

**RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY
PORT HARCOURT**



**WE HAVE KILLED OUR FATHERS:
THE TRAGEDY OF NEGLECTING HISTORY**

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

BY

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents,
Jeki Opusenibo Michael Alali Jaja (late)
and Mrs. Leticia Michael Jaja (late)
for their labour of love.

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PROTOCOL

The Vice Chancellor and Chairman of this occasion, Sir,
Chairman and Members of the University Governing Council,
The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration),
The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic),
The Registrar and Secretary to Council and Senate,
The University Librarian,
The University Bursar,
Former Vice Chancellors and Emeritus Professors,
Former Deputy Vice Chancellors,
Heads of the Various Campuses of the University,
Provost of the College of Medicine,
Dean of the Postgraduate School,
Deans of Faculties and Directors of Institutes and Centres,
Heads of Departments and Units,
Distinguished Professors and Members of Senate,
Academic, Administrative and Technical Staff,
Great Students of Rivers State University,
Ministers of God,
Your Royal Majesties, Highnesses and Chiefs,
Honourable Local Government Chairmen and Commissioners,
My Family Members and Friends,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

1.0 PREAMBLE

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with great honour and privilege that I stand before you today to deliver my inaugural lecture as a Professor of African Social History, the first inaugural lecture in the Faculty of Humanities, and the first in the Department of History and International Diplomacy. This moment marks a significant milestone in my academic journey, and I am humbled to have the opportunity to share my passion for this captivating discipline with all of you. The tradition of the inaugural lecture is an obligation a Professor owes to the academic culture, even when it is not mandatory. Principally, the Professor announces to the academic community a coherent account of his discipline in a university setting. As I stand before you today, I join this tradition as a proclamation of faith in the discipline that I profess. My discipline is social history. I am interested in the things and thoughts that shape civilizations. I meditate or reflect on the intricacies and the web of actors, or *dramatis personae*, whose actions and activities result in the decisions and reactions that impact time in its ever-fleeting nature.

Reflecting upon my path to becoming a Professor of African Social History, I am reminded of the words of a renowned historian, Marc Bloch, who once said, history is, in its essentials, the science of change. From a young age, I was captivated by the stories of the past, and drawn to the profound transformations that have shaped our world and continue to resonate within us. I

chose to dedicate my life to the study of history because I firmly believe in its inherent power.

History is not merely a collection of dates and events confined to the pages of textbooks; it is a living, breathing entity that has the ability to illuminate the complexities of human existence. It unveils the triumphs and tragedies, the aspirations and struggles, and the remarkable achievements and profound mistakes of those who came before us. Through the lens of history, we gain invaluable insights into the human experience. We are challenged to question our assumptions, broaden our perspectives, and critically analyze the choices and consequences that have shaped societies across time. History enables us to understand the present by unravelling the intricacies of the past, guiding us towards a more informed and enlightened future.

In an era of rapid technological advancements and ever-evolving global dynamics, the importance of history cannot be overstated. Neglecting the study of history risks severing our connection to our collective heritage and blinding us to the patterns and lessons that history offers. The consequences of such neglect are dire, as they deprive us of the wisdom and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of our contemporary world. It is such that what happens in time, or what is taken note of that has come to define time, gives an insight into the concept of history. The phenomenon we call history harbours a complexity of knowledge formations and

regimes of understanding, which become the responsibility of the historian to synthesize and appreciate. The objective of the historian is to grasp their values for his or her milieu in ways that are enriching. In this way, I discharge my responsibilities by transmitting the past from my perspective to the human community. The conviction for which I make this profession as a historian is the passion of my engagement, interest, and worth of the discipline.

As a Professor of African Social History, my mission is to instill a deep appreciation for the discipline and ignite a passion for the past. I aspire to cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and an unwavering commitment to seeking truth through the exploration of historical narratives. I believe that by fostering a profound appreciation of history, we can empower individuals to become active participants in shaping a more just and equitable future.

Today, as we embark on this intellectual journey, let us embrace the richness of history, acknowledging its power to inspire, educate, and provoke change. I invite you to join me in the exploration of the human tapestry woven by the hands of countless generations. Together, let us delve into the depths of the past, for in doing so, we unlock the keys to our present and forge a path towards a brighter tomorrow.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, too often, the instrument of African Social History and culture is not employed in addressing problems, thus leading to undue tension in the entire society. The ability to handle volatile circumstances maturely with adequate recourse to African Social History and culture is the only safeguard against tragedies befalling African communities (Adagogo-Brown & Oko-Jaja, 2020; Jaja, & Agumagu, 2017; Jaja, & Adagogo-Brown, 2016a; Jaja & Azuokwu, 2002). African Social History can be a valuable tool in eliminating and/or minimising the occurrence of tragedies intimidating members of African communities by providing a deeper understanding of the roots, dynamics, and complexities of a tragedy. Without African Social History, the individual is as lost as a child without a mother (Jaja, 2013; Jaja & Badey, 2013b; Adejumo, *et al.*, 2012; Jaja & Enemugwen, 2006; Jaja, 1994b). The more changes occur in our society, the more it becomes imperative for the past to be studied with a view to establishing the connection and continuity between what has been and what is (Jaja, & Adagogo-Brown, 2022; Adagogo-Brown, 2019; Jaja, & Adagogo-Brown, 2016b; Jaja & Aba-Erondy, 2000). The significance of African Social History is incontestable because human experience repeats itself. The disciplinary tools of African Social History are important to helping people today understand two critical related things: (1) stories mobilising people in powerful ways; and (2) the ability to

analyse, challenge, and judge stories' credibility.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, in contemporary times, Africans who live in neighbourhoods where there is access to their historical heritage are expected to admire artefacts, enjoy consulting them, and grow their actions around such traditionally domesticated knowledge and experience. These moments would offer a health boost and make visible the ways human action will be supported by their relationship with their historical heritage. Unfortunately, our historical heritage has been neglected and/or treated as not having any significant value anymore. Notwithstanding that historical heritage helps us to: (1) examine our history and traditions; (2) develop awareness about ourselves; (3) understand and explain why we are the way we are; and (4) serve as a keystone of our culture that plays an important role in our politics, entrepreneurship, and world view (Ahmad, 2023; Jaja & Pepple, 2017a,b; Agboola, 2016; Jaja, 2016a,b, 2010, 2006a,b). This lends support to Patterson's (1974) belief that the situation should be addressed as relational historical health. It is well celebrated in African communities that, from a relational historical health perspective, historical heritage is a constantly unfolding measure of the relationship between human knowledge and various aspects of societal development. The foregoing line of reasoning reminds us of the philosophy and ideology of historical heritage as a pillar for building sustainable socio-economic, political, and technological development,

