

# THE OFALA

By Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke



They come in different shapes and colours  
Red-capped, white-capped  
Feathers, bird-like: back, front and side  
Royal staff, fans, horse tails, and all  
Flowing dresses: red, white, blue, green and multicolours.

Oval and rectangular faces: fleshy, dark, chocolate  
Stern, curious, sceptical, expressionless  
Neck decked with heavy beads  
The ushers sweating and smiling and serving  
Music, commentaries, litany of names and titles.

They come in processions like priests and altar boys  
Ushered by drummers and flutists  
Ahead of the music-makers  
Praise singers rolling out praises like carpets  
And the high priest in flowing garments taking the rear.

And then he enters  
Dancing with measured steps  
His traditional headgear on his royal head towering like an Ijere  
All eyes on the most handsome traditional ruler in Nigeria  
Drummers and gong players in a frenzy.

And he enters the traditional hall to take his throne  
With elephantine steps, sweating profusely  
Long beaded hands cladding a fan-like sword  
Face beaming with smiles  
Of a king.

Four red-capped servants squatting on the floor  
And then the worshipful processions  
All paying homage:  
Traditional chiefs, politicians, business moguls and admirers  
Women with their white cloths baring glittering flesh.

All prostrating or bowing and offering their presents  
As the king smiles radiantly  
And I shouted amidst a thicket of thronging human flesh:  
Agbogidi! Agogidi! Agbogidi!  
Congratulations!