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## 30 Years of Ahiajoku Lectures 1979-2009: Anthropology and Law, A Critical Survey

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### Abstract

Ahiajoku Lectures is a rich, seminal public lecture established in Imo State - Nigeria since 1979. The output of this lecture series has been phenomenal, creating dependable sources for various aspects of Igbo studies and opening up new vistas of research outlets especially about the Igbo people of Southeast Nigeria. This paper first assesses the contribution of the Lecture series to public enlightenment, over the first 30 years of its existence (1979 – 2009), especially with regards to critical study of the Igbo people and, concentrating on the contributions of the Lecture series in the areas of Anthropology and Law, makes a critical analysis of the offerings of the Lecture series in these two very important dimensions of the knowledge and cultural heritage of the Igbo people. This paper is an effort to debrief the Lecture series, to highlight its importance and role, as well as to focus the searchlight on its rich contributions in the areas of Anthropology and Law.

**Keywords:** 30 Years of Ahiajoku Lectures (1979 – 2009), Anthropology, Law, Public Enlightenment, Igbo people.

## Introduction

30 years is a long time, a good enough time to examine the fruits of an institution such as the *Ahiajoku* lecture series has become. This paper is an attempt to contribute in this exercise of “looking back” the way we have come and “looking forward” to many pathways yet to be traversed. It is a critical appreciation, with the appreciation of course taking center stage and the critical suggestions following. First, I examine the fruits of the lecture series in general and then attempt an evaluation of the contributions of the lecture series in the areas of anthropology and law. In my conclusion, besides highlighting the crucial roles of these two disciplines, the need to give them more time and attention in the *Ahiajoku* events, I try to establish the intimate linkage between anthropology and law and the need for both disciplines to collaborate in rescuing what we presently call customary laws from the secondary place they have occupied since our colonial days. I also enter some suggestions about how the lecture series might be improved upon, particularly with regard to the mission/mandate given to future *Ahiajoku* lecturers and the creation of follow up loops and institutions to harvest and vivify the insights generated by these lectures.

## The mission of *Ahiajoku* Lecture Series

Since its inception in 1979, the *Ahiajoku* lecture series has become the most important annual public lecture in Igboland. It is a lecture series that gives prime place to thinking, to reflection, to respecting genius and celebrating intellectual labor. The choice of *Ahiajoku* laureates has been wise, encompassing the length and breath of Igboland. Most *Ahiajoku* lecturers fall into the higher echelon bracket of eminent Igbo scholars, distinguished as flag bearers of their chosen disciplines, at home and abroad. Through great industry, resourcefulness and dogged ploughing, profound harrowing and dedicated ridging of their particular disciplines, they have set themselves apart from their peers. *Ahiajoku* lecture has featured scholars occupying with dignity and grace the growing tip of their chosen disciplines. Nor have they failed to deliver when called upon to do so. Each of these lectures over the years is a gold mine of information, enlightening, profound yet simple, accessible and even entertaining.

It is therefore only fair that we all recall with gratitude the founding fathers of *Ahiajoku* and mention at least three names that triggered this phenomenon: Ambassador

Gaius Anoka of illustrious memory, whose dogged vision created the lecture series, Chief Sam Mbakwe, unforgettable former Governor of Imo State, who generously gave that seminal idea state backing and funding, and Prof. M. J. C. Echeruo, who fired the first salvo, with such dexterity and gusto, that 30 years after it was first delivered, *A Matter of Identity*, still brings back fond memories and nourishes the soul of the Igbo like a healing balm. A long line of eminent Igbo scholars and administrators have since then used their vast intellectual resources and organizational acumen to etch the *Ahiajoku* spirit into the consciousness of Igbo people, at home and in the Diaspora.

