

ISIDORE O. OKPEWHO

Department of Africana Studies
SUNY at Binghamton
Binghamton, NY 13902-6000
Tel. 607-777-2324
e-mail: iokpewho@binghamton.edu

Qualifications	B.A. Honors Classics. University of London, 1964. First Class Honors. Ph.D. Comparative Literature. University of Denver, 1976. D.Lit. Humanities. University of London, 2000.
Previous academic positions	SUNY at Buffalo, 1974-76: Assistant Professor, English. Ibadan University, Nigeria, 1976-90. Lecturer to Full Professor, English. Harvard University, 1990-91: Visiting Professor, English & American Literature and Language.
Present academic positions	SUNY at Binghamton: (a) Professor of Africana Studies, English, & Comparative Literature (since September 1, 1991) (b) SUNY Distinguished Professor of the Humanities (since January 27, 2004)
Areas of teaching and research	African Literature African American Literature The African Diaspora Postcolonial Literature and Criticism Classical Literature (in comparative perspective) World Literature Oral Literature Folklore & Mythology Jazz Studies Creative Writing (Fiction)
Courses I have taught	Introduction to African Literature African Oral Literature Heroic Poetry Medieval English Poetry Literature and Folklore: a fieldwork course Afro-American Literature Creative Writing: Fiction

The African Novel (Grad.)
 Comparative Epic Poetry (Grad.)
 Studies in Mythology (Grad.)
 The African American Experience in Poetry & Jazz (Grad.)
 Creative Oral History (Grad.)
 Postcolonial Revisions of European Literary Classics (Grad.)

[Note: "Grad." means up to graduate level, but open to seniors]

Academic administration

Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), Faculty of Arts, Ibadan University, Nigeria, 1979-81

Chair, Department of English, Ibadan University, Nigeria, 1987-90

Chair, Department of Africana Studies, SUNY at Binghamton, 1991-97; Interim Chair, 2006-07

Some professional distinctions and recognitions

Named Guggenheim Fellow for 2003-2004

Appointed Director of the NEH Faculty Seminar for Summer 2000 at SUNY College at Potsdam, NY: involving faculty from SUNY College at Potsdam, St Lawrence University, Canton, NY, Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY, and SUNY at Binghamton, NY.

Dean's Award for Honors Teaching Excellence, SUNY Binghamton, 1998

Profiled in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography, No. 157: Twentieth Century Caribbean and Black African Writers, Third Series*. 1995.

Winner of the (British) Commonwealth Writers Prize for Africa, 1993: for my third novel, *Tides*.

Appointed Senior Visitor, St Anthony's College, Oxford University, May 1993.

Appointed "full member" of the Folklore Fellows (FF), by the Folklore Fellows International of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki. 1993.

Winner of the African Arts Prize for Literature, an international competition organized annually by the African Arts Center, UCLA: for best entry, with the manuscript of my second novel, *The Last Duty*. 1972.

Fellowships won

Fellow of the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, NC. 1997-98.

Ford Foundation Visiting Scholar, WEB DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University, 1990-91.

Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, CA, 1988. Residency deferred.

Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC. 1982-83.

Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, Federal Republic of Germany, 1982-83. Did not take it up.

Grants awarded

From the Rockefeller Foundation: \$12,585.00, towards hosting an international conference on "The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Self-fashioning," SUNY at Binghamton, April 11-13, 1996. See **Publications BOOKS: 1999**.

As Chair of Africana Studies, SUNY Binghamton, I participated in an application that won a Ford Foundation Grant of \$250,000.00 towards a research/teaching consortium linking the Africana departments of four colleges: Cornell University, Syracuse University, Morgan State University, and SUNY Binghamton for three years (1996-99)

From the Federal Government of Nigeria: 20,000 naira (Nigerian currency), towards organizing the 1981 Ibadan Annual African Literature Conference on "The Oral Performance in Africa," July 1981. See **Publications BOOKS:1990 (i)**.

Publications**BOOKS**

2008 *The New African Diaspora*. Editor (with Nkiru Nzegwu). Bloomington: Indiana University Press. In press: scheduled for publication Spring 2009. Scholarship.

2007 *The Preservation and Survival of African Oral Literature*. Guest editor. Special issue, Vol. 38.3 (Fall), 2007 of *Research in African Literatures*.

2004 *Call Me By My Rightful Name*. 260 pages. A novel. Trenton: Africa World Press.

