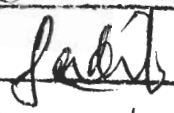




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DEPARTMENT OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS**

**CHIKE ANIAKOR: THE MAN AND HIS CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY,  
MIND AND ART IDEAS**

**A DISSERTATION IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF ARTS  
DEGREE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

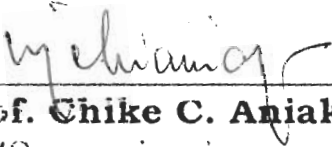
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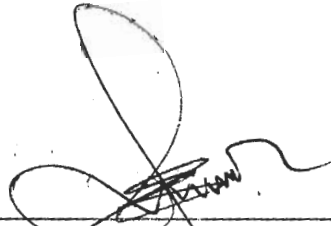
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## APPROVAL PAGE

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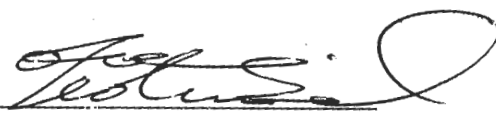
  
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**Prof. Chike C. Aniakor**  
(Supervisor)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. Ernest Okoli**  
(Head of Department)

  
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**Internal Examiner**

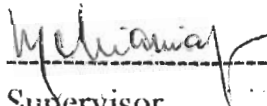
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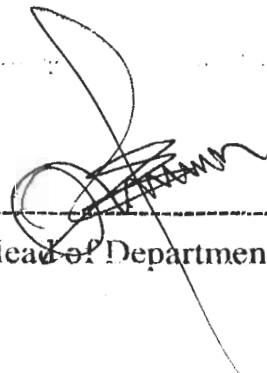
  
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**Prof. O. Oyecku**  
(Dean, Faculty of Arts)

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that Okoduwa, E. A. Tanko of the  
Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
carried out the work contained in this thesis

  
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Supervisor

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Head of Department

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, without Him, nothing is, that is.

Ozioma Onuzulike (God's messenger)

Thank God Lucky German.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to Chris and Julie Okoduwa for their incessant moral and financial support.

My profound gratitude goes to Pastor Emma Ronald Onah for the prayers, support and love all these years.

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The credit is due to God the fault has been mine.

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## ABSTRACT

CHIKE ANIAKOR: THE MAN AND HIS CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY, MIND AND  
ART IDEAS

BY

OKODUWA, E.A.T.

(2<sup>nd</sup> CLASS UPPER DIVISION, UNN)

The first chapter introduces the reader to the preliminaries of this dissertation through background account, statement of problem, research objectives, research scope, limitations, research methodology and literature review.

Chapter two is a sketchy biography of Chike Aniakor's formative years, educational experiences and academic career.

In chapter three, his formal art features are examined paying special attention from the 1970s, through the 1980s to the 1990s.

The writings of Chike Aniakor are treated under his scholarly articles and poems providing an insight into the subjects and the manner of handling. While the structure, content and tone are identified in chapter four.

Chapter five interprets and evaluates the data on Chike Aniakor's art, poetry and writings. It went as far as tracing his sources of design inspiration.

A sub-chapter, Redefining History is added under this chapter, here Chike Aniakor's bold statement on the Zaria Art society is examined and the Nsukka Art School history re-examined

Chapter six concludes the research: by summarizing the overall findings of the project.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background Account:**

I had never thought of writing on Chike Aniakor, but the fact that not much have been written on him propelled me. Having watched him closely I knew he was of a special breed; one of those kinds of men that grace this part once in a lifetime. A kind of a genius, I would say. Based on the above statement, therefore, it is important to enquire into the life of Chike Aniakor so as to understand not only those divergent qualities of the man but also to fully grasp this paragon of virtue as a contemporary modern Nigeria artist, critic, art historian and poet.

In studying or examining Chike Aniakor, I shall limit myself to documented materials and approach the artist himself or sourcing information from limited secondary or other sources and deduce from them. Both sources seem plausible, but the former will be given more consideration.

The question then is, Have other artists in Nigeria been documented? Only few artists have been comprehensively written about or documented in Nigeria. So Chike Aniakor is not an exception. All that is known about him over the years depends mostly on some scanty publications and oral interviews. Literatures on the subject have provided only fragmentary information on Chike Aniakor's artistic philosophy, themes, works and poetry.

It bothers me greatly, the way and manner our great artists have been left unsung, and their contributions to the growth of modern art study relegated to an

abyss of despair. We should, I believe, begin to take a clue from the western world that has consistently written about the art professionals in the areas of studio, art criticism; art history and art administration.



A Portrait of Chike Aniakor, 1972 (Plate 1)

Whether we believe it or not, Chike Aniakor's works and contribution to art have been of immense inspiration to so many artists and non-artists in this part of the world. That is why I strongly think that a proper documentation of him and all that he stands for will help to preserve that image that has helped to propagate and promote cultural and traditional ideals.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS**

This study will strive to address the following problems, here stated as questions, namely:

- (i) Who is the man Chike Aniakor?

- (ii) How did his birth and family background influence his creative and Scholarly life?
- (iii) What techniques and tools does he employ in giving shape and life to his works?
- (iv) What iconographic readings are possible in his works even when the forms provide the visual delight?
- (v) And how does his stylistic development relate to his art, written essays and poetry?

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this research can be stated as follows:

- (i) To attempt to develop an insight into the historical development of this artist and scholar in the perfection of life and art.
- (ii) To identify Chike Aniakor as a contemporary Nigeria artist, art historian, critic and writer.
- (iii) To analyze his manipulation of media via technique and style typology.
- (iv) To review his poems as a strong voice in modern Nigeria poetry in relations to his art.
- (v) To study his works artistically, evaluating and interpreting their formal density and, in any extent the iconography in his works.



## **RESEARCH SCOPE**

This study confines itself to the aforementioned research objectives. Basically, this study examines the artist's techniques and styles as they relate to themes and work and the impact of his writing in them. This research shall limit itself to the biography, art training, poetry and creative philosophy and works.

## **LIMITATIONS**

All that is known about Chike Aniakor over these years depends mostly on some scanty publications and oral interviews. There has never been a serious attempt to really interview his childhood peers, classmates and family members so as to be able to retrieve and rewrite his artistic history. This is compounded by the fact that the artist does not always give in to discussion about himself, even when he talks about art, poetry and other related matters. Rarely does he talk on his upbringing and life.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used the following procedures:

Study data, library research, interviews and photographic materials. Those interviewed included the artist himself and his eldest Son, Ikechukwu Aniakor. Others were four of Aniakor's students, namely: David Polycarp, Okey Nwafor, Chika Modum and Usman Kuti.

Historical, functional and stylistic analyses were used in tracing the development of Aniakor's art, life and poetry, as well as for establishing the typology of his

works for deeper insight. This served to delineate the function, typology and iconography of Chike Aniakor's work, for art historical insight.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned earlier on, only few artists have been written about or documented in Nigeria. Artists like Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Dele Jegede, Obiora Udechukwu and a few others have literary drawn a little attention from writers or scholars.

It is pertinent to state that there is no notable literature on Chike Aniakor, as a result, the concentration on primary sources of information. Despite the dearth of sufficient secondary materials, the available scanty materials are sourced to help enrich the literature on Chike Aniakor. Most of these are found in several books, art exhibition catalogues, magazines and daily newspapers.

For example, the study that paid special attention to Nigerian contemporary artists, their themes, techniques and style as well as their historical development was carried out by Mount (1978). A National exhibition catalogue (1977) had featured a number of contemporary Nigerian artists. Apart from their works that were shown, there were also brief entries on artists' biography. A synchronic study of contemporary Nigeria art was carried out by Kojo (1980).

The exploits of *Uli* idiom as a comprehensive source of design for the contemporary arts has been the subject of study by Willis (1987). Oloidi (1989) wrote on the constraints of contemporary art in the colonial era. The image of women in modern Nigeria art was Oguibe's (1991) focal point.

Aka catalogues from 1986 to 1994 provide a very vital source for the study of the artist's biography though not detailed in terms of biographical studies. Aka catalogue of 1986 describes "Aniakor as an artist who has continued to work with pen and ink in order to energize his work with visual essays of line for multiple view points, creative spontaneity and direct executive."<sup>1</sup>

Another insight into the contributions, achievement and biographies of many contemporary Nigerian artists has been compiled by Kelly (1993) Ikwuemesi's (1992) exhibition catalogue contains important information on Chike Aniakor. Ikwuemesi, went on to describe Aniakor as one of the pioneering *Uli* artists of Nsukka school, including Obiora Udechukwu and Uche Okeke as the "Founding Father."<sup>2</sup> However, facts hints to Uche Okeke and Chike Aniakor as pioneer as far back as 1972, at this time Obiora Udechukwu was still a student.

The most objective treatment of Chike Aniakor as an artist and critic was carried out by Awaji (1995), who did a highly historical biography and review of his works. Also, Williams (1998) provided brief information on some artists' biography, *Uli* aesthetics and the Nsukka School.

On Nsukka artists' biography, Ottenberg (2002) affirms, "Aniakor's works... have always had a strong linear quality."<sup>3</sup> He further acknowledges, "The lines in his work have become association with sound."<sup>4</sup> (op. cit p 96)

Aniakor has been described as "Another artist and poet of the Nsukka School who has championed the course of the fusion of art and poetry..."<sup>5</sup> (Nwafor 165 - 166, in Ikwuemesi 2003)

On the other hand, many scholars have equally written on various Nigerian contemporary artists. Notable among such scholar are Oniha (1974); Oyelola (1976); Okereke (1987); Beier (1991), and Kennedy (1992).