What has the lecture series achieved? By every standard, *Ahiajoku* lecture series is a tremendous success. By providing a counterforce to extraversion of indigenous scholars, the *Ahiajoku* lecture series has created an opportunity, a fora, for indigenous wards of Western style education to address their home—audience, their own people, and their own native challenges, problems, needs and aspirations. This they have done using their knowledge, the insights, experience, exposure and acquired tools, techniques, skills, methods they have gained in their academic and life journeys, to probe and

plumb the depths of our variegated cultural heritage. Thus, in the spirit of *Aku ruo ulo*, in keeping with wisdom of gathering in the richness of insights available for the sojourner, (*Nwata ukwu nje nje ka oki isi awo no n 'ulo ihe ama*), the *Ahiajoku* lecture series has provided adequate reasons for homecoming of Igbo scholars, physically, mentally and spiritually. Thus *Ahiajoku* lecture is a credible return loop that allows local scholars to do at home what they have done in Jerusalem, in Washington, in New York, in London, in Brussels and elsewhere. One of the regrets of the introduction of Western style education in our land is the unhealthy division it has brought between the so-called lettered and the unlettered, between urban and rural peoples, and especially between town and gown.

Academics seem locked up in ivory towers, distanced from their own people, unaffected by their many travails. *Ahiajoku* lecture is one popular, yet eminently scientific, lecture that brings the entire community together. They troop out in their numbers; traders jostling with professors, statesmen sitting side by side with their most consistent critics, the religious establishment, children and undergraduates, young men and women, and across every conceivable class-making

parameter. The openness of the event, the incredible mix of audience, all attest to this exciting role of *Ahiajoku* in the task of community building.

It has also created and enhanced the spirit of solidarity among this emerging Igbo scientific community. The necessary encampment of scholars in different higher institutions, sometimes blurs the sense of community that should exist between scholars wherever they are domiciled. *Ahiajoku* lecture brings these seemingly scattered brains together, a coming together that sometimes creates powerful synergy through mutual recognition of strengths, capacities and opportunities for cross fertilization and cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Academics need to be challenged, need to be presented with problems to tackle with their mental might. Along this curve *Ahiajoku* has been such a rich outlet that galvanizes and mobilizes the intellectual resources in the land towards quality production of knowledge, extending, with particular reference to Igbo life, culture, history, environment, the frontiers of what is known and reducing the darkness of ignorance and its myriad negative effects on the society. This is also a service to younger generations

of Igbo people, who are thus being armed with seminal and salient ideas that could trigger deeper thinking and rational acting, in the spirit of relay race that enables civilizations to survive and flourish.

The growing lecture corpus is a veritable source material for Igbo people and others trying to understand the various extensions of Igbo culture using modern scientific methods and tools. This is why the plan to publish them in a series of volumes is very welcome. Similar plan should be extended to the rich corpus of colloquia lectures after carefully being selected by an editorial team.

As an effort to make the Igbo better known and understood, *Ahiajoku* has been a phenomenal success. No one can say again, “who are the Igbo people?” Through *Ahiajoku*, Igbo people at home and in the Diaspora have boldly stated who they are, forming numerous cultural organizations, creating cultural calendar for themselves for celebrating their Igbo-ness, using the vast resources of the multi-media and especially the internet to provide rich information about who they are, what they are doing, what their aspirations are, and networking among themselves in an incredibly intensive manner.

Not that all that interaction is productive.

There is a lot of bickering, boasting, attacking one another that sometimes unfortunately goes on in these internet conversations. But at least there is some dialogue going on even if with bloated egos! What is very significant is that self esteem, even patriotism, is returning and with full force to Igbo shores after the 1967-1970 affairs and their resilient shock waves.

As a force for mobilizing a people, *Ahiajoku* lecture has functioned as one spot where neither religious differences, political cleavages, economic stratification nor indeed geographical located-ness on the Igbo map, do not become an obstacle for Igbo people coming together. It is thanks to the steadfast watchfulness of the founding fathers and their wise successors that the lecture series has not suffered hijacking either by politicians or by noisy economic princes, seeking cheap popularity even by, disrupting and corrupting veritable cultural institutions in the land.

With regard to content, respecting the wishes of its founding fathers that scholars burrow into Igbo life and culture with the tools of their particular disciplines, the growing corpus of *Ahiajoku* lectures are united in being a powerful show case of “the riches within”, whether it is in our literature (oral

and written), in our folklore, in our ecology, in our political culture, in our traditional herbal medical practices and pharmacological possibilities or indeed in our history, local economic institutions or sophisticated gender relations. *Ahiajoku* lecturers have been full of praise where necessary and have been blunt and incisive with their criticism whenever it is called for. Aspects of Igbo character, love of freedom, creative industry, and even harmful arrogance and brashness have all come under the powerful scrutiny of these wise scholars. Some of the lectures have opened up lingering public debates, debates that have generated more knowledge and clarified previously held assumptions. Some of them have been eye-openers, creating either, “*na so?*”, or “*Ehee!*” Thus *Ahiajoku* lecture has become an important avenue for public education and re-education of consciousness.

