

## AGULU: YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

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### Introduction

May I start this presentation by sincerely appreciating the organizers of this forum, the National Executive Council of Agulu People's Union, the Igwe and his cabinet among others, for finding me worthy to speak to this respectable audience. I see this invitation as a special one for two main reasons. First, it affords me the opportunity to interact with my old friends and kinsmen as we herald the 2011 *ofala* festival and other associated festivities. This singular opportunity is a veritable bridge-builder given the fact that our frequent search for the greener pastures has always kept us far apart. Second, it is a rare opportunity to participate in the debate on this all important subject and to share views with probing minds, but with emphasis on change and continuity in Agulu. With due modesty, may I inform you that I am not the most qualified person to speak on this topic. However, I am strengthened by the popular saying that: *oku a gunyelu nwata na aka a di ele ya*.

As a growing up young man, two popular expressions about Agulu left impressionable marks in my psyche and have continued to agitate my mind. The first is *Agulu nine mmuonwu, mmuonwu*, literally meaning Agulu, the home of masquerades. The second is *Agulu adighi Igbo a taa aja*, which can simply be interpreted as: Agulu, the food basket of Igboland. These two expressions, the former by a white missionary and the latter by an Igbo musician, but not of Agulu extraction, summarize the valuable position of Agulu in Igboland. Indeed, the evolutionary history of Agulu and its future can be debated within the context of these expressions, and it is around them that this discourse shall revolve.

Agulu of yesterday was serene, vibrant and achievement-oriented, hence our current motto: *Agulu ji nma gbu enyi*. Nevertheless, such peace and serenity were punctuated by slave raids/kidnapping, intra and inter-group wars, and European incursion. But the people responded positively either individually and/or collectively to these challenges. In contrast to the above, we are witnesses to the emerging weak social cleavages and ties of today, occasioned by westernization, including Christianity. In spite of these weak cleavages, however, today's Agulu can be said to be very relevant and eventful, particularly in the political arena, at both the state and national levels. In actual fact, we have won a good number of contests, including the all important first citizen of Anambra State, but we are still awaiting the trophies. As one of the popular artistes puts it: *Ka Poloo gachalu soja, kedu kwanu buutu ya?* What then does the future hold in store for us? We shall elaborate on these as we proceed.

We shall delimit this discourse into two major phases, namely the pre-colonial and post-colonial. The first discusses all the institutional structures, activities and events from the earliest times to about 1905, when the sovereignty of Agulu was broken by British incursion. The changes that took place thereafter shall be discussed under the post-European intervention, in a section christened: Continuity and Change. Other historical landmarks in Agulu shall, where appropriate, be subsumed

under these two phases. It is from these premises that we shall extrapolate on the future of Agulu. But who are the Agulu?

### **The Setting and Traditions of Origin**

Agulu are Igbo by ethnic origin. The name Agulu, is used here to refer to one of the towns in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State. It is located within Awka-Orlu uplands in the forest zone. The rainfall is heaviest from the months of July to September. However, population pressure and increased human activity have reduced the original vegetation to the derived savannah. Agulu has an estimated land area of 92.25 square kilometers (Nwankwo, 1985). It shares boundaries with Nise and Nri in the North, Awgbu and Mbaukwu in the East, Adazi Nnukwu and Obeledu in the West and Agulu-uzoigbo and Nanka in the South.

Some of the "prominent geographical features in Agulu include the raised upland, valleys and plains all of which combine to give it a scenic beauty. Viewed from Ezinano on the north, one faces the escarpment of the Ugwuaba, Ugwugolo and Ugwu-Okpu hills. Ugwu-Okpu forms a continuous stretch of undulating highland. It is this scarp that joins Akamkpsi-Agukwu (Nri) and Nimo gentle slope to form the great depths of the x-shaped depressions containing Agulu Lake" (Egboka, 1993 in Okpoko, 2001). There is also a network of gullies that have persistently devastated the town and separate it from other nearby communities despite their shared geographical, economic and socio-cultural affinities.

Many commentators, including missionaries, scholars and amateurs, have made individual and/or collective attempts to trace the origin of Agulu people. Some of such efforts are, at best, mere collections of oral history, and not necessarily historical narratives/scripts. Nevertheless, they are invaluable in understanding Agulu history.