Certainly, it is regrettable that all of the existing body of literature mentioned above, none has made a comprehensive or insightful study of Chike Aniakor except that by Awaji (1995). It is therefore relevant, to focus completely for the first time on this man. A comprehensive study is needed to sidelight the many dimensions of Chike Aniakor as an artist, poet, and art historian. His versatility remains a challenge to art historical scholarship in terms of his intellectual range and breadth.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BEGINNING AND SCHOOL DAYS

In the rainy season of August 21, 1939, Lolo Ogbapuluenyi Akuoso was delivered of her fifth child and the last son. That child is the artist, poet, critic and art historian, Chike Cyril Aniakor. His father was Ogbuefi Nwandelu Aniakor. Little or nothing, apart from his name has been written about Chike Aniakor's father. But his mother has continued to remain a great influence in his life though she has passed on.

#### **Formative Period**

Chike Aniakor grew up in his village, in Abatete under the tutelage of his mother. His childhood experiences later shaped his worldviews. His mother was an uli artist and a dancer. She had other attributes that brought fame to her artistically. Lolo Ogbapuluenyi had "A ringing voice,"<sup>6</sup> that is why the villagers called her Olu Ogene. He loved his mother so much that for so many years a large portrait of her sat on one of the chairs in the living room.

This artistic ingenuity runs in their family. Chike Aniakor's uncle was a blacksmith and flutist but he was more successful as a musician in the fifties. Tales of his collection of flutes, dangling around his neck while he played created a myth around the man. Another major factor in the shaping of his worldview was the spacious environment where he grew up. It was and still remains a sacred part of his life. Each time you encounter Chike Aniakor in a conversation that has to do with his growing up or culture, he normally made reference to this great period.

A period that has continued to serve as a link between his past and present; a sort of a bridge, linking two worlds. It was during this same period that he first witnessed masquerades and festivals. For him, it has remained an unforgettable period. It was here that he first experienced art.

### **Educational Experiences**

With the kind of exposure that the young Chike Aniakor had acquired he needed a formal training. So when the time came to start school, he was sent to Holy Trinity School Abatete and later to New Bethel College, Onitsha. It was at the latter that he met a teacher, Ulas; A.J. who had a way of inspiring his students towards art wherever he taught.

Chike Aniakor was naturally gifted. His draughtmanship was already evident in his elementary grade. And all that knew him then including the students had great respect for him. Little wonder, he was moved towards becoming an artist. During this period, Chike Aniakor produced drawings, landscapes and works in watercolour. All these happened from 1955 to 1959.

After his graduation, he taught art briefly at Nnobi Community Secondary School in Anambra State. It was from here that the urge for greener academic pasture took him to Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology Zaria from 1960 to 1964, obtaining Bachelor of Arts degree in painting. When the time came for Chike Aniakor to write his B.A. Thesis, he wrote on Igbo carved doors. His concentration was on the designs, and the knowledge he acquired helped him in writing on architecture. It was when he returned after graduation to Nnobi

Community Secondary School that he started to incorporate *uli* into his artwork. The students were not left out in the exploration as he took them to the villages to learn more about *uli* designs.



*Homage at Full Moon*, 1970s, oil, 99x129cm(Plate 2)

The following year he started a postgraduate programme in Arts Teacher's Certificate. The most exciting period for Chike Aniakor at Zaria was the experiments in art that a British teacher, Charles Argent encouraged his students to embark upon; a departure from "photo realism."<sup>7</sup> Rather, they used their initiative and conceptualism started to appear in their works. Argent brought a kind of consciousness and freedom to their mind. This resulted in an "Intrinsic personal search"<sup>7</sup> and a radical change from the usual. The revolution that engulfed art through most of the Zaria students of that era can be attributed to Charles Argent

The Nigeria civil war brought his stay at Nnobi to an abrupt end. Chike Aniakor who worked in the publicity department of the Ministry of Information in Orlu witnessed the brutality that took place during the war. He wrote articles, mostly publicity materials, as editor of its government newsletter. The memories of the brutal war still remains vivid in his memory, and the works he produced on the war experiences are still some of his finest. "Exodus I," is and still remains a masterpiece.

In 1970, after the civil war Chike Aniakor was appointed as assistant lecturer at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He taught drawing, painting and mixed media, and played a pivoting role in the development of history of traditional art as a course. Few years later, he proceeded to Indiana University in 1973 for his Master of Arts degree in art history and completed it in 1974. From 1975 to 1978 he did and finished his Ph. D in art history. He returned briefly to carry out research on Igbo Architecture as his dissertation in Nsukka. Chike Aniakor was a research associate and a consultant at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1984. Before this time, he taught at Southern University, New Orleans.

At Nsukka he held several positions. He was the director of the Institute of African students in 1986 to 1988 and departmental head of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts from 1989 to 1991. He has held fellowships in oral literature at African Studies Center, Howard University, Washington DC and at the metropolitan museum of Art, New York.



It is worthy of note that Chike Aniakor has remained an influential figure to his students. Any student that has ever passed through him can never forget him. They come from far and wide to tap from his reservoir of knowledge. No one captured him better than Chika Modum when she says, "The fire in his words is so infectious it makes you keep working till you reach the best you can be."<sup>8</sup> This words and others by scholars have continued to magnify him.

Chike Aniakor has contributed to the growth of several organizations, such as Society of Nigerian Artists, International Society for Education and other art bodies. He is married and blessed with five children.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANIAKOR'S ART

#### Early and Late 70s

Chike Aniakor's art shall be chronologically studied under three periods: The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This is essential to enable us understand the trend of his professional development.

The "Elders," (1967) a work executed using pen, ink and wash on paper is one of his only documented works of the 1960s. In this work three masquerades like figures are represented. Their faces are elongated, thick lines mark the right hand edge of the first face and there is another thick line before the former with curved and spiral lines that decorates in between the lines. On the second face thick lines runs down wards from the cheek, chin to the body. In between the two adjacent faces, light dark colour is used to wash the surface, as curved and spiral lines outline their faces.

Heavy, rigid and short lines are used for the eyes, nose and mouth. Almost the same feature is noticed on the third figure, except that the size of the face is shorter. A fourth suggestive figure is seen represented with thin lines. The background is washed with shades of black colour and pen is used to draw curved lines at the left hand corner of the surface. The second figure has five suggestive fingers, and the hair and beard is depicted with zig-zag lines which creates an untidy look around the figure. Though the first figure does not have beard; the third has a horn-like hair.

“Atonement,” 1972, an oil painting, three elongated figures are the focal point of the entire work. One figure tends to overlap the other and the other stands alone. There are so many figures beside and above these three figures. Above them only the oval shapes of the figures’ heads are noticed while beside them other figures have their bodies represented in gown-like shape. A figure is seated, not as elongated as others. A semi-circular shape depicts the sun above all the figures, and interplay of light and dark is noticed on the figures. This results in the allowance of a passage from light to shadow between the semi-circle and the curved shapes that suggest clouds. The foreground is characterized by dark spiral colour highlighted to depict movement.

In “Maiden” 1972, that Chike Aniakor used a single figure in his visual art creation. The figure has a circular head with a dark heavy spiral lines that cast a shadow behind the head. It has square eyes painted with dark colour highlighted at the edge and a rectangular nose. Beneath the nose, a thick line shares the body of the figure into two halves. The figure’s neck is also rectangular. The hands; the one on the right part of the canvas opposite the observer, has a comb shape, with four fingers as well as the one on the left. But it differs in shape and colour. Beneath the hand lies a circle painted in blue with another dark circle inside highlighted with a tinted colour. The left hand tends to rest on it. This part of the figure’s body is painted in shades of red while the other part is painted in light shades of blue. The background is a mixture of grey shades of blues and reds that

seem wavy and circular when viewed closely. It is a juxtaposition of saturated colours.

“Reminiscences,” 1974, still remains one of the most complex of all of Chike Aniakor’s works. This work is divided into sixteen parts representing various activities. Horizontally; it is in three parts and vertically, in five parts of seven in the first roll, four in the second and five in the last. Heavy, thick and thin lines have been juxtaposed through horizontal and vertical lines to create different figures performing one function or the other represented in geometrical shapes. The work shows good use of line and space to illustrate clothes, movements, reclining forms, gazing, seated, dancing, people at a distance, busy environment and others. At the centre of all these is a man depicted in right angle.

His 1974, oil painting, “Sacrifice,” he used predominantly red, blue, purple, grey and white colours in different shades and tints in subtle hues. Three figures are depicted, a man, woman and a child. The man and the child are carrying bowls with whitish substance. The female figure overlaps that of the man and is directly behind the child. Her hair is shown in heavy dark lines to make it look plaited. The shapes of the hair is star-like and that of her top wear is shaded in purple, the child wears a white attire, while the man’s clothes is tinted and shaded in purple. The artist achieved harmonious effect, the background is broken into different parts, and this is through tints and shades of the same colours mentioned above. Radiating lines are used in white except the one at the topmost right hand corner of the work that is in deep blue and dotted blues on a little white square

background. Other shapes that make up the intricate background, breaks, meet, and blend with other juxtaposed forms. There is a slightly curved flowing red, highlighted to show its directional progression at the left hand part of the canvas on a very dark background.