A rich corpus of ideas have emerged from these efforts as testaments and tributes to the unflagging zeal and devotion of many seasoned men and women, who have supported the *Ahiajoku* phenomenon in a variety of ways. This paper examines the fruits in the area of anthropology and law, two disciplines that enter deeply into self-understanding and development as well as

the creation of order, harmony, peace and justice in the society.

### Features and fortunes of anthropology in the Ahiajoku lecture series

Perhaps no discipline can claim to have the kind of intimate attention and contact that anthropology does with regard to culture. If culture is then seen as a people's way of life, their habits, their arts and artifacts, their language, their signs and symbols, their cuisine and medical practices, their architecture and *techné*, their occupations and pastimes, their plays, songs and dances, their beliefs and rituals, their taboos, laws and mores, their fashions and attitudes, their vital institutions, modes of organization and gender relations, their tools, their world view, their philosophy and theology, in sum, to borrow Achebe's happy phrasing with regard to language, "a people's entire world",<sup>1</sup> then the crucial importance of anthropology, that discipline devoted to studying and unraveling culture, becomes obvious. This is possibly

why Professor Ikenna Nzimiro, in introducing Professor Angulu Onwuejeogwu, the first anthropologist to take to the podium to deliver the 8th edition of *Ahiajoku* lecture in 1987, lamented this late entry of anthropology into the conversation on culture that is at the heart of the *Ahiajoku* lecture series.<sup>2</sup>

This capacity of anthropology to both attract and repulse is historical, particularly for us Africans. From our own perspectives, the discipline arose at an unfortunate time, namely during the colonial and Christian missionary era and its capacities to throw light on a people from inside out, was quickly understood by our colonizers especially the British. They enlisted the discipline, its Darwinian ethos of the time and its best minds into the colonial enterprise, converting the incisive tools of anthropology into weapons for extending the power, the authority and the stranglehold of their violent enterprise.<sup>3</sup> Foreign anthropologists invaded our land, especially after the Aba women's

<sup>1</sup> Achebe, Chinua, quoted in Dan Izebaye, 'In Achebe's World' in *Uwa Ndi Igbo, Journal of Igbo life and Culture*, no. 1 June 1984, Nsukka, Okike Publications, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Ikenna Nzimiro, *Citation on the Academic Life of Michael Angulu Onwuejeogwu*, in *Evolutionary Trends in the History of the Development of the Igbo Civilization in the Culture Theatre of Igboland in Southern Nigeria*, M. Angulu Onwuejeogwu, 1987

*Ahiajoku Lecture*, Owerri, Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, 1987, p. v.

<sup>3</sup> Graduates of Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, as well as of St. Andrews, (Scotland), Dublin and Belfast, (Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively) were major recruiting grounds for anthropologists and district officers who wrote extensive intelligence reports for the colonial establishment.

riot/uprising/war, to study our cultural institutions, with an aim to generate and supply data and intelligence reports with which our colonizers could more effectively enshackle us.<sup>4</sup> They were quite successful in this mapping out of Igboland, pointing to our strengths and weaknesses, thus enabling the devising of edicts, laws and institutions, (such as the infamous warrant chiefs),<sup>5</sup> that corrupted and disorganized our land and its peoples in a profound way. In the hands of colonialists, anthropologists became allies and their work became tools of subjugation and oppression. It was through the unholy labor of anthropologists, acting as colonial apologists that a further darkened image of Africa evolved and circulated widely through Europe and the rest of the Western world. They contributed immensely to the negative stereotyping of our land, its people's, its cultures and its institutions. In so doing they helped to drastically reduce our people's self-esteem and self-worth, creating an unhealthy extraversion that has continued to plague us

on literally every front. By presenting our image in darkened murals, they created a tendency towards self-hatred, towards self-rejection, towards loathing what is one's own and towards self-denigration. Consequently, by tinkering so profoundly with our self-worth, they made us apish and slavish wards and even lieutenants of Western values and tastes, with all the many economic and intellectual wastes this kind of unpatriotic habit entrenches and sustains.

