



EDITORIAL



Chima J Korieh, PhD
President, Igbo Studies Association



WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF ISA NEWS!

November 2014

Dear Members,

I am delighted to introduce the first edition of ISA Newsletter! I hope your semester is going well. I wish you the best for the rest of the academic year!

I hope that you will enjoy this maiden issue of ISA Newsletter, which aims to keep you abreast of important issue and events concerning the association as well as our members. The current issue includes interesting articles, research reports and other activities by our members. The success of the newsletter will depend on your contributions in the forms of short articles and commentaries. We will also appreciate your comments and suggestions for future issues.

The ISA executive is proud to announce that a committee has been set up to work out the modalities for the establishment of an ISA book prize/award. Dr Raphael Njoku is leading the committee and we expect that the initiative will be approved at the next annual general meeting.

The 13th Annual Meeting of the ISA taking place at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is only six months away and preparations are ongoing to ensure that we have an exciting meet! We can't wait to see you all in Milwaukee in April. This is an opportunity to submit an abstract and to participate in next year's conference. ISA is as strong as its membership, so please remember to renew your membership and to register for the conference, if you have not already done so!

Finally, we would like to congratulate the newest members of the ISA Executive who were elected at the last annual general meeting in Chicago. Chima Korieh (President), Uchenna Nzewi (Vice-President), Ogechi Anyanwu (Sec), Ada Azodo (Treasurer) and Chidi Igwe (PRO).

Chima J Korieh, PhD
President, Igbo Studies Association.



RESEARCH NOTE



PROFESSORS SIMON OTTENBERG AND GOFFREY NWOGU RESEARCH MBAISE MODERN ART MOVEMENT

Simon Ottenberg and Mbaise trained artist, Goffrey Nwogu (geonwogu@gmail.com), who has been living in the United States since the 1980s, have been working for over a year on a biography of the Mbaise modern art movement, organized and led by Dulu S.A.O. Chukueggu, 1955-1985 at Mbaise, involving the sculpting and selling of a unique form of modern wood carvings, quite different from traditional art forms, but related to traditional Mbaise beliefs in gods, spirits and myths. If anyone has information that would be helpful to the project, this would be appreciated.

Particularly:

- Any knowledge of, or experience with, the Mbaise Cultural Centre, later called the Mbari Cultural Centre.
- Photos of the works in wood created at Mbaise.
- Ownership of any of the Mbaise pieces.
- Any knowledge of the nature of the shrine figures and other traditional art forms in the Mbaise area, as very little has been published on them.
- Any knowledge of publications in newspapers, magazines, books on the Mbaise modern artists.

Professor Simon Ottenberg
otten@u.washington.edu

IGBO STUDIES ASSOCIATION 2014-2016 LEADERSHIP TEAM



Chima J Korieh, PhD
President
Marquette University



Uchenna Nzewi, PhD
Vice President
University of Nigeria



Ogechi E. Anyanwu, PhD
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Chidi Igwe, PhD
PRO
University of Regina



Apollos Nwuawa, PhD
Past President
Bowling Green State University



Raphael C. Njoku, PhD
Conference Chair
Idaho State University

RESEARCH NOTE



Anwesha Das is an Assistant Professor of English at VIT University, Chennai, India. She received her doctorate degree in English literature from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. Her research interests focus on postcolonial studies, cultural inequities, anthropology, with emphasis on African literature. She is currently working on postcolonialism and global urbanism. Her recent publications include "A Rendezvous with T. Obinkaram Echewa," *Research in African Literatures*, 45.1 (February 2014) and "Egbe bere! Ugo bere," *Igbo Studies Review*, 1.1 (July 2013). She is presently a member of MELUS/MELOW and Igbo Studies Association.

THE CAUSE LIES WITHIN

Anwesha Das

Do we stay stuck at 'who is to blame?' or do we ask, 'how do we resolve this?'
- Dr. Peregrino Brimah (2014)

Nigeria has been a home to people from various ethnic groups. After the violent history of colonization and the tragedy of the Biafra massacre, Nigeria stands a witness to the growing violence of ethnic conflicts and acrimony. The nostalgia of the past, the hope for a better future, both restricted by a resentful present. What are the reasons leading to such a cesspool of ethnic tensions and corruption? "Who is to blame?" Or rather, "how do we resolve this?" Politicians, writers, intellectuals, news reporters, seem to be grappling with these and many other questions regarding the ethnic strife which have been a part of daily life in Nigeria.

One has to come to terms with the question "why" in order to unravel answers for "how," or "who," or "what." Why is Nigeria a mire of ethnic resentment and burgeoning corruption? "Corruption is the consequence of the problems we have not the cause of our problem as a nation," declared Governor Fashola (2014). The cause lies within. The divergent traditions, oral cultures, customs and beliefs among the ethnic groups of Nigeria deter to enter into a space of mutual dialogue, which lead to conflicts during cross-ethnic encounters. They fail to unite and share each others' cultural worldviews in order to rule as one nation. Let us consider the Igbo. Igbo people are enriched with an oral culture which can be channeled to bring about a harmonious rule in Nigeria. It has its share of flaws as well. Chinua Achebe (2012) had rightly pointed out that:

. . . the Igbo as a group is not without its flaws. Its success can and did carry deadly penalties: the dangers of hubris, overweening pride, and thoughtlessness, which invite envy and hatred or, even worse, that can obsess the mind with material success and dispose it to all kinds of crude showiness. There is no doubt at all that there is a strand in contemporary Igbo behavior that can offend by its noisy exhibitionism and disregard for humility and quietness.

At the same time, he highlights the fact that: "[T]he competitive individualism and the adventurous spirit of the Igbo could have been harnessed by committed leaders for the modernization and development of Nigeria. Nigeria's pathetic attempt to crush these idiosyncrasies rather than celebrate them is one of the fundamental reasons the country has not developed as it should . . ." (Achebe 2012) The tragedy of Biafra, the intended marginalization of some ethnic groups, while the domination of those others, restrict the space for mutual dialogue on an equalized terrain, thereby leading to acrimonious conflicts.