In "Ogbanje," 1976, the same brushwork that is used in "Sacrifice," 1974 is noticed, though the colour scheme differs a bit. Instead, yellow in several shades was deployed; red is used to blend the yellow. The middle of the work has four visible figures like dwarfs and others above them that seem oval, circular and spiral in nature that tends to dissolve with the background. The figures' hands are short and irregular, and their eyes are conical except the one behind the central figure that has lallow eyes achieved through the use of deep heavy lines.

"Homage at Full Moon," a work executed in the 1970s, looked almost like Ogbanje, 1976, in terms of same colour scheme and brushwork. Here, five figures with elongated shapes are depicted. Three of the figures seem seated while the other two are in recumbent position, which makes them seem as if the forms are in motion. Two of them are holding objects like gourds. Grey colour in circular and spiral form different shapes. Above the focal point of the work, there is a large seated figure holding one of the gourds; with a stomach that is pronounce and a big semi-circle, painted with a light colour. The figures' hands are slender and elongated. Rhythmic curved lines in varied grey dominate the entire canvas, creating a feeling of roughness as one view the painting.

In 1977, Chike Aniakor executed a work using pen and ink entitled "Exodus 1 (The Refugees)." The artist used heavy lines to outline the figures and the loads they are carrying. Rigid lines marked their eyes, lips, hands and legs. The male figures have four fingers and toes while their female counterparts are irregular. A number of thin lines were also used on the figures, objects and the lines appear in spirals, loops and wavy lines. These are the same lines used on the figures' to show where their attire starts and ends on their figures. The male figures' have more space between them and the lines used are short scroll lines suggesting attire and slightly curved lines that help to suggest movement.

### **THE 1980s**

The 1980s saw the execution of "Refugees," 1984, with the use of pen and ink. This work is similar to "Exodus 1 (The Refugees)," 1977. The treatment of the figures' clothes and the static nature of the figures are totally contrasting to "Exodus 1 (Refugees)" of 1977. The similarity lies in the same use of heavy lines at the border to outline the figures. Thin lines are used vertically, horizontally, and diagonally on their attire. Good use of line and space is evident.

His 1985, "Seer," is a mixed media work. In this work he used two figures; the central figure has a round head to the nose region and from there down to the lower jaw is oval. A thick dark line is used to suggest the eyelash, nose and outline the head; with a hollow mouth. The elongated body is filled with little square objects that give it a mosaic look. There is a horizontal line that touches the figure's hands from both sides and moves to form an oval shape, from where the

feet are formed. The flat fingers and feet are four respectively. Above the figure's head is another small figure. The half body is filled with tiny particles painted white with two diagonal lines that run across the body. Beside and above this figure are white tiny square objects that combine to form a spiral edge that blends with the background. On a closer look, one observes faintly small white square objects on the background. Two shapes, painted white, vertically represent the juxtaposed background. The figures, that all appear white, interplay with the black background to create a contrast in design.

Line and space is used to execute his 1989, "The prophet/Seer and His Novice." A similar style used too produces, "The Elders," 1967, "Music Maker," 1977 and others. Thick suggestive line is used to outline the two figures and to create wavy hair, giving it a dreadlocks appearance. To show distance between the overlapped figures, dark broad and thick strokes are used, beside and above the lower figure's head to highlight the body.

Works like, "Of Dance and Initiation," "Outing of the Mothers," and "Ode to the Seasons," "Season of plenty," all executed respectively in 1987 and 1989, show juxtaposition of light and shade. Even his early works like "The sacrifice," 1985, executed using pen and ink like most works of the early 1970s and in the 1980s share same features.

In "Ode to the Seasons," 1989, the figures are achieved using black elongated forms in vertical progression. To achieve or depict activities around the

figures, light background interplay with the dark. Two large figures stand in front of three groups with outstretched arms like a conductor conducting an orchestra, while "Season of Plenty," 1989, tiny figures are depicted around several white separated shapes joined by black strong lines. The figures look clustered as a result of tiny white surface that interplay with black.

"Of Dance and Initiation," 1987, figures are built around an irregular shape that forms the thick outline. It is applicable to "Outing of the Mothers," 1987 and "Sacrifice," 1985. They bear the same use of line and space.

### **THE 1990s**

The 1990s saw the execution of works like "Blistered figures 1," 1990, "National Mirages," 1990, "Regeneration," 1990, "Falcon Descent on the People," 1992, "The Assembly; Delegation (Allegory of power)," 1993, "The leader and us," 1994, "Metamorphosis" 1994 and others.

The forms in "Blistered figures 1," 1990, are elongated. Strong lines outline the irregular shape. At the spiral edge of the irregular outline, the figures' heads are depicted. Thick lines mark their bodies. The figures are drawn vertically on the flat surface and they overlap and juxtapose the dark and light areas. The forms and background is washed with very light black colour.

"National Mirage," 1990, resembles "Season of Plenty," 1989. The center is a dark blur circle, surrounded by different forms or figures, suggested with rhythmic lines. Thinner lines are juxtaposed with dark space to create form in



movement while in "Regeneration," 1990; it is a juxtaposition of blurs dark space and light figures with thin lines.

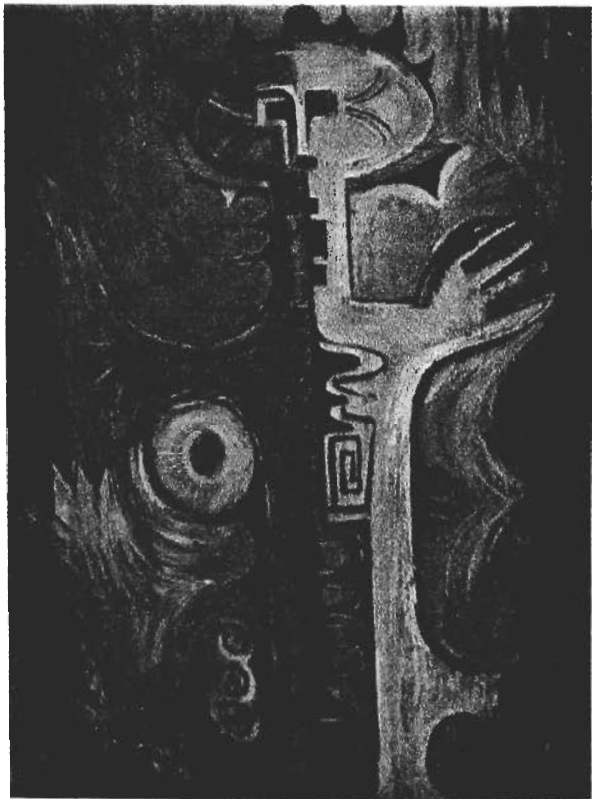
In the 'Falcon Descent on the people,' 1992, the forms are developed around an irregular shape. Some of the figures are painted predominantly in blue while others appear in red. Their heads and bodies have varied shapes. To show their clothes the bodies are left highlighted. There is a light space between the descending falcon, the people and the background from the top while the foreground is washed with very light blue. Thick and thin lines outline the edges of the irregular shape and the figures.

Though 'The leader and us,' 1994 is rendered almost like 'Falcon Descent on the people,' 1992, the colour scheme differs. Here red in varied shades and grey dominates the figures bodies. A large head with an elongated neck and a body of elongated forms form the body of the figure. Thinner lines of colours, dark short lines contour the figures where they meet. The background is depicted with light colour.

Sharp curved lines outline "The Assembly; the Delegation (Allegory of power)" 1993, on a light blue background. Line and space characterized this work. The figures are elongate and outlined with thin lines. There is a light space between the suspended figures and others opposite them on juxtaposed colours like red, blue, black and white. Thick lines outline the colours around the figures. They appear in spirals, loops and waves. The figures are painted in varied colour as mentioned above.

Works produced in 1996 like "Reminiscences Revisited," "Visual Incantations," "Of Collective Memory," "Allegory of Power," and others, Chike Aniakor used very thick lines. In "Reminiscences Revisited" for instance, thick line is used to outline a large figure and a light one for two imaginary figures' heads. The same lines are used vertically, horizontally and in rounded arches to create square and curved shapes. A thinner line is used to draw circles on one of the square shapes, while in others; dark dots and light colours are used to fill the shapes.

In "Visual Incantations," strong broad lines outline the shape at point and they form circular and curved shapes. A very faint line runs across the middle of the shape. Pointillism is noticeable on the surface. "Of Collective Memory," 1996, very thick lines used to create two overlapped figures. The figures have circular heads. Expanding spheres run across the figure towards the right and left. The figures' bodies and other shapes are lightly applied.



