

## BOOK REVIEW

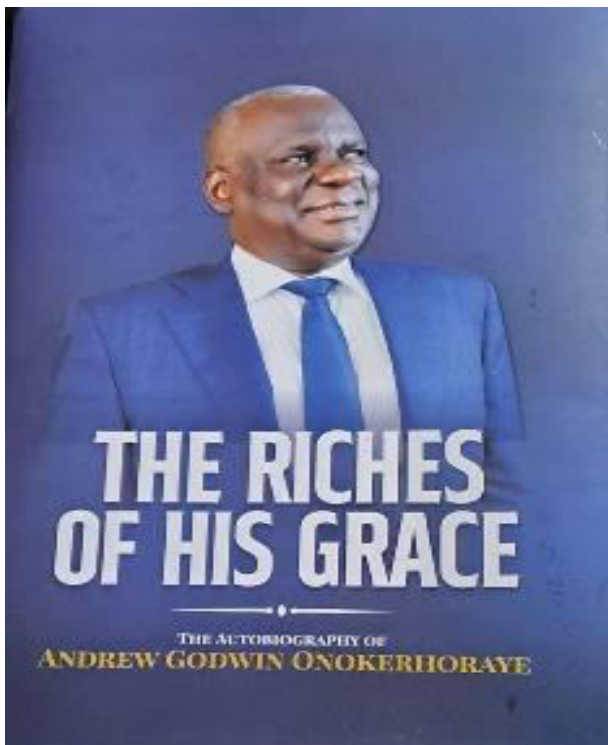
# The Riches of His Grace

DOI: 10.29063/ajrh2024/v28i5.13

*Friday Okonofua*

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Reproductive Health, and Editor in Chief, African Journal of Reproductive Health

\*For Correspondence: Email: [feokonofua@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:feokonofua@yahoo.co.uk)



After ten years of intense work and research, Professor Andrew Godwin Onokerhoraye, former Vice—Chancellor of the University of Benin, and one of the most profound protagonists of education in Nigeria has finally written his memoirs. A compendium of 767 pages of facts and data personally written by the great educational leader himself cannot surprise those of us who know him well. As Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin in the 1990s, he wrote and personally launched more than 20 books in a single day, a fit never again replicated by any serving Vice-Chancellor of Nigerian University.

The book titled “The Riches of His Grace”<sup>1</sup>, and is published by Safari Books limited in hard and soft covers, and has nearly 33 pages of beautiful

photos and illustrations. Despite its large size, it is easy to read. Professor Onokerhoraye is one of those who writes the same way he speaks and illustrates his points with vivid expositions. I can remember in Senate at the University of Benin, Professor Onokerhoraye will build up his points and arguments so eloquently and defensively such that his opponents, usually those brilliant professors in Senate will have no points to hold onto. He writes much the same way in a free-flowing eloquent and lucid manner, with each points dove-tailing into the other, that it will be difficult for anyone to drop the book after starting to read it. It’s a story of his life written by a man who saw it all, and willing to share every detail without hiding the facts, dates and figures.

The objective of this review is to summarize the contents of the book in ways to emphasize its most essential elements to that readers can understand how a man with such dignified presence came to play a pre-eminent and unforgettable role in Nigeria’s educational system.

### ***His birth and early upbringing***

The first two chapters of the book provide details of his birth and early upbringing. His father was Chief Onokerhoraye Achanacho Ideh who was from the Isiololo-Orhoakpor Kingdom in Ethiopie East Local Government Area in today’s Delta State. His mother was Mama Unumiyemu Onokerhoraye (Nee Akpokomuaye) from Kokori also in Delta State. He was born on July 7, 1945, making him about 78+years old this year. He was from a polygamous family; his father having married two other wives aside from his mother. His lineage stood out very strongly among the Onokerhoraye clan. Although he is from the Urhobo ethnic group, he was born and lived his early life in Okitipupa, in today’s Southern

part of Ondo State in southwest Nigeria. In the book, he narrates how Urhobo migrants had migrated to Okitipupa between 1896 and 1897, a community nearly 200kms away, seeking prosperity and the proverbial “greener pastures”. The ability and skills in climbing palm trees to harvest palm produce was the main attraction that lulled Urhobo farmers to Ondo south, a skill that the natives in Okitipupa had not perfected. Pa Onokerhorhaye himself arrived in Okitipupa in 1935, where he established a village in Ayeka area of Ikale land. The village later grew to between five and ten households, and contained many artefacts reminiscent of rural communities, which included a shrine called *oforhie*. One would wonder how large the village is today.