Like many other Igbo sub-groups, the origin of Agulu has been explained under three major versions. The first is the autochthonous tradition, which claims that Agulu people have always been where they are, and therefore trace descent within the present location of Agulu. There are three variants of this tradition each of which traces Agulu origin to any of these three villages Nwanchi, Odidama or Nnohia. It is believed that the people migrated from this core area to found such villages as Amorji, Isiamigbo, Okpu, Amaezike, Ukunu and Uhueme, collectively called Agulu-enu or Agulu *ebe teghete*. The eleven remaining villages that constitute Agulu-ana or Agulu *ebe monu* namely, Obeagu, Nkitaku, Obe, Umubiala, Okpu-ifite, Umuowelle, Umufite, Umunnonwu, Nneogidi, Amatutu and Ifite-ani, were said to have evolved from migrations in one account, and the descendants of the youngest son of Agulefo, in another version (Echetabu, 1984). These two groups of villages constitute the twenty villages that make up Agulu, often referred to as Agulu *ohu mba* by neighbouring communities.

The second is the Agulefo tradition which traces Agulu people to one apical ancestor, called Agulefo. He was said to have had three sons from two wives, the first of whom was forced to migrate, due to mutual suspicion between him and his half-brothers, to found the neighbouring Agulu-uzoigbo community. The second son married many wives whose children founded the *ebe teghete* group of villages listed above. The youngest son also had children that later founded the eleven villages that constitute Agulu-ana. The last tradition is one that maintains that Agulu people migrated from

Aguleri, specifically from Umuatu, in their search for arable land. They were said to have left Umuatu from where they moved through Ugbenu, Agulu-Umana and Isuaniocha to the present location of Agulu (Echetabu, 1984).

It must be noted that some scholars have made efforts to trace the sources of these migrations, including the migration of Agulu-ana group of villages (Okoye, n.d., Agwubike, n.d. and Echetabu, 1984). The success or otherwise of these attempts is a matter for another debate. However, the Agulefo tradition which traces Agulu-ana group of villages to the youngest son of Agulefo appears to contradict any such effort. It seems more plausible to assert that the origin of Agulu lies in its present location. The first two traditions (autochthonous and Agulefo) support this claim. Both traditions trace Agulu people around a single father of unstated origin. This suggests the antiquity of human occupation of the town. However, there might be some micro-waves of migration into Agulu, but most likely from this core area. Available evidence suggests that Nri-Awka-Orlu complex and Okigwe axis appear to be the most ancient Igbo settlements from where the waves of migrations trooped out to occupy other parts of Igboland (Okpoko and Anyanwu, 2000/2001). This assertion was based on the high population densities of this core area vis-à-vis other parts of Igboland, the extent to which the original vegetation has been remarkably modified by human activities, the abundance of core Igbo cultural traits such as the *alusi* (ancestral deity) and organized title societies, and the claim by the communities in the area that they came from nowhere. The Aguleri tradition appears to be recent, and may have been informed by the influence of Nri in the pre-colonial history of Igboland. Indeed, no collaborative evidence exists either in Aguleri or Nri to support this claim. Even the extensive anthropological research by Onwuejeogwu on Nri people did not establish any such claim. Although some biological and cultural connections existed between Agulu and Nri, nay Aguleri people, such connections resulted mainly from marriage, trade and religious interactions.

### **Political and Socio-Economic Organization**

Pre-colonial Agulu operated a republican form of government. Some scholars call it village democracy. Here, the administration of the town was organized around three tiers, namely the *Umunna* (patrilineage), *Ogbe* (village) and *Obodo* (town or village group). Each of these units had institutional structures with which they protected the unit, maintained peace and administered justice for the overall benefit of the people. No wonder P.P.Grey 1934 (in Nwankwo, 1985) described Agulu people as cheerful and peace-loving. Some other repositories of authority in pre-colonial Agulu were *Ndi nze na Ozo* and *Umuada*.

The government operated by representation. At the *umunna* level, the oldest male or *okpala* presided over political decisions and he was also the custodian of the ancestral deity. And at the village level, all adult males in each lineage participated in political decisions. This village assembly, made up of representatives of the various *umunna*, was charged with legislative, executive and judicial functions. The oldest titled man called *Isi Nze*, became the president of the assembly. They, in turn, represented their individual villages in the general meeting of the Agulu-ana or Agulu-enu or both as the case may be. A village that had no *nze* sent the oldest untitled man, *Isi Okolo*, to represent it. Decisions were taken by consensus of the villages as no one person had supremacy over the others. However, because of their prominence in the society, *ndi nze* had a pride of place in the

government of pre-colonial Agulu. They not only tried cases and handed down judgments in accordance with the traditions of the land; they also served as “courts of appeal” as the villages sought redress or even assistance against an enemy (Nwankwo, 1985).