*Maiden*, 1972, oil, 91x121.5cm  
(Plate 3)



*Homage at Full Moon*, 1970s, oil, 99x129cm  
(Plate 4)



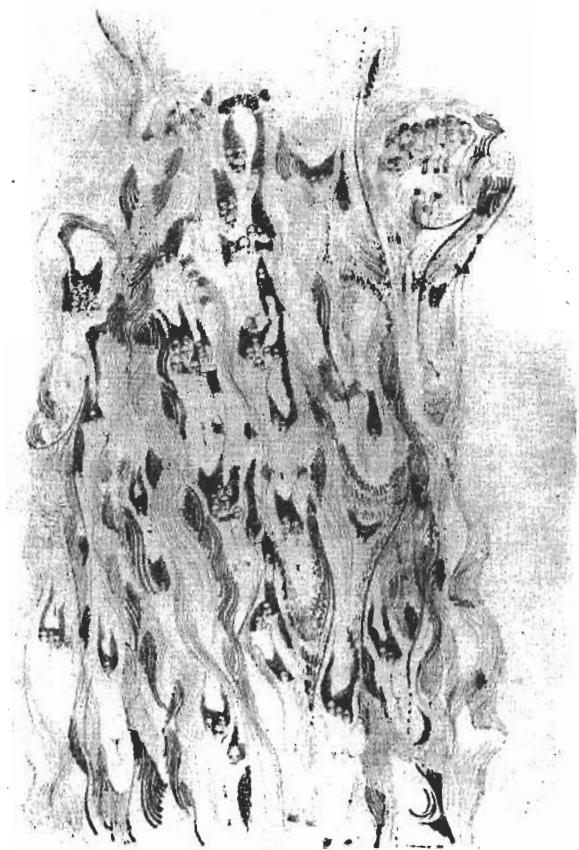
*Of Dance and Initiation*, 1987, pen and ink,  
46x61cm

(Plate 5)

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*Homage at Full Moon*, 1970s, oil, 99x129cm

(Plate 6)





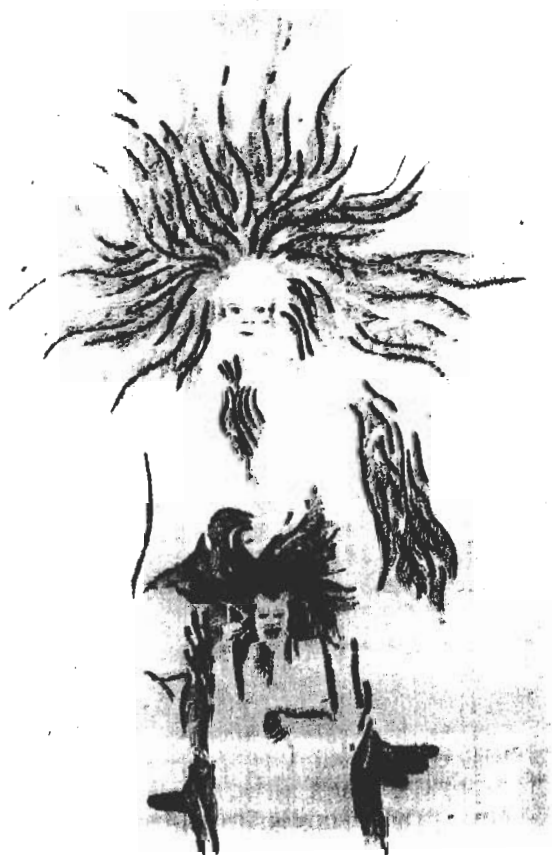
*Outing of the Mothers, 1987, pen and ink,  
(Plate 7)*



*The Sacrifice, 1985, pen and ink, 30x35cm  
(Plate 8)*



*Refugees*, 1984, pen and ink, 30x50cm  
(Plate 9)



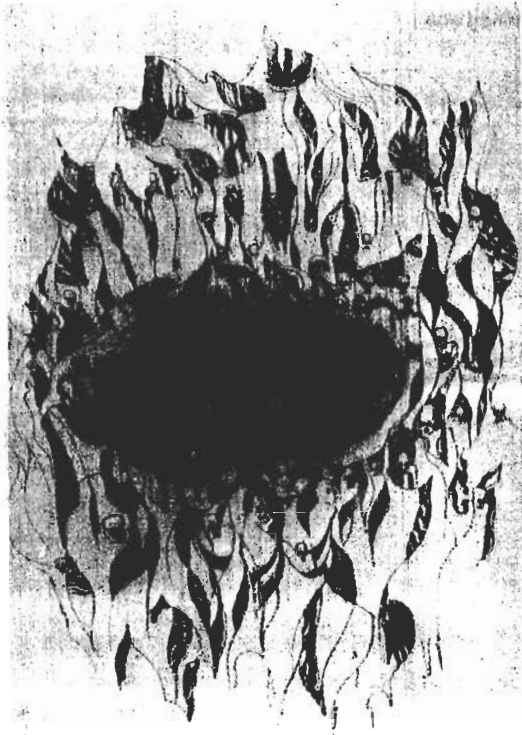
*The Prophet/Seer and His Novice*, c.1989,  
pen and ink on paper, dimensions unknown  
(Plate 10)



*Metamorphosis*, c.1994, pen and ink, water colour, poster colour,(dimensions unknown)  
(Plate 11)

*Blistered Figures I*, c.1990, pen and ink and colour wash on paper, dimensions unknown  
(Plate 12)





*National Mirage*, c.1990, pen and ink, poster colour  
on paper, dimensions unknown

(Plate 13)

*Regeneration*, c.1990, pen and ink, poster  
colour on paper, dimensions unknown

(Plate 14)







*Ode to the Seasons*, c.1989, pen and ink on paper, dimensions unknown

(Plate 15)



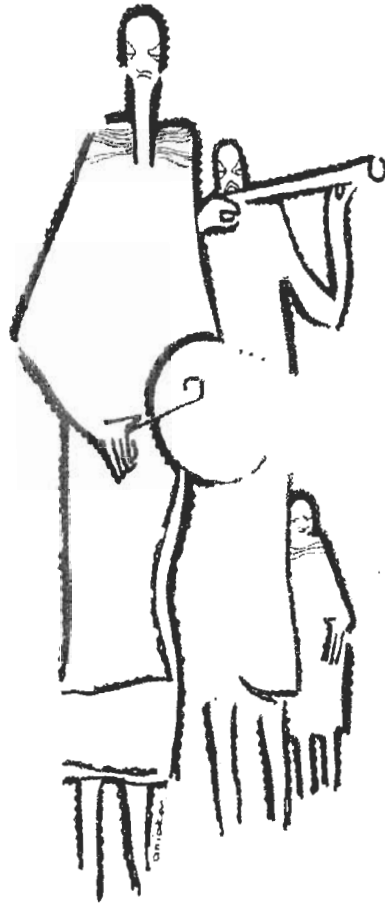
*Season of Plenty*, c.1989, pen and ink on paper, dimensions unknown

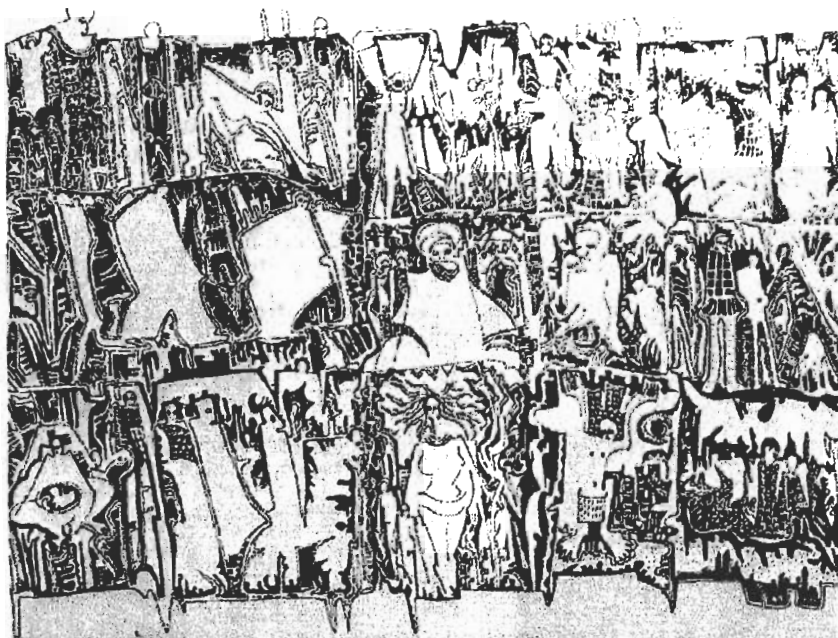
(Plate 16)



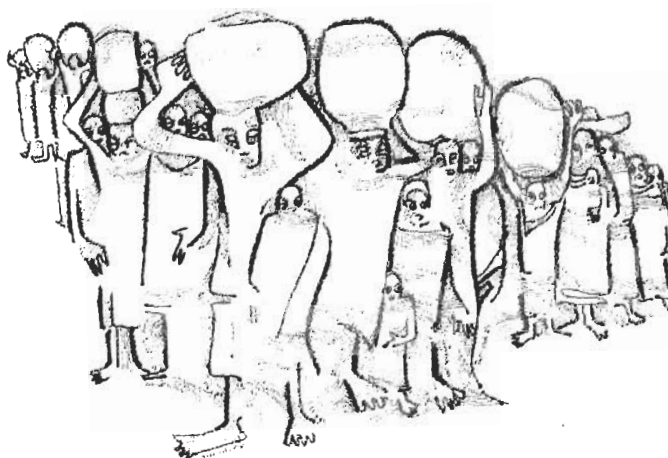
*The Elders*, 1967, pen, ink, and wash on paper, dimensions unknown  
(Plate 17)

*Music Makers*, 1977, ink drawing on paper, 27.9x24.2cm  
(Plate 18)





*Reminiscences*, 1974, pen and ink on paper, dimensions unknown  
(Plate 19)