The circumstances of his birth warrant some recounting, as it epitomized the difficulties associated with childbirth in those days. The young Onokerhorhaye was born the same year the Second World War ended, at a time of severe scarcity and poverty. Hospital facilities were scarce in the area. The only hospital was in Ondo town, that was about 80kms away from Okitipupa. Consequently, when time came for his mother to give birth to him, only a traditional birth attendant (TBA) that lived five kms away could be consulted. However, before her mother could arrive at the home of the TBA, he was delivered along a footpath. This method of delivery featured prominently in the area in those days, and because of its unskilled nature, it often resulted and still results in a high number of deaths of newborn babies.

The fact that he survived was due to God’s intervention and the perseverance of his mother who was determined to ensure that he survived being the only boy among a large number of girls in the family. He told the story of how his father had intended to give him a name akin to that of Hitler, given the timing and circumstances of his birth. But the timely intervention of his older brother prevented the name from sinking him who gave him the name Godwin, being the native translation of the native Urhobo name (Irerhivworhe) that his mother gave him. His baptism name was Andrew, and it’s no wonder that he is now often referred as AG Onokerhorhaye. His closest friends often call him Onoks.

Trying to get Andrew to survive in the first years of life was a major challenge to the family. Given that his mother had had two other boys who died before he was born, there was always the fear

that he too would not survive. The many interventions carried out by the mother including those by various traditional healers, and his having to leave away from his parents saved the day, and he survived the tumultuous period. These experiences probably resulted in what he later turned out to be – a strong and fearless man able to handle the many vicissitudes of life.

### ***Early school life***

Due to his repeated illnesses and fear that he might be traumatized at school, Professor Onokerhorhaye did not begin primary school until 1953 when he was 9 years old, a thing that would be unthinkable today. He started his primary school education from Infant 1 at the St. John’s Catholic School in Okitipupa. Apart from this period exposing to tutelage in subjects such as Arithmetic, English, Reading, Writing and Education, it also offered him strong Catholic upbringing and discipline. It’s no wonder that he remains one of the most consistent and faithful Catholic Adherents till this day. He was extremely brilliant in primary school, which earned him double promotion from Infant to Standard 1. He passed his First School Leaving Certificate conducted by the Western Regional Ministry of Education, Ibadan in 1958 when he was in Primary Six. He was then 13 years old. Transition to secondary school then became a problem as his parents were not able to pay for the common entrance examinations to those schools. It was the intervention of one of his teachers, Mr. Awere, who was convinced by his brilliance that he would do well in secondary that he was able to obtain funds to pay the exams. True to expectation, Onoks passed the entrance examinations into several outstanding Colleges at the time – Government College, Ughelli; Urhobo College, Effurun; St Joseph’s College, Ondo; and St Patrick’s College, Asaba.

Unfortunately, due to paucity of funds and his inability to obtain a scholarship, he was not able to enter any of these prestigious colleges. His mother was only able to obtain limited funds, through which he enrolled in a Modern School – the Catholic Secondary Modern School in Okitipupa. He performed excellently well in the school, attaining between first and the fifth positions in a class of 120 students for any examination conducted. He passed the Final Secondary Modern School examination conducted by the Western Region in

flying colors in December 1961. He was then 16 years old.

After completing secondary modern school, our great Onoks worked as a farmer for his parents, learning in the process how to climb palm trees to harvest palm nuts. He also doubled working as a pupil teacher in 1962 at his Ama mater, the St John's Catholic School in Okitipupa. His versatility and resourcefulness were immense, but he never lost sight of continuing his education.