Another group that played very significant roles in the government of pre-colonial Agulu was the *umuada*, married daughters of Agulu. Their primary concern was to adjudicate on matters that affected the womenfolk. Nevertheless, they could compel their individual villages to sue for peace with the whole town, if the males proved recalcitrant. They even appeared in war fronts holding palm fronds and mediated on behalf of the warring parties. The masquerade society also played political role. Masquerades entertained the people during festivities, but they also acted as the community police for the execution of justice. Besides politics, pre-European Agulu also had rich economic, religious and social traditions. Her economy revolved around farming, her religion around *Chukwu* and His intermediaries, and her social life around assorted festivals.

Farming was the most important economic activity in pre-colonial Agulu, and therefore the chief employer of labour. The people farmed for subsistence and exchange and their very success or otherwise depended on their soil fertility. This explains the sentiments and religious importance attached to land by the people. Farming began after the first rain in March or April. The mother earth, *Ana*, was generally appeased by the priest of *Ifejioku* to ensure fruitful harvests. Sacrifices were also offered to Haaba goddess by adherents to solicit her support. The main crop cultivated was yam. Others include cocoyams, okro, fluted pumpkins and melon. The economic trees that were planted include oil palm, pear and bread fruit (*ukwa*). Household refuse and animal droppings were used as manure. However, due to the infertile nature of Agulu soil, and the resultant poor yields, some dedicated farmers went to such towns as Mbaukwu, Awgbu and Aguleri to rent farmland. Pre-colonial Agulu also had craftsmen who engaged themselves in blacksmithing, carving and weaving. The blacksmiths produced mainly hoes, knives, machetes, gongs and spears, the carvers, mortars, pestles and doors, while the weavers produced mainly bark cloth.

The products of their industry were distributed via internal and external trade. The two notable markets then, and which also served as venues for the general meetings of Agulu-enu and Agulu-ana, respectively were Afo and Nkwo. They also served as venues for social contact and rituals. People from neighbouring towns also visited these markets. Goods were exchanged by barter and thereafter through cowrie shells (*ego ayo*). Some items that could not be sourced internally such as potash, ornaments and iron implements, were sought for in neighbouring markets like eke-Awgbu, eke-Agukwu, eke-Adazi, eke-Nanka and nkwo-Mbaukwu. Some traders went to Awka, Ufuma, Nkwerre, Ugwuoba, Enugu-Agidi and as far as Arochukwu. Due to the insecurity associated with long-distance trade, many of them travelled in groups and in company of persons believed to be influential, strong and brave. They also entered blood pacts with influential men along their trade routes to ensure their safety. Some Agulu traders also wore *udu* Haaba (small clay pot) on their necks, while others took charms from Ududonka shrine and travelled unmolested.

It is instructive to note that pre-colonial Agulu people had constant communion with their physical and socio-cultural milieu and therefore instituted laws and sanctions to maintain them. They had sacred groves (*ajo ofia*) and designated some water bodies, animal and tree species as sacred. We all know, for instance, that tortoise (*mbekwu*), python (*eke*) and crocodile (*agu iyi*) are totem animals

and must not be killed or eaten. Thus, their sacrosanctity cannot be desecrated without incurring the wrath of the people. This approach helped to conserve nature while, at the same time, maintaining the required balance in the ecosystem. They planted trees and dug catchment pits to prevent erosion and surface run off. In actual fact, they worked for the benefit of all. They were also quick to realize that 'all works and no play, makes Jack a dull boy'. In other words, they knew that life without relaxation was not worthwhile.