*Exodus I (The Refugees)*, 1977, ink drawing  
on paper, 32.7x27.9cm  
(Plate 20)



*Reminiscences Revisited*, 1996, pen, ink,  
and wash on paper, 60.9x45.7cm

(Plate 21)



*Visual Incantations*, 1996, pen, ink,  
and wash on paper, 56.5x38.5cm

(Plate 22)



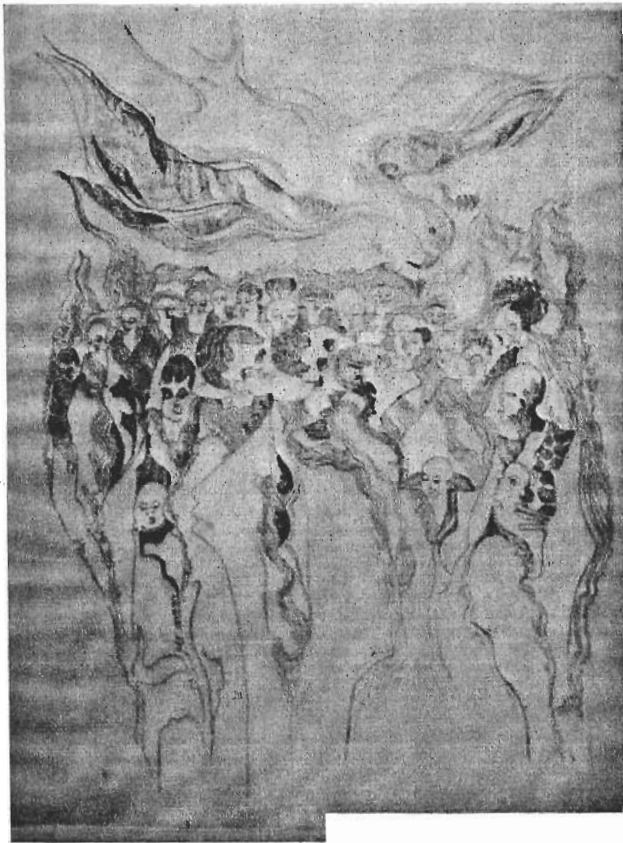
*Of Collective Memory*, 1996, pen, ink,  
and wash on paper, 60.8x45.7cm

(Plate 23)

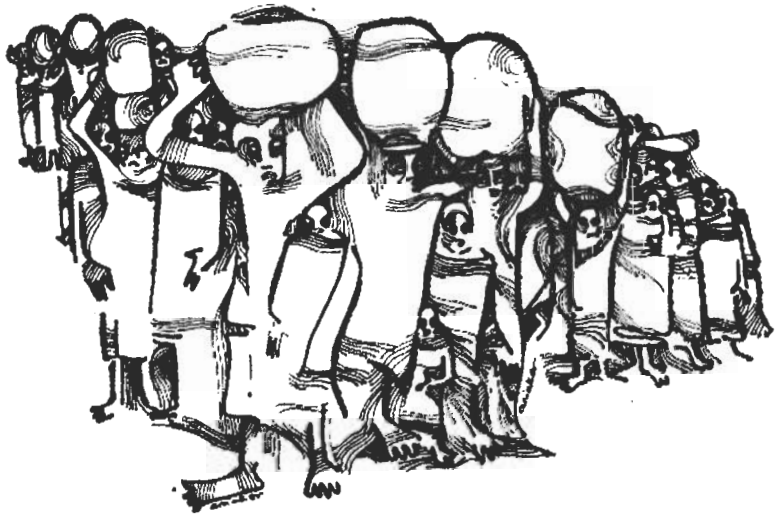
*Allegory of Power*, 1996, pen, ink,  
and wash on paper, 61x45.7cm

(Plate 24)





*Flight, Hope and the People, 1992,*  
**(Plate 25)**



*Exodus I (The Refugees), 1977, pen and ink on paper, 32.7x27.9cm.*  
**(Plate 26)**



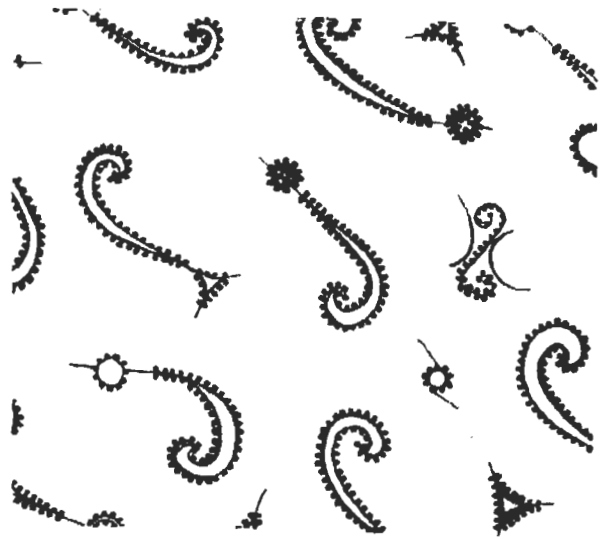
*Sacrificio*, 1974, oil on canvas, 101.6x77.5cm  
(plate 27)



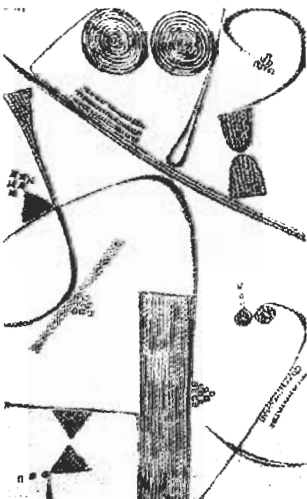
*Uli* design on paper by Arochukwu women, c.1946 (Plate 28)



Sample of *uli* drawing from Umuahia, collected by K.C. Murray, ca. 1930. (Plate 29)

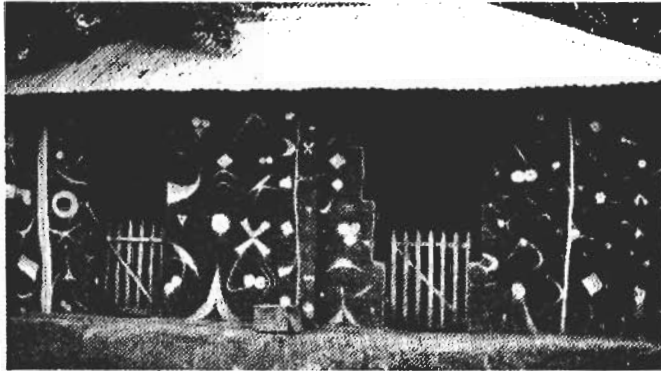


Sample of *uli* body painting taken in 1930 (Photo: After Cole and Aniakor, 1984) (Plate 30)

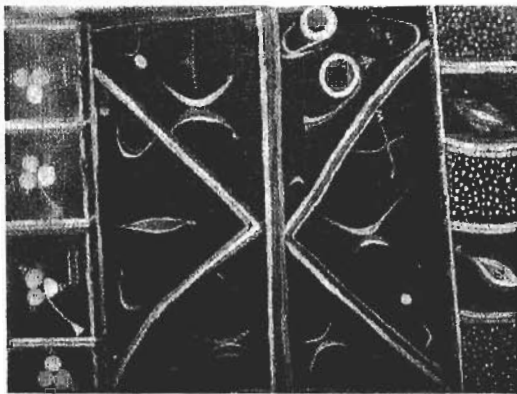


Another sample *uli* painting design (Plate 31)

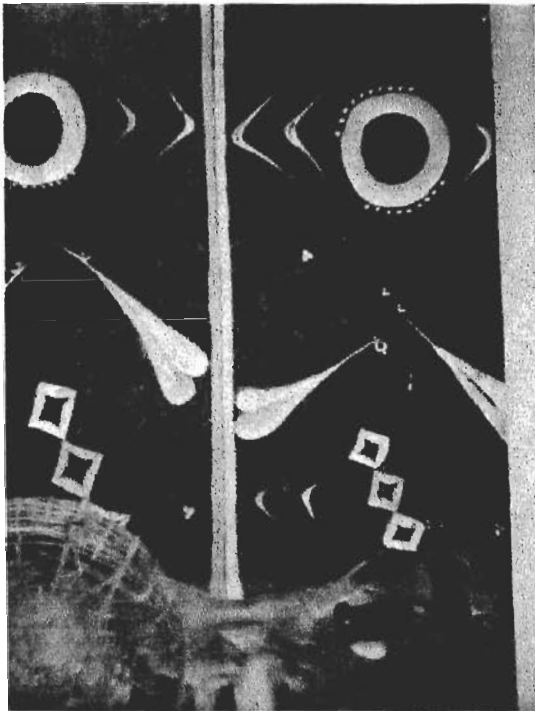




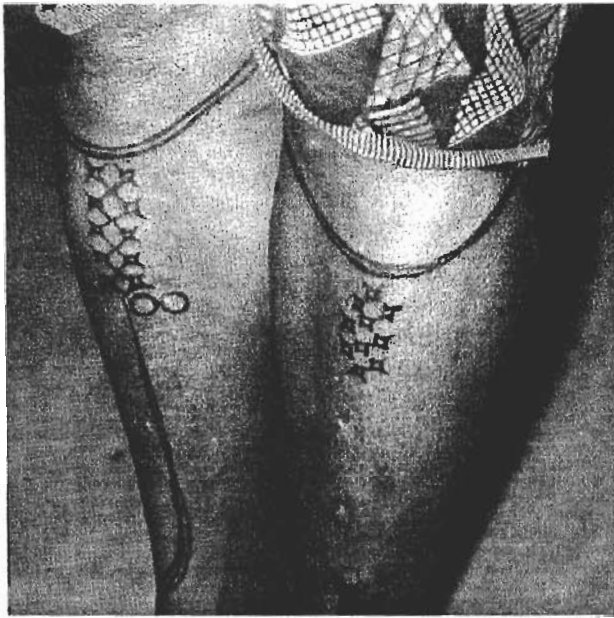
front view of a traditional Igbo *uli* wall  
Painting (Plate 32)