After several considerations of what was best for him, he took the entrance examination, and was admitted at St Peter's College in Akure for training as a Grade II teacher in 1963. He did so, because he considered that this offered him the possibility of taking the London University General Certificate of Education (GCE) which would give him the possibility of gaining admission to the University. His education at the St Peter's College gave him the opportunity to training in teaching methods, especially in subjects such as English, Arithmetic, and the principles and methods of education. He did so brilliantly well and on account of his performance in the first-year examination in the College, he was appointed the prefect of his class.

While at the St Peter's College, he also studied for the London University General Certificate of Education (GCE) Examination because of his realization that passing the GCE exam was the only way he could enter the university. One of the requirements for qualification to take the GCE exam at the time was a pass in English in a prequalifying exam. This, our dear Onoks did in 1964 which qualified him to enroll for the GCE examinations.

With great wisdom, he studied for the GCE examination while simultaneously in the teacher training class, a devotion which is unusual of young people these days. Thus, it was not surprising that he passed the GCE OL exam in English, Geography, Economics, British Constitution, and Botany in excellent grades in January 1965. By passing the GCE OL exam, he was exempted from some of the Teachers Grade II subjects, enabling him to concentrate on fewer subjects in the Grade II exam and also on the GCE Advanced level exam. He subsequently passed the Teachers Grade II examination and the GCE Advanced level exams with good grades in Geography, Economics, and

British Constitution, which made him eminently qualified to enroll in any University.

### ***His work as a village teacher***

In chapter 4 of the book, he described his escapades as teacher in four village schools, a situation which he later alluded to assisted him in his teaching and administrative career at the University of Benin. First, was when he was appointed a pupil teacher at his Alma Mata, the St John's Catholic Primary School in Okitipupa, where he gained basic rudiments in teaching. His annual salary was only £36.0 (£3.0 per month) which is instructive, given the extreme devaluation of Nigeria's currency today. With that, he was happy because this exposed him to the first "white collar" job, that took him away from farm work. The salary sufficient to enable him meet his basic requirements, and to focus on his future ambition.

He was later transferred to the Catholic School in Ori-Eran, a Riverian community that took nearly two days travel time by boat from Okitipupa. This was after he had passed the Grade II teacher training exam and the GCE Advanced Level exam. Indeed, his attaining these certificates marked him out as a qualified teacher, that was needed in some of the most deprived parts of the State. At Ori-Eran, he was Headmaster of the school, the only qualified teacher, and was welcomed very warmly in the community eager to obtain basic education.

One year after, he was transferred again to the Brendan's Secondary Modern School at Ajagba, another waterside community, which was only 3 hours travel time from Okitipupa. He functioned as Headmaster of the Modern School, teaching the most senior classes, on a special salary of £25 per month. This salary placed on a senior cadre, which enabled him to meet his basic needs, and also to save for his future enrollment in the University.

From St Brendan's Modern School, he was transferred to the St Paul's Catholic Primary School, also in Ajagba as Headmaster, which gave him further experiences as a teacher and school administrator.

His experiences in these schools helped his later development in the educational system. It helped to build his courage and resilience, his determination to succeed in whatever he does, and his connivance with administrative rules and procedures, which have helped him throughout his life course.

### ***His student days at the University of Ibadan***

Our great Onoks was admitted into the University of Ibadan to read geography in 1967, at the age of 22 years. His university admission was held down by the Nigerian civil war. Indeed, he had earlier secured admission to the University of Nigeria Nsukka, but the closure of that university at the time due to the civil war prevented him from moving forward with the admission.

Indeed, his road travel from the Midwest to Ibadan to commence studies at the University of Ibadan was made impossible by the war because the Biafran soldiers had destroyed the Bridge between Benin City and Ore. It was the intervention of the then Governor of Midwest region at the time, Osaigbovo Ogbemudia that helped the situation, who lifted the estranged students by Military Aircraft from Benin City to Lagos, after which they travelled by road to Ibadan.