Consequently, they had occasions for relaxation as well as festivals with which they appeased God (Chukwu) and the gods and entertained themselves. The lyrics with which people were invited to *egwu onwa* (moonlight play), the folktales with which the young were cuddled and the old retired to bed, and the guttural broken voices of *mmuonwu anyasi* that heralded major festivities etc, ensured maximum relaxation during work-free periods. We all remember the *ogbugba* Haaba and *ife* Ududonka, not to talk of the *iri ji ofuu* (new yam festival) that were handed down to us by our forefathers. We also remember how we were entertained with *uloko* (masquerade dance) during such occasions, and how the masquerades tested the speed and endurance of the initiated young men in both long and short distance races. We must not forget the *emume mmuonwu* with which young boys were initiated into the masquerade cult and *iso ebe*, which announced the coming of age of young girls and therefore entitled them for initiation into womanhood. It was during *iso ebe* that intending suitors came and selected their future wives. Wrestling (*mgba*) competitions were also used to grace this occasion. Some of us will remember with nostalgia, the sumptuous dishes we ate during *okuka* and how we were lavishly entertained by our maternal grandmothers and their relations and how we shared common concern and solidarity. We can go on to recount the alluring features of the good old days some of which have slipped off our hands.

Nevertheless, pre-colonial Agulu had its own challenges and these should be put on record. Prominent among them were slave raids, intra and inter group wars and European incursion. Slave trade became an important source of money supply among some Agulu people during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is important to remind us that Agulu has very loose and infertile soil and this constituted serious problem to those who depended solely on farming for their livelihood. The problem began to compound as the population of the town began to increase. Hence, many active Agulu found solace in long-distance trade, some rented farmland for itinerant farming, while the headstrong ones engaged in slave trade. Agulu slave dealers were said to have collaborated with those at Adazi, who were reportedly very notorious in the trade, and sold slaves to Aro traders and bought precious metals, ornaments and beads (Echetabu, 1984). People also travelled to Arondizuogu to sell their slaves. We noted earlier that long-distance travel was then a risky business, as people were allegedly kidnapped or murdered or sold into slavery. In the views of Ottemberg (1958 in Echetabu, 1984), distant travel of any kind was undertaken only under unusual circumstances in Igboland. This is because people feared being captured by slave or oracle agents. The people responded by localizing their movements, by moving in groups, and by building watchtowers (*uno aja*) with which they monitored invading slave raiders.

Even the inter-group wars that took place within this area were said to have been instigated by slave dealers, notably Okoro Ijoma of Ndikelionwu, to ensure regular supply of slaves. Thus, adjacent groups became enemies and no longer traded with one another. A case in point was the

invasion of Abatete by Agulu people. Craftsmen even abandoned the local industries and crafts in preference for slave trading, which was believed to be more lucrative (Onwuejeogwu, 1974 in Echetabu, 1984). However, majority of the wars were fought for reasons other than slave raids. Although Isichie (in Echetabu, 1984) may have made an extreme statement when she averred that: "the Ibos prior to British occupation of the country **occupied their spare time with fighting**, generally town against town", her statement has one merit, and that is, that wars were fought in parts of Igboland before European advent. Impliedly, group wars took place, but these were generally occasioned by the failure to settle group squabbles, land disputes and other misunderstanding. It is on record that Agulu went to war, at separate periods, with such towns as Agulu-uzoigbo, Awgbu, Mbaukwu, Adazi and Enugwu-Ukwu, for reasons ranging from stealing to land disputes. In actual fact Agulu people fought to protect life, and to maintain and keep their territory intact (Nwankwo, 1985). Some of such wars could be described merely as a 'show of strength,' because they never involved the shedding of blood. In all, Agulu people rose to the occasion, raised well organized warriors and signal men (*ndi oti ekwe*), and were able to meet squarely with the incessant need to fight (Echetabu, 1984). In spite of the above, however, pre-colonial Agulu people maintained good relations with many of her neighbours.

### **Continuity and Change**

A very significant landmark which must be recorded in the history of Agulu is the British invasion of November, 1905 and her subsequent conquest. It is significant for three main reasons. First it marked a turning point in the history of the town. Second, it precipitated dramatic changes and introduced new social structures aimed at successfully prosecuting colonial rule. Third, the change that resulted from such intervention brought, in its wake, further challenges some of which we currently contend with. Nevertheless, some of such changes brought development to the town, directly or indirectly. We must not fail to mention, however, that some cultural elements of old spilled into the new dispensation and have continued to unite us.