Detail of a traditional Igbo *uli* wall painting  
(Plate 33)



Detail of a traditional Igbo *uli* wall painting  
(Plate 34)



Sample of a traditional Igbo *uli* body decoration (Plate 35)



Sample of a traditional Igbo *uli* body Decoration (plate 36)



Sample of a traditional Igbo *uli* body Decoration (PLATE 37)



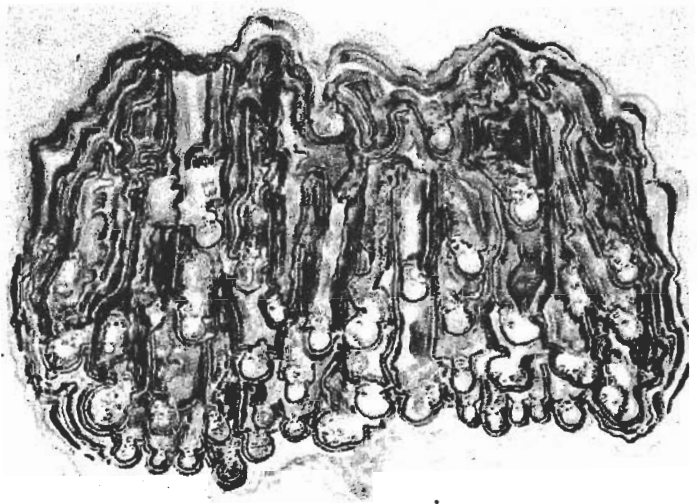
*Assembly; the Delegation (Allegory of Power)*, 1993, mixed media, (dimensions unknown) (Plate 38)



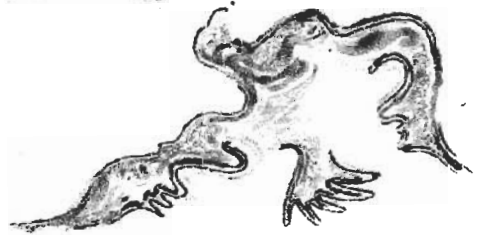
*Ogbanje*, 1976, oil, dimensions unknown (Plate 39)



*The Leader and Us*, 1994, pen, ink, and watercolour on glossy paper, dimensions unknown (Plate 41)



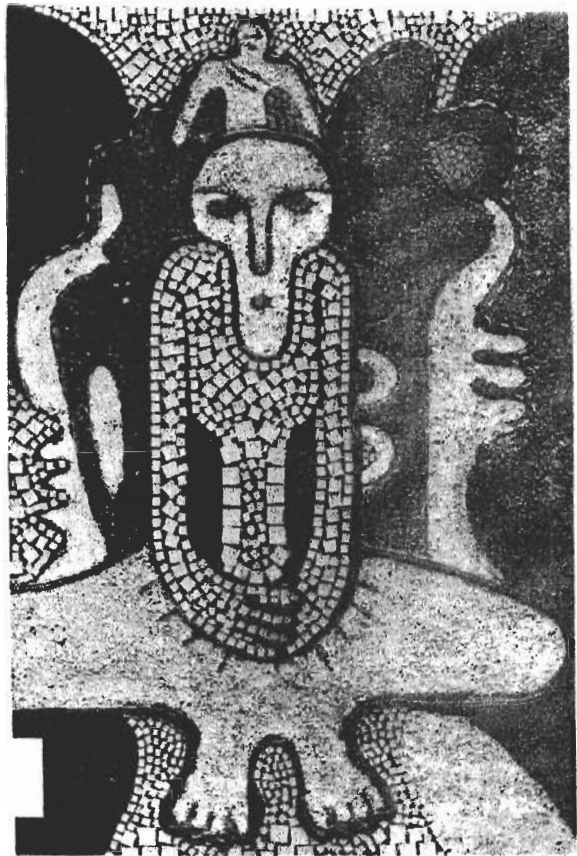
*Falcon Descent on the People*, 1992, pen, ink, and watercolour on paper, dimensions unknown (Plate 40)





*The Atonement*, 1972, oil, 99x129cm  
(Plate 42)

*The seer*, 1985, mixed media, 120x90cm (Plate 43)



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE WRITINGS OF CHIKE ANIAKOR

#### Scholarly Articles

It is not always easy to find a scholar that possesses several qualities outside his or her chosen profession. The few that exist are ranked among super-humans. Chike Aniakor is one of such few. He is a man that has mastered a profound way of writing. He has read widely and taken time to perfect his art. Over the years, he has been widely published, read within and around the globe in several reputable catalogues, journals, anthologies and books. He co-authored "Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos," a comprehensive book that surveys indigenous Igbo art in 1984, with Herbert Cole. Chike Aniakor has carried out research in *Traditional Architecture: A study of forms, function and typology*.

"In Space Concept in the Architectural Planning of an Igbo village: The Nekede Example." He wrote on how the Igbos settled before and after the colonial era. What led to their choice of location? Water and then road was some of the major reasons. The people he writes "Lived in clustered houses."<sup>9</sup> He also provided the layout of rooms in the building, the centre that constitute the meeting place and where cultural events take place etc. Architecture he believes creates the environment for art. Due to his creative analysis in architecture he was commissioned along with 100 others scholars from other countries to write 7 sections in the *Encyclopedia of World Architecture* published in Britain.

Chike Aniakor has written considerably on 'Igbo Aesthetics,' employing great descriptive power to capture the essence of Igbo concept of beauty and aesthetics. He gave one of the most accepted descriptions of the Ijele masquerade. The masquerade in his concise account is the "King of Masks."<sup>10</sup> He went further to state when it normally appears and why this has helped to heighten its greatness. The attire, what it consist of and other elements that make the mask unique was pointed out. In all, he sees the intricacy of the Ijele as an epitome of its aesthetics.

The same kind of study was what he did with the Oriokpa, a masquerade of the Nsukka people of Enugu State. He wrote on its costume, appearance, social and ritualistic significance.

He wrote the introductory chapter for over a decade for the then AKA Circle of Exhibiting Artists catalogue. These articles have contributed immensely to contemporary Nigerian art; at the same time it gives credence to the fact that Chike Aniakor has good analytical perception. His logical mind can best be seen through reading of some of the introductions, where he described three seasons of AKA, 1986 to 1988, as the preparation of the ground, the planting and the harvesting period. The preparation of the ground is when the crowd begins to gather, the appearance of the little masquerades to cleanse the ground before the great Ijele mask finally enters as the big masquerade for the big occasion. Which in is the harvesting time as the viewers enjoy themselves.

Another area of interest to Chike Aniakor is in Contemporary Art Criticism, where he has written and consistently decries the lack of acknowledgement of sources in most publications by academic scholars. He further laments the lack of professionalism on the art desk of most media houses. This he asserts has not helped too properly propagate or put art on its rightful place in the committee of professionals.

On modernism, he has raised critical questions in his works, asking if anything is really modern. He went further to buttress this fact by saying that if certain time, period or era is referred to as modern, what then is modern? Yet he believes in the marriage of both the traditional and the modern. Chike Aniakor for sure is a logical thinker whose work is capable of igniting a new fire or consciousness in a curious learner. He is a man of insight, foresight and a philosopher, who like Plato knows, and claims not to know and still wants to know,"<sup>ii</sup> as Polycarp puts it.

On cultural policy, in 1988, he wrote on the need for government to take its art policy seriously, though he laments that such issues never saw the light of the day. His comments on the relationship between the artists and government have been very useful.

The works of El Anatsui was critical examined by Chike Aniakor in the early 1990s. He traced his materials from terracotta to wood to found objects, grouping them according to their stylistic features and analysed Anatsui's professional development.



He carried out a comparative study of traditional *uli* designs and contemporary art in the 1995 Skoto Gallery Catalogue. In 1998, Chike Aniakor published "Fang" a book on the Fang Kuba people of the Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Cameroon. He examined the history, art, society and recent political history of these tribes.

## **POEMS**

### **Early and Recent Poems**

Chike Aniakor has been writing poems for over four decades. Christopher Okigbo, a renowned poet that died at the Nsukka front during the Nigeria civil war in 1967, has influenced most of the Nsukka poets including Chike Aniakor. There was this link between the Ibadan and Nsukka poets, spanning 1957 to 1967. These literary events led to a literary coterie.

Some of Chike Aniakor's earlier poems are: "In Silence I wait," "The Moon's Departure," "My love," "My Surrogate," "Not the End," "Nwagboliwe, Oh Tell Me," "What happened," and others.