2003 *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A Casebook*. Editor. New York: Oxford University Press. Scholarship.

1999 *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*. Editor (with Carole B. Davies and Ali A. Mazrui). Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 594 pages. Scholarship.

1998 *Once Upon a Kingdom: Myth, Hegemony, and Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 272 pages. Scholarship.

1993 (i) *Tides*. London: Longman. 200 pages. A novel. **Winner of the (British) Commonwealth Writers Prize for Africa, 1993.**

(ii) *Letteratura Orale dell' Africa Subsahariana*. A macropedia project. Milan: Jaca Books. 94 pages. Scholarship.

1992 *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 408 pages. Scholarship.

1990 (i) *The Oral Performance in Africa*. Editor. Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books. 285 pages. Scholarship. **Runner-up, Nigerian Newsprint Manufacturing Company Prize, 1990.**

(ii) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Scholar*. A professorial inaugural lecture. Ikeja: Longman Nigeria Ltd. 35 pages.

1985 *The Heritage of African Poetry: An Anthology of Oral and Written Poetry*. Editor. London: Longman. 287 pages. Textbook (with Introduction and Commentary)

1983 *Myth in Africa: A Study of Its Aesthetic and Cultural Relevance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 315 pages. Scholarship.

1979 *The Epic in Africa: Toward a Poetics of the Oral Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press. 308 pages. Scholarship.

1976 *The Last Duty*. London: Longman. 243 pages. A novel. **Winner (in ms.), African Arts Prize for Literature (UCLA African Arts Center), 1972.** Translated into French, Russian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian.

1970 *The Victims*. London: Longman. 200 pages. A novel. American editions: Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1971. Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1980.

ARTICLES IN JOURNALS AND BOOKS

2008 (i) Introduction: Can We 'Go Home Again'? *The New African Diaspora* (see above under BOOKS).

- (ii) Foreword to M. J. C. Echeruo, *Concordance to the Poetry of Christopher Okigbo* Lewiston: Mellen, 2008.
- (iii) Foreword to Makuchi, *The Sacred Door and Other Stories: Cameroonian Folktales of the Beba*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- 2007** (i) Foreword to *Crossroads: Poetry in Honour of Christopher Okigbo*, ed. E.E. Sule. Abuja, Nigeria: Okigbo Foundation.
- (ii) Introduction. *The Preservation and Survival of African Oral Literature*. See above under BOOKS.
- 2006** (i) Foreword. *South African Voices: A Long Time Passed. Vol. 1*, coll. and trans. Harold Scheub. Madison, WI: Parallel Press. ix-xiv.
- (ii) Home, Exile, and the Spaces in Between. *Research in African Literatures* 37.2: 68-73.
- 2004** (i) The Oral Artist: Training and Preparation. *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial. New York: Routledge. 226-231.
- (ii) Performance and Plot in *The Ozidi Saga*. *Oral Tradition* 19.1: 63-95.
- (iii) African Oral Epics. In *Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 98-116.
- 2003** (i) Oral Tradition: Do Storytellers Lie? *Journal of Folklore Research* 40.3: 215-32.
- (ii) Oral Literary Research in Africa. In *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip Peek and Kwesi Yankah. New York: Routledge. 303-10.
- (iii) The Art of *The Ozidi Saga*. *Research in African Literatures* 34.3: 1-26.
- iv) Introduction to I. Okpewho, ed., *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A Casebook* (see above under BOOKS). 3-53.
- 2002** Walcott, Homer, and 'the Black Atlantic.' *Research in African Literatures* 33.1:27-44.
- 2001** (i) On the Concept "Commonwealth Literature." In *Meditations on African Literature*, ed. Dubem Okafor. Westport: Greenwood Press. 35-43
- (ii) Introduction. *The Scholar Between Thought and Experience: A Biographical Festschrift in Honor of Ali A. Mazrui*, ed. Parvis Morewedge. Binghamton: IGCS Global Publications.

