



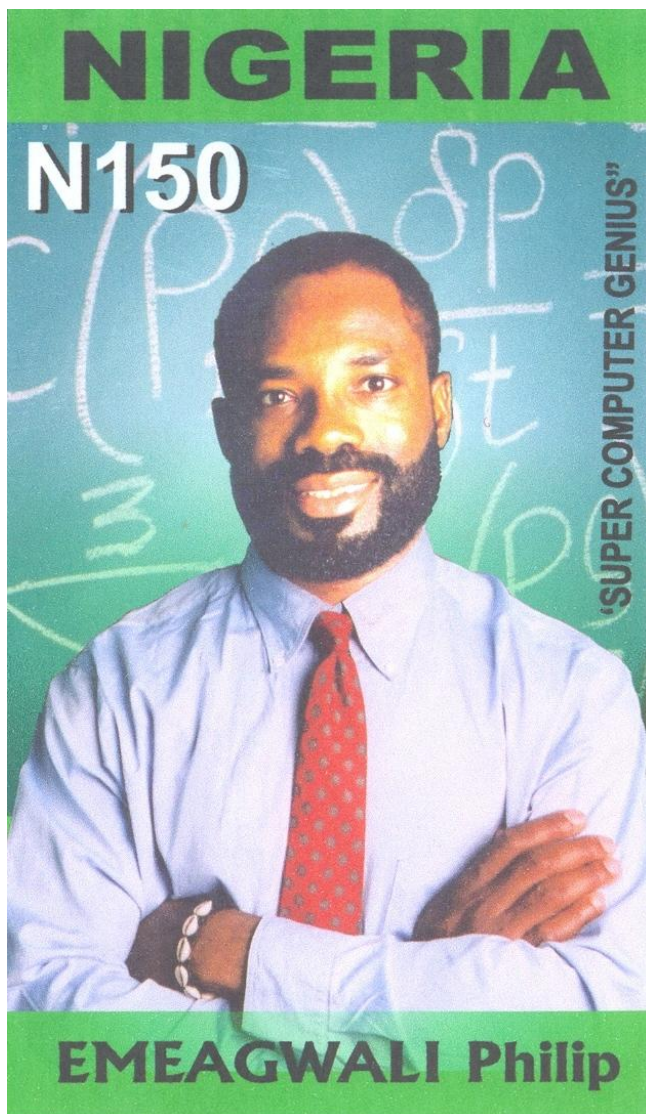
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My Quest for an Internet

In this, the 42nd installment of our weekly series at emeagwali.com, we present a biographical, poetic tribute by Obu Udeozo to Philip Emeagwali.



Ikenga for Philip Emeagwali

by Obu Udeozo

“Philip Emeagwali is a minnial super human and a figure straight from BIBLE PROPHECY - over events that will soon occur on the planet earth before the 2nd Coming of CHRIST. I pray people will really understand the poem Ikenga - and its implication - in prophetic terms.”

Obu Udeozo



Obu Udeozo, with Prof. and Mrs. Chinua Achebe at *The ODENIGBO LECTURE*, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, 1999



Obu Udeozo with Prof. Theo Vincent, former Vice Chancellor University of Port Harcourt, at ANA 1994 Benin Convention, where his books *Stimulus* and *Excursions* were shortlisted for the ANA/CADBURY POETRY PRIZE.

According to Chinua Achebe,

“Udeozo’s poetry comes to us hot from the foundry of his restless imagination.

He is a natural poet ready to take on any subject that touches his people.

We shall hear of him more and more in the years ahead.”

Ikenga for "Philip Emeagwali"

By OBU UDEOZO @2002

our landscape is a catwalk of songs;
praise singing explodes
on every tongue.