In "Nwagboliwe, Oh Tell Me," the poem opens with a rhetorical question in line 3 of stanza 1 and 2. This definitely is one of the poems that exemplify his use of stanza. Nwagboliwe is an Igbo word that means the child that stops anger. Ironically, the child being described by the poet persona arouses anger and sorrow. The first stanza starts with "If" a word that the poet uses to introduce the action. This repetition is deliberate, so as to achieve emphasis. Even the use of rhetorical

question and repetition continued in lines 13 and 15. The poet's use of hyphen in lines 9 to 11 help to give the lines new meaning. Simplicity of diction makes the poem easy to appreciate, though certain words pose ambiguity. Nwagboliwe happens to be the third child in the family; an ogbanje child that never stay. And it creates a picture of brevity. The poem is a sad one with a lamentation tone. It is an elegy.

Another sad poem is "My surrogate." Aniakor opens with his usual straightforwardness and rhythmic pattern: 'we shall meet again / beyond the seven rivers...'

The poet's use of 'we shall' repetitively helps to intensify and gives the poem musicality. This blank verse is highly lyrical and has a melancholic tone. It is an Ode. Men of valour are being described in the poem. The exploits, conquest, death and remembrance of men of valour are been described in the poem.

"My Love" started like the other poems mentioned above with 'I shall' in lines 1 and 9 used repetitively. This poem is a complex one in the sense that reading through it for the first time it strike's one like a nature poem. On a second reading, the poem tends to be like a poem on love. This makes it complex. First person singular is used to arrive at generalization. It brings the reader very close to the poet's experience. There is a seeming paradox in the first 8 lines and last 8 lines. Most of the features noticed in these poems are traceable to all his earlier poems even his use of a word to end a statement after several lines, like, 'Moons,' 'harvest,' and 'leaves.'

Chike Aniakor's poem "Mummy" was published first in the 1990s and 2002. The poet persona speaks of his loneliness in a foreign land. He yearned for his mother. There is a contrast in the beginning of the lines and subsequent lines where we see the use of 'I have' with 'but' separating 'only your.'

The use of 'I have' and 'only your' creates a picture of luminosity in the reader's mind. This comparison at the beginning of the lines and subsequent ones interlaced the story arriving at simplicity of language in the poem. At the end of two lines, a word or more is used like 'movement,' 'mentality,' 'the Iron Gate' to lay emphasis on the previous in line. Poems like "Sunset," "An Arrow Flight," "Homage," "Descent into the Abyss," and others share similar structure. They are lyrical poems in blank verse. The poet uses repetitive words in different lines in some of the poems to create emphasis and musicality. Simplicity seems to run through most of the poems, though sometimes few words need to be looked up in the dictionary. "An Arrow flight," is a personal and emotional poem, "Homage" "Descent into the Abyss" are meditative and sad, as one reads through them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### GENERAL INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION

#### Drawings and Paintings

The Nsukka community made Chike Aniakor possible. It established him as an artist of repute, for it was Nsukka that sets him on the platform of time. Chike Aniakor's art over the years has developed along linearity since his 'Elders,' of 1967 through the civil war period and after when he executed "Exodus I: The Refugees" and others.

The civil war brought about a renaissance in him. It had such great psychological effect on him that it resulted in his taking cognizance of his people's culture and used it in his art. *Uli* was what he fell back on and started to incorporate it during this period, whether in pen or ink work, oil, prints, mixed media or wash and ink. It is normally linearity based on *uli*. Typical examples of work executed during the 70s are: 'Maiden' (1972) "Atonement," (1972), "Homage at Full Moon," (1970s) "Music Makers" (1977), "The Refugees" (1977), "Sacrifice" (1974), and others

Heavy black lines tend to outline the figures, with thinner straight lines that are curved, in spiral and wavy from the inside. Line and space create distinctive characteristics around the work. The figures are usually elongated.

It is pertinent to note that the year 1972, when Chike Aniakor held his first solo exhibition titled "Visions of my Ikenga," that was when his work "Matured in subject and form"<sup>12</sup>. During this period he concentrated more on Igbo myth, rituals

and tales. He has constantly admits being spiritually in touch with his ancestral home. Little wonder that features of Igbo art like wall, body painting and; masquerade appear in multiple layers in his elongated human images. Two dimensions are achieved in most of his works, yet there is no denying the fact that three-dimensional quality is inherent, when the figures are viewed due to the layering pattern. Even his use of oil on canvas during this period, the same brushwork is noticed, with little variation in terms of colour scheme. He employed several shades of blue, red, yellow and grey in most of his paintings.

Chike Aniakor experimented with figures, he used a single, two, three and more figures in his works. He used few figures to achieve simplicity and more figures to create complexity around the work. This is because he believes a figure brings rigidity and makes it static while more figures create the feeling of movement. The arms are depicted "Long and outstretched, adding elegance to the figure."<sup>13</sup>

In the course of the early 1980s not much changed in terms of style and his thematic representation rather it was a continuation and perfection of his initial style. Towards the middle of this period, 1985 to be precise, when he executed "The sacrifice," a little change can be noticed in terms of the arrangement of figures around an irregular shape. This style can be noticed in works like "Of Dance, and Initiation," 1987, "Outing of the Mothers," 1987, "The Sacrifice," 1985, and others. The medium and material did not change, pen and ink on paper and oil on canvas. Even the theme remained the same.

There were changes in the 1990s in terms of ways of execution. In the “Blistered Figures I” 1990, “Regeneration,” 1990, “National Mirage,” 1990, “Flaming Landscape I,” 1992, “The Assembly; the Delegation (Allegory of power),” 1993, “Metamorphosis,” 1994, and others.

Chike Aniakor first either pours water on the working surface then apply ink, and allow it to flow and create his designs naturally from them as he observed the ink flow into forms or he works directly on his concept. Rhythmic movement in different direction is achieved. Yet when the colour or ink stops to flow, it becomes moment of silence. This kind of experiment were the artist gives freedom to ink or colour to partake in the process of the creation of the work is inherent in most of the aforementioned works.

Most of the works that he executed during this period was centred more on social cum political matters. He changed his themes due to the fact that after the civil war, other prevailing social, political issues overtook the war experience. Each time one discusses social political matters with him, it becomes glaring how depressed and disappointed he is with the Nigeria situation and government. He sees a constant misplacement of priority and the problem of leadership. Never has he isolated himself from the situation, for it stirs him in the face each time he sees the faces of Nigerians. That is why almost all the figures look worried and disturbed. His personal feelings about the society are captured through his works.

Chike Aniakor used *uli* designs for most of his works. *Uli* motifs like *Onwa* (moon), *Agwolaḡwo* (spiral) and *ije agwo* (snake movement), used by Igbo women

on their *uli* wall paintings can be found in works like "Maiden," 1972, "Homage at Full Moon," 1970s, "Ogbanje," 1976, and others.

The use of *Nchigalii* (curvilinear lines), *Agwolagwo* (spiral), *ife eji-acho aazu mma*. (Decorative element for the back) and others, are most of the *uli* designs he used in the execution of works like "Exodus 1 (The Refugees), 1977, "Sacrifice," 1974, "Of Dance and Initiation," 1987, "The Sacrifice," 1985, "Refugees," 1984, "National Mirage," 1990 and others. In these works the technique of using line and space in the samples of traditional Igbo *uli* body decorations and sample of *uli* drawings and body paintings in the illustrations and photos in this work are traceable to Chike Aniakor's works. See *uli* designs in the photo pages.

The overall style can be described as the use of lines, spaces and shapes within enclosed figures, giving them expression. Chike Aniakor's works show unique characteristics which is a language of its own and poetic. This as we know is the artist stamp of authorship. The same technique of manipulation resulting in his artistic style typology has remained in Chike Aniakor's work with little variation till date.

## **Poems**

Chike Aniakor's earlier poems are mostly a recollection of his childhood experiences. Myth, Igbo folklore, masquerades and history are captured in poems

like 'Nwagboliwe, Oh Tell Me,' 'The Maiden Spirit,' 'My Surrogate,' and others.

The poem addresses a mysterious child in Igbo land, an Ogbanje. Chike Aniakor's "Nwagboliwe" can be compared with Wole Soyinka and J. P. Clark's "Abikus" "Nwagboliwe" explores the meaning of the word "Evil maiden of the Night" in the action and behaviour of the African Child, known in the poem as "Nwagboliwe."

Such a child is normally showered with abuse by parents and family members when recounting their tales, so when a parent notices such a child among his children his fear becomes his worries.

The speaker knows so much about this 'evil' child that is why he did not spare the child: Where are you? / Evil maiden of the night. The poet in this line depicts the child's attitude towards her family. Most of the children that are Ogbanjes' are females only a few male children have been reported to be or display such traits in Nigeria. Stories and tales of such children are associated with the southern part of Nigeria.

"In My Surrogate," the poet tries to find meanings in Igbo traditional ideals embodied in myth and wall paintings. The three interrelated themes in the poem are bravery, conquest and immorality. The speaker in the poem, referred to as "We" are men who have been in the same association, and they share similar characteristics that mark them out.



These men are aware of what shall befall them, in victory or vanquish but comradeship propelled them. For them, the journey into the unknown is more important as emphasized with “We” as emphasised at the beginning of the poem, and two other lines. Conquest is what these men are after instead of being idle.

Nevertheless, they are out to win one ultimate victory in death or defeat. They might be afraid, not too brave but their fate is already decided as the last four lines suggest. Chike Aniakor re-echoes the future of brave men who are willing to die for a cause.