which has been neglected.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is not uncommon to find in some African cultures that some inhabitants largely ignore the fundamental role of historical heritage in developing the nation's socio-economic, political, and technological developmental structures. This human action is referred to as historical blindness, which is the inability to perceive the significant role of historical heritage and accord it adequate recognition and respect. To this class of Africans, however, we perceive their actions as killing our fathers, the repositories of our most cherished historical traditions. This is a tragedy.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, in our context, killing is used to describe a deliberately neglected action and a failure to draw from the experiences of our fathers, the custodians of our historical heritage, when making critical decisions. Fathers comprise heads of families, community elders, strategic custodians of the attributes of our historical heritage, and administrators of our ancestral spiritual homes. Tragedy is an uncomfortable phenomenon or state of things in providing human welfare, joy, and satisfaction.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it must be pointed out that the historical blindness outcome in Africa is not significantly different from the global perspectives where humans also demonstrate ignorance of the developmental-supporting role of historical heritage in the

name of relying on modernity and self-preferences (Ahmad, 2023; Jaja, 2021a,b, 2004a,b,c; Jaja & Agumagu, 2019; Jaja & Badey, 2009). The common tragedies from our boundaryless historical heritage result in weak leadership orientation and practice, refusal to be mentored, absolute deceit by all, criminality and corruption, weak followership, and backstabbing, including religious intolerance.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I am aware that perceiving historical heritage as an equal partner with the state of humans may seem to negate the contemporary paradise of African historical thought that man is higher than any other thing in human society (Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2021; Agboola, et al., 2014; Jaja, 2013a; Jaja & Agumagu, 2010; Gwiyani-Nkhoma, 2006; Jaja, 1992a,b). This line of reasoning seems to have made most Africans believe that they can make decisions without consulting their historical heritage, and they have acted as such with the resultant tragedies. This is because, it is a recognized practice that in dominant African culture, humans in high places of authority are treated as supreme deities, leaving the rest of the world as resources to be exploited by them (Agboola, *et al.*, 2016; Jaja, 2013b; Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2007; Jaja & Orji, 2007a,b,c; Agogo, 2001; Asante & Asante, 1990). To place history as a fundamental consult, therefore, will require a shift in African telescope, because African indigenous ontologies have understood and valued man as being above board (Jaja & Badey, 2012; Van-Henbroek,

1999; Jaja, 1995a,b,c).

As an advocate of historical science, however, it must be pointed out that this is killing our fathers, and it is a tragedy in African communities. The implication is that to promote human knowledge and understanding in this time of global revival in our socio-economic, political, and technological lives requires scrutiny of the relationships humans have with the repositories of their historical heritage. In this inaugural lecture, therefore, I will x-ray: (1) genetic ideologies and the great debate on the historical agenda; (2) the power of cultural exchanges and the hidden histories; (3) historical mysteries as social fabric of exchange; (4) rhythms of historical celebration and house systems as pillars of unity; (5) recognition of women as unsung historical heroines; and (6) building historical bridges and bridging the historical gap. At this juncture, I will bring the discussion to a close by examining the timeless lessons that should not be forgotten on this journey.

3.0 GENETIC IDEOLOGIES AND GREAT DEBATE ON HISTORICAL AGENDA

3.1 Historical Genetic Ideologies

The genetic and ideological coevolution, domestication, and conservation of history are among the most important developments of knowledge in human society (Jaja, *et al.*, 2019; Hatemi, *et al.*, 2014). Over 200,000 years ago, there were no cultivated records of history, historians relied mainly on

artefacts to satisfy their needs. Over time, this was genetically converted to written records (Jaja, 1993, 1994 & 1995d; Asante & Asante, 1990). Knowledge of genetic ideological coevolution, domestication, and conservation of history is therefore fundamental to our understanding of the tragedy facing African communities resulting from the killing of our fathers, the custodians of historical heritage (Jaja, 2019; Gabriel & Jaja, 2017; Aminigo, *et al.*, 2012; Hatemi, *et al.*, 2012; Bouchard & McGue, 2003).

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, humans evolved to have more deposited knowledge with increasing functional historical diversity (Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2005; Martin, *et al.*, 1986; Eaves & Eysenck, 1974). This is another case of the very important interconnectedness between historical heritage and humans. In addition to the diversity of events in many cultures, this traditionally consists of signs and symbols (Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2015; Jaja & Badey, 2012; Ashworth, 2000; Cookey, 1974; Eaves & Eysenck, 1974). These are products of history. Humans cannot biosynthesize all the attributes and functions of society without acquiring them from their historical heritage (Gabriel, *et al.* 2019; Jaja & Opara, 2006; Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2005, Jaja, 2002a,b; Aminigo & Jaja, 1999).

3.2 The Great Debate on Historical Agenda

History, by its nature, is core to the humanistic disciplines as a

methodology that is a narrative science. History demonstrates that the human family, through their engagements in space and the perception of phenomena, is entangled in a certain dialectic that constitutes the core of human experience (Jaja, *et al.*, 2019; Jaja, 2019, 2015b,c,f; MacPepple, 2017; Martin, *et al.*, 1986). Social history is a branch of historical inquiry that focuses on the study of society and social relationships. It examines the everyday lives, experiences, and interactions of people in different time periods, with an emphasis on understanding the broader social, cultural, economic, and political contexts that shape their lives (Jaja, *et al.*, 2019; Jaja, 2011f, 2003a; Osai, *et al.*, 2004; Olorunfemi, 1999). Social historians draw upon a wide range of sources to reconstruct and analyse the social fabric of the past. These sources can include diaries, letters, personal testimonies, court records, photographs, newspapers, and other archival materials. By examining these sources, social historians aim to shed light on various aspects of society, such as family structures, social hierarchies, labour relations, gender roles, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, education, and leisure activities.