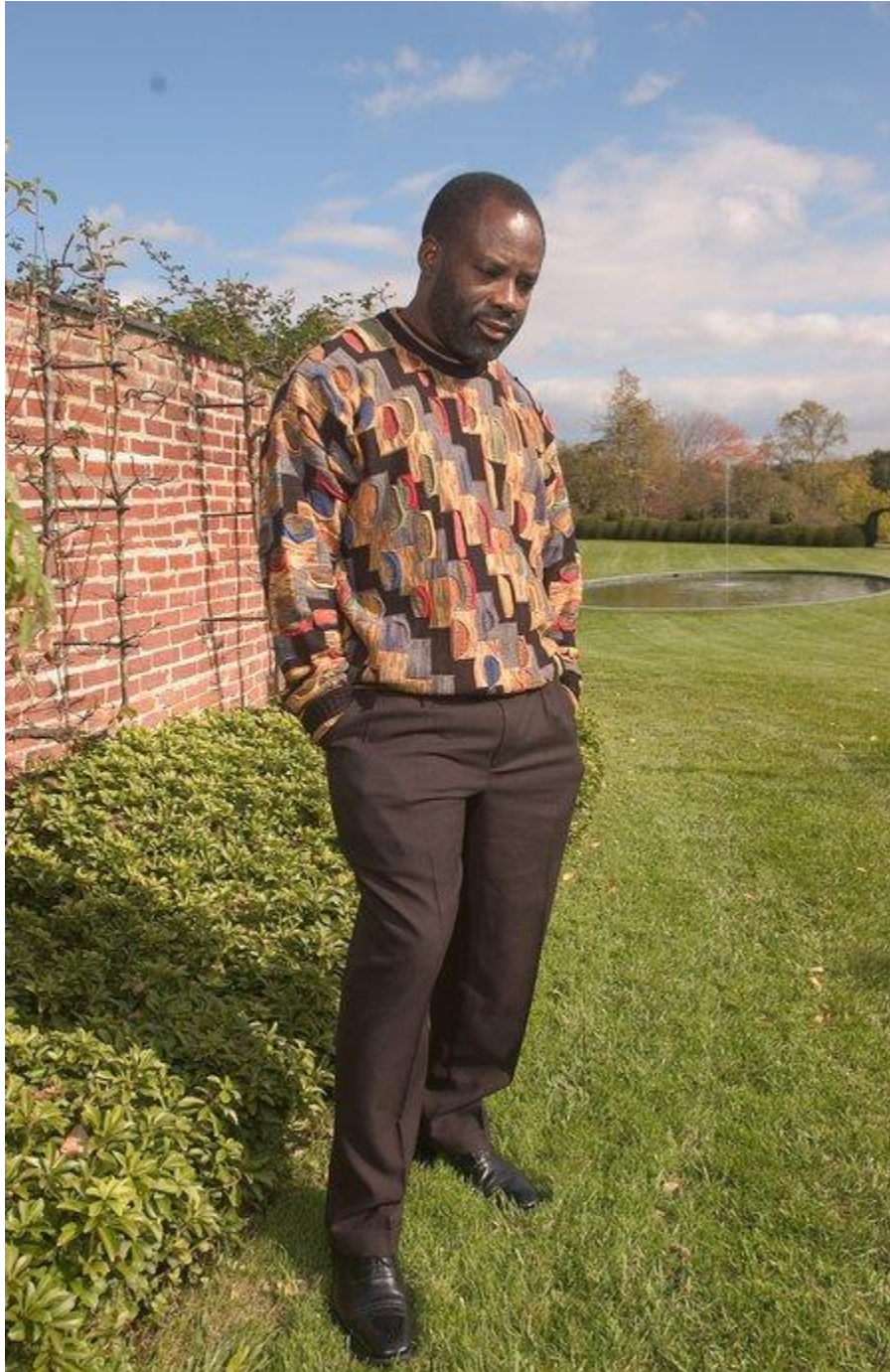
trumpets and cymbals
more sonorous than April thunder
escort long drums and flutes
in their intoxicated tunes.

our native land
is a glow with melodies ...

nno, aka ikenga
elephants float
on your right thumb
to compel the spotlight upon us;
truth cracked
after your tessellated models
tore the digital divide:
their fresh Ayatollah of malice;
truth cracked,
when your chicken over oxen theory
defied the deified Seymour Cray
to deliver the crown of science
upon the African Sun

this hemisphere
is a Christmas of trumpets
our laughter season.