It is on record that Agulu fell under the fire-power of the British in 1905/06, after the latter gunned down the *oti-ekwe* (signal man) and interrupted the flow of information to Agulu warriors. Thenceforth, the British under the administration of Sir Walter Egerton introduced catalytic changes, some of which destroyed the existing social order. One of such changes was the establishment of a court at Ugwu Okpu and subsequently Agulu Administrative Court Area to administer Agulu, Agulu-uzoigbo, Agukwu, Adazi-Nnukwu, Adazi-Ani, Adazi-Enu, Ichida, Neni, Obeledu, Akwa-Eze, Nanka, Awgbu and Igbo-Ukwu. Agulu served as the Headquarters (Okoye, n.d.). Apart from the last three towns listed above, the others constitute the current Anaocha Local Government Area. Other institutions that were established by the colonists included the installation of Paramount Chiefs, Warrant Chiefs and sub-Chiefs to oversee the conduct of the people, ensure peace and maintain order in their respective spheres of influence. It was from this concept of Chieftaincy that the Igwe institution later emerged in many parts of Igboland, including Agulu. There was also the Agulu Native Administration, which split Agulu into two namely, Agulu-enu and Agulu-ana. We must not forget the introduction of the Christian religion with Catholicism and Protestantism gaining prominence in these parts.

It must be stated that these new structures posed serious challenges to the existing order. First, the establishment of a court at Ugwu Okpu and Agulu Native Administration had negative consequences. They undermined and ultimately destroyed the existing institutions for justice dispensation and administration. The powers of democratic institutions of governance, which the people were used to were whittled down and/or replaced with the chiefs. Yet some of the chiefs were not the choice of the people, neither were they their acknowledged representatives. Indeed, many were never-do-wells and were therefore regarded as nuisance. Those that resisted the new order among them and were not subservient to the colonial masters were banished to unknown destinations. Even the establishment of Agulu Native Administration, that was meant to facilitate colonial rule, brought its own challenges which the people later began to solve. We noted earlier that Agulu was split into two during this process, and this introduced divisive tendency. The climax of such division was reached with the APU-ADU (Agulu People's Union and Agulu Development Union) saga, which split Agulu into two contending lines - Catholics and Anglicans - for more than a decade. The subjugated Agulu people did not also believe in the transparency and efficacy of the new court. Thus, they refused to patronize it, but continued to use Haaba and Ududonka and other traditional institutions to administer justice. Those that patronized the court during the said period were literally forced to do so.

Furthermore, family and lineage ties have been weakened by the new dispensation. In other words, the bond of kinship has shrunk to the extent that only the immediate family members matter. Even within the immediate family, the insatiable quest for individual wealth seems to threaten such cleavages. This has resulted in mutual suspicion among relations who in the past depended on one another for social/economic assistance. What can be said today is that individualism has overtaken the collective endeavour of old. Indeed, we have become so self-centered and individualistic that the concept of *Agulu ji nma gbu enyi* can no longer hold for this generation. What can be safely said is that we currently have individuals or pockets of them who are acclaimed achievers in their individual pursuits. But their kinsmen cannot rely on them to achieve success. Given this new scenario, it is apt to put in its place, *Onye Agulu ji nma gbu enyi*. It must be noted, however, that some affluent Agulu people have been utterly disappointed by their close relations that they genuinely wanted to assist.

Suffice it to say that European intervention did not bring mainly disadvantages. It had its good sides. It brought Christianity and education, which ultimately brought western development to the town. Soon after the colonization of Agulu in 1906, the West Indian Church Missionary Society arrived and established a church at Nwagu. The Catholic Church followed six years later and settled in the present St. Andrew's Catholic Church, Adazi before establishing Madonna Catholic Church, Agulu in 1925. The merits of these new churches, nay westernization are two. First they brought Christianity, which the indigenes gradually embraced. Second, they established Missionary Schools and opened a new vista of knowledge to the people. Consequently, the horizons of the people were broadened, security of lives was increasingly guaranteed and enhanced and this encouraged outward and inward migration of Agulu indigenes and non-Agulu people, respectively. Thus, Agulu people travelled and settled in places like Awka, Onitsha, Enugu, Calabar and Port Harcourt. Some of them went in search of further education, others for trade and farming, and yet others for evangelization. They gradually began to participate in the administration of Agulu and subsequently, western

development began to filter into the town. It was from these crops of Agulu people that Agulu General Assembly (1936) at Enugu and Agulu Youth League (1948) at Onitsha, both of which later metamorphosed into Agulu People's Union emerged (Okoye, n.d.).

