

The Past the Present and the Future make a People

It is a general belief among the Igbo people that Igbo history and culture, literature and art, music and dance convey meaning which manifests aesthetic value, religious content, ethical foundations and historical events within the theatre of the divine milieu in the midst of human communality. Each work of art points beyond the originator, saying “*look at me, but beyond me, for I represent and manifest the divine among you*”. Thus masquerade, dirge, songs, poetry, artifacts, visual arts, film, drama, proverbs, cult, oratory and interlocution have become avenues for the *Homo Sapiens* to mirror Igbo civilization which is the pride of a people and the *kpim* of existence. This translates into the ontology of Igboology, making the past our heritage, the present our opportunity, and the future a challenge to our authentic legacy.

I have great pleasure to share in the celebration of greatness revolving around the literary work of an illustrious son of the Igbo nation, **Chinua Achebe**, who fifty years ago, told the Igbo and African story without an interpreter. The emergence of “**Things Fall Apart**” in 1958 as a literary piece of African philosophy, history, anthropology, culture, values and ethics, has become a turning point in literature, historiography and the African question within the theatre of modernity and antiquity. Just as the Igbo torpedoed the slave trade about four hundred years ago by marrying the daughters of the slave Masters in Europe and America, thus gaining acceptance and integration, so has Chinua Achebe's “**Things Fall Apart**” transformed and radicalized the writing of African history and literature, such that now, the African has audacity to speak without interpreters, as was the case before “**Things Fall Apart**”.

The **First Festival of Igbo Civilization and Culture in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of Chinua Achebe's “Things Fall Apart”**, celebrated here in Enugu, the coal city, historical headquarters and evergreen home of the Igbo nation, speaks volumes of the people, who in the spirit of *Egbe belu Ugo Belu*, and *Onye aghana nwanne ya*, claim their own, stand for their own, and are willing to die for their own, as history records within the Nigerian State portrays. Our celebration is, modestly put, a laudable dimension that Ndigbo claim Chinua Achebe as their son and leverage on the Golden Jubilee of “**Things Fall Apart**” already universally celebrated, to launch the Igbo quest for intercultural dialogue on a global level. The Festival here in Enugu, and other cities of the Igbo nation, reaches out to those at home and the diaspora, to neighbours and friends, and all people of goodwill, with extended hands of friendship which transcends geography. The Igbo people as a leading nation within the Nigerian State and abroad, have proved their mettle in various walks of life, with leadership ability in the various disciplines and areas of religion, business, economy, literature, medicine, education, law, music, drama, engineering, diplomacy and art, skills and enterprise.

Obiora Anidi and his team of artists joined the organizing committee of the First Festival of Igbo Civilization and Culture comprised by eminent Igbo sons and daughters and notable organizations such as The Whelan Research Academy; Ohanaeze Ndigbo; Ndigbo Lagos; Izu Umunna Jos; Aka Ikenga; Igbo Studies Association, USA; Conference of Democratic Scholars (CODES) and the Catholic Institute for Development Justice Peace and Caritas (CIDJAP), which also is the driver of this event, to achieve the success contained in this booklet and transmitted as a collection of African Thought to you, the reader.

Enugu State Government under the able leadership of the amiable performer, Barrister Doctor Sullivan Iheanacho Chime, the Governor, generously sponsored the successful hosting of this publication and the Festival events staged at the Ofu Obi Africa Centre, CIDJAP, Enugu. The Catholic Church which is both *mater et magistra* has continued to engage the world with spiritual leadership and in the context of inculturation, has assisted the promotion of authentic human values, culture, ethics, history and the Igbo heritage.

I happily welcome you to the First Festival of Igbo Civilization and Culture which showcases African art, exhibition, folklore, film, lectures, cultural dances, songs, drama and masquerades around the theme of “Things Fall Apart” *yet, with the Centre still holding*.

It is the desire of the organizers of this Festival to make it an annual event holding in the capital city of Enugu, (universally acclaimed for its Nollywood productions) with the establishment of **Igbo Art Foundation** for the promotion of African culture and civilization in a globalised world. Good morning!

Professor Monsignor Obiora Ike
Enugu, 7 February 2009