Ethnic antipathy frustrates the space for mutual learning and for acknowledging the presence of other cultures. Be it the Igbo, the Yoruba, or the Hausa/Fulani, every ethnic group is enriched with oral cultures and traditions as well as flaws, which form the basis of each of their worldviews. One needs not only to revisit the traditions and pay importance to oral cultures but also to question the flaws which prevent mutual dialogue and "reciprocal respect" (William E. Connolly 1991). Tradition lives "by evolving, not by remaining the same. This perspective precludes an understanding of tradition as something fixed once and for all, or as self-sufficient and as essentially and absolutely different from other traditions" (Jean-Marie Makang 1997). It is significant to understand that: "Transcending the horizon of one's own cultural tradition is the precondition for a better understanding of that very tradition" (Hans Köchler 1997).

As E. O. Eke (2013) writes: "Biafra can only now emerge from Nigeria, if there is disintegration of Nigeria." Nigeria has to disintegrate in order to unite as one nation. Ethnic groups need to critically take a look within, and transcend cultural and religious barriers for a better understanding of the contemporary predicament that Nigeria is in.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ROLE OF NIGERIA IN WORLD WAR II

Chima Korieh

In his second major monograph on colonial Nigerian history, Professor Korieh explores an African society's role in World War II and application of African agency. Tentatively titled *War and Empire: The British Empire and an African Society during the Second World War* (Nigeria), Korieh argues that, we can learn more about how Africans perceived the war and draw from their experiences important details about the impact of the war on their lives through the petitions they wrote in reaction to British war-time policies.

As Ashley Jackson remarked, "The role of colonies in imperial warfare has been consistently undervalued and their histories less well developed than those of the former 'white' Dominion and India." Indeed Africans participated in the two major international conflicts in the twentieth century: the two world wars. None of these wars was theirs but African societies took on a significant and strategic role as colonial subjects of major warring European powers particularly Britain and France. Beginning with The Great War of 1914–1918, the most global war of its time, European empires in Africa conscripted Africans as soldiers to meet their rising demands for manpower. In sub-Saharan Africa, some 192,000 Senegalese Tirailleurs fought on the Western Front and in Togo, Cameroon, and Turkey. Although Britain's colonial subjects were not allowed to fight in Europe, by 1916, African troops from West fought valiantly in East Africa against Germany.

Although the world wars have often be perceived as majorly a European conflict, Africa societies were greatly affected, so much so that one can speak of Africa's World Wars. Africa was part of the global theaters of war and subjects of the British Empire served in the British imperial forces as soldiers of the King's African Rifles from East Africa side by side with their West African counterparts. Societies across Africa sent soldiers, workers, and supplies on a large scale to theatres of war in Europe and the Middle East. Indeed, it is striking how Africans of all classes looked at the war as their own and took inspiration and claimed legitimacy from the rhetoric on empire – particularly the war propaganda mounted by the Britain and local African elite – when organizing for the war effort. In particular, discourse around the legitimacy of the war against Nazi Germany helped to break down previous divisions between the 'empire' and 'subject' peoples, forcing each side to organize around a common goal of defeating totalitarianism and the treat to liberty and arguing that the treat to Europe was a treat to the world, including African societies. Yet studies on the Second World War have not particularly focused on its world-wide dimension. *War and Empire* is an eye-opening and moving portrait of an African society during World War II, a war that was arguably the most important event that redefined relations between colonial powers and Africans in the 20th century. I focus on a particular social context—Nigeria, Britain's most important colonial possession in West Africa, in order to recount the extraordinary and often neglected story the African population who were drawn into the war, the intense demands made on their resources, and how the war transformed people's lives. Never before has the vast range of the experiences of Nigerians of all classes including rural and urban dwellers during this pivotal era in British empires' relationship with colonial subjects in Nigeria been brought together in one book. *War and Empire* re-creates what Nigerian men, women and children from all walks of life were "doing and thinking, on the home front and abroad" to use... Emily Yellin's expressions, in the service of the empire. The books explores the extraordinary story of how the African population was drawn into the war on the side of the Allied powers, the intense demands made on the African population and their resources and their attempt to overcome the crisis in the period of the war which have usually remained neglected and underappreciated.

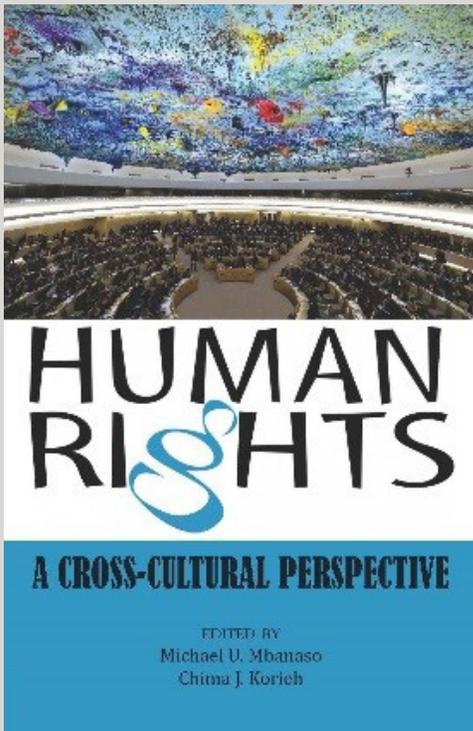
RESEARCH NOTE



Chima J Korieh, PhD
 President, Igbo Studies Association
 Department of History
 Sensenbrenner Hall, 202A
 1103 W. Wisconsin Avenue
 Marquette University
 P.O. Box 1881
 Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881

FEATURED ARTICLE

FEATURED MEMBER PUBLICATION



Michael U. Mbanaso & Chima J. Korieh (Eds.)
Human Rights: A Cross-Cultural Perspective.
Glassboro, NJ: Goldline and Jacobs Publishing,
2014.

BENJAMIN ADEKUNLE: THE PORTRAIT OF A GENOCIDIST

EC Ejiogu

I do not want to see any Red Cross, and Caritas, any World Council of Churches, any Poe, any Mission, or any United Nations Delegation. I want to prevent even one Ibo having even one piece to eat before their capitulation.

--Major Benjamin Adekunle. *The Economist (London) August 14, 1968.*

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Research by this writer reveals that ever before Benjamin Adekunle, who died this month—September 2014—of natural causes after a protracted illness, uttered the excerpt above to the World Press in 1968 as “one of the most notorious of the genocidist commanders in southern Igboland” (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2014) during Nigeria’s genocidal war against Biafra, he was not just an individual who woke up one morning and suddenly found himself in a situation of duty that compelled him to play a circumstantial role that happened to impact the Igbo adversely. In the rapidly shifting scheme of events in the Nigeria project during the period that commenced with the termination of de facto British rule on October 1, 1960, the first time in the research for this piece that a young Benjamin Adekunle was encountered was in May 1966. This was right after the May promotions in the Nigerian Army, which the Major-General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi-headed military regime that had just been in power for barely five months seemingly embarked upon to consolidate its delicate hold on state power and to of course placate the north and its ruling feudalist establishment over the death of their prominent politicians and personalities in the January 15, 1966 coup d’état.

As it turned out, in the super-charged atmosphere that arose then and has sustained in varied forms in the Nigeria project ever since, that promotion exercise, which “Under normal circumstances... would not have raised eyebrows” became an excuse for the hateful to let mayhem loose on the Igbo. Although it “could be justified on the basis of merit and correcting the anomaly of deserving officers that had been passed over for promotion in the past ...”, still, it “was interpreted as favoring Igbos (sic)” (Siollun, 2009: 91).

Benjamin Adekunle, then a major, and three others—Olusegun Obasanjo, Oluwole Rotimi, and Emmanuel Sotomi—who all happened to be Yoruba were by-passed in that promotion exercise. But that was not the first time when promotions in the officer corps had not favored some officers. For instance, in 1964, when Yakubu Gowon, then a major was promoted to the rank of a lieutenant-colonel, his “course mates at Sandhurst—Alexander Madiebo, Patrick Anwunah, Anthony Eze, and Michael Okwechima—all Igbo were passed by and no eyebrows were raised.

Although, a significant number of the 21 officers who benefited in the May 1966 promotion exercise were Igbo, clarity remains that: “several majors were promoted to acting Lt.-colonel and some others were promoted substantive Lt.-colonels” (Siollun, 2009: 91). Those of them who were in the latter category, were prior to the coup d’état, “already acting Lt.-colonels, and simply had their temporary/acting ranks confirmed”. Another reality worthy of mention is that although the Igbo predominated the officer corps especially the middle rank of major at the time, it was an ‘advantage’ that accrued to the Igbo by default: ‘The imminent end of de facto colonial rule forced the British who needed to replace the all-British officer corps with indigenous men, to alter their recruitment policy into the colonial military forces in the Nigeria project beginning from the 1950s to look for qualified indigenous men with the requisite Western educational qualifications. They found them mostly in the nationalities that inhabit the lower Niger areas, especially amongst the Igbo. Since the Yoruba had not yet over-come their age-old aversion for enlistment and participation in

the colonial military forces over the latter's excesses during the course of colonial conquest and subjugation, even though the British on their part deemed the Igbo unsuitable colonial subjects due to their exceptional democratic social authority patterns, the prevalent acute military manpower pressure left the British no other viable option than the recruitment of the well qualified Igbo young men who presented themselves for recruitment. As for the Igbo, this writer observed elsewhere paraphrasing William F. Gutteridge (1970) that:

Ahead in Western education, and being a nationality in which the individual is free in society to embark on pursuits for personal advancement without first securing the approval of the ruling elite, the Igbo quickly took advantage of the window of opportunity which opened in the officer corps and enlisted in record numbers. In 1956 and in 1960 when colonial rule ended, 68% of the officer corps was composed of the Igbo (Ejiogu, 2011: 164).

In contrast, only 17% and 14% respectively were from nationalities in the north and the Yoruba.

Furthermore, due to the preponderance of men from the nationalities that inhabit the upper Niger in the junior ranks of the officer corps, and the non-commissioned officer (NCO) ranks, that promotion exercise benefited the north and its political establishment in the main. One researcher puts it quite succinctly:

Conversely, most junior officers and NCOs were Northerners and the primary beneficiaries of the promotion exercise in the junior ranks were logically also Northerners. The promoted Northern soldiers included Theophilus Danjuma, Muhammadu Buhari, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, Abdullahi Shelleng, Ibrahim Bako, Muhammadu Jega, Garba Dada ("Paiko") and Paul Tarfa. Strangely there were no complaints about the preponderance of Northern promotions in this category. All eyes remained formed on the Igbo majors promoted to Lt.-colonel. A group of Northern air force cadets were also dismissed due to their underwhelming educational achievements. The exercise seemed to be part of a broader leaning by Aguiy-Ironsi away from quota towards more merit based system (Siollun, 2009: 92).

Of the five northerners who were promoted—Murtala Mohammed, Joe Akahan, Hassan Katsina, and Mohammed Shuwa were the most generously favored: "The promotion to Lt.-colonel of Murtala [Muhammed], Shuwa and Haruna was particularly generous because at the time of the promotions, all three were only substantive captains (holding temporary ranks as majors) yet they were promoted to Lt.-colonel".

So then, it turned out that in a time space of just a few months, the next phase was being readied to pounce yet again on the Igbo who Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe described as "the world's most brutally targeted and most viciously murdered of peoples" with deadly, wanton orchestrated political violence.

MURDERERS, INFAMOUS PHONE CALL, MURDERS

As those heady days unfolded further, the next time that Major Adekunle is encountered in the thick of the tragic events that aimed at spilling innocent Igbo blood was late in the wee-hours of July 29 in Enugwu, Igboland, which was also the regional capital of the then Eastern Region where the army's 1st Battalion was based. He was the deputy to the Igbo battalion commander, Lt.-colonel David Ogunewe. The revolt and targeted massacre of Igbo officers and other ranks in all the army formations, which was systematically planned by Murtala Muhammed, Theophilus Danjuma and a host of other officers from nationalities in the upper Niger, had already commenced in the Abeokuta Garrison late in the night of the previous day. It had spread to Lagos and Ibadan, the capital of the Western Region where Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi and his host, the military governor of the Region, Lt.-Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi had been abducted from the State House by northern soldiers under Theophilus Danjuma's command. Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon's infamous telephone

FEATURED ARTICLE

Professor EC Ejiogu was with the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is the author of the paradigm-changing, *The Roots of Political Instability in Nigeria: Political Evolution and Development in the Niger Basin* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011).

FEATURED ARTICLE

call from Lagos to the State House, Ibadan had, according to Theophilus Danjuma, been made and coincidentally taken by Danjuma himself and the following conversation had ensued between them:

Gowon: “Hello I want to speak to the brigade commander. I want to speak to Colonel Njoku.”

Danjuma: “May I know who is speaking?”

Gowon: “My name is Gowon. Yakubu Gowon.”

Danjuma: “Ranka dede.” This is Yakubu Danjuma.”

Gowon: “Yakubu. What are you doing there? Where are you?”

Danjuma: “I am in the State House here.”

Gowon: “Where is the brigade commander?”

Danjuma: “He is not around.”

Gowon: “Have you heard what has happened?”

Danjuma: “Yes. I heard and that is why I am here. We are about to arrest the Supreme Commander. The alternative is that the Igbo boys who carried out the January coup will be released tit for tat since we killed their own officer[s].”

Gowon: (after a long pause). Can you do it?”

Danjuma: “Yes. We have got the place surrounded.”

Gowon: “Alright but for goodness sake we have had enough bloodshed. There must be no bloodshed.”

Danjuma: “No. We are only going to arrest him” (Siollun, 2009: 105)

What illogical meaning would any reasonable person read into the chummy-chummy conversation between Yakubu Gowon, a lieutenant-colonel, and Chief of Army Staff at the time and Theophilus Danjuma, a junior officer who was evidently caught red handed in the course of committing a grievous offense? The “Can you do it?” and “Alright...” clearly constitute a ‘go ahead’, while the “...but for goodness sake we have had enough bloodshed” is a worrisome after thought. What would a junior officer who surrounded the location of his Supreme Commander with unidentified and armed soldiers and proclaim that they were “only going to arrest him” without explaining to the superior officer—who never bothered to ask—where he would take the former to, do with him after he does? Take him to a picnic? The world has since that horrible day known that it was not what happened. Furthermore, it is incontrovertible that even Yakubu Gowon himself is implicated from that outset in the phases of the Igbo genocide that took place in the period, 1966-1970. Back to Benjamin Adekunle.

In Enugwu where Adekunle is encountered again in those stream of events, not much is heard about him even though quite a lot can be gleaned from the stream of events to implicate him in the genocide of the Igbo during the time. In the 1st Battalion, there is a Captain Baba Usman, a northerner in the army intelligence unit who Murtala Muhammed and his gang designated to spearhead their assault on Igbo officers and men in Enugwu. But as fate would have it, Usman was in faraway city of Aba that night. His absence deprived his fellow northern officers in the battalion of the catalytic leadership they needed to swing into action after they dressed up and got themselves ready. Ogunewe was quick to deploy his able crisis management skills right after he was alerted by the fabled distress telephone calls from a Lt. Ogbonna in the Abeokuta Garrison. That, coupled with Usman’s God-sent absence from base, put Ogunewe ahead of the genocidists:

Ogunewe found Northern soldiers in his battalion (including Captain Gibson Jalo and Lieutenants Shehu Musa Yar’Adua, M. D. Jega and A. A. Abubakar) dressed in combat fatigues and readying themselves to commence an assault in Enugu. Using all his persuasive powers, he managed to convince them to hand over the armory keys and negotiated a tense but effective truce with Northern soldiers” (Siollun, 2009: 16). That, notwithstanding, Murtala Muhammed’s repeated signals to his fellow northerners still galvanized some of them who still “attempted to break into the Enugu armory but were overpowered (Siollun, 2009: 16).



Swearing in of the ISA Advisory Board at the Annual Conference of the Igbo Studies Association in Chicago

As the spilling of innocent Igbo blood sustained, was it by happenstance that when Yoruba officers felt so ‘concerned for their safety’ and “sent a delegation consisting of Lt.-Colonel Obasanjo, Major Oluleye and Captains Akinfenwa and Timothy B. Ogundeko to the Northern Region’s military governor, Lt.-Colonel Katsina, to report their fears” (Siollun, 2009: 132), not Benjamin Adekunle whose father is Yoruba from Ogbomosho and mother is Bachama; a nationality in the upper Niger, not Emmanuel Abisoye, not David Jemibewon and the other Yoruba officers from northern Yorubaland, which was part of the then Northern Region were included?

The tenor, i.e. his complicity in the wanton wastage of innocent Igbo lives, of the narrative remained the same when next Benjamin Adekunle is encountered: As

“the deputy commander of the 1st battalion in Enugu... [w]hen a decision was made to repatriate army officers [and rank and file] to their regions of origin, Adekunle and Northern soldiers in his unit (sic) were to leave Enugu and head first to Kaduna, and then to Lagos. Simultaneously a group of surviving Igbo soldiers that had been detained in Kaduna prison for their safety were to be repatriated to Enugu via Lagos. When they were released for transportation by train to Enugu, Adekunle promised them safe passage to Lagos from where they could then proceed to Enugu. Northern soldiers in Adekunle’s battalion and the Igbo soldiers were placed on the same train. Some Northern soldiers having long been frustrated at their inability to kill Igbo thus far, finally got their opportunity. They descended upon the Igbo soldiers, killed them and threw their bodies off the train. For promising safe passage to the Igbo soldiers, Adekunle too was attacked, but was saved by the intervention of Captain Jalo. Although his father was a Yoruba from Ogbomosho, Adekunle’s mother was like Jalo, from the Bachama ethnic group of the Northern Region (Siollun, 2009: 132-3).

Think of it: Major Benjamin Adekunle, the deputy battalion commander was simply ‘attacked’ by the same northern soldiers from his battalion, on the same train, who ‘descended on Igbo soldiers, killed them and threw their bodies off the train...but was saved’ by Gibson Jalo whose mother and Benjamin Adekunle’s mother are from the Bachama nationality in the upper Niger. For full disclosure, this is the same Captain Gibson Jalo of the 1st Battalion who was encountered on the night of July 29 when he was dressed in combat attire with other northerner officers ‘and readying themselves to commence an assault in Enugu’ to massacre Igbo officers and other ranks in the army.

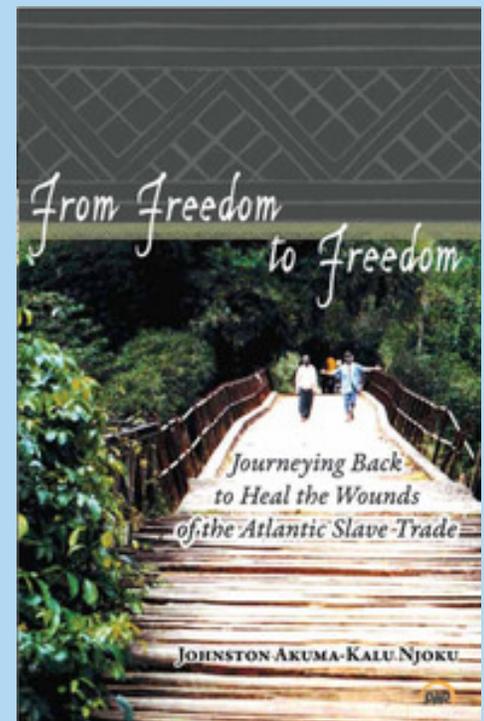
As battlefield commander, Benjamin Adekunle projected such unparalleled ruthlessness from the very onset of the genocidal war against Biafra that earned him notoriety and the ghoulish moniker, ‘Black Scorpion’. He had no qualms looking the World Press in the eyes in 1968 in southern Igboland where he gave a press conference and proclaimed the following as the London-based weekly, *The Economist* reported in its 24 August 1968 issue: “I want to prevent even one Ibo having even one piece to eat before their capitulation”. In the same story in *The Economist*, he expressed what is best termed his combat conduct mantra being: “We shoot at everything, even at things that don’t move” (*The Economist*, August 24, 1968 in Ekwe-Ekwe, 2014).

ASABA, RELIEF AIRCRAFT, OUTING MEMOIR

Could such an individual with such checkered antecedence have cultivated such hatred against the Igbo overnight? He was Yakubu Gowon’s only battlefield commander in that war who was quietly removed from command and sidelined into private life and made to forfeit every opportunity to have the access to enrich himself as an actor in successive military and non-military regimes in the Nigeria project. Benjamin Adekunle’s mortal sin could probably have been his loud mouth, which enabled him to get account of his atrocities on the Igbo to the World Press in his own words. Others—including Murtala Muhammed who was implicated in the massacre of Asaba males, and even Olusegun

FEATURED ARTICLE

FEATURED MEMBER PUBLICATION



Johnston Akuma-Kalu Njoku
*FROM FREEDOM TO FREEDOM:
Journeying Back to Heal the Wounds of the
Atlantic Slave Trade.*

Trenton: Africa World Press, 2014.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Obasanjo (1981: 79 in Ekkwe-Ekwe 2014)) who personally outed himself in his 1981 war memoir, *My Command* over the downing of one of the clearly marked International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) small civilian aircrafts that ferried relief supplies to starving Biafran women and children by Gbadamosi King on his orders on June 5—who kept mute over their own atrocities fared quite better.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

The last encounter with Benjamin Adekunle is this time right after he passed away. From newspaper reports, in his last days, he experienced what he inflicted on the Igbo as battlefield commander: He could not even get enough to eat or with which he could seek adequate medical attention anywhere decent in the West. His children scrapped around from his few benefactors for just enough to ferry him to India for the third-rate type of medical treatment that flourish over there in backyard hospitals and clinics. Perhaps the Bible is right on the mark when it intones: The measure you give, will be the measure you will reap.

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IGBO AS A LANGUAGE OF NORTH AMERICA: FOLKTALES AND LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

Chidi Igwe

The aim of this paper is to present the objectives of my current Igbo folktales and language documentation research project, and the context within which the project was conceived. The second part of this paper, which I intend to publish in a later edition of the Igbo Studies Association Newsletter, will focus on the theoretical framework, methodology and preliminary findings. Igbo language has been categorized as an endangered language due to a variety of social, cultural and linguistic factors (Igwe 2013; Odinye and Odinye 2010; Azuonye 2002). The traditional stories of the Igbo people which have been passed on from generation to generation now face the risk of being forgotten and lost to modernity. This is because modern professional families have neither the time nor the knowledge of the Igbo oral tradition to be able to transfer to their children. I intend to record one hundred traditional stories, folktales, fables, riddles and jokes, narrated by native speakers of Igbo language, living in ten major cities in Canada (Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Regina, Montreal, Ottawa, Saskatoon, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg). These ten cities have been selected because they have a large number of Igbo native speakers who have migrated to Canada in recent years. These immigrants have already organized themselves into community organizations and cultural associations such as the Igbo Cultural Association of Saskatchewan, the Umunna (Igbo) Cultural Association of Manitoba, the Igbo Cultural Association of Calgary, the Igbo Cultural Association of Edmonton, the Saskatoon Igbo Cultural Association, the Igbo Development Association of British Columbia, the Quebec Igbo Association, Association of Nigerians in Nova Scotia, and the Igbo Union of Canada (Toronto).

I am partnering with the above organisations to organize story-telling workshops. These workshops will provide an opportunity for select members of the Igbo communities listed above to tell Igbo traditional stories and folktales in their mother tongue. I will document the oral traditions of the Igbo people of Canada through the use of state-of-the-art video cameras and sound recorders. The data collected will be subject to multiple uses. I will transform some of the stories into screenplays for animated cartoons and storybooks for language learners. I will publish articles focusing on the expressive, syntactical/grammatical features of Igbo language. I will transcribe some of the stories to produce texts and passages for the culture and rhetorical components of my current Igbo language instruction/acquisition book project.

The future of the Igbo language and its traditional tales is not too certain. According to Odinye and Odinye (2010), language endangerment can be defined as a condition whereby the socio-economic, political, technological, cultural, and religious ecologies have altered to a point where some language species cannot survive or thrive in them. The social, cultural, and economic situation of Nigeria has changed rapidly in the last few years favouring more and more the use of English language. The increasing valorization of English language forces many syntactical and morphological changes upon the indigenous languages. Igbo language shows insufficient lexical creativity to respond adequately to the naming needs that come with introducing new products and concepts into the indigenous cultures. For instance, Odinye and Odinye (2010: 89) noted that the use of Igbo language in government, schools, churches, meetings, campaigns, conversations, or at homes is continuously decreasing. Since linguistic competence increases with practice, the mastery of the language is constantly decreasing among young people. Thus, it is becoming more and more difficult to find young people who can speak Igbo fluently without resorting to a linguistic phenomenon known as “Engli-Igbo”, a form of code-switching or code mixing exemplified in Obiamalu and Mbagwu (2008), and this is why a language supposedly spoken by over 30 million people living predominantly in Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Abia, and parts of Delta and Rivers States of Nigeria, and hundreds of thousands of immigrants of Igbo origin living in other parts of Africa, Europe, North America, and Asia

RESEARCH NOTE



Chidi Nnamdi Igwe, PhD
PRO, Igbo Studies Association
Assistant Professor
Department of French
University of Regina
3737 Wascana Parkway
Regina, SK, CANADA S4S 0A2
Chidi.Igwe@uregina.ca

RESEARCH NOTE

CONDOLENCE



The Igbo Studies Association hereby express our heartfelt condolences to the family of Professor Apollos Nwauwa and the entire Nwauwa family on the death of their mother, Mrs Veronica Nwauwa Irechukwu, of Uburuekwe autonomous community in Isu LGA of Imo State, on Thursday, August 7, 2014 at the age of 76. May God grant her eternal peace

Prof Nwauwa is the immediate past president of the Igbo Studies Association.

is categorized today as an endangered language.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research project is to study, document and preserve the Igbo language through the documentation and preservation of its folktales, which have been transferred orally from generation to generation. This project is the only effort till date to preserve these tales and make them available to the future generations in an audiovisual and written format, adapted to modern life within the Igbo families of North America. This folktale documentation project is necessary because the traditional stories of the Igbo people face the danger of being forgotten and lost to modernity, the same way that the Igbo language faces the danger of extinction. Igbo is endangered partially due to decreasing native-speaker fluency, lack of language acquisition tools (books, articles, cartoons, narrated stories, etc.) and diminishing interest in Igbo acquisition because English remains the language of social upward mobility in the different areas where Igbo is spoken. Some of the sociolinguistic factors that lead to Igbo endangerment have been explained in Igwe (2013), Eme (2004), Odinye and Odinye (2010), Obiamalu and Mbagwu (2008), etc. This project will generate linguistic data that can be put to multiple uses. I intend to use the data to create written literature, storybooks, animated cartoons that can be used for entertainment, language instruction and acquisition.

With regards to the importance of the Igbo traditional stories and folktales to the Igbo community, Ogbalu (2011) noted that:

No one can exactly say when Igbo folktale originated but one thing is certain, the folktale is as old as the society it belongs to. Folktale stems from man's desire to communicate his experiences to others, to let others share his views about life, to direct members of the society, to satirize deviant characters in the society and to instill the spirit of love for the community amongst members of the society. It is interesting to note that the folktale narrator lives in the community with others. He takes materials for his tales from his experiences in the community so the events of Igbo folktales are not strange to his audience. Igbo folktales contain the people's culture, worldview, norms, spiritual life, their hopes and aspirations. In short Igbo folktale contains Igbo man's total way of life. It is the recreation of the folk's activities in the society (Ogbalu 2011: 56).

This research project is very important because Igbo, a language of over thirty million native speakers living predominantly in South-Eastern Nigeria, and which, due to immigration, now has a significant native-speaker representation in North America, is categorized as an endangered language due to sociolinguistic factors resulting in decreasing native-speaker competence. Like most African languages and cultures, the Igbo language is based on oral tradition. History, customs, traditions, etc., are transferred from generation to generation through storytelling and oral discourses. In North America and everywhere else where Igbo is spoken, modern professional families often have neither the time nor the knowledge of the oral traditions to transfer to their children. On the other hand, the children have the time to learn language, values, customs, ethics, etc., through media contents such as cartoons.

CONTEXT

According to Ogbalu (2011: 55), Igbo folktales by their nature as well as their definitions are regarded as fictitious, fabulous and mythical stories and, yet, they exhibit some elements of truth that somehow translate them into realism and true life situation, and that is why, in the appreciation of the tales, real people react to them as if they were real life stories. Igbo language is spoken by over thirty million people living predominantly in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, and parts of Delta and Rivers States of Nigeria. It is the mother tongue of hundreds of thousands of immigrants of Igbo origin living in other parts of Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia. Nigeria is a West African nation with a

population of over 170 million people. English is the official language of Nigeria, retained after the British colonization of Nigeria to foster the unity of a country with a high level of linguistic diversity, where, according to Crozier and Blench (1992), Grimes (2000), and Heine and Nurse (2000), over four hundred languages and dialects are spoken. This multilingual context created the first set of challenges for Igbo, which is now struggling to survive as one of the national languages of Nigeria (Igwe 2013). The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) report on endangered languages shows that Igbo language faces the risk of extinction in the next fifty years. It is hard to find young people who speak Igbo fluently without code-switching (Obiamalu and Mbagwu 2008). Sociolinguistic factors that I have described in Igwe (2013) and lack of modern language acquisition tools contribute to the Igbo language endangerment. In the past twenty years, no good textbooks have been published for teaching Igbo language and culture in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools. The Igbo problem is not only a linguistic one. It also affects other aspects of the Igbo life as modern professional families continue to replace traditional ones and the Anglo-American culture continues to penetrate deeper and deeper into Igbo towns and villages.

This research raises new questions within the theoretical frame-work of language endangerment, documentation and preservation of minority languages of Canada. In the statistical data on linguistic demography and ethnic origins of Canada as shown in the 2011 census, 3,665 Canadian residents declared Igbo as their mother tongue. 770 residents declared Igbo as the language they use primarily at home. The 2006 census report puts the number of Canadian residents of Nigerian origin at over 11,405 people. Knowing that the two largest ethnocultural groups of Nigerian immigrants to Canada are Igbo and Yoruba, one may conclude therefore that a good number of the Canadian residents of Nigerian origin did not declare their mother tongue on the census questionnaire. However, Statistics Canada (2011) shows that the number of Igbo speakers in Canada is larger than that of some indigenous languages of Canada such as Algonquin (with 1,755 speakers), Michif (with 645 speakers), Mohawk (with 545 speakers), etc.

