igbo before UNN, a giant Iroko tree in the savannah. But thanks to God that in 1974, the first ever full-fledged Department of Igbo was established at AICE, Owerri, where lqbo is used as the medium of all instructions. In 1968 Igbo was a requirement for the award of B.A. degree in History for Igbo scholars in the University of London.

### UNIQUENESS OF IGBO LITERATURE

Igbo literature is only 75 years old, having been born in 1933 with the publication of **Omenuko**. It is unique unlike any other literature in the world. The three giant missionary bodies that had a stake in Igbo Studies, contributed to the development of the written literature through their adherents. In 1933, the Methodist Mission gave to Igbo its first novel-**Omenuko**-through Mr. Pita Nwana. In 1974, the CMS Church through Prof. A. B. Chukuezi, gave Igbo its first play-**Udo ka Mma.** In 1975, through Mr. R. N. Ekechukwu, the Catholic Church gave Igbo her first poetic anthology of 63 poems contributed by 13 poets. What a wonderful trinity! None of the Missions wanted to be left out in the race for the development of Igbo written literature.

The second aspect of the uniqueness is the fact that none of the three writers is a scholar of Igbo. Pita Nwana was a foreman at the Uzoakoli Institute. He only attained Sunday School education at the CMS on the Niger at Onitsha where he trained as a carpenter. Mr. Pita Nwana was the paternal uncle of our Prof. O.C. Nwana of this University. Prof. Baranbas Anaelechi Chukuezi, the son of an Anglican Cleric, was a medical student at U.I. when he wrote **Udo ka Mma**. He is currently the Medical Director of the Imo State Teaching Hospital at Orlu. Mr.R.N. Ekechukwu, a Catholic, and a former School Principal, read English.

The third dimension of the uniqueness is that it fell on the Aro people to give Igbo their first two novels- **Omenuko (1933)** and **Ala Bingo** (1935) by D.N. Achara from Isuochi, a veteran educationist and Methodist Supervisor of Schools. The uniqueness of Igbo literature cannot be more unique! The same uniqueness goes with Chief (Dr.) F.C. Ogbalu, an economist turned into Igboist, who became the doyen of Igbo Studies, the man who planted, others watered and God gave the increase. This was the man who spent his life, time, money and energy, fighting the cause of our mother-tongue. May God give him eternal rest. Amen.

## THE PERIODIZATION OF IGBO WRITTEN LITERATURE

One can easily demarcate Igbo written literature from the point of view of the Nigeria/Biafra War - Pre and Post-but that will be a cheap and simplistic way of handling such a serious exercise. In my course of teaching Igbo literature all these years at the undergraduate and post graduate levels, I have come into greater and firmer grip of the literature. So, I have tried to map it out into the following epochs:

Derivative Period (1857-1932): 1. **The** The development and growth of Igbo literature was not night's activity. It did not just emerge. It one underwent a rigorous journey to arrive. It started with literature-translations from foreian derivative literatures such as Arabian Nights, Tales From Shakespeare, Pilgrims Progress, Grimm's Fairy **Tales,** etc. Added to these were those religious texts written for the sole purpose of educating Christian adherents in morals and biblical injunctions. Such works were: Ndu Dinwenu Anyi, Meri Nne Jesu, Katekizim Nke Okwukwe and some folkloric works. With these, the lgbo were introduced to the reading culture of literature.

2. The Formative Period (1933-1966): This is the beginning of Igbo written literature, starting with **Omenuko.** In this epoch the Igbo through the

instrumentality of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IIALC) took their fate into their own hands, and produced literature. Apart from *Omenuko* which falls in the realm of realism, the others that followed-*Ala Bingo, Osondu, Elelia Na Ihe O mere, Ije Odumodu Jere* were fantasies which could not adequately x-ray the social problems of the Igbo society and reveal and delineate human characters. During this era, there were not more than 10 pieces of literature and which all were in prose.

3. **The Vacuum Period (1967-1972):** This is a very short period to be called an epoch in the history of literature but it is unique and important in a way. This was the War Period in Igbo life - the Nigeria/Biafra War - when no single book, literature and language alike appeared in the market. War periods in history are not friendly to the arts and to the people. The greatest concern here and now is the preservation of life. It is true that the War ended in 1970 but its effects lingered to 1972 during which time Igbo people engaged in the rehabilitation of themselves, the reconstruction of their broken and damaged home

and social structures, and the reconciliation with their war-separated country men and women. Within these years, 1967 to 1972, Igbo education was dormant, and except those outside the Eastern Region, no one could have been engaged in academic pursuit.

4. The Glorious Period (1973 to Now): This is my age and period in history and I am glad that I am an active participant in the production of the literature of the period. I have not called this period the golden age of Igbo literature because I believe that that age is yet to come. I have to call it GLORIOUS because the labo coming out from the War empty-handed, could raise their heads above the waves, currents, and buffetings of the Nigerian tsunamic factors. From 1973 a large number of Ndiigbo swung into writing their own literature in all the genres, taking a worldguess of themes and subject matters, projecting lgbo world-view: their triumphs and failures. their experiences and expectations, their joys and sorrows, their beautiful and ugly, their beliefs and disbeliefs, their exploits and intrigues etc. Today, the Igbo literary world is blessed with about 200 creative works that can compete and compare favourably with their counterparts in the world. To God be the glory!

### RUMBLINGS IN IGBO LITERATURE: (1978-1995)

Idbo written literature is a 20<sup>th</sup> century-born literature; in fact, it is only 75 years old compared with older European, American or Asian literatures, some of which dated from the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, or 18<sup>th</sup>, centuries. But none of those literatures has drunk or undergone the experiences it has gone through. It was shaken by the bitterest and the most awful orthography controversy in literary history (1929-1961) which no other literature or language has 1978-1995. Iqbo witnessed. From literature underwent a crisis of definition of existeince-What is Igbo literature? This academic exercise and acid test triggered off after the publication of Professor Ernest Emenyonu's **The Rise of the Igbo Novel** (1978), an explication de text in which he grouped together novels written in Igbo and those written in English, and called all of them 'Igbo Novels'. Like the Igbo say, what resembles yam is not yam. Again, it is only the

sleeping one that rat eats one's materials. So, scholars and watchdogs of Igbo Studies reacted and objected to this, and wrote to deny the illegitimate child. To this, Emenyonu fought back like a wounded lion, abusing his opponents with sarcasm and indecent language.

this academic battle, three Schools of In Thought emerged: The Libertarian/Emenyonu School; The Authoritative/Ugonna School, and The Rationalist/Nwadike School. The Libertarian School is made up of foreign literature scholars of Igbo nativity, and who argue that the Igbo novel is that novel which carries with it the mark of nationality and traditionalism irrespective of the medium of expression. This means that any literature piece that is written by an Igbo, provided it touches on Igbo culture, that piece, is automatically lgbo literature whether written in Igbo, French, English or German etc. So, in the thought of this group, all the novels of Achebe, Ekwensi, Munonye, Nwapa, Amadi. Nwankwo etc are all lgbo novels.

The Authoritative School led by Ugonna is made up of scholars of Igbo and others who argue that as long as any literary piece is not written in or translated into Igbo, no such work belongs to the pool of Igbo literature irrespective of the nationality and the traditionalism.

The Rationalist School of Professor Nwadike is a late comer into the debate. It emerged after his doctoral research in 1995, and he had to pull out from his former camp, and accused the other two schools of being right and wrong at the same time. He reasoned that for any piece of literature to be really Igbo, such a piece must be written in Igbo and carry the mark of lgbo traditionality. He emphasized that language alone cannot make a novel/drama lgbo when other elements like setting, characters and world view are foreign to lgbo. For the nationality of the author, he argued how, for example, Ekwensi's Iska, Burning Grass, The Passport of Mallam Ilia can be called lgbo novels when their settings, characters and world-views are all foreign to lgbo. In the eyes of Nwadike, the nationality of the author

does not count in determining the suitability of the Igbo novel. He contends that any national of any nation can write Igbo literature provided the piece so written carries the mark of Igbo language and Igbo tradition.

Scholars of African Literature will recall the decades (1960s and 1970s) of arguments and counter arguments on what should be the language of African literature, a debate raised by a young Nigerian author and critic, Dr. Obi Wali (RIP). It seemed that the Igbo spectacle took its cue from here and burned like a harmattan fire-the way Ndiigbo do their things.

This debate did not stop at the literary level; it went into the language, this time, the **brand** or **variety** of Igbo for the Igbo novel, nay, the type of Igbo to be used in schools. The debate erupted between two academic giants: Emenanjo and Achebe. While the former advocates Standard Igbo for all literary creations, books, schools and the media houses, the latter sees the standardization process as an effort in futility, and stresses that authors should be given free hand to write in whatever dialect they deem fit. Achebe (1979) argues thus:

We must free our writers to write in whatever dialect they know and speak. Children in schools in particular must be encouraged to write in the dialect they speak.

Achebe did not understand the implication of his advocacy-the production of dialect pieces of literature for Ndiigbo. So, we would have Ogidi literatue, Asaba literature, Izii literature, Oguta literature, Afikpo literature, Owerri literature, Enugu-Ezike literature, etc? How could Achebe, who writes in Standard English advocate for non-standard writing for his people? Who would read them? How would the examination syndicates set their examination questions? It is to be noted that S.O. Mezu (1974) wrote his Umu Ejima,, a drama in the Emekuku Owerri dialect but till today, the text was not read in schools, talk more of it becoming a recommended text for any examination. Any language that must be a literary language must submit itself for standardization otherwise, it will not make any headway academically.

#### **PEP TO IGBO STUDIES**

Igbo Studies have had its ups and downs. This is natural. Did the **Book of Ecclesiastes** (Ch 3) not tell us that there is time for everything under the Sun: time for life and time for death; time for joy and time for sorrow; time for shrinking and time for rejuvenation etc? Like in every human system, it is not smooth all the way. Life consists of rise and fall and fall and rise. While Igbo was declining in some areas, it was being blessed in some others. It has the privilege of growing taller by coming into vogue two stalwart Lectures: Ahajioku Lecture and Odenigbo Lecture. **Ahiajoku** came into being through the magnanimity of the Imo State Government of Chief Samuel Onunaka Mbakwe in 1979. Odenigbo, on the other hand, was born through the philosophy of Amarachi A.J.V. Obinna, the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri in 1996. The two "address the question of laboness in its holistic, cultural, scientific and linguistic dimensions."

In an era when Igbo people tend to focus on English Language other than their own, Prof. Pita

Eijofo came up with the philosophy and gospel of **Subakwa Igbo** through which Ndiigbo are urged to speak their God-given language which is as good and as rich as any other language under the sun. In the same vein, Amarachi Obinna (Archbishop) came up with **Ozisa**, a newspaper in the lgbo medium. Professor C.O. Nebo. the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to demonstrate his love for his language, through the Department of Linguistics, labo and Other Nigerian Languages, started UJA ODUM and EKWE Igbo Newspapers to inspire Ndiigbo to read and admire Igbo. These people have set the pace, and it is for us all to contribute our quota to the development of our language and the preservation of our culture.

# THE BIG CHALLENGE

For Igbo Studies to make giant strides it deserves, every Igbo person has to identify with it from his/her area of specialty because **ebe onye bi ka o na-awachi.** This is our language, we must speak it and reverence it. To those people who see their mother-tongue as secondary, the owners of those languages they consider as major, will reject them when they go over to them. Which Frenchman was more French than Dr. Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal? But at the hour of determining who was who in cultural identity, the French denied and rejected him. Which Englishman was more English than Josef Konrad, (a Polish) but when the English decided to determine who was English, Josef Konrad was rejected along with his English novels. Be warned!

For Igbo to make the giant strides it deserves, let tertiary institutions in Igboland make it a compulsory course in their General Studies just as the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, had done.

For Igbo literature to forge ahead, let Ndiigbo buy and read their literature books so that these books do not become only school textbooks recommended solely for examinations. Let not Ndiigbo glorify and pride themselves for being unable to read Igbo. This is **aru**. This is **nsoala** against our mother-land. This is **abomination**! Igbo academics in other fields of study like Engineering, Biology, Botany, Physics, etc should contribute to the growth of Igbo Studies in these areas.

I should stop at these four challenges because there are four days in the Igbo week-Eke,Orie, Afo and Nkwo. But I warn that the days of E ji Igbo eje ebee have gone. Today, e ji Igbo enweta oru; eji Igbo eje Eligwe. Today, e ji Igbo abu Okankuzi (profeso) di ka Nwadike bu; e ji Igbo echi Ukochukwu; e ji Igbo aga Alabekee. Onye Kwe, chi ya ekwe! My people, let it be borne in mind that

> Any ethnic group that neglects its language Is as good as dead.

Any ethnic group that has no language,

Has no culture it can call its own.

Any ethnic group that has lost its language,

Has become the slave of others.

Any ethnic group that is shy of its language, Is not worthy to live;

The owners of that language are insulting God Who gave them the language.

Any ethnic group that prefers others' cultures to its own,

Is worthy of extermination

From the face of the earth, for

A lost language is a lost tribe;

A lost tribe is a lost culture;

A lost culture is a lost civilization;

A lost civilization is invaluable knowledge lost..

The whole vast archives of knowledge and expertise

....will be consigned to oblivion.

# THE BIG PROMISE

If we can give the Big Challenge, we can also give the Big Promise. For sometime now, it has been heard all over the place that in the next fifteen years or so, Igbo Language will go extinct. This is wishful thinking. Other languages may go extinct but not Igbo. Igbo is widely spoken, seriously committed into writing, and assiduously taught in schools. A language that is given these life-giving measures never dies. It is only those languages that are not spoken widely, not committed into writing, and are not taught in schools that die. The known extinct languages of the world lacked these features, and therefore, they faced death. If Ndiigbo will allow their language to die, into which ethnic group will they be assimilated: Efik, ljaw, Tiv, Hausa, Yoruba? Ndiigbo, which tribe in Nigeria, will you enslave yourselves to? Answer me. During the Nigerian/Biafra impasse, (1966-70) you never allowed yourselves to be humiliated, hunger and suffering notwithstanding, how can vou now. emancipated people, give up yourselves to slavery and inhuman treatment? Ndiigbo, choose the God/god you will like to serve!

### NWADIKE AS A PROFESSOR OF IGBO

The chick that will become a cock is determined early in the egg, so goes an Igbo adage. If Inno Uzoma Nwadike was to be a girl, she had already developed full breasts before suitors started to seek her hands in marriage, so the Igbo say again. Yes. By the grace of God, Nwadike had become a professor of Igbo before UNN University Appraisals Committee (UAC) declared him one. My contributions to Igbo Studies started during my Youth Corps Days (1977-78) at Kafachan Teachers College, Kaduna State, when I wrote my first novel - **Adaeze -** and the prototype of an explication de text, **Ntoala Na Nnyocha Agumagu** (Introduction to Igbo Literature). I have to my credit some 22 textbooks, 40 academic journal articles, over 80 journalistic articles, about 30 primary and secondary school texts co-authored, and am still writing. As of now, I have on my table, three monumental works at hand:

Introduction To Literary Criticism (Critical Theory), Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Translation, and The Rise of Igbo Written Literature. All these are tertiary texts.

I am a good spreader, evangelist and crusader of Igbo language. Wherever I go, and whichever group of non-Igbo I meet, I speak Igbo to them to their admiration, and they long to learn the language. When I was the President of the Senior Staff Club, UNN (2002), I broke the myth of brothers and sisters discussing all the time in English. I introduced Igbo language there and used it in all my dealings with the members that warranted them to nickname me OHANAEZE. In St. Peter's Chaplaincy where I worship, I popularized Igbo to the admiration of all.

- On assuming duties here at UNN from Alvan, I caused Igbo to be used as the medium of teaching Igbo instead of English, and in 1988, I inspired and supervised the first ever B.A. Thesis in Igbo at UNN which was adjudged the best project for that year and which won the Ogbalu Prize.
- I have effectively taught my courses in Igbo and Linguistics, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. My supervisees at both levels have found in me a good father, helper and adviser. At the PG level, I have produced two Ph.D and over ten Masters candidates within the short period of ten years I was empowered to become a PG Supervisor.
- When all hopes had been lost for gathering Igbo scholars again after Chief Ogbalu's

demise in 1990, I single-handedly in 2002, called them to the fold in a resounding Conference, which led to the formation of Igbo Studies Association (ISA) two years after to replace the SPILC which Chief Okoye, the successor of Chief Ogbulu had highjacked and grounded. Today, I am the General Secretary of ISA and the Editor of its journal, **Journal of Igbo Studies (JIS).** As the Editor of **JIS**, we have produced two volumes and going in for a third without the journal dying after the first volume as is the case with many African academic journals.

When distractors and detractors in the persons of Professors Chinua Achebe (1999) and M.J.C. Echeruo (2001) committed heresies against Igbo Studies, when they veered into Igbo to discuss issues that were not clear of them, I, as a watchdog and crusader of Igbo Studies, challenged and cautioned them lest they led us into another orthography and dialectal controversies.