The major theme in “My Love,” is definitely love. The speaker in the poem, referred to as “I” is used in the first person singular for generalization. That in effect means the reader is being carried along in the process each time he or she uses “I”. The poet persona is in love with a young girl, and he affectionately adores her. He is not in a hurry to experience her but would wait till she is ripe, as the word “apples” hints to the fact.

We all fall in love somehow; so the poet wants us to share in the experience. Whether he succeeded in his quest is another issue which we cannot unfold.

In his subsequent poems like: “Mummy,” “Sunset,” “Only a thought,” “Arrow flight,” “Homage,” and others. Chike Aniakor captures contemporary experiences like love, social and political issues.

“In Arrow Flight,” he recalls his flight experience to a foreign land and even mentions the airport where he landed in the United States. He felt so

lonesome resulting in fleeting memories of his mother's visit to him once in a while (a kind of trance) as he captured it in the poem "Mummy." The theme is that of loneliness. No amount of comfort that he enjoyed in the "Eleventh Street" was able to quell his yearning for his homeland. He has always been willing to acquire knowledge in a foreign land but he has never nurse the ambition to live there permanently.

Interrelated themes in some poems like "Homage," and "Descent into the Abyss," deals with politics, military regime and survival of the fittest. Poems that relate the different experiences during the military junta and civilian government were several poets were incarcerated and others killed for standing for the truth. However, he is willing to pay homage to these poets as he overcomes himself in similar experience like a caged bird.

Chike Aniakor employs free verse in all his poems in varied length of lines. One can experience a poet trying to discover himself through his poems. He believes that through poetry an artist can, like visual art, capture imaginations. For him, poetry and painting are highly interrelated in terms of the use of imagery.

There is a great relationship between Chike Aniakor's drawings and poems, which are "related to Igbo cultural archetypes."<sup>14</sup> His drawings are dominantly characterized by the use of line, space and elongated human images that are composed in segments or panels that depicts "Ulli" wall paintings as well as Igbo masquerade and folk tale. The use of several layers and narrative segments can also be found in his poems in form of stanza and free verse. His drawings and

poems of the 1970s, 1980s and a little further, share similar characteristics, mostly from 1977 to 1989. Even when his drawings changed later on; from thematic to contemporary issues his poems followed suit.

### **Books Published**

Chike Aniakor has published two novellas: "*Ojadili*", and "*Somudia*" under the fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd. Enugu. His poems has been published in "*Apples of Gold*," "*Water Na water*," a book he co-authored with Greg Mbarjiogu, *Research in African Literatures, African Arts, Okike, Interlink, The conch and Obsidian*. His first poem was published in 1972, in *Interlink* in the United States.

### **REDEFINING HISTORY**

It is my desire to stir our consciousness towards seeking deep into history and possibly correct some misconception. Chike Aniakor has consistently insists that to write the true history of Contemporary Nigeria Art is to chronologically traced its development. This is due to the fact that he has never believed the rebellious nature that the Zaria Art Society claimed to have exhibited during its short era. Though he was never a member of the association, he was privileged to attend several of its meetings. Is it enough to just believe him? To truly understand and clarify certain misconception about the Zaria Art Society, let us critically examines the issue.

Although views on the Zaria Art Society vary, everyone agrees that it "brought about a renaissance in Nigeria art."<sup>15</sup> There is no doubt that 1958 was

when the Zaria Art Society was born. Everything during this period was geared towards independence; an agitation for a united nationhood was very high. So the Zaria Art Society was more or less an association that fought for the welfare of its member not natural synthesis. Rather "Freedom was everything"<sup>16</sup> writes Ekeada. Natural synthesis is the mixture of different things, be it old or new, traditional or modern. Even a prodigy could have done that.

One of its founding members Jimoh Akolo was left out of the list of members in Uche Okeke's diary. Another school of thought believes it was probably due to his non-conformist attitude. Almost all the works of these artists of the society during this period were not culturally oriented, even that of Uche Okeke till the early 1970s. So it would be wrong to say that Uche Okeke started to employ "uli designs in his work since the Zaria days."<sup>17</sup> It simply reminds us of how Mungo Park discovered the mouth of the River Niger when our forefathers excreted there before his arrival. How can one discover what was already in existence?

The "Nsukka Art School," "Uli" are other issues that need to be addressed urgently. What are the criteria for christening "Founding Father" as a title on Uche Okeke any time mentioned is made to *uli* and the influence on the artists' of the Nsukka School? What baffles me is the fact that before Uche Okeke joined the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria Nsukka, other lecturers like Chuma Amaefuna and Chike Aniakor had been there since 1967 and 1970 respectively. The questions then are: Did Chike Aniakor starts working with

*uli* idioms when Uche Okeke arrive Nsukka? Was he influenced by Uche Okeke? We all know that Chike Aniakor's mother was an *uli* artist, so were Okeke's mother and perhaps Amaefuna's mother.

An artist works are judged artistically through his documented works. That is why one has to look at the work artistically, evaluating and interpreting its symbolic density. Having said this, after studying most of Uche Okeke's works before the 1970s and after, it is only those of the 1970s and subsequently like, "Mama Nwuli" 1972, "The Crescent Moon" 1974, "*Uli* Experiment" 1974, "Mural" 1974, "Ana was not there, only darkness," 1976, and others had shown *uli* or experiments in *uli* are evident.

For sure, Uche Okeke has been working with *uli* idioms as most writers have rightly noted in the past. But my argument is with being termed the "Founding Father" when Okeke himself had acknowledged in 1972 that Chike Aniakor had already been working in the *Uli* idiom over the years.

Chike Aniakor was a painter before he became an art historian, poet and writer. As a painter he had worked with the *uli* idioms before the 1970s. His painting the "Elders" executed in 1967 possesses all the ingredients of *uli*. And by 1972 Aniakor held his first solo exhibition "*Visions of my Ikenga*".

It is at this juncture that I must state that the inculcation of *uli* into the work of artists' and lecturers' was a child of accident as many people had been experimenting with *uli* idioms. Uche Okeke himself attests to this when he confesses that *uli* was a "success of those working in the *uli* mode..."<sup>18</sup>

Let us then for the sake of history not concern ourselves with the founder(s) of *uli* but concentrate our energies on those that have propagated *uli*. If I am asked why, I would say if the early cave painters are still regarded as the first painters, then women that painted on the walls in Igbo land should be termed the first *uli* artists. Even student that had researched and worked during this era and after have contributed to the growth of *uli*. It is worthy of note that Chuka Amaefuna, Chike Aniakor, Uche Okeke, Obiora Udechukwu and other artists have been pioneers of the *uli* experiments.

Practically, Obiora Udechukwu is the most faithful of all the *uli* artists as all his documented works speak the language of *uli*. Chike Aniakor is another artist who has had a continuous impact on the students till date, practically and theoretically. Uche Okeke has projected *uli* to a larger audience through his campaign. Presently, Krydz Ikwuemesi a cultural activist is in the forefront in the promoting of *uli*. Ola Oloidi has never relented in the propagation of the Nsukka School of Art through his essays. So have El Anatsui, Tayo Adenaike, Ozioma Onuzulike and others. They have continuously played pivoting roles in the propagation of *uli* idioms to a larger society through exhibitions of their artworks.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Summary of Finding

The study shows that it is a risky venture to attempt to trace Chike Aniakor's life since few literature exist on him, unfortunately, he complicated issues by refusing to supply vital information to certain question that would have helped to give flesh to some skeletal background account about his infancy.

His present character no doubt is a product of an evolutionary process, which can be linked to his early childhood. Social influences such as family, the method of teaching which was informal and so forth, contributed in the way he immense himself at a very tender stage in observing and appreciating art.

Abatete people in those days were predominantly farmers. They combined farming with petty trading. In such a community where everybody was mostly farmers, Chike Aniakor no doubt was expected to become one. But he had already built his personality pattern.

Chike Aniakor would rather engage one with discussion on his works rather than on himself. An artist cannot be separated from his work, though an artist opinion of his works might be of little or no significance to each other.

Chike Aniakor has created so many good works in drawings, paintings, poems and research publications that are highly related in terms of form and content. Having been fertilized by the spiritual strength of the tradition Chike Aniakor's scholarship is on traditional architecture, interface of text and image and

contemporary issues, among others. During the past decades, however, his paintings, drawings and poems tend to be regarded as a departure from the orthodox Igbo cultural archetypes to a complexity of thoughts that draw upon several sources from social, political, personal to others.

This discernible trend of artistic growth is delineated in his poems and paintings that draw inspiration from Igbo wall paintings and body decoration known as “uli” for their forms and manner of manipulation.

The study reveals that his drawings are predominantly characterized by a stylistic use of line, space and elongated figures or images which are mostly human images arranged in layers that appear in panels or segments; which recall Igbo “uli” wall paintings as well as masquerades, folk tales and minstrel songs?

This study shows that Chike Aniakor has focused on both traditional and contemporary themes. The traditional deals with Igbo myth and the contemporary address the human condition of his people.

This study has also placed Chike Aniakor in his proper place in the historical development of the Nsukka Art School by critically examining his role in its art programme, beginning from after the Civil War in 1970 when he was employed to teach there. Altogether, this study sheds light on the formal and conceptual link between Chike Aniakor as an art historian, a visual artist and poet.



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