Top among the plethora of benefits that emerged from these unions was the re-unification of Agulu-enu and Agulu-ana in 1958. With this development came the selection and installation of the first Igwe of Agulu in 1960. Today, Agulu People's Union is charged with the day-to-day administration of the town. The union has branches in every town where Agulu indigenes are resident. Its village arms and headquarters are at Agulu. They handle all matters related to community development, but seek the advice of the Igwe and his council of chiefs on matters related to culture and tradition. Funds for the implementation of any agreed development projects are raised through flat rate levies which every *bona fide* member is expected to contribute, and annual development launchings that take place during festivals when affluent sons and daughters come home to celebrate. Some of the development projects instituted by Agulu people are: Agulu-Aguinyi Water Reservoir, Agulu General Post Office, Agulu Maternity, later upgraded to a General Hospital, Agulu Community Secondary School and market stalls at Nkwo. The shopping centre at Nwagu and environs, banks, police station, private schools and clinics, state and federal establishments etc are increasingly making the town cosmopolitan. Furthermore, the non-Agulu indigenes that are currently resident in the town, to service the above institutions/organizations, are also increasing by the day. Today, Agulu can be said to be an emerging urban centre. Its development profile, administrative and demographic variables now transcend the level of a rural service centre. However, the above parameters require to be further stimulated to attain higher levels. At the individual levels, Agulu has produced accomplished persons in the bakery, pharmaceutical, supermarket and distributive businesses. She also has accomplished politicians, scholars, professors, professionals and priests.

### **Sustainable Legacies for the Future**

The question that arises now is what we can say about the future of Agulu, from the perspective of the present situation. Regrettably, except Agulu and probably a few others, many of the towns in Nigeria that served as administrative headquarters during the colonial period have become either state capitals or local government headquarters. It is also regrettable that Ugwu Okpu court that served all the towns in the current Anaocha Local Government Area and beyond is only now a Customary Court behind Neni, which currently hosts a Magistrate Court. We might not be asking for too much if we request that a High Court be established at Ugwu Okpu, which incidentally falls within Awka Capital Territory. Nevertheless, we can assert without fear of contradiction that the future will be bright if we keep things right, if we acknowledge our past and the exploits of those before us, if we build our current milieu, and if we bequeath good legacies to our children. Today, Agulu is transiting into one of the commercial nerve centers in the local government. What do we do to enhance this position? Perhaps, our greatest strengths in this present dispensation lie in the two expressions made in the introductory section of this discourse, namely *Agulu nine mmuonwu*, *mmuonwu* and *Agulu a dighi Igbo a taa aja*.

The first expression portrays the very significance of masquerades in Agulu culture history. It also opens our mind to the wide range of heritage resources and activities in Agulu in which



masquerades appear. Masquerades play not only the social role of policing people and executing community decisions; they also perform and entertain the people during communal festivities including Christian festivals. Enekwe (1987 in Okpoko and Okonkwo, 2004) described masking as “the most versatile, and the most entertaining public performance in Igboland”. Indeed, masquerades are very alluring to Agulu people, and the youth often adjudge festivities successful or otherwise by the number of masquerades that displayed. When the white missionary made the above statement, he may have constrained himself to the domain of religion. Mask has the force of invocation... and extra human forces... in which mythical beings commune with the living and manifest their powers. They are conceived as the incarnation of our dead ancestors who continue to take active part in the affairs of the living. Masking is also a synthesis of many art forms, including impersonation, miming, sculpture, music, dance ..., and their appearance at festivals is a manifestation of the general well-being and prosperity of the community (Enekwe, 1987 in Okpoko and Okonkwo, 2004). The importance of the above to our discussion is that in conjunction with other natural and cultural endowments, masquerades can be harnessed to promote tourism. We shall discuss this in detail later.