Anthropology as practiced by Western pioneers with regard to Africa, was an exotic gaze, a sustained effort at mockery and caricature of a people's genius, an abusive use of the intellect to put down a people, define them into footnotes of world civilizations.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps on account of this painful encounter with mercenary anthropologists, Africans realizing this harm shy away from this discipline, seen mostly as an instrument of oppression. This may be why in the ongoing

<sup>4</sup> Eyo, Ekpo Okpo, *The Story of Old Calabar. A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, Calabar*, Lagos, The National Commission for Museum and Monuments, 1986, p. 162.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Afigbo, A. E., *Warrant Chiefs*, London, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Mudimbe, V. Y. *The Invention of Africa, Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, London, James Currey, 1988, Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us*, New York, Nok Publishers, 1975, Njoku Anthony P. C., "A New Gaze with a New

Reason: An Indigene as Student of his/her own culture in a globalized context" paper presented for the North Sea Doctoral Seminar, organized by the Department of Social and Cultural anthropology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, held in North Sea, Germany, June 3 to 2004, Achebe, Chinua, *Impediments to Dialogue Between North and South*, in *Hopes and Impediments, Selected Essays*, New York, Double day, 1989, pp. 21- 29.

struggle between sociology and anthropology in many of our universities, many unwittingly incline towards, sociology, probably hoping that it is more economically viable and more modern in its outlook! But, in spite of these negative reservations, the promise of the discipline of anthropology as a major source of healing for fractured cultures, for peoples whose ego has been mangled by historical forces beyond their control, the capacity of anthropology to be the fulcrum for re-energizing a people, re-directing their gaze, for mobilizing them to discover the riches within and in the spirit of *Nku di na mba na-eghere mba nri*, to re-visit their vital cultural institutions, recover their conceptual genius, their symbolic heritage, their mother tongue, their native arts and crafts et al, is beyond dispute.

Besides these, anthropology has important academic values, namely, as a handmaid to numerous disciplines; law, politics, economics, history, fine and applied arts, theology, philosophy, linguistics, architecture, archeology, medicine and

pharmacology. To all these and more, the findings of anthropology provide a base, a veritable tripod on which to stand, grow and flourish. This is probably why there is evident more crossing or rather more appeal to anthropological data by a plethora of scholars of diverse backgrounds, for relevant information to deal with core issues in the humanities and even in core sciences, such as Physics!<sup>7</sup>

Anthropology is an important cross-roads discipline, a bridge maker between the old and the new, a conveyor belt that links generations with the wellsprings of their cultural identity and resources. It is primarily through anthropology that knowledgeable local elders, marginalized as teachers by the Western style school system, can be debriefed and indeed be re-integrated and re-educated by their younger sons and daughters.

The votaries of *Ahiajoku* lecture series have time and again made the point that there is a whole lot of recovery that needs to be done,

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<sup>7</sup> The example of Professor Animalu, eminent professor of physics and mathematics, in this regard is outstanding. Cf. Animalu, A. O. E., *Ucheakonam: A Way of Life in the Modern Scientific Age*, 1990 Ahiajoku Lecture, Owerri, Ministry of Information and Culture, 1990. For one of the best essays regarding the link between culture and

technology, see, Chinua Achebe, *What has Literature Got to Do with It?* In *Hopes and Impediments*, pp. 154-170. See also powerful use of symbols in Umezurike, G. M., *Amamife na Ako-na-Uche: The Hub of Igbo cultural Renaissance in the Scientific Age*, 1992 Ahiajoku Lecture, Owerri, Directorate of Information and Culture, 1992.



to re-gather our riches literally thrown into the rubbish heap by unrelenting negative stereotyping that we have virtually imbibed, and internalized. Chinua Achebe has in regard to this written:

But it was not necessary to throw overboard so much that was thrown overboard in the name of Christianity and civilization. It was not necessary. I think of the damage, not only to the material culture, but to the mind of the people (that is, their psyche). We were taught that our thoughts were evil and our religions were not really religions ... the traditional attitude of Europe or the West is that Africa is a continent of children<sup>8</sup>.