This project is very important because, within the context of the Canadian multiculturalism, it will rejuvenate some of the potentially lost values, customs, cultures, etc., calved into the Igbo oral tradition and folktales and passed on from generation to generation. Other than the few cartoons and other language resources I have created in collaboration with the Igbo Cultural Association of Saskatchewan and published at www.igboteacher.com, no cartoons, animated learning materials and storybooks have been published in recent years to help children entertain themselves in Igbo, learn Igbo language, values, culture, customs and tradition. No language acquisition books have been published to help language instructors and parents transfer their mother tongue to their children and preserve their linguistic and cultural identity. Igbo language and culture cannot survive extinction if they are not being transferred to the children.

This project will create resources for the education of the Igbo child. One of the functions of Igbo folktale is education. My daughter, Chidera Igwe, is one of the inspirations behind this research. She is now four years old. I have watched her grow and sometimes I am marvelled at her linguistic competence in the use of English. Her understanding of the Canadian values and way of life is impressive and she learned most of it by watching cartoons on Tree House TV: Dora the Explorer, Toopy and Binoo, Max and Ruby, Caillou, Team Umizoomi, etc. There are many other children like Chidera in so many Igbo families across North America, Europe and Africa. Their parents continue to wish that they could transfer some of the beautiful Igbo values to their children, including the language. The digital documentation and dissemination of the Igbo traditional stories through cartoons will help families grow in the knowledge of the language, culture and values. Duruaku (2004), Emenanjo (1977), Ogbalu (2011), etc., show that, over the years, the Igbo folktale has been used to educate both the young and the aged, and that Igbo folktale is an embodiment of the Igbo people's worldview which is formed based on the

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FEATURED MEMBER PUBLICATION

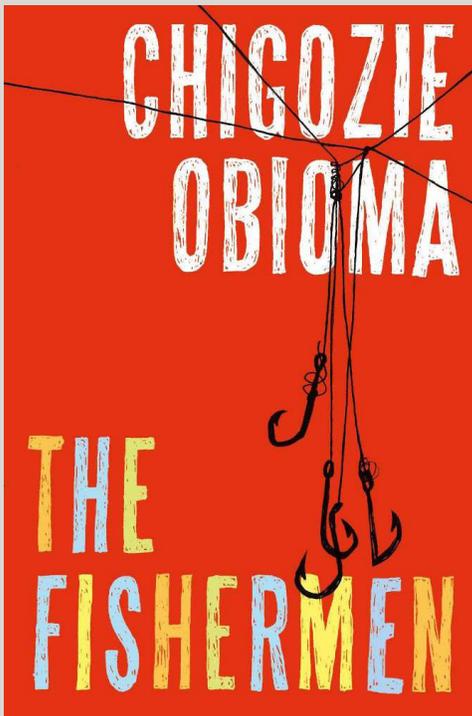


Ogechi E. Anyanwu (Ed.)
Journal of Retracing Africa (JORA).
Richmond: Eastern Kentucky University,
2014.

The *Journal of Retracing Africa (JORA)*, a peer-reviewed African studies journal that welcomes submissions of original, previously unpublished manuscripts on a broad thematic and chronological range, is edited by Dr Ogechi Anyanwu.

RESEARCH NOTE

FEATURED MEMBER PUBLICATION



Chigozie Obioma
THE FISHERMEN.
New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015.

folk's observation of social behaviour. Ogbalu (2011) further highlights that folktales are designed to inspire, to provide moral standard, and to mirror the activities of members of the society. This research will provide an opportunity to knowledgeable members of the Igbo Canadian community to provide leadership, and participate in an elaborate effort to document, preserve and disseminate a very important aspect of the Igbo experience.

In Igbo culture, folktale is normally told in the evening after the evening chores. Ogbalu (2011) states that, unlike formal education which is characterized by strictness and rigidity, storytelling in Igbo families often takes place in a relaxed atmosphere. As we see in Ekwensi's novel, *An African Night's Entertainment* (1962), at night, children normally sit round the fire place in the courtyard to listen to folktales. Stories are narrated by elders, usually the parents, or grandparents. The children are then invited turn by turn to tell their own stories. When I was young, I remember spending time during the day learning stories so that I could tell them at night time. I remember the elders putting us in small groups to compete in the use of Igbo proverbs, riddles, jokes and tongue twisters. From a linguistic perspective, I am interested in examining how, through the Igbo folktales, proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters are introduced to the children to make them speak fluently. What is missing in today's modern Igbo families is that the immigrant Igbo parents in North America and Europe, even those in Africa, have become too busy with work and professional activities. They have to struggle to survive, put food on the table, pay the children's school fees, send money to help extended family members back in Nigeria, etc. They no longer have the time to gather the children around the fire place for storytelling.

In his work on the impact of storytelling session on the Igbo child, Ogu (1992) noted as follows:

- It gives the child the opportunity of using imagination to decipher the truth and develop his intellectual ability. Their wits are tested by allowing them give quick answers to questions posed to them.
- It helps the child develop creative thinking as a natural process through which a person becomes aware of a problem, difficulty or gap in information for which he has no previous knowledge.
- Obedience and respect are other contributions of folktale to children development. Most stories and songs condemn bad behaviour. In African folktales good always triumphs over evil, truth over falsehood, honesty over dishonesty.
- National consciousness and patriotism are inculcated into the child with the aid of folktale. Children learn bravery, selflessness, etc., from legendary stories and songs that tell how heroes suffered greatly or even died for their people. Children become attracted to such characters and usually aspire to be like them.

This project will provide an opportunity for the documentation and preservation of Igbo lullaby and bed-time songs. It is a common feature of folktales to punctuate the story with songs. These songs help to enliven the narrative (Ogbalu 2011). Even, the use of music and sound effects is an important aspect of Canadian children's Tree House TV series such as Dora the Explorer, Toopy and Binoo, Max and Ruby, Caillou, and Umizoomi. According to Obiechina (1990: 47), "song not only heightens the narrative but also vivifies it. It also ensures audience participation... Song also helps to ensure the alertness and attention of the audience, as well as providing them with some respite or digression as the story progresses".