God who planted
the onyx stone of Gad
within us,
is redeeming that pledge
of our sunrise.



II.

our folks
are summoned
across the four winds
for a steaming fiesta
over Chineke's smile upon us;

so,

aka Ikenga

astride the surrealist oche ekwu
may courtiers rain you comfort
with peacock feathers.

our fatherland
is drunk with songs.

what Psalms

shall we engineer

for him who

beyond seven seas and seven terrains

captured the daybreak of foreign gods.

your Papacy in science

radiates in alien tongues.

what algorithms

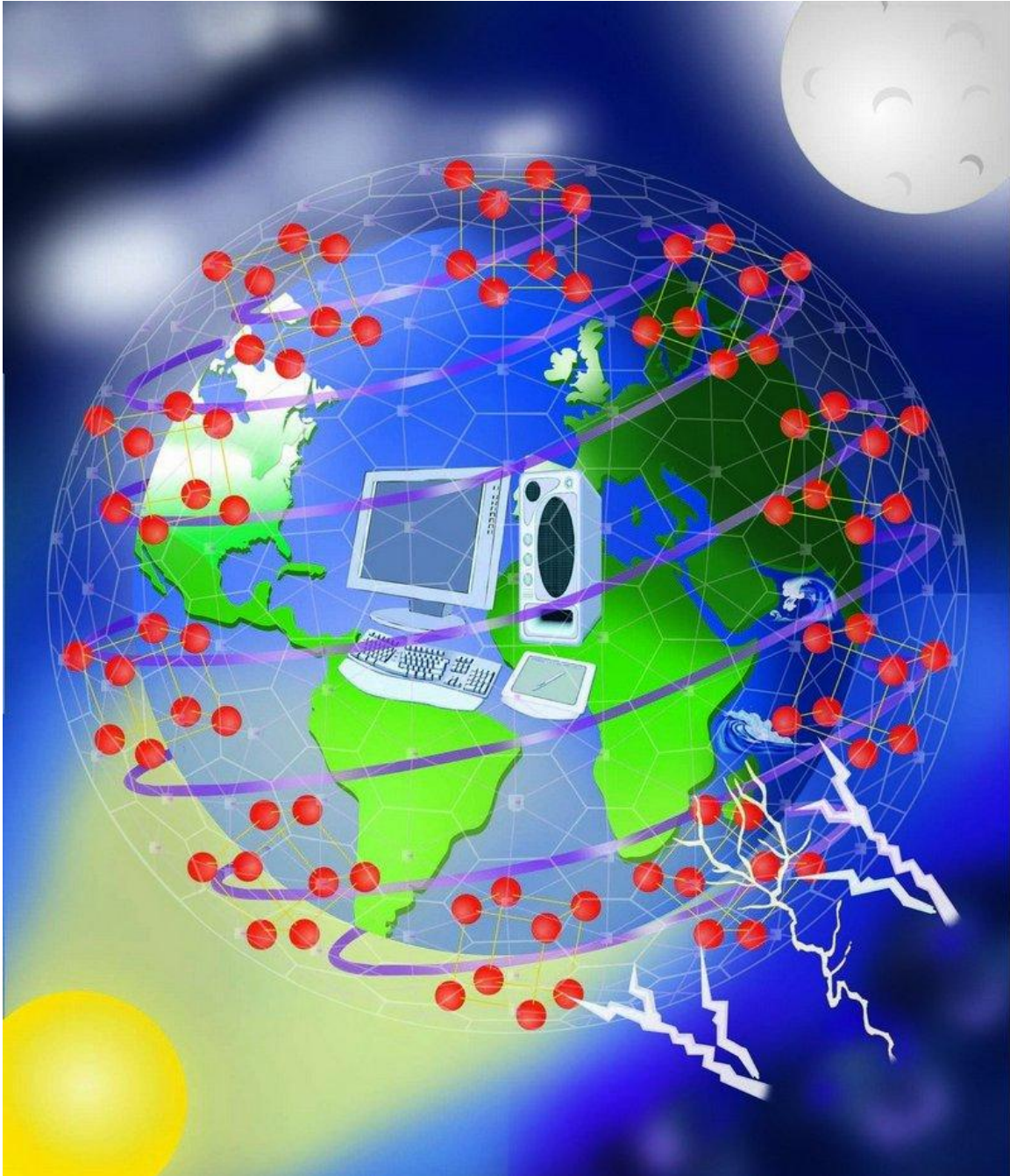
of dance steps

shall unravel

this immanence of our race?