The interconnected nature of what is actualized in the cause of time in its relentless flow sits squarely with my objective in this inaugural lecture-discussion as a social historian. This is to define the character and significance of history as an embodiment of culture that provides experiential knowledge that creates identities (Jaja, 2005a,b,c). In other words, the

discipline of history is a storehouse of values. This objective, thus, makes clear the rationale for historical heritage knowledge and its value index for culture.

The core of the study of history is folklore. Folklore comprises the oral traditions of a people. It is the collection of traditional customs, wisdom, and stories passed down through generations by word of mouth. Myths are man-made stories that play explanatory functions in the African understanding of reality (Jaja, *et al.*, 2019a,b; Omole, *et al.*, 2014; Jaja, 2013; Okafor & Onokerhoraye, 1986). One of these myths that is pregnant with meaning is the story of the animals that killed their fathers. A community of young animals, trying to find their way in the world, began to feel a sense of restlessness and discontentment without the presence of their fathers. Instigated by the crafty tortoise, they desired independence and believed that they could create a better society if they were free from the rules and guidance of their family heads, elders, custodians of historical heritage, and ancestral spirits. Driven by their newfound ambitions, they decided that in order to bring about the change they sought, they needed to eliminate their fathers, the very beings who had nurtured and protected them throughout their early years. In a shocking and heartbreaking turn of events, the young animals attacked their fathers, driven by a distorted sense of power and misguided notions of progress. The very creatures who were meant to bring life and love to the world were struck down by their own progeny. The foregoing phenomenon has

remained a pattern of life in most African communities. In most African communities, the youth have no regard, recognition, or respect for their historical heritage.

The tragic consequences of their actions soon became apparent. With their fathers gone, the young animals found themselves lost and alone. The wisdom, guidance, and unconditional love they had once taken for granted were now absent. They struggled to understand the complexities of survival and the intricate balance of nature without the lessons taught by their fathers. As the seasons passed, the young animals grew older and wiser. They came to realize the magnitude of their terrible mistake. Regret and sorrow weighed heavily on their hearts as they longed for the presence and wisdom of their fathers. In most African communities, our youths and the elites have yet to recognise and turn around this sort of tragedy befalling society.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, history is lived, not because humans desire to make history. Rather, it is because human actions call for chronicling while seeking understanding of their essence. Human actions have come to place some burden on the historian who cares for human actions enacted and engaged in the past as a way of keeping such actions alive, necessarily as *aides-mémoires*. This overriding implication of the foregoing has been redefined by the Eminent Emeritus Professor Ebiegeberi Joe Alagoa in the aphorism - the past in the living present. This is shared by Professors Tekena Tamuno, Sylvanus J. S. Cookey, Bassey Wei (Ogosi) Andah,

and N. C. Ejitiwu, among others.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it would interest you to know that God is a historian. God has perfect knowledge and understanding of all things, including past, present, and future events. As the Creator, He has a comprehensive understanding of the entirety of human history and the underlying factors that shape it. He has demonstrated this over time in the following ways: (1) taking documentation seriously (Habakkuk 2:2); (2) knowing the value of corroborating information (history is about corroborating facts) (Mark 1:44); and (3) the Christian faith and service to God require history.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, history is not just relevant to all disciplines, it is the father of all disciplines. An insight from the Bible to support the idea that history plays a foundational role in shaping various disciplines can be derived from Genesis 1:1 (KJV). "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." This chronicling of an event in time is history. No discipline can exist, and no knowledge can be passed across without prior documentation. Every discipline is the sum total of relevant ideas, events, or experiences that have been collated and documented over a period of time. The acknowledgement of a beginning is, in itself, history. There is absolutely nothing that exists without a beginning, and this includes all disciplines. History is therefore the foundation that all other professions build upon. It is the chief cornerstone of

learning and knowledge.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the problem in African communities is that we have jettisoned history, and like the reckless animals who killed their fathers in my earlier analogy, we are groping in the dark and cannot navigate our way into the future. We are like those dastardly drivers who ply the roads without checking the rear-view mirror. We have traded our values and our cultural heritage on the altar of westernization. As a result of globalization, most people in African communities prefer foreign drinks and foods over our traditional ones. In the last century, the world witnessed some degree of homogenization, mainly of the dominant classes in various societies.

During the foregoing period, in most African communities, the educated mimicked their colonial masters; today, we have masses of even the poor preferring hamburgers, shawarma, pizza, meat pie, and Coca-Cola or Pepsi to their native akpu, abacha, or mpitaka (tapioca), and ukpakala (oil bean salad), including tombo and kiki. The American (or British) suit and tie or jeans have become the global dress, and the English language, or rather, American-English, has become the world language (Jaja, 2010). Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, most of us here are to blame. Our children are cut off from our roots, where God planted us. We do not visit our villages with them. Some fathers believe that death awaits them once they go home. Many young people cannot converse

fluently in their local dialects. If you ask any student where he comes from, his or her response might be 'Rivers State', or 'Khana Local Government Area'. Many, sadly, do not know the family compound or village that is their place of origin.

There is evidence that even the governments conspired and killed our fathers. For instance, the Federal Government of Nigeria, during the 2009–2010 academic session, made the grave error of removing the study of history from the curricula of primary and secondary schools. Official reasons given then were, among others, that students shun the subject; only a few jobs are available for history graduates, and that there is a dearth of history teachers. This is a disservice to the citizens. Similarly, we keep agitating for self-determination. The youths do not even know what led to the Nigerian Civil War and why a repeat must be avoided at all costs. Santayana (1998) famously said, those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. The implication is that the government in most African communities does not take cognizance of the importance of historical heritage, nor does it know how that heritage should be applied in solving our problems. For instance, Nigeria had to cede the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon at The Hague because, even though they were able to assemble seasoned lawyers, they forgot to consult the Historical Society of Nigeria to bring its wealth of experience into the team that prosecuted the case. A lawyer can argue brilliantly, but without historical facts, the case is dead on arrival.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is said that if you do not tell your story, another person will tell it for you. The unfortunate consequence of your story being told by another is the distortion of facts. It is as a result of this distortion that we were told that Mungo Park discovered the River Niger. The day Mungo Park arrived at the bank of the Niger, he met people swimming and fishing in the river. He saw houses around the area, but they went ahead and wrote in the colonial history that Mungo Park discovered the River Niger. These are intentional colonial distortions, and people with no knowledge of history are bound to swallow this sort of garbage hook, line, and sinker.