- When I was a student in the Teacher Training  $\square$ Colleges, I was nicknamed Assurbanipal after King Assurbanipal of Sumeria who was the first person in history to build a library. I am a great acquirer of books that my library is bigger than many departmental libraries. My students and others have recourse to it when they have elsewhere, and from many tertiary failed institutions in Nigeria, students being are referred to me and to my library, and I very gladly oblige them to make use of it irrespective of the fact that I have lost some rare books in the process.
- I am an actor in many innovations, workshops, conferences, seminars and meetings that yield good dividends in Igbo Studies without counting the costs.
- Over the years, I have been a resource person and consultant to examination syndicates, ministries of education and publishers of this country.

- As a literary and social critic, I have always aired my views in literary and national matters without fear or favour of whose ox is gored. I believe in speaking the truth for truth is life.
- I am always on my toes, monitoring the arrival of new books in Igbo Studies especially in the sphere of literature where I specialize. I started this by the year 1995, and I update it often. Today, I can say with certainty the number of novels, plays, poetic anthologies and short stories there are in Igbo. But I do not claim the omniscience of God about this because some may escape my observation since there is no central clearing house for all published books.
- In the criticism of African literature in which many African writers and critics clamoured for a different critical standard from that of the Europeans, but who over the years could not suggest any thereby becoming toothless bulldogs, I, Nwadike, an 'outsider', developed one-the character-characterization element.

Instead of the E.M. Forster (1927) age-long of two character types of *flat and round*, I suggested the African formula of three typesthe **Very Active**, the **Less Active** and the **Passive Characters** since in the Igbo worldview, there are not just two extremes to things, for there must always be a mid. It is left for these our agitating literary giants of Africa who engaged in this academic battle of the 1970s and 1980s to come up with other elements to complement mine if their demand is still valid in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. He-Goat of the fictional world once said that travelling out is a very great school of knowledge, otherwise, how could he have learnt to point his mouth skywards had he not visited his maternal home. Yes. This is applicable to me. My sojourn to Unilag, the home of Inaugural Lectures in 2004/2005 session on sabbatical leave, equipped me with this feature of comprehensive "Acknowledgements' in the inaugurals. Do the Igbo not say that **onye ngalite ije ka onye isi awo ihe ama?** 

To God Almighty I owe my life, my sustenance, my help, my protection. I thank Him immensely for taking me to the pinnacle of my career and making this day possible. It was he who admitted me to UI to read Igbo, otherwise, I applied for Ed/Rel/History but was offered Ed/Rel/Igbo instead. This was his great purpose in order that I become a St. Paul to Igbo Studies.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I became Professor during your tenure. I will cherish this as long as I live. I must say that your sense of justice and fair play are remarkable. You are here today in person to chair this once-in-a-life-time-occasion in the academic career of someone who had to wait for eight long years for his papers to come back. **Enyi m nwoke, I meela. Daalu.** May God help you to reach the goals and standards you have set for yourself and for this great citadel of learning.

To my family members, I cannot express myself enough. First, I pray for the repose of the souls of my parents who nurtured me - Mr. John Onvemesi Nwadike (Okwueziokwu Umundugba) and Ezinne Magdalene Ekenasi Nwadike (Ochioha Mary Umunwaanyi). To my lovely wife, Odz. Ada Nwadike, greatest and severest critic, a woman of mv incomparable magnanimity of heart, the one who has stood by me all these years through thick and thin, the only person in my entire family-nuclear and extendedto accompany me in this journey of Igbo Studies. Thanks to God that in the last Convocation Ceremony, she picked up a Masters degree in Igbo Literature. To my five children, none of whom agreed to read lgbo: Mrs. Ifunanya Evangel Obim (a Librarian) and her husband - Dr. George Obim and my grandchildren, Tovia and Ngozi Obim; Mr. Toochi John-Mark, a Dramatist and the popular Ojaadili of the Dramatic Arts Dept's, drama and dramaturgy; Mr. Chika Nwadike; a Sociologist and Anthropologist; Mr. Chidozie, a final year Pol. Science student, and Miss Chidimma Vivian, a Psychologist. Except myself, all the members of my family are Lions and Lionesses.