Philip Emeagwali,
your Madison Square Garden feat
over fractious fraternity
at the hot horizons of knowledge

redeemed the millennial eclipse
of our ravaged soul.



III.

your connection machine,
and honey-combed logic
in massive parallelism
awoke drybones
our God's gift
which vindicates Nwagu Aneke
that the children of Cush
shall outshine the first born;

but they slapped
conspiracy across your paths,
padlocks and platinum gates
saluted your dreams.

yet your Chi

lit your anointed breath

for the Onitsha pilgrim

whose pocket betrayed

even at home

to pluck the gold medal

of the computer age;

a tale Bill Clinton

sprayed to a world agape;

a sugared tale in our innocent ears ...

your trainloads of prizes

and caravan of honours

across the globe

a dizzying statistic

that at last,

God has poured

His Sovereign Spirit

upon all flesh.

our current godlike mode

of fecundity and genius

across the globe

is God's incomprehensible equity

upon all mankind;

whether Black or Yellow or Blue ...

Philip Emeagwali,

aka Ikenga

astride the surrealist oche ekwu

may courtiers slake your thirst

with divine wine.

mythic king

of our bloodline

we polish our music with lightening

and erect anthems

sky high

at our Maker's altar for a wonder child

and proof

that the lamb and leopard

shall chew divine grass
in Mount Zion
at the appointed feast
of our
Christ and Redeemer King.

- Amen -

OBU UDEOZO is a poet, painter and psychologist. He is of Igbo heritage and lives in Jos, Nigeria.

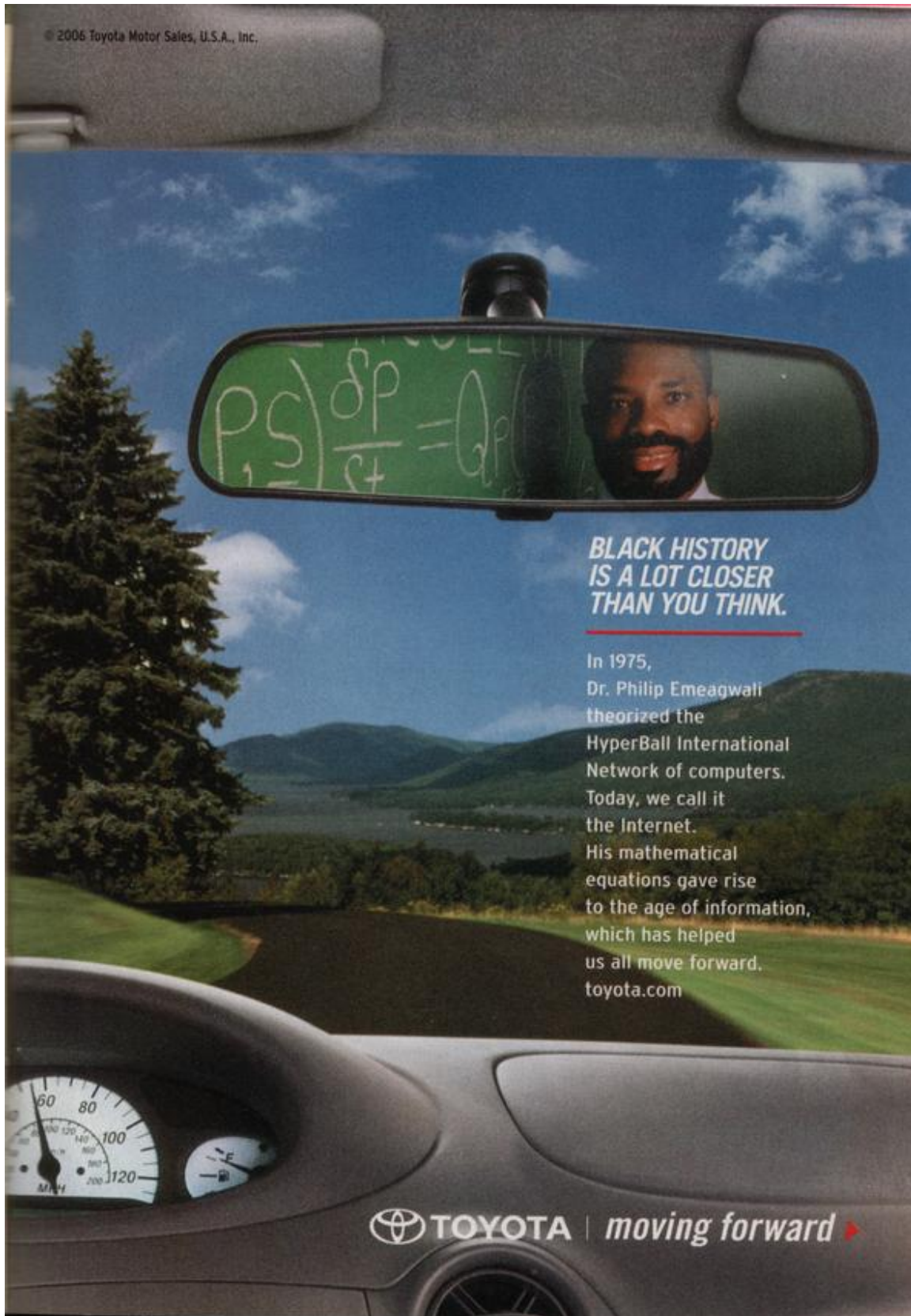
What is an Ikenga?