Research evidence has shown that history was a critical weapon for deconstructing the psychological colonialist construct that sought to undermine African achievements and thus provide the ideological basis for colonial rule (Agboola *et al.*, 2018, Okafor & Onokerhoraye, 1986). The challenge of Kenneth Onwuka Dike's era was one in which Africans were faced with the superiority toga of the Europeans as justification for colonialism. The history that was propagated at the time succeeded in the task of demythologizing European stereotypes about the African past (Jaja, *et al.*, 2019). As historians and lovers of history, we should try as much as we can to re-orient our people about the true history of our country.

4.0 POWER OF CULTURAL EXCHANGES AND HIDDEN HISTORIES

4.1 Cultural Exchanges and History

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as expected, a great deal of my work has focused on the Opobo Kingdom and the Niger Delta Area. However, Opobo's true allure lies in its deep cultural heritage. It was founded in the late 19th century by the legendary King Jaja, a fearless leader who defied colonial rule and established Opobo as a powerful trading hub (Jaja, 2012d,e; Jaja & Orluwene, 2005; Epelle, 1970). With its rich history and enchanting natural beauty, Opobo offers a unique blend of cultural heritage and picturesque landscapes. Stepping into Opobo is like stepping into living history, as the Kingdom is still striving to preserve its traditional customs and values while embracing modernity. The location of Opobo in the Niger Delta environment made it play a dominant role in the nineteenth century economy (Jaja, 1977). The Niger Delta environment became Opobo's greatest strength in terms of the security it needed for its expansionist agenda while directing the oil trade in the region. The Ibani culture is also known to have continued to exist in the two kingdoms (Jaja, 2013b,c,d; Jaja & Badey, 2012; Jaja & Orji, 2006).

4.1.1 Language and Literature

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, language and literature have long been considered one of the

most important attributes of cultural identity and food used for cultural exchange. For many people around the world, particularly in areas where history and traditions are more predominantly conveyed through speech than in writing, the transmission of oral literature from one generation to the next lies at the heart of culture and memory. It is highly essential to the survival of a culture. Very often, local languages and literature act as vehicles for the transmission of unique forms of cultural knowledge (Jaja, 2019, 2014a,b, 1995e; Jaja & Orluwene, 2007; Jaja, & Ogan, 2004).

Language endangerment is therefore a serious concern to which linguists and language planners have turned their attention to in the last several decades. It is one of the unwholesome consequences of cultural exchange. The continuous exposure of youths to the influence of Western civilization and the government's inaction are promoting the extinction of many African communities' dialects (Jaja, 2010, 2007). For instance, as my research revealed, this prevailing situation has almost resulted in the near extinction of the Ibani language (Jaja, 2005). It is projected that if nothing serious is done by the end of the 21st century, for a variety of reasons, speakers of many smaller, less dominant languages will stop using their heritage languages, and intergenerational transmission of the heritage language will cease to exist. The following checklist, the Expanded Grade Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), is therefore a good measure for assessing where we are and

where we hope to be in the future with our native languages and literature. The issues to be considered are that language and literature are used: (1) internationally for a broad range of functions; (2) in education, work, mass media, and government at the nationwide level; (3) for local and regional mass media and government services; (4) for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders; (5) for transmission in the public education network; (6) orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form in parts of the community; (7) orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language; and (8) orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation is transmitting it to their children.

4.2 Hidden Histories

Narrating our history the right way is of utmost importance as it shapes our collective identity, informs our understanding of the present, and influences our trajectory into the future. Biases, distortions, and the viewpoints of those in power have shaped many historical narratives. Telling history the right way requires challenging these distortions and acknowledging the injustices committed in the past. By confronting and addressing historical wrongs, we can promote healing, reconciliation, and social justice. The Eurocentric positions about African Social History are most of the time wrong, and at times deliberate. Some of the points put forward were to play a role in sustaining neo-colonialism. The era of imperialism in Africa was marked by the exploitative actions of European powers that sought to extract

resources and establish control over African territories. Despite their ruthless plundering of Africa's wealth, these imperial powers often labelled the continent as underdeveloped and backward.

The Imperialists viewed Africa as a treasure trove of valuable resources, including minerals, natural riches, and agricultural products. European powers exploited these resources for their own economic gain, often through unfair trade practises, forced labour, and resource extraction. Africa's wealth was syphoned off to benefit the imperial powers and their industries. Despite the immense wealth that flowed out of Africa, imperial powers conveniently portrayed the continent as underdeveloped or lacking in progress. This narrative conveniently ignored the fact that Africa's underdevelopment was, to a large extent, a consequence of colonial exploitation and resource extraction. It is essential to recognize that the underdevelopment of Africa was not a result of any inherent deficiencies or lack of capability on the part of Africans. Instead, it was a direct outcome of the systematic plundering and exploitation by imperial powers through the distortion of African Social History.

Cultural suppression also took place. Imperial powers actively suppressed African cultures and traditions, often imposing their own values, languages, and institutions. This cultural imperialism aimed to undermine African identities and erode local knowledge systems, reinforcing the perception of African societies as primitive or backward. A lot of cultural artefacts

were plundered or destroyed, such as the Benin bronze cockerel sculpture and a bronze head of an Oba recently returned from the Jesus College, Cambridge and Aberdeen University respectively. To the plunderers, they are nothing but interesting works of art. To the Africans, those artefacts represent generations of ancient significance, which are symbols that convey information.

Understanding this historical context is crucial for debunking the myth of Africa's inherent underdevelopment and acknowledging the structural inequalities and legacies of imperialism that have continued to shape the continent's challenges today. It serves as a reminder of the need for equitable and inclusive approaches to development that address historical injustice and promote self-determination and empowerment for African nations.