To him, the University of Ibadan was a masterpiece where he gained immense experiences in community life. He shared a room with two beds at the Independence Hall (Katanga Hall) of the University with another Midwest student, Mr. Andrew Omobhude, who later became the Registrar of the then Bendel State University (now Ambrose Alli University). His university education was seamless and painless as he had sufficient funds initially from the Midwest government students loan scheme, and later as a Federal Government funded scholar.

The story of life at the University of Ibadan as narrated by Onoks is worth recounting as it epitomized the excellence in university education that was the benchmark of those days. He surmised that the period was golden, which was why universities were called the “ivory towers” in those days. The most essential elements were the ease of access to scholarships, excellent students’ accommodation facilities, cheap and affordable three-course meals, an excellent library with students using its facilities with ease, and readily available religious and social amenities. On page 78 of the book, I smiled with envy when he said “universities met international standards as expected of any university in the world”. I then wondered why our current universities are now searching for global excellence which our earlier universities obtained in those days without difficulties.

Onoks was taught at the University of Ibadan by intellectual powerhouses. These included Professor Dudley, Professor Aboyade, Mr. Ukpabi Asika (who later became the Administrator of the East Central State), and the now Emeritus Professor Faniran. He was particularly influenced by their teachings on social development, arising from the intense national patriotism that arose at that time due to the attainment of independence and freedoms by many African countries including Nigeria. The Universities at the time, were the festering grounds for scholarships around post-independence development, and the University of Ibadan, being Nigeria’s pioneer university, was one of the most fertile grounds for pontificating such intellectual fervors.

His choice of urbanization as his scholastic focus was influenced by a book titled “Urbanization in Nigeria”, written by Professor Akin Mabogunje, which captured his mind at the time. At the University of Ibadan, he participated in all activities including students’ union politics, professional governance and activism, religious activities (as a student Catholic cheerleader), sports (volleyball), and social activities. Yet he found time to read his books and attend classes regularly. It was not surprising that he passed his final examination earning a BSc degree in second class, upper division, in 1970, an extremely rare fit in Ibadan in those days.

His immediate appointment after graduation was as a teacher at the St. Peter Claver’s College in Aghalokpe in the now Delta State, for which he earned a paltry sum of 60 pounds per month.

His initial vision after university education was mixed and surrounded being either a teacher, a civil servant rising to the post of permanent secretary or being in a management profession. However, given his good grade in his BSc examination, and learning from his esteemed professors at the University of Ibadan, he later decided he would pursue a career in academics which would enable him become a professor and work in the university system.

Consequently, a highly performing Federal Government administration at the time offered him scholarship to undergo postgraduate studies (PhD) in Geography at the London School of Economics. This was immediately the civil war ended, and it is praiseworthy that a government involved in such an intractable war was able to offer scholarships to

students to study overseas, an undertaking that is difficult in today's war free democratic governance.

### ***As PhD student at the London School of Economics (LSE)***

Onoks enrolled for PhD at the LSE in 1971 at the age of 26 years. This was another phenomenal achievement. Despite that he started formal schooling late on account of his frequent illnesses, he was able to progress well in the school system to attain this remarkable progress in PhD enrolment. He had married Josephine, his lovely wife at that time and they had had two children (Roseline and Onajite), meaning that he also moved relatively fast in marital life. His wife was pregnant with his third child and first son, Omonigho.

On his trip to London to begin his LSE education, it was compulsory he flew the Nigerian Airways, and his documentation suggested that he enjoyed a lovely and uneventful flight. The question is "where is the Nigerian Airways today?"

He described his first arrival in London as extremely pleasant; he was received by officials of the British Council at the Heathrow airport; and was accommodated in a students' hostel at Queen's Garden in central London. He was paid a monthly subsistence allowance of 40 pounds, in addition to receiving other services free of charge.

Two supervisors were later assigned to him: A lead supervisor, Professor Harrison Church, who had extensive knowledge of Nigeria, and a co-supervisor, Professor Emerys Jones, who was vast in social geography a field for which he had considerable passion.