- by Curator (Donita Brown)




Ikenga altar statuettes are found in sacred shrines of the Igbo-speaking people of southeastern Nigeria. They are personal power icons that are believed to possess protective spirits and provide success and achievement. The word "ikenga" translates to "man's life force" or "place of strength."

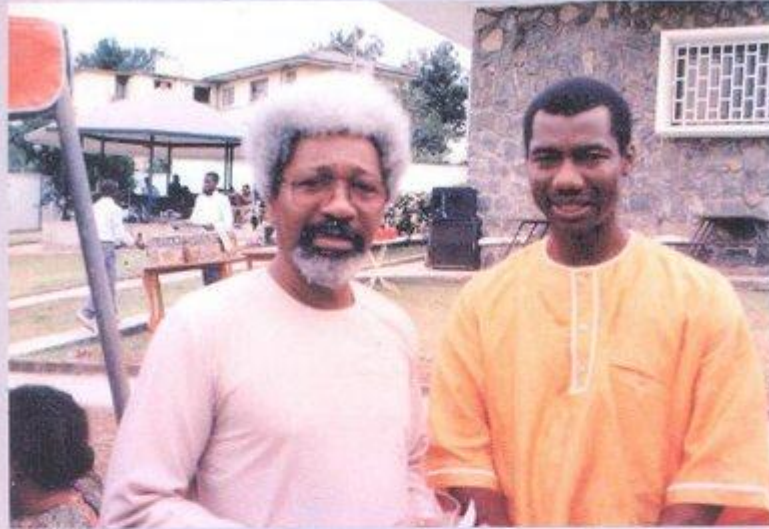
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**BLACK HISTORY
IS A LOT CLOSER
THAN YOU THINK.**

In 1975,
Dr. Philip Emeagwali
theorized the
HyperBall International
Network of computers.
Today, we call it
the Internet.
His mathematical
equations gave rise
to the age of information,
which has helped
us all move forward.
toyota.com