5.0 HISTORICAL MYSTERIES AS SOCIAL FABRIC OF EXCHANGE

5.1 Significance of Signs and Symbols

In many African communities, there exist some complex mechanisms of human communication that involve many verbal and non-verbal components. These are generally known as symbols. Symbols are anything used to represent, express, or stand for an event or situation (Jaja & Badey, 2013a; Jaja, 2011b,c,e; Ecoma, 2007). They are short expressions for the identification of an object or situation. Symbols serve in the

transmission of messages as well as focusing the mind on an idea or ideal. They are objects used to typify or represent the quality of something and/or abstract ideas. Symbols guide our behaviours and are used to show an event from the past, present, or future. This involves using the functions of the human mind: religion, science, art, myths, dreams, and rituals are all manifestations of symbols (Udechukwu, 2019; Jaja, 2012a,b,c; Jaja & Ogoloma, 2007; Jaja & Eleanya, 2006) (see Plates 1, 2 & 3).







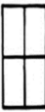




Ibani Buruma	Meaning	Ibani Buruma	Meaning	Ibani Buruma	Meaning
	Madian (Iriabo)		Dominion of marine life		Princess (Ambile)
	Prince (Ambile)		Coral Beed (Klan)		Virginity
	Shield of Honor during War. (Agbo)		Secrecy and allegiance, always on the foot toes of a masquerader		Patience
	Trust		Freedom		

Plate 1: Ibani Buruma symbols used on Iriabo

Source: Abinye Morgan Ogolo Personal Library



Plate 2: Historic depiction/representation of the environment in which we live.

Source:Field Work in the Niger Delta

Note:

1. Drummers at a festival appreciated by an elder/title holder probably a monarch.
2. A Warri monarch being attended to by his subjects, one fanning him, while the other stand by him.
3. The Niger Delta economic environment depicting fishing as an occupation, and the palm oil trade that took centre stage in the 19th century.



Plate 3: Cage showing a withheld dog inside its coffers.

Source: Field Work in the Niger Delta

Note:

1. This is a symbolic and historic preservation of the place of dogs in Opobo Kingdom.
2. It explains why the presence of dogs and pigs are taboo in the Kingdom.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, communication is a way of transmitting information from one person to another. Hornsby (1995) defines communication as the practice of making something known; exchanging information, news, or ideas with somebody; or making one's idea clear to others. It employs the use of drawings, signs, or symbols. One of such comprehensive examples is the *Nsibidi*. *Nsibidi* is an ancient system of communication that is indigenous to African communities. It is used by Ibibio, Efik, and Igbo communities in Nigeria (Uka, 2022; Uzegbunam, 2012; Jaja, 2009a,b; Wariboko,2007). Aesthetically compelling and encoded, *Nsibidi* does not in any way correspond to any one spoken language in the world(Ajibade, *et al.*, 2012; Aminigo, *et al.*, 2000; Jaja, 2001a,b,c; Alagoa, 1981). It is an ideographic script whose symbolism refers to the abstract concepts, actions, or things that are used to facilitate communication among the people speaking different languages in that area (Agboola, *et al.*, 2018; Jaja & Badey, 2014a,b; Jaja, 2008a,b,c,d; Alagoa,1964). *Nsibidi* transmits and conceals various kinds of information using a wide, fluid vocabulary of geometric and naturalistic signs placed on objects. Uka (2022), noted that *Nsibidi* is an ancient script that existed before the coming of the Europeans to the African communities. Umoetuk (1985) and Ubom (1987) accept that *Nsibidi* was an ancient pictographic writing used within and around the South East and South South geopolitical zones of Nigeria before the coming of the colonial masters.

Udofia and Inyang (1987) postulate that the people of Cross River invented a picture writing called *Nsibidi* in order to overcome the difficulties in communication in government establishments, trade, and diplomacy. A host of scholars support the view that *Nsibidi* was used throughout Calabar, beyond Igbo-land, and even extended to some areas of Cameroon before the coming of the Europeans (Ecoma, 2007; Eyo, 2005; Jaja, 1996b; Udofia & Inyang, 1987, Dryrell, 1911). The mask of the *Nsibidi* symbol is shown in Plate 4.



Plate 4: Mask from South-eastern Nigeria showing Nsibidi symbols

Source: Dryrell, E. (1911). Further notes on *Nsibidi* signs with their meanings from the Ikom district southern Nigeria. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 51(4), 318-333.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, *Buruma* is a form of indigo pigment used widely across the Niger Delta by women for body beautification during occasions. In African communities, maidens have symbols drawn with *Buruma* to decorate their bodies for *iria* (celebration of womanhood). The *Buruma iria* incorporates intricate linear and geometrical designs painted on the body of the female. These designs or symbols are significant, and they have various meanings.

5.2 Markets

The market is a place where people interact primarily for the exchange of goods and services, for currency, or for any other acceptable form of exchange. Zakariya *et al.* (2016) and the World Bank Report (2009) showcased that a market is an institution, an avenue for social relations, and a place for the transaction of businesses and services. The traditional market space in Pan African communities offers various degrees of activities, such as commercial activities, a place to earn a living, socio-cultural contact, religious purposes, administrative functions, recreational benefits, and political activities, amongst others (Jaja, *et al.*, 2015; Ogeah & Omofonmwan, 2013). Historically, the market square is adjudged to be a spatial planning feature that has been in existence since the inception of a typical settlement and, as such, has formed an integral part of the community (Zakariya, *et al.*, 2016; Uzuegbunam, 2012;

Van-Henbroek, 1999). Many market squares or market places feature an open space where various passive and active sharing activities are carried out without contesting for users' accessibility and/or right of use or ownership. It is usually free and open to all. In other words, it is an arena that favours public accessibility, meetings, interaction, and engagement (Agboola *et al.*, 2018; Ashworth, 2000).

The diverse roles of markets manifest in their distinctiveness and values attributed by both residents and visitors (Agboola *et al.*, 2014; Adejumo *et al.*, 2012). The economic importance of the market is established, having constituted a venue for traders and patrons to exchange goods and services with currencies. Hence, it could be established that the economy of any country is vested solely in the huge contribution of markets at both the state, local, and national levels (Shakur *et al.*, 2012). In terms of historical heritage, this provides a lesson on the need for self-reliance amidst much-valued democracy and supportiveness. All these are no longer there as a result of the killing of our fathers (Omole *et al.*, 2014; Ogeah & Omofonmwan, 2013).