- 1999** (i) Soyinka, Euripides, and the Anxiety of Empire. *Research in African Literatures* 30.4:32-55.
- (ii) Introduction, *The African Diaspora* (see above under BOOKS). xi-xxviii.
- 1998** (i) Prodigal's Progress: Jay Wright's Focal Center. *MELUS (Multiethnic Literatures of the United States)* 23:187-209.
- (ii) African Mythology and Africa's Political Impasse. *Research in African Literatures* 29.1:1-15.
- 1996** How Not to Treat African Folklore. A review essay. *Research in African Literatures* 27.3:119-128.
- 1994** The Cousins of Uncle Remus. In *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture*, ed. W. Sollors and M. Diedrich. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 15-27.
- 1991** (i) African Literature and African Culture. In *Culture and Civilization*, ed. L. Thompson, D. Adelugba, and E. Ifie. Ibadan, Nigeria: Afrika-Link Books. 67-75.
- (ii) A Critical Introduction. In *The Ozidi Saga*, tr. and ed. J.P. Clark-Bekederemo. Washington, DC: Howard University Press. vii-xxviii.
- (iii) From a Goat Path in Africa: An Approach to the Poetry of Jay Wright. *Callaloo* 14:692-726.
- 1990** (i) The Study of Performance. In *The Oral Performance in Africa*, ed. I. Okpewho (see above under BOOKS). 1-20.
- (ii) Towards a Faithful Record: On Transcribing and Translating the Oral Narrative Performance. In *The Oral Performance in Africa* (see above under BOOKS). 111-135.
- (iii) The Oral Performer and His Audience: A Case Study of *The Ozidi Saga*. In *The Oral Performance in Africa* (see above under BOOKS). 160-184.
- (iv) The Primacy of Performance in Oral Discourse. A review essay. *Research in African Literatures* 21.4:121-128.
- 1989** A Personal Narrative from the Nigerian Civil War: Further Issues in Oral Narrative Representation. *Uwa ndi Igbo: Journal of Igbo Life and Culture* 2:13-31.
- 1988** (i) Michael J.C. Echeruo: The Dignity of Intellectual Labour. In *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, 1700 to the Present. Vol. 2*, ed. Y. Ogunbiyi. Lagos, Nigeria: Guardian Books. Reprinted in *The Gong and the Flute: African Literary Development and Celebration*, ed.

Kalu Ogbaa. Westport: Greenwood, 1994. 185-192.

(ii) African Poetry: The Modern Writer and the Oral Tradition. *African Literature Today* 16:1-22.

1987 (i) “Once Upon a Kingdom...”: Benin in the Heroic Traditions of Bendel State, Nigeria. In *The Heroic Process: Form, Function and Fantasy in Folk Epic*, ed. B. Almqvist, S. O’Cathain, and P. O’Healai. Dublin: Glendale Press. 613-650.

(ii) Understanding African Marriage: Towards a Convergence of Literature and Sociology. In *Transformations of African Marriage*, ed. D. Parkin and D. Nyamwaya. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 331-343.

1986 The Study of African Oral Literature. In *Presence Africaine*, special Spring issue. Ed. F. Abiola Irele.

1984 “Ezemu”: A Heroic Narrative from Ubulu-Uno, Bendel State. *Uwa ndi Igbo: Journal of Igbo Life and Culture* 1:70-85.

1983 (i) Book review of Wole Soyinka, *Ake; The Years of Childhood*. *The Wilson Quarterly* 7:140-141.

(ii) Myth and Modern Fiction: Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*. *African Literature Today* 13:3-20.

1982 Cultural Prejudice and Cultural Scholarship. *Higher Education and Research in the Netherlands* 26:39-47.

1981 (i) Cheikh Anta Diop: The Search for a Philosophy of African Culture. *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 84:587-602.

(ii) The African Heroic Epic: Internal Balance. *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale* 36:209-225.

(iii) Comparatism and Separatism in African Literature. *World Literature Today* 55:25-31.

(iv) Myth and Rationality in Africa. *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* 1:28-49.

1980 (i) The Anthropologist Looks at the Epic. *Research in African Literatures* 11:429-448.

(ii) Rethinking Myth. *African Literature Today* 11:1-17.

(iii) Analytical Boundaries in the Oral Narrative. *Bulletin d’Institut Fondamental de l’Afrique Noire* 42:822-856.

1979 (i) Firstfruits and Prospects in African Folklore. A review essay. *Journal of African Studies* 6:171-175.

(ii) Poetry and Pattern: Structural Analysis of an Ijo Creation Myth. *Journal of American Folklore* 92:302-325.

1978 African Fiction: Language Revisited. *Journal of African Studies* 5:114-126.

1977 (i) Does the Epic Exist in Africa? Some Formal Considerations. *Research in African Literatures* 8:171-200.