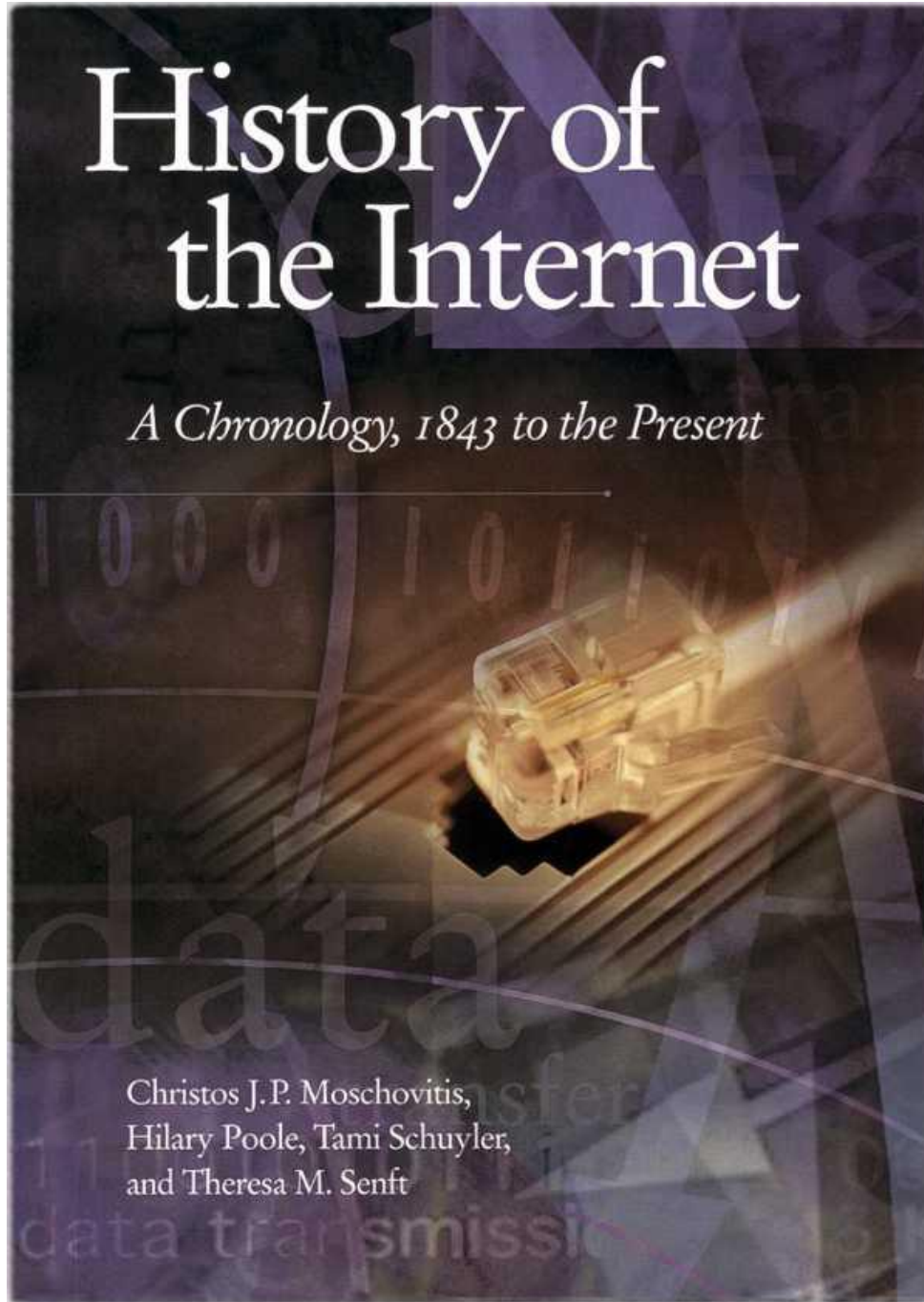
 **TOYOTA** | *moving forward* ▶



Obu Udeozo, with The Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, during The Christopher Okigbo Commemorative Anniversary at The Cambridge House, Ibadan 1994



Obu Udeozo, with Prof. Ali Mazrui, at an International Lecture in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, 1996



The book "History of the Internet" contains a one-page profile of Philip Emeagwali