The recovery of local voices, local agencies, local vectors, local energies, local capacities, skills, arts and crafts, local cuisine, local fashion threads and trends, local philosophy and theology, et al, with a view to creating synergy between these indigenous resources and their counterparts in other cultures and climes, is admittedly on-going in various disciplines. However, anthropology is expected to be in the vanguard of this effort

at critical restoration and creative rehabilitation.

This is why the two slots given so far to anthropology at the *Ahiajoku* lecture series in its 30 years history is really small given the vocation of the discipline in our context. However, the two representatives, namely, Professor Angulu Onwuejeogwu and Professor Victor Uchendu, have very ably represented the discipline, showing through the window of opportunity offered them, the tip of the iceberg in terms of the potentials of the discipline. Both men ploughed familiar terrain with new zest and with the enlarged vision that comes from manifold experience and the advantage of hindsight.

Onwuejeogwu sketched the evolution of Igbo civilization, socketing each era skillfully into their time and place and denoting their unique contributions to the growth of Igbo civilization in general. His was a large canvass with important beacons and signposts to guide those coming after him. His mapping of Igbo culture area is very useful.

Yet with the growth and expansion that we have seen in Igbo land on several fronts, there

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Animalu, A. O. E., 1990 Ahiajoku Lecture, reprinted in Animalu, A. O. E., 2001 *Igbo Day Lecture, Technological Capacity Building: The*

*Making of An African Tiger*, Nsukka, Ucheakonam Foundation, p. 75. See also Achebe, C., *The Novelist as Teacher*, in *Hopes and Impediments*, pp. 40-46.

is a crying need for more focused studies that would further highlight the inner resources of each of these culture areas and their many sub-cultural networks. The data he supplied needs to be updated and enriched by an approach that unveils the uniqueness of each sub-cultural zone/area of Igbo land. This requires follow up fieldworks/case studies possibly through projects organized by anthropology professors in various universities around Igbo land, each paying close attention to their own zones, but in a coordinated and collaborative manner, that will make for the fruits of such research, enhancing and filling up gaps in our self-knowledge as a people. Questions that could be added to these quests are: how can we improve on the gains of our forebears? How can we lengthen the capacities of their rich genius? What luggage needs to be dropped now that we are in the era of globalization?

The contribution of Professor Victor Uchendu, is a classic, a sifting of years of intensive labor in the area of understanding Igbo family, *Ezi na ulo*. This institution, the base for Igbo achievements deserves closer attention too, especially in an interdisciplinary manner. Can those values that make us proud be sustained in this period when parents are harassed, economically and

socially, when parents have limited time to do proper parenting? What of the extended family? Is it a burden or a plus? As in Onwuejeogwu, there is need for follow up studies to enrich the outline richly sketched by Uchendu. How are our values changing, in what directions and by what vectors/forces? Is there still room for some level of positive social engineering, some room for controlling the swing or are we doomed to be buffeted on all sides, like hapless victims, by all kinds of forces seemingly beyond our control? All civilizations that have flourished have been able to master such forces and consciously worked towards achieving their dream societies. Protection of core institutions like the family is paramount and the formula for doing so can only be generated in an interdisciplinary manner.

In spite of the small space it has officially been given, anthropology has received significant and rich attention in the *Ahiajoku* lecture series from interested non-experts in the field. Whether it is an Echeruo the literary scholar, or Afigbo, the historian or Anezi Okoro, the dermatologist, or Animalu, the physicist, or Uzoigwe the biochemist and more besides, there is a rich recourse to data that belongs to the province of anthropology, in their elucidation of their fine points. This

trend is surely going to continue, for as I have earlier pointed out, anthropology is playing the role of handmaid for a plethora of disciplines.

Besides these academic forays, there are significant economic values of anthropology that deserve to be underlined. To give but one example, it can provide vital information that gives added value and indeed backbone to tourism. Recovery of local skills, such as cane-making, wine-tapping, pottery work, soap making, local cuisine cultures, as well as unlocking the riches of our herbal heritage, through scientific debriefing of our informal intellectuals, have the capacity to re-energize and re-activate our presently dis-empowered and emptied villages. Especially when put to scale, these insights can create jobs and re-invigorate local economies.

### **Features and fortunes of law in the Ahiajoku lecture series**

Law is strategic in its importance for creating and enabling order in any given society. In modern times, every nation has or is expected to have a constitution, a body of laws that holds the polity together and which is regarded as paramount in indicating rights, obligations, privileges, limits and boundaries of power, authority, governance and general

decorum. It is also the instrument that determines how resources and duties are shared, who gets what, and to what degree. It is also the place where a given society sets forth their philosophy, their core beliefs, their societal values and ethos, as well as where it stipulates control mechanisms and sanctions in order to maintain these values and protect them against transgression, *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Law is therefore the prime instrument for order, for harmony, for justice, for peace and for proper governance and accountability. Thus, there is often talk about, *The rule of Law*, as a check on abuses. It is in this context that it will be seen how crucially important law is in societal affairs and growth.

As a post-colonial territory, the value of law and the need to attend to it takes on an even greater role. Part of what the colonial encounter did was to re-draw boundaries, to link up, often without any formal consultation, peoples who have been hitherto living separately as autonomous ethnic groups, with their own unique political cultures, their own unique cultural values and ethos, ethos that form the basis of the local laws they generated to guide themselves in their previous enclaves. In the case of Nigeria,

Igbo people, Efik people, Yoruba people, Hausa people and others, were brought together, first, under the so-called Northern and Southern protectorates by the British colonial administrators, and later in 1914, by amalgamation of the two big blocks into a new entity, surnamed Nigeria. This re-drawing of boundaries has myriad implications, political, economic, social, religious, cultural and also legal.

Especially on the legal front, in order to manage such a conglomeration of peoples, the colonial powers had to invoke and impose their own laws, laws evolved according to their own local /British, cultures and values, to ensure effective control of these annexed territories. This way, besides re-drawing boundaries of encounter, they suppressed existing local laws, lumped together under what is now known as “customary laws.” This suppression of local laws is hidden under the guise, “civilization”. This follows the pattern of conquest by imperial powers across centuries. To put their stamp of authority, they have to, like all dictators suspend existing local laws and rule by decrees and edicts. In the *Ahiajoku* lecture series, Law has had one slot, when in 1985, the eminent legal luminary, Professor Ben O. Nwabueze,

climbed the rostrum to address our people, on the theme: *The Igbos in the Context of Modern Government and Politics in Nigeria: A Call for Self-Examination and Self-Correction*. It is generally agreed that this is one of the most soul-searching presentations since the inception of the *Ahiajoku* lecture series. However, its critics feel shortchanged that Prof. Ben Nwabueze, in spite of his elegant lecture, and his passionate commitment to Igbo political fortunes, missed an opportunity to address law, his chosen discipline.

But this thinking is itself a misunderstanding of law. There is no law in abstract. Law must have a context, a framework, an environment, a boundary, physical and human. What Prof. Ben Nwabueze in his wisdom did was to use his lecture opportunity to point to this widened environment, this enlarged law space, the need for Igbo people to take this new boundary created by colonial fiat, called Nigeria seriously, and stop living and acting as if they were in an enclave, or an Island, or as if they were a state within a state, to stop living the illusion of being autonomous when they are in fact enmeshed and part and parcel of the Nigerian reality. He therefore called for developing a robust

formula for coping and even flourishing within this enlarged “law landscape.”

It is an advice that can only come from somebody fully conscious of the power of the constitution and the pre-eminence of law and by extension, the rule of that more embracing Nigeria law under which the Igbo people “must live and move and have their being,” to paraphrase a Pauline statement. The great contribution of Nwabueze therefore is to point to the wider frame, to the expanded context and to higher laws and logics, Igbo people must respect, if they are to match forward and flourish in Nigeria.

However, there are serious matters that need to be addressed that affect not just Igbo people, but other peoples as well. One is this ongoing relegation of customary laws and with them the creation and sustenance of bottlenecks that block off our own local values from being taken seriously in legal practice. We are still being ruled, in the main, by laws generated in other contexts, following other people’s values, particularly the British. Our legal practice is essentially a change of guard. While the District Officers (DOs) and District Commissioners (DCs) are physically gone, they have left behind, their clones to continue business as usual, ruling our people by proxy with such laws.