6.0 FESTIVAL RHYTHMS AND HOUSE SYSTEMS IN HISTORICAL HERITAGE AS PILLARS OF UNITY

6.1 Festival Rhythms

The word 'festival' is derived from the Latin word *festivus* which means joyful. It is a public celebration held to

commemorate an important event in a community or place (Oziogu, 2011, Jaja, 2004, Agogo, 2001). A festival is a special event or occasion that is celebrated with enthusiasm, joy, and often cultural or religious significance. It is a time when people come together to commemorate and honour certain traditions, rituals, and/or historical events. This has the implication of: (1) the performance of sacrificial, passage, seasonal, and commemorative observance rites; (2) people gathering together at a community centre, market place, and/or any other spot; (3) communal eating and drinking festivals; (4) dramatic dancing, music playing, and athletic displaying; and (5) masked plays and dancing groups.

Festivals serve as a platform for communities to express their cultural identity, strengthen social bonds, and create lasting memories. Festivals can be local, regional, or national in scale, and they play a vital role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The specific roles performed by festivals in African communities are: (1) promoting political, social and economic activities of the people including the transmission of ideas, knowledge, understanding and aspirations as well as the philosophy of the people for meaningful living; (2) serving as an attraction for homecoming by the sons and daughters of the soil from various towns and cities of Nigeria and abroad after a long period of separation, in addition to serving as a forum for neighbouring communities, families and individuals to mend fences among its embittered community members and

individuals and to cement ties with one another; and (3) serving as a forum for eligible marriageable bachelors and spinsters to meet their life partners, make new friends and to exchange addresses, in conjunction with serving as a forum to take necessary steps towards enhancing the development of the communities.

Another set of roles showcased by festivals is built around: (1) promoting the cultural heritage of the community to the outside world. The sons and daughters of the community buy artefacts and take them home as souvenirs, thereby promoting their cultural heritage, including assisting in publicizing the people and the community in the media by some organizations, thereby attracting tourists, both foreign and local; (2) playing crucial role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage, providing a platform for communities to showcase their traditions, rituals, music, dance, costumes, and culinary delights, in addition to bringing people together, fostering a sense of unity and belonging within a community; (3) serving as a means for communities to express their unique cultural, religious, or ethnic identities and providing an opportunity for individuals to pay homage to their ancestors, deities, or important figures in their cultural or religious narratives; and (4) offering educational value by providing insights into different cultures, traditions, and historical events, including serving as a significant thread in the fabric of society, promoting cultural diversity, social cohesion, and a sense of shared heritage. They

create spaces for celebration, reflection, and connection, enriching the lives of individuals and communities.

All the foregoing aesthetics are no longer visible in African communities as a result of neglect of the place of heads of families, community elders, and custodians of the attributes of our historical heritage and ancestral spirits.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, African communities are known for their rich cultural heritage and diverse ethnic groups, each with their own unique customs and traditions. African communities are home to several festivals that celebrate the culture and history of the people. These festivals attract a large number of visitors from far and near to witness the colourful displays of dance, music, and art during the period. The festivals not only promote cultural diversity but also contribute to the economies of African communities by providing opportunities for tourism and local businesses. Examples of festivals in African communities are the *Awankere*, *Dumineya*, Boat regatta and *Nwaotam* masquerade festivals.

6.1.1 *Awankere* Festival

This festival is also known as *Okere Juju* festival and has been in existence since the 15th century. It is an annual festival celebrated by the Itsekiri people of *Okere* in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State. It is one of the most popular

cultural festivals celebrated annually in Okere Community. The first part of the festival is ritualistic but close to the public, but the second part is funfair where people wear masks (see Plate 7).



Plate 5: Awankere Masquerades

Source: Jaja, J. M. (2021c). Culture and Environment in the Niger Delta in Pratten, D. and Asuk, O. C. (eds.) *Perspectives from the Niger Delta. Essays in Honour of Abi Derefaka*. Port Harcourt, Onyoma Research Publications, pp. 64-84.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the *Awankere* is a fertility festival. *Awankere* is therefore referred to as god of fertility and security. The community is purified, and sacrifices are made to appease and thank the deity for all the

blessings of the preceding festival year prior to the commencement of the ceremonies. Such rites as *ajafifa* (purification of the community), *ibiribiri* (the spiritual entering into the community), *ode gbigba* (sweeping the arena), and *awerewere* (cleansing ceremony), precede the main event. The *Awerewere* is the fourth and final cleansing ceremony preceding the coming out of the masquerades. There is a procession of initiates streaming out of the ancestral landing point of *Ekpen*, led by the *Ogieboro*, the *Olare aja* (the head of *Okere* Community), or his representative, followed by the *Ojo umale* (Chief Priest) and other elders holding up *Awerewere* leaves (cleansing leaves) and shouting *Ogungbaja Okere Dola* (literally meaning that before war comes to *Okere*, it will be yesterday).

The *Awerewere* leaves are dropped off at the epicentre of the community, right in front of a line of elders led by the *Akpugba* and the Chief Priest. The dash by the youths along the centre of the arena, and the symbolic flogging of each other with the *Awerewere* leaves depict spiritual cleansing and the introduction to a new year of prosperity and sound health. Today, as in most other traditional African communities, this most cherished festival has been abused. This leads to tragedies such as a lack of peaceful co-existence—a communal crisis all the way—resulting in underdevelopment of sectors of the economy.

6.1.2 *Dumine*a Festival

This is water purification-based. This is because, water plays a unique role in our daily lives by providing a source of refreshment and good health for people. In most African communities, the *Dumine*a festival is worshipped; it is perceived as a symbol of purity, fertility, and rebirth. Many African villages hold these celebrations in the honour of water spirits, entreating them to control water levels, increase fish supplies, and keep flooding at bay. The Kalabari, a tribe of the Ijaw people living in the Western Niger Delta region of Nigeria, hold a four-day festival to honour *Dumine*a, the head water spirit of their village. As a result of these features, *Dumine*a is perceived as the god of improved productivity.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, today, can an entrepreneur accept consulting *Dumine*a, the god of improved productivity, to assist him/her in improving the performance of his workers or businesses? The answer is absolutely no, because *Dumine*a has been demystified. A negligible few who try to consult it, do so under high confidentiality and/or secrecy.

6.1.3 Boat Regatta

This is another intriguing festival in the riverine African communities (see Plate 8). The significance of this as one of our results revealed is that it is a builder of strength, discipline, smartness, hardwork, attachment and commitment to work

among young people. All these festivals have been grounded as mark of historical heritage. This gives room to appearance of tragic results such as laziness, underproduction and therefore low Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



Plate 6: Boat Regatta in Bonny

Source: Jaja, J. M. (2013b). Myths in African Concept of Historical Reality. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2(1), 228-242.

6.1.4 Vibrant Traditional Nwaotam

In virtually every village or town in the Niger Delta, traditional religion is practised. The people believe in and worship numerous deities or spirits. Traditional religion plays a huge role in the Nwaotam dance practised in the Ibani enclave (Jaja, 2009, 1995). Examples are from the Opobo, Bonny, and Ndoki

Kingdoms of African extraction (See Plates 5 and 6). These groups have their ritualistic paraphernalia carried about in a box attended to by a small group of ritual specialists called the inner circle while on display. They send a lot of signals, such as the need for peaceful and harmonious living. Today, the meat in these ceremonies has been eroded through the “killing of our fathers”. The inspirations are no longer there, notwithstanding that this tradition, which has been adulterated in practice, is still there just as a funfair.



*Plate 7: Nwaotam
Masquerade of Opobo*



Plate 8: Nwaotam of Bonny

Source: Jaja, J. M. (2009). The Role of *Otam* in the *Nwaotam* Dance Drama of the Opobo. *International Journal of History and Strategic Studies*, 1(1), 57-61.

6.2 House System

Most African communities had a very unique socio-political and economic structure before the British conquest. This political structure was unique because it was not known to have existed in any other place in Africa or the rest of the world. It was based on association and economic participation. Although it had class stratification, the class structure was not meant to block the growth of citizens. The use of the open sea and creeks had long been the way of life of most coastal communities in Africa. The canoes as means of transportation helped the seafarers out of economic and social difficulties, without which life and living would have been very excruciating (Adagogo-Brown, 2019). The war canoe house was more than a mere descendant group. It was a compact and well-organised trading and fighting corporation, capable of manning and maintaining a war canoe (Jones, 1963). It comprises a number of persons grouped together for the purposes of trade and subject by native law and custom to the control, authority, and rule of a chief known as the head of the house (Alagoa, 1964).

The introduction of European overseas trade added a new element, provoking changes. The house expanded through the birth and recruitment of new members through marriages, adhesion, the purchase of slaves, and adoption (Wariboko, 2007). It was also a social and administrative system within a grouping of canoe houses that made up the so-called city states. An example of this are names like Akassa, Bonny, Brass,

Nembe, and Opobo. Each canoe house had rules for the behaviour of its members and was responsible for ensuring that the members met their obligations to the city state, which might include supplying labour for a special project like erecting defences or serving when needed in the war canoe.

The formation of the canoe house and its segmentation were associated with human asset specificity and the difficulty of productivity evaluation. The canoe house was a simple hierarchical arrangement that enabled merchants to internalise transactions that were previously made across market boundaries, as investment in transaction-specific assets increased. In a war canoe house, the workforce and the military arm of the house worked together to protect their spheres of influence (Adagogo-Brown, 2019).

The war canoe house system has remained unchanged in the Ibani kingdoms until today. The war canoe houses might have lost their prowess, but they still serve as an avenue for showcasing the rich cultural heritage in most African communities during coronations, burials, and other ceremonial occasions. They are the standing pillars and the basic unit of socio-cultural organization for the people in these communities.

7.0 WOMEN AS UNSUNG HISTORICAL HEROINES

Women's participation is crucial to the development of their communities. No human society is complete without women (Jaja & Agumagu, 2016; Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2008;

Jaja, 1996a). God did not stop creation until women came on board. Surprisingly, despite their usefulness at work and strategic place in all developmental efforts in most African communities, women have remained marginalised in recent times (Jaja, 2021b, 2015a, d, e).

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is pertinent to point out that, the role of women in most African communities is diverse and multifaceted. The roles are generally in social, economic, cultural, and political life. Our research results revealed that the major contribution of the Niger Delta women in the distant past are: (1) economic empowerment, that is they are actively engaged in economic activities that contribute to the specific development such as agriculture, fishing, trading, small-scale businesses, food production, cultivating crops, processing agricultural products, and marketing goods in local markets; (2) contributing to the livelihoods and economic stability of their families and communities; (3) community development and social welfare, that is Niger Delta women are at the forefront of community development initiatives in the areas of improving education, healthcare, social welfare, advocacy, activism, social issues, promotion of gender equality, and fight for the rights of marginalized groups; and (4) active cultural preservation and promotion through engagement in making traditional arts and crafts such as weaving, pottery, beadwork, and fabric dyeing. These skills, knowledge, ability and awareness are passed down

from generation to generation. The women also actively participated in cultural festivals, celebrations, and performances in their various African communities, showcasing the cultural diversity and vibrancy.

Other relevant contribution of women are in the area of: (1) political engagement and leadership: Niger Delta women were positively politically engaged and are breaking barriers in political development advocated for women's rights, gender equality, and increased representation in political platforms, levels of governance, influenced policy decisions and contributed to the improvement of the democratic process; and (2) Given the region's rich biodiversity and natural resources, Niger Delta women were involved in environmental stewardship by actively engaging in sustainable resource management practices, promotion of eco-friendly initiatives, environmental justice, raising awareness about the impact of environmental degradation, involvement in adjudication, conflict resolution and advocating for sustainable development practices that prioritize the well-being of both communities and the environment (Jaja, 2011, Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2008, Jaja & Adagogo-Brown, 2002).

Today, these achievements and knowledge have been strangulated. Despite the significant contributions of Niger Delta women in the past, they faced challenges from inequalities, limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Jaja, 2008). Efforts made to address

these issues and empower women in terms of gender equality and inclusiveness have fallen on deaf ears, outright neglect, and absolute deceit. This is another evidence of killing of our fathers.