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I am indebted to my cousin, Ichie Eddy Mbah (a Pharmacist), who when I gained admission into U.I in 1974, had to help me pay 1/3 of a session's fee which was of <del>N</del>33,35k because I didn't have the wherewithal to pay the deposit. Eddy, **Ekele.** To my other cousins and relations who are here on this occasion, **Nnoonu. Deejenu.** 

My Teacher Training education at St. Thomas's College Ogoja (1961-62), instilled in me the discipline and integrity which prepared me for the path that I was to follow for the rest of my life. I thank my teachers-those young bachelors who rehearsed their GCE O/L and A/L readings and lecture notes on us and gave us overdose teaching: Mr. Christian Ozor (a former Controller of Personnel of this University, Ozo (Dr). Onyema Ocheoha (a former Secretary to the Enugu State Government, who we nicknamed: "The Son of Rapidity", Messrs RNC Muodili, Pius Ekuma and Agbor, men who imparted to me the grandeur and magnificence of scholarship that after only two years the course lasted, my friend, Mr. E.C.S. Okoye (former Registrar, Anambra State Polytechnic, Uli,

and former Registrar, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, and myself, sat for and passed our 5 papers including English Language respectively in the London GCE O/L at one sitting in 1965. This made it providential that when we went in for the Higher Elementary Course, instead of the normal Grade II Teachers Course, we were pursing the Pivotal Teachers Course which only those with Cambridge/School Certificates were qualified to undergo. Umuibe, oo kwa etu a ka m bu mmadu si jee ikute utaba, baa ime ahia.

I do not know how to express my feelings when I remember my Alma Mater, U.I, the Great University that discovered the potency in me and offered me admission to study Igbo on which I stand up today to philosophize. Can I forget Dr. S.U.Obi, the Ione Lecturer in the Igbo Unit of Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, but who taught everything -Linguistics and Igbo Literature alike?

Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, where I started off as a lecturer, afforded me the scope and opportunity of being a writer of books and articles, and a deep and rigorous researcher. Great Alvana!

Do I stand to forget my mentor and academic father, Prof. Nolue Emenanjo of Ibuzo, the St. Paul of Igbo Studies, the man, when Ogbalu planted, he watered, and God gave the increase (1 Cor. 3<sup>5</sup>)? When I could not turn up for the interview at Alvan in 1978 because of late reach of invitation letter, Emenenjo as **HOD** still waited for the Nwadike he did not know. He had to ride to Umundugba despite deplorable roads and the rains, looking for Nwadike to come over to Alvan to start teaching. He taught and encouraged me to write. At Uniport, he taught me for my Ph.D and showed me love in all dimensions of relationship. **Diokpa, I meka.** 

Can I forget my Ph.D Supervisor, Prof. Chidi Maduka, the man whose mainstay is English but who is more at home in French that he wears Comparative Literature as apparel? When he cancelled the things I wrote, I thought he was punishing me but little did I know that he was passing me through a furnace of strengthen, sharpen and harden me in literature. Nna m Ukwu, ala!

How do I repay Dr. (Mrs.) G.I. Nwaozuzu, the first woman Odenigbo Lecturer in the history of mankind, the emissary UNN despached to Alvan in 1986 to bring me my appointment paper as a lecturer to the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages. On arrival at UNN when I did, I had no place to lay my head, but the emissary and her amiable and amicable husband, Prof. B.S.C. Nwaozuzu, offered me accommodation for six months in their house before I was able to find one at Ugwu Odenigwe.

To my HOD, Dr. Chibiko Okebalama and the entire members of staff and students. I salute you all for the type of good family life we exhibit in our department.

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To my "classmates" of the Professoral Appointment: Professors Uche Azikiwe, Queen Joy Nwoji and M.I. Uguru, people with whom I was appointed professor at the same time. Dear colleagues, I look forward to your Inaugural lectures.

To my numerous publishers who have made it possible for me to be heard: Macmillan, Deo Gratias, Totan, Heinemann, Kawuriz and Manillas, Pacific, Evans, Format, UPL, Africana First etc. **Unu emeela**, but be honest and up and doing in paying my royalties. I doff my hat to the current President of the Senior Staff Club, Prof. Sam Onyegegbu and all the members especially **HRH**, Prof. Ononogbu, Eze Udohiri of Mkpa, the only Traditional Ruler around. I owe a lot to the Club for all the good things I have learnt and gathered there. Really, it is a place to belong!

To these my beloved students –Mrs Tina Chinelo Onuegbu and Dr Charles Ikechukwu Nnaji, unu ga-adiri m ndu n'ihi ihe unu mere m.

Lastly, but not the least, to all my friends (men and women of this great University, **ekelee m unu**, **na-asi unu**, **Egbe bere ka Ugo berekwa**; **onye achokwala ibe ya onwu**.

To God be the glory who,

I have trusted my past

To His Mercy,

My present to his Love,

And my future to his providence.

Kelere m Chi mu oo Unu kelere m chi mu oo Na Chi m emeela. (X2)

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