Beyond the use of foreign paraphernalia, such as wigs and overalls, with all the economic extraversion these attachments entail, there is a fundamental work to be done to study our local laws and see how these can be brought into the mainstream of the corpus of laws ruling our people, respecting our distilled cultural values and ethos and furthering our own dreams and aspirations. This type of study and critical evaluation is also important with regard to sanctions and modes of punishment and with regard to the language of law. Must our referents, our case studies, come from Britain, from the West? A future *Ahiajoku* lecturer could be missioned/mandated to address this crossroad aspects in our legal system. For it is still true that in many cases justice is not being served, many of our citizens are shortchanged, some of our court sessions are a replay, of Lomaji Ugorji and Nwadishi’s famous play, *Ichoku*, only that this time, it is not a laughing matter, many do go to real jails because of their encountering a foreign approach to justice, in terms of language, presentation of cases, what constitutes evidence and convincing proof and so on. Technicalities rather than substantial matters often, sadly, decide cases.

Besides Nwabueze's main lecture, there have been good efforts to address significant aspects of law in especially the colloquia. The collection, *Igbo Jurisprudence: Law and Order in Traditional Igbo Society*, feature rich contributions from Marcus FeyiWaboso, Rose A. Wilson, Chike Dike, Theophilus Okere and G. A. Wigwe. This type of entry into the discussion, again in an interdisciplinary manner is commendable and should be continued.

Finally, I would like to point out that there is an intimate connection between anthropology and law, in what is called "legal anthropology." It is the discipline that could enable future lawyers understand the ingredients that go into the evolution of laws *ab ovo* and through which they might begin to gain back respect for our presently relegated customary laws. Like anthropology, law deserves to be allotted more space in the community conversation, which is *Ahiajoku* lecture. This is especially so since one of our greatest handicaps is the flagrant abuse of the rule of law, abuse of power, trampling on the rights and privileges of other people, especially those placed under us. Unless we are drilled properly into the mutual gain that normally comes from respecting law and order, attaining

development, as we find elsewhere in the world might remain a mirage, *nro malaria*.

### ***Ahialoku* Lectures series: The road yet to be traversed**

Let me re-state, that *Ahiajoku* lecture series has been so far a resounding success. Rather than say it is "a bush fire that is now beyond control", I would like to see it more as a movement, whose energies can still be directed and re-directed according to need. This is why its vast potentials and possibilities deserve closer attention.

First on the level of freedom, one can only say to the founding fathers and their many collaborators, more grease to your elbows, for sustaining the freedom of *Ahiajoku*, and saving it from being hijacked by governments and politicians hell bent on abusing the *fora* created by *Ahiajoku* over these years. The future of *Ahiajoku* depends heavily on this freedom. Yet there is need to be more resourceful to free the lectures from over dependence on government agencies and on their whims and caprices. There are some

years in which the lectures were not presented because of political intrigues.

One can say that the large canvass studies have run their course and one would

henceforth expect, focused attention to specific areas that have vast potentials. At the risk of sounding too prescriptive, let me with the timidity of a snail touch on the topic, “Igbo cuisine culture.” Such focused studies have the capacity to generate not only great interest but can supply, especially to younger generations, the knowledge they require to value this rich dimension of our culture and life.

Some of the insights generated by the lectures delivered so far are yet to be harvested, yet to be followed up, institutionally. There is need to establish ‘follow up’ institutions, to address the challenges, raised by the lectures. To save costs, to ensure continuity and synergy, such follow up institutions could be farmed out to our local universities, both to fund and to host. Of course they must be attached to professors/seasoned scholars able and willing to carry on such tasks. Nothing kills an idea as giving it to somebody who is either incapable or unwilling to do it. Where there is a will there is a way. As much as possible, such “follow up” institutions should be well funded, possibly via public spirited foundations.

Possibly, mid year colloquia could be organized which seek to systematically

address and harvest the insights generated by previous *Ahiajoku* lectures, seeing such presentations from a variety of disciplines and entry points. For example, Okigbo’s elegant and profound survey deserves a serious follow up, which builds on openings already made by earlier *Ahiajoku* lecturers while of course opening up new paths for study. Once again may I thank the organizers for the privilege accorded me through their warm invitation.

Long live *Ahiajoku* lecture series! Long live Igbo people! Long live Nigeria! Thanks for your kind attention.