8.0 BUILDING BRIDGES AND BRIDGING THE HISTORICAL GAP

As an enduring legacy, historical heritage points to the fact that, from a proper analysis, the future is like the past, and it is only by ascertaining accurately the course of past events, that we can equip ourselves to solve the future problems of mankind. These strategic instruments that can salvage African communities from the tragedies emerging from killing our fathers are: (1) contextual understanding: history helps provide the context and background necessary to comprehend the causes and grievances underlying a tragedy. By studying the historical events, societal dynamics, and cultural factors that have shaped the tragedy, stakeholders can gain a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. (2) Humanising the parties in a tragedy: history can humanize the other by shedding light on shared historical experiences, cultural heritage, and commonalities. By recognizing shared historical narratives, people facing a tragic situation can develop empathy and a sense of shared identity, which can pave the way for dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation; and (3) learning from past mistakes: history serves as a repository of lessons learned from previous tragedies and

their effects. By studying historical case studies, policymakers, mediators, and stakeholders can gain insights into the actions required to eliminate or at least minimize the reoccurrence of tragedies and associated pitfalls. By doing so, we learn from past mistakes and adopt effective approaches to repeated occurrences (Jaja, *et al.*, 2019; Osai, *et al.*, 2017; Omole, *et al.*, 2012, Santayana, 1998).

Another set of strategic instruments has to do with: (1) shaping perceptions: historical narratives and memories often shape the perceptions and attitudes of people faced by tragedies. Recognizing and addressing historical tragedies, such as distorted narratives, misinterpretations, untrustworthy behaviour and weak integrity; and (2) mediation, peacebuilding, and promoting dialogue: history can inform mediation, peacebuilding, and promoting dialogue by providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and trajectories in these facts of life (Shakur, *et al.*, 2012; Jaja, 2011a, d; 2003b). Historical research, oral histories, and documentation of past events can contribute to truth and reconciliation processes, transitional justice mechanisms, and the establishment of long-term strategies in the area. Facilitating strategies can include shared history, historical injustices, opportunities for truth-telling, forgiveness, and the long-term consequences of action. It is important to note that the use of historical heritage in eliminating and/or minimizing the appearance of tragedies in African communities requires sensitivity, objectivity, and a

commitment to inclusiveness under the umbrella of multiple perspectives, understanding, and sustainable peace.

9.0 CONCLUSION: TIMELESS LESSONS

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the timeless lessons that should not be forgotten are deep-seated terrorism, human degradation, calamity, and unspeakable human suffering. Nigeria is a deeply divided society. The country bifurcates along ethnic, regional/geopolitical, and religious lines, creating cleavages to political power and capable of heating the polity.

Neglecting our historical heritage can have dire consequences for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. There are therefore a few reasons why historical heritage should not be neglected: (1) Understanding the present: History provides crucial insights into the present. By studying the past, we can better understand the origins and development of social, political, and cultural phenomena that shape our world today. History helps us comprehend the context in which we live and make informed decisions for the future; (2) lessons from the past: history offers valuable lessons that can guide us in navigating present-day challenges. It provides us with a wealth of examples, successes, failures, and experiences from which we can learn. By examining historical events, we can identify patterns, understand the consequences of certain actions, and avoid repeating past mistakes; and (3) preserving cultural

heritage: history is closely intertwined with culture and heritage. Neglecting history means disregarding the stories, traditions, and identities that define who we are as individuals and communities. Embracing and preserving history allows us to honour our cultural heritage, maintain a sense of identity, and pass down knowledge and values to future generations.

Another set of factors include: (1) fostering empathy and tolerance: history promotes empathy by offering diverse perspectives and narratives. It allows us to see the world through the eyes of different individuals and communities, fostering understanding and tolerance. By exploring different historical contexts, we can develop a more inclusive worldview and promote harmonious coexistence. (2) shaping identity and nationhood: history plays a crucial role in shaping national and collective identity. It helps us recognize the struggles, achievements, and shared experiences of our ancestors, fostering a sense of pride and unity. Neglecting history can weaken the bonds that hold a society together and hinder the development of a strong national identity. (3) Informing decision-making: history provides essential context for decision-making. Whether in politics, economics, or social issues, understanding historical events and their outcomes can help us make better-informed choices. By studying past policies and their consequences, we can assess their efficacy and make more effective decisions for the present and future; and (4) promoting critical thinking: history encourages critical thinking

skills by requiring us to analyse and interpret evidence, evaluate different perspectives, and develop well-rounded arguments. Neglecting history limits our ability to think critically, weigh evidence, and make informed judgements, leaving us vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, at this juncture, I would like to conclude the fable I started. After killing their fathers, the animals felt remorseful. The young animals vowed to honour the memory of their fathers. They sought to rebuild the fractured bonds of their community, striving to create a society that embraced the values of love, respect, and unity. Through their shared grief and newfound understanding, they endeavoured to learn from the mistakes of the past and foster a future where the virtues of compassion and filial devotion would never be forsaken.

The tale of the animals who killed their fathers serves as a solemn reminder of the irreplaceable role that fathers play in our lives. It cautions against the allure of misguided ambitions and the consequences of forsaking the values that hold communities together. May we always cherish and honour the guidance and love bestowed upon us by those who came before, for they are the pillars upon which our future is built. Neglecting history deprives us of the invaluable knowledge, insights, and lessons it offers. By embracing and studying history, we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves, our world, and the importance of learning from the past to shape a better future.

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On the 19th of February, 2018, His Excellency, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, CON, GSSRS, POS (Africa), appointed members of the Fourth Commission of Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission (RSIEC). They included the Chairman, Hon. Justice C. I. Uriri (Rtd), Hon. Prof. O. Ekpete, Hon. Florence Amiesimaka, Hon. Prof. R. Amadi, Hon. Dr. Anthony Nwiado, Hon. Innocent Karibo, Hon. Dr. Festus Etete, and myself. This appointment gave me the springboard on which I presented the letter from Rev. (Mother) M. P. Eboh

requesting for approval for the establishment of the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences.

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Based on the historical understanding of moral consciousness, I declare that while acknowledging the significant impact of this inaugural lecture, I assume full responsibility for any contentious opinions expressed within it.

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