The music, *Agulu a dighi Igbo a taa aja*, by Ozoemene Nsugbe, a celebrated philosophical musician, attempts to chronicle the exploits of our people in bakery and supermarket businesses. Permit me to say here that at the time the music was released, our bakers could rank amongst the best in Africa. Prominent among them are Ejidike, Our Lady's... and Highlife... I remember with nostalgia, the bread cake by Ejidike... popularly called *mgbodo ume*, which kept us going during our secondary school days. Mention must be made of Ideal, Chibros, Eastern Shop and Cyril supermarkets among others that brought fame to Agulu. There are many others who brought glory to the town in their individual and/or collective ventures. I salute them all. I specifically salute Professor Dora Akunyili and Dr Ifeanyi Okoye for attracting NAFDAC Zonal office and Nnamdi Azikiwe University School of Pharmacy, respectively to Agulu. I also salute those that have established their businesses in Agulu. If Ozoemene Nsugbe were to revisit his music today, he would probably have started with the exploits of our sons, daughters and wives in politics. The most celebrated among these, is the governorship position which our son, Mr. Peter Obi, is occupying for the second term. You all know how difficult it is to win such an exalted position, particularly in Anambra State where we have many eggheads, let alone occupy it for the second term. In actual fact, we have become so celebrated in politics that a national daily re-christened APGA, a national party, Agulu People's Grand Alliance. I need to caution that such a position does not come just by wave of hands or wishful thinking. If it were to be rotated among the seventy seven towns that make up the state, you can imagine how long it will take to get back to Agulu. Hence, *o riri oji kpa ya nku maka na a di a ri oji kwa daa*. Thus, while we acknowledge the accomplishments of our people, we must remember to join hands to move Agulu forward. As we noted earlier, we also need to see the trophies. What legacies do we then leave for the future?

I do believe that such legacies must transcend the individual achievements enunciated above, but entail at the same time concerted efforts to acknowledge our past, and rely on the present to bequeath a viable future to our children and children's children. This is where the need to harness our masquerade displays, Agulu Lake and other natural and cultural endowments for tourism come in. Agulu Lake is the largest lake in the state, and could be developed into an activity-oriented resort. A

major strength of Agulu Lake as an area of attraction is its strategic location. It is along one of the gateways to other states in the southeast and south-south; it is within Awka capital territory and also close to Onitsha, an international market of repute. We therefore encourage a robust resort development that is anchored on commerce, events and entertainment, so as to make it vibrant and competitive. Thus, there should be hotel accommodation, conference halls, arts theatres, shopping malls, banks, clinics and other institutions that provide utility services in the resort. Provisions should be made for sporting facilities and arenas of all kinds so as to encourage competitive sports and so on. Periodic masquerade festivals, cultural nights, fashion shows, water regatta, cultural shows and entertainment, celebrity weddings (as with Delaware in the US), regular colloquiums and so on can also help to make the resort competitive. It is significant to note that the much celebrated Olympic Festival started as a local festival among the Greece.

We must note that resorts thrive on stable socio-political environment. Thus, we must eschew all vices including robbery, theft and kidnapping that may discourage visitation and mar the success of this venture. We also need to inculcate the culture of tourism in our people and make them appreciate tourism ethics and values. What we require from government to actualize this dream is strong political will and an enabling environment, because private investors will definitely come to harness the great potentials of the resort. In this way, job and business opportunities would be created for our young ones. Agulu Lake resort could also be the venue for celebrating Agulu 'mass return' which should be resuscitated. We must remember that this town was handed down to us in trust by our fore-bears. In discharging this trust responsibility, we can put the community to every beneficial use as we deem fit. Nevertheless, we must not do anything that will jeopardize the chances of future generations from benefiting from it. One of the ways we have tried to jeopardize the society today, is by the indiscriminate discharge of wastes and channeling of water drainage into Agulu Lake. This attitude is unpardonable and could result in siltation and ultimately, the cessation of the lake. May I admonish us to dispose our wastes in more civilized manners, and to begin to emphasize more of the things that unite us than those that divide us. As we have seen from the above discussion, many of the issues that tended to bring division are alien to us.

Long Live Agulu People, Long Live Anambra State, Long Live Nigeria.

Thank you.

#### **Note**

This address was presented months before His Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi left enduring legacies in Agulu. He built an enviable network of roads that links Agulu to neighbouring communities; started the magnificent Agulu Lake Resort; built sustainable bridges and commissioned the State High Court among other alluring projects. Indeed, Mr. Peter Obi has transformed Agulu into a sub-urban community and many Agulu indigenes now regard him as a true son sent by providence to liberate them. If Peter Obi did not read my speech, then we must be thinking alike. This is because he did virtually all that I demanded for and even beyond. I salute this great son of ours.

*\*This paper was presented at the annual Ofala festival of the Igwe of Agulu on 30 December 2011.*

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