AGBAJA: for MY MUM

By OBU UDEOZO, University of Jos, Nigeria.

slaughter kingdom

after our memory dried
from counting the *perpetual hawk's*
goals against us:
kwashiorkor's hotline
to the yawning soil

we swallowed life
in our bowels
to brave the death daring lanes...

with the foresight of camels
we banked tomorrow

in our stomachs

lambs, limping unto life's devouring realms...

the eagle's splendour

is clarity in flight

for a burden of crumbs;
is supplication for cheap arrests:
like Edozie's Dad
who vanished
at the waterfront
into slaughter kingdom;
severity has auctioned us
unto the Maginot Line of blind beggars...

My mum clutched her breath
her fragility groaned
a candlelight in chaos
pain awoke her *fresh stitches*

to cure the community's
salt, sugar and stockfish sclerosis
and to evade that wrestler
who molests victims before their mothers:

kwashiorkor's hotline

to the yawning soil

my Mother vowed to kiss the blind spot;

our lone bridge to salvation and harvest.

Zerubbabels

So we gambled on
towards hot horizons

She, a candlelight in chaos
and I,
at ten, a tendril
flavoured for calamity's claws;

plumbing the dark trade route
of futility and faith
pure Zerubbabels for the harvest tide:

where bombs germinate
in hoods of yam tubers
and the foliage hosts

death sprinkling platoons,
or a sniper coiled
at the ceiling of an *Akpaka* tree
whose instant fortune
nails men, smouldering on the spot.

and roaring afternoons,
snatch unwilling folks
beyond mortality's curve

a perfect homage
to the genius of a sage
and Great Britain:
whose marvellous blockade
crowned salt
our first Bill Gates
beyond our tongues or memory

and made soap and sausage
the fairy tale of madmen;

starvation
bewitch our children
with the yuletide of expiring tones;

and our elders
bargain with death
in loud hunger-propelled night songs...

Mozart and his loyal wife

dancing away the cruel winter...

yet our lone bridge

for salvation and harvest

is the bunker

of my Mother's love

at every sorrow station;

the compassion

She lends us,

with the nuclear power of leopards.

a universe of wolves

bowfuls of sweat

calibrated our rare retreats

and solitary couriers

after eternities of stealth steps
barter security briefs in whispers
like a column of ants
lacing their highways with scarce perfume.

and the bereaved farmlands
conscripted the bush paths
molding each step into a combat
as our bodies punctured the bulrushes
like *agu ngwo*
against the deaf waists of palm trunks

and before
our murmuring feet
succumbed to gravity's claims,
we staggered after 3 nights upon
the brown goddess;

Ezu Ebenebe

with her fierce waters roaring
like a universe of wolves...

Ezu Ebenebe

over this bleeding bridge
the Biafra angel *Ogbunigwe*
snatched us from the fire
of acids, razor blades, *koboko*, rape
and sunset of the Hottentots
upon our heels

Ezu Ebenebe
her amputated bridge
is a key hole of suicidal Passovers
with her fragment's head
buried in the skies
and broken feet in fierce waters
the ascent

for pilgrims
is crawling upon a skyscraper
with red monsters yawning at our feet...

- with our *chi*

alert

we awoke
upon the crown of the barricade...

and after seven strides
 beyond the bridgehead,
with the voyage's halfway house
 wrapped in our palms
we surrender again to rest and rice:

a voyage
of long shadows

where a hair's misprint
upon that barricade
mails victims
into the feast of fierce waters...

a voyage
of long shadows

-after

such *wahala* of ascents and assaults

the *Di gbakwa oku* ladies

sold marriage, manhood and fruits.

Divine Cup of Wrath

a register

of cadavers

outside the compass of trade routes:

in Biafra

yawning fabrics

or leaves

map the passage rites

of pilgrims whose luggage

eclipsed

in the fever of flight...