I want to examine characterization as another important aspect of the Igbo folktale. Preliminary investigation reveals that Igbo folktales make use of certain characters, and the role of each character is clearly identified in such a way that the audience can learn moral lessons from the character's words and behaviour. Emenanjo (1977: xv) asserts that, "one can say that all the characters in folktales, be they animals, spirits or human beings are stock character. For very often each character represents a motive in the framework of

the tale.” From a linguistic perspective, how do the narrator’s diction and choice of words shape the characters in folktales in ways that illustrate a point or the view of the narrator? I intend to study the expressive features of the Igbo language by examining how the narrator places the words, what words are used and how those words interact with other words in discourse to achieve the above effects on the audience. This research is very important because it is the only effort up till now to use technology to document the Igbo traditional stories and make them available for dissemination in a format adapted to modern life.

In conclusion, it is evident that less literature is available in Igbo language. To researchers on African and Igbo oral tradition, language and culture, both the primary data and the published works will be of immense value. The primary data and the published works will add to the very limited body of published works in Igbo language, making the language more accessible to linguists and researchers. The recorded stories themselves, since they serve the transmission of cultural knowledge and values, will shed light on traditions, practices and moral codes of the Igbo people. Igbo is categorized as an endangered language. Recording, transcribing, documenting and preserving the Igbo folktales do not only serve to generate linguistic data, but also an important step toward language revitalization. The language cannot survive without great effort from the language community. The project will provide a body of literature to draw on for other tasks such as the preparation of language learning materials and the study of the expressive and grammatical features of Igbo language. Preliminary investigation shows that there is currently limited studies on the grammatical structure, verb conjugation and verbal tenses, etc., of the Igbo language. I intend to use the raw data collected as a basis for the description of Igbo syntactical structure. What forms of nominal units exist? How do the nominal elements interact with other grammatical categories in discourse? What verb tenses are available and what expressive functions do they have? The data collected will be used to study the grammar and expressive features of the Igbo language.

The linguistic primary data collected during the first phase of this project will be made accessible to a variety of audiences for multiple uses. As part of the project, the primary data will be annotated and structured into a database of Igbo traditional stories and folktales. The database and transcripts will be archived at the University of Regina Archives and Special Collections. The colleagues, community members, graduate students and research assistants who participated in the process of collecting, annotating, evaluating and preserving the stories may be inspired to use them right away or later in the future to pursue and achieve other research interests. Linguists, researchers and scholars are able to access the database for examples of natural speech. The database will form the basis for other forms of linguistic and literary interrogations for improved language literacy, conference presentations, peer-reviewed research and methodological articles.

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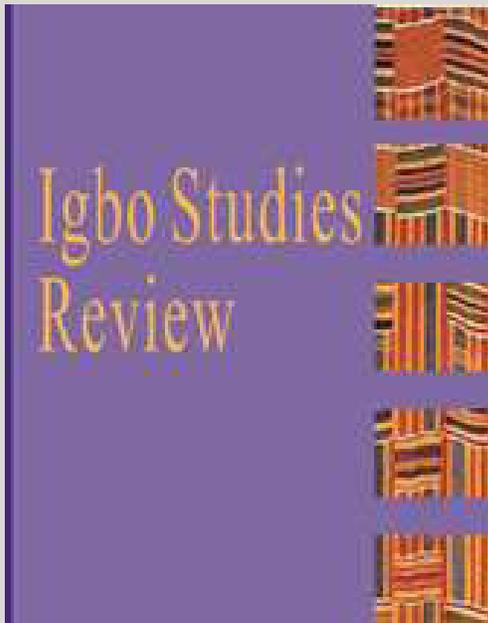
CONGRATULATIONS



The Igbo Studies Association extend a healthy congratulations to Rev Sr Carol Ijeoma Njoku who successfully defended her PhD in Literature at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka on 31 October 2014.

RESEARCH NOTE

ISA PUBLICATION



The Journal of the Igbo Studies Association
ISSN 2325-0801

Igbo Studies Review (ISR) is peer-reviewed journal that publishes original research from scholars across the disciplines on all aspects of studies on the Igbo of Nigeria, including topics related to the Igbo Diaspora worldwide.

Submission: isr@goldlineandjacobs.com

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A FEW PICTURE MOMENTS FROM ISA CONFERENCE

CHICAGO 2014



ANNOUNCEMENT

ISA CONFERENCE - WISCONSIN 2015 CALL

The Igbo Studies Association (ISA) invites submissions from scholars and professionals working on all aspects of studies on the Igbo of southern Nigeria for its 13th annual international conference to be held from April 9-11, 2015 at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. Over the past decade, scholars and experts have gathered annually to deliberate on diverse facets of the Igbo people. Considering the current economic conditions of the Igbo region in Nigeria, the consensus is that the discourse must progress to strategies for development. In other words what are the practical steps that must be taken to remedy the problem of development in the Igbo region today? The deadline for submitting paper/panel proposals is November 15, 2014. Completed papers are due for submission by December 10, 2014. All abstracts and papers must be submitted online at: <http://igbostudiesassociation.org/index.php/submission/submit-abstract>.

Inquiries to:
Raphael C. Njoku, PhD, Conference Chair
TEL: (208) 282-4164 ; Email: njoku08@gmail.com

ISA NEWSLETTER VOLUME 2 CALL

The Igbo Studies Association is seeking submissions from members for the second issue of the ISA Newsletter. You may submit the following types of item:

- Short research notes of between 500 and 1000 words.
- Academic events such as conferences and workshops that will be of interest to members.
- Vacancies.
- Recent publications such as monographs or edited collections with full publication information including a high resolution image of the cover.
- Other events that will be of interest to members.

We plan to have the second issue published by the end of March 2015. All submissions must reach Dr Chidi Igwe via the editor's coordinates below by March 5, 2015.



ISA NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Chidi Igwe, PhD
PRO, Igbo Studies Association
Chidi.Igwe@igwe.ca
1.306.581.4493

MAILING ADDRESS

c/o Department of History, Sensenbrenner Hall,
202A, 1103 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Marquette University
P.O. Box 1881, Milwaukee
WI 53201-1881 (USPS); 53233 (courier)