(ii) Principles of Traditional African Art. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35:301-313.

1976 Africa and the Epic: Comparative Thoughts on the Supernatural Machine. *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing* 11:81-104.

1975 The Aesthetics of Old African Art. *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing* 8:38-55.

Film production

Made the film *University of Ibadan 1948-1988: The First Forty Years*. Listed in the film's credits under the following heads: Research, Interviews, Script, Videotape Editors, Executive Producer, Directors.

Other publications

1975 (i) Aeneas to the Sibyl: At the Foot of the Rocky Mountain. A poem. *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing*, 7:88-89.

(ii) Offering: For the War Dead. (A poem). *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing*. 7:86-87.

1973 Dialock. (A poem). *Ufahamu*, 4:111.

Current research and writing projects

Blood on the Creeks: Art, Culture, and Society in "The Ozidi Saga"

The Cousins of Uncle Remus: African Mythology in the New World. A study of Transformations of African tale traditions in the Americas

Contesting Empire: Black Writers and the Western Canon. A study of the

postcolonial impulses behind adaptations, by writers from Africa and the African diaspora, of European classics works

A New Anthology of African Poetry (ed. with Robert Fraser). A definitive edition of oral and written African poetry.

Osman! Osman! A novel.

Conferences I have convened/coordinated

Sixth Conference of the International Society for Oral Literature in Africa (ISOLA). Topic: "Oral Literature and Identity Formation in Africa and the Diaspora." University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago, July 20-23. Convener (as ISOLA President).

Symposium on "The New African Diaspora: Assessing the Pains and Gains of Exile." SUNY Binghamton, April 7-8, 2006.

Fifth Conference of the International Society for Oral Literature in Africa (ISOLA). Topic: "The Preservation and Survival of African Oral Literature." University of the Gambia, Banjul, Gambia, July 15-17, 2004. Convener (as ISOLA President).

Conference on "The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Self-fashioning." SUNY Binghamton, April 11-13, 1996.

Ibadan Annual African Literature Conference, Ibadan University, Nigeria.
 1977: "Oral Poetry in Africa" (Coordinator)
 1981: "The Oral Performance in Africa" (Coordinator)
 1990: "New Trends in African Writing" (Convener)

Selected sites of invited lectures (keynote, etc.) and readings

Monmouth University, West Branch, NJ, February 5, 2007

Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.. April 14, 2005

Mount Saint Mary College, Newbury, New York, November 18, 2004

Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, October 6, 2004

African Literature Association Conference, University of California-San Diego, April 3-7, 2002

Columbia University, Department of Comparative Literature, December 1, 2001

Indiana University, African Studies Program, Bloomington, June 23, 2001

Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, VA, June 9, 2001

Fernand Braudel Center, SUNY at Binghamton, April 27, 2000

Department of English, SUNY at Buffalo, April 10 & 11, 2000

Woodbury Library, Emory University, November 5, 1998

Department of African American Studies, University of Minnesota, February 5
&
6, 1998

Department of English, Brandeis University, December 5, 1997

Mary Lou Williams Center for Afro-American Culture, Duke University,
November 12, 1997

Department of African and African American Studies, University of North
Carolina at Chapel Hill, October 2, 1997

African Studies Center, Ohio State University, May 15, 1997

Department of Fine Art, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, April 24, 1996

Department of English, University of Bloomsburg, PA, April 18, 1996

Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Wisconsin at
Madison, March 6-7, 1996

University of Ghana, October 24, 1995

University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, July 1995

African Studies Center, Ohio State University, May 26, 1995

African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, April 1995

Harborfront Readers Series, Toronto, October 1994

Fernand Braudel Center, SUNY at Binghamton, March 15, 1994

Department of Afro-American Studies, Harvard University, February 24, 1994

Department of Afro-American Studies, City College of NY, October 1993

The British Council, Singapore, September 1993

St Anthony's College, Oxford University, May 27, 1993

Department of English, Lincoln University, PA, October 12, 1991

Department of English, Brandeis University, June 26, 1991

Center for Literary and Cultural Studies, Harvard University, May 4, 1991

Center for African Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana, April 12, 1991

1991 Department of African American Studies, Dartmouth College, March 17,

Committee on African Studies, Harvard University, March 15, 1991

Department of English, University of Calabar, Nigeria, April 12, 1989

Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin, September 4, 1985

Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, May 1985

The Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, July 10, 1983

Folklore and Folklife Department, University of Pennsylvania, February 1983

Department of Afro-American Studies, Yale University, November 1982

Committee and consultative roles:

(a) SUNY Binghamton

General Education ACT on the Humanities

Graduate Council

Committee on Research and Scholarship

Grievance Committee

Harpur College Dean Search Advisory Committee

Harpur College Dean's Adjunct Allocations Committee

Rosefsky Scholarship Committee

Honorary Degrees Advisory Committee

Committee on 50th Anniversary Celebrations for Harpur College

(b) Elsewhere

Member of a committee of the Intangible Heritage Division of UNESCO, Set up to prepare a handbook for the preservation of the world's intangible Cultural heritage. 2006

President, International Society for Oral Literature in Africa, 2002-2006.

Member, Editorial Board of the Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures publications series of the Modern Language Association of America, 2002-06.

Member, Board of Directors, African Studies Association, 1994-97

Member, Board of Consultants, Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, 1992-94

Religions,

Member, Research Advisory Council, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 1992-96

Chair, Task Force for the 40th Anniversary of Ibadan University, Nigeria, 1986-88

Director for Africa, International Association for Oral Literature in Africa (Budapest), 1984

Member, Advisory Committee of the International Comparative Literature Association, 1982-83

Vice-President, Nigerian Association for African and Comparative Literature, 1981-90

Member, Presidential Planning Committee for Open University of Nigeria, 1980.

Have been External Examiner for degrees (undergraduate or graduate) in English at the following African universities: University of Ghana; Universite de Benin, Togo; Universite Nationale de Benin, Porto Novo, Benin; Universite de Yaounde, Cameroun; Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria;

University of Lagos, Nigeria; University of Benin, Nigeria; University of Calabar, Nigeria; University of Jos, Nigeria; Ogun State University, Nigeria.

Membership of Learned Societies

Member, International Society for Oral Literature in Africa.

Full Member, Folklore Fellows International

Member, International Society for Folk Narrative Research

Member, African Studies Association

Member, African Literature Association

Member, American Folklore Society

Member, Council of Black Studies

Member, George Moses Horton Society for the Study of African American Poetry

Member, Modern Language Association.

Member, Nigerian Literary Society, 1978-90

Member, Nigerian Folklore Society, 1980-90

Member, Association of Nigerian Authors, 1976-90

Journal editorship

Member, Editorial Board, *Research in African Literatures*

Member, Editorial Board, *Oral Tradition*

Editor, *Journal of African and Comparative Literature*, 1981-90

Associate Editor, *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 1981-82

Associate Editor, *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing*, 1973-80

Direction of doctoral dissertations

Completed

Siendou Konate. *Writing Violence in Francophone West Africa: A Study of Representative Oral and Written Texts*. Ph.D., Comparative Literature, SUNY Binghamton, 2005.

Marame Gueye. *Wolof Wedding Songs: Women Negotiating Voice and Space Through Verbal Art*. Ph.D., Comparative Literature, SUNY Binghamton, 2004.

T.J. Anderson III, *Notes to Make the Sound Come Right: Towards a Definition of Jazz Poetry*. Ph.D., English, SUNY Binghamton, 1998

Chiji Akoma, *Between the Oral and the Written: Folklore and the Afro-Diasporic Narrative*. Ph.D., English, SUNY Binghamton, 1998

Olohigbe O. Adedeji, *The Mythical Imagination in the Legends of Old Benin*. Ph.D., English, Ibadan University, Nigeria, 1990

Emmanuel F. Doh, *Funeral Poetry of the Bamenda Grassfields (Cameroon)*. Ph.D., English, Ibadan University, 1990

Adegboyega A. Kolawole, *Major Themes of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. Ph.D., English, Ibadan University, 1990

Justus O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada, *The Igbo Proverb: Communication and Creativity in Traditional Art*. Ph.D., English, Ibadan University, 1990

Frank U. Mowah, *Towards a Structuralist Study of African Poetry: An Examination of the Poetry of Wole Soyinka and Okot p'Bitek*. Ph.D., English, Ibadan University, 1989

Sam Ukala, *The Making of the Folkscript*. Ph.D., Theatre Arts, Ibadan University, 1985.

Current

Moussa Kane. Comparative study of the poetries of Derek Walcott and Wole Soyinka, for a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, SUNY Binghamton.