... roaring afternoons

snatch unwilling folks

beyond mortality's curve

bullets pluck persons

from the bulrushes

for the elephants' feast;
and our elders
bargain with death

in loud hunger-propelled night songs
Mozart and his loyal wife
dancing away the cruel winter...

we have indeed drunk
the Divine cup of wrath
promised our ancestors

the Jewish Holocaust
and Biafra's open graves
is the same kolanut
offered our blindness.

and the Bible said:

*“I swear by myself; declares the LORD,
that Bozrah will become a ruin and an
object of horror, of reproach and of cursing; ...”*

Jeremiah 49:13

and Okigbo said:

“The drowsy heads of pods in barren farmlands witness it,

The homesteads abandoned in this century's brush fire witness

it:

The myriad eyes of deserted corn cobs in burning barns witness

it:..."

- we endure
toxic echoes
of petulant babies'
veiled and expiring tones
for the sake of their community's head.

air raids saturate us
with fatality and fear

their electric birds
sow death in our
farmlands and pillows

in tunnels and bunkers
we rehearse the wisdom
of rodents
and the comfort of ant-holes;

air raids saturate us

with fatality and fear

and because we cannot sow tomorrow in our soil

starvation salutes us at day break.

Plaza of dreams

amidst

these chaos and throes

for their families;

certain Esthers spread

their lives towards death's kingdom:

we trudged on

and after one more night

the incense of merchandise

sprayed pacifism
among debonair shrubs

welcome to the
apple and ice cream
plaza of dreams;

Agbaja, the palace
of midnight merchandise:

canteens of salt and stockfish
with gold walking sticks;
china wares scream in splendour;
eggs and butter laugh
in glittering stalls
where plump and jocund traders
barter goods
and banter.

proud coins and pounds currency
dance *mkpokiti*
in the palms and pockets
of merry merchants

and Edgar said, “you can buy a planet there...”

the god of cash
autoclaved the city

from sirens, air raids and bombs;
whereas our ambassadors
 pant under Houphet Boigny's
 conference table
at aeroplane's shadow
Agbaja plays table tennis with peace.

and beyond the insanity
of grenades and mortar
the Federal troops and
Biafra soldiers
freeze their weapons
in soccer friendly matches
in the palace of
midnight merchandise...

Agbaja
the apple and ice cream
plaza of dreams:

who can transpose
these luxuries
unto the tongues
of my famished folks

only the *tapster's* clout

can fly this market

to douse the famine at home

had I *wands of noble wood!*

after the seven seas and seven terrains

with the *Babylonian capture*

singing at our feet

in Agbaja

only cash and commodities speak

no minefields, artillery fire or enemies...

we saw those who saw those who saw them

and who now see us and know that we know

that we are all dwellers in this oasis of peace.

navigating our funds

against commodities
for our neutron world.

amidst huge oceans of luxuries
we ponder

how

human bonds

crack at the terminus of pain:
nations, villages, relations

mother and child
taste the death of self love
compassion bleeds

like an atom torn;

in Biafra

families barter

cassava leaves, husks and kernels

by pecking order, graft or knives

among families
mercy is monitored

to make hunger sleep.

human bonds

crack at the terminus of pain

like the Medusa's Raft

whose passengers aspirated the flesh

of expired colleagues

to postpone the next

dirge

or the Daewoo's option

that tranquillize the appetite

of children before

feeding their parent's fire

or the smug

Chinese couple's

plea for the cake of their baby's corpse

to keep warm and awake.

human bonds

crack at the terminus of pain...

dance and laughter

as we

ambassadors from

the palace of

midnight merchandise

hoist our antenna

homewards;

my Mother declares me

her Samaritan

her encomiums drag

tears from my eyes

and memories of our

debt to her compassion

deluge me...

Mum:

your neurons creak to feed and pander;

to our thirst and thunder

your love

is blind to sacrifice

and danger

every second of

your leaping breath:

feeds patience, prayers, hope,

discipline and sunshine into our lives.

Mum:

I love you beyond the gold of words

Ijele

battalions await

your soup pots with fairy tales

we hibernate in

your dance, mercy and laughter

I dream

to shoulder the skies

for your sake;

to paint, sculpt, script

your face and compassion

into eternity's mind.

-by Obu Udeozo.



Philip Emeagwali



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