He initially started with the Masters in Philosophy (M Phil) program in geography, but on account of his high success in the preliminary assessment by his assessors, he was moved to the PhD grade in 1973. Thereafter, he had a 9-month data collection stint in Nigeria, during which period, Professor Akin Mabogunje, who he repeatedly referred to as his mentor in many sections of the book, supervised him as an occasional student at the University of Ibadan.

On his return to London after data collection in Nigeria, Josephine joined him to start a career in nursing education at the St Margaret Hospital in London, leaving their children with his parents' in-law in Okitipupa.

He completed PhD at the LSE and was awarded the degree on July 7, 1974. Immediately after, he was offered appointment a Research Fellow II at the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) at the University of Ibadan. He assumed duty in NISER in September 1974, immediately after relocating from London, while leaving his wife Josephine, behind to continue her nursing education.

### ***His NISER experience***

His return to Nigeria to work in NISER was a memorable experience and gamechanger for him. He was received on arrival by Professor HMA Onitiri, the then the director of NISER. NISER was established as an economic development research center in the 1950s by the colonial government. A comprehensively conceived research centre, it consisted of four departments – Economic Development, Agricultural Development, Physical Development, and Social Development. Being an economic thinktank, and economist always headed the Institute.

On page 116 of the book, he described his assessment of the facilities at NISER as comparable to those at the LSE. In his words "furthermore, the NISER had adequate research facilities, and resources for anybody who wanted to carry out research. The NISER library was, at that time, one of the best social science libraries in Nigeria". It is unlikely that such great appellations would be used for NISER as it exists today in the country.

Some of the social science experts he worked with in NISER were Professors Adeniyi, Onibokun, Onakomaiya, and Oduola. A major requirement for researchers in NISER at the time was to carry out research that address national developmental challenges in the social sciences. With this, Onoks focused his research endeavors on two key issues: urbanization and development, which was the topic of his PhD at LSE, and social services and development. His identification of social services and development was as a result of his experiences earlier in life when he witnessed deprivation and inequity in not being able to gain access to health and educational opportunities due to long distances. Since then, he had passion for work that seek to promote social justice and equity as panacea for national development. He published a number of papers from his PhD thesis in

international journals, which led to his rapid promotion in the system. At NISER, promotions from Research Fellow II to Research Fellow I occur every three years with at least two papers. In his own case within two years, he had published six papers which enabled him to gain accelerated promotion to Research Fellow I in 1976 after only two years at NISER.

One year after, in 1977, he had published 16 papers which made him to seek accelerated promotion to the post of Senior Research Fellow. However, this was turned down by the Faculty of Social Sciences' review Board, that recommended that he needed to gain more experience in the system. He was promoted Senior Research Fellow a year later in 1978, still one year earlier than normal, which was only 4 years after obtaining his PhD.

At NISER, Onoks was extremely transformational in participating in many research accomplishments. He participated in group research efforts, which were largely related to social science issues of State and National interests. Many of these research groups were funded by international agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), etc. He also learned the principles of proposal writing, which later helped him when he later established the Center for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) as a nongovernmental organization. He started the Research for development journal at NISER, helping to edit the first two editions of the journal.

After discussion with his friends and family, he decided to move to the University of Benin especially because he wanted to get closer to his parents who were then getting old. He was recruited by Professor PO Sada, the pioneer head of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Benin. He was appointed Senior Lecturer on first appointment in the Department, despite having been assessed for research professor at NISER.

### ***Teaching and research at UNIBEN***

When Onoks joined the University of Benin in October 1, 1980, Professor Adamu Baikiie was the Vice-Chancellor of the University. Professor Baikiie was by consensus, a highly performing and resourceful Vice-Chancellor of the University at the time. Professor PO Sada who had appointed him

from NISER, had just been appointed the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Professor MA Onwuejeogwu was new Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, while Dr Akinbode (now Prof) was the Acting Head of Department of Geography and Regional Planning.

The Department of Geography and Regional Planning was established in 1975 with the philosophy to train graduates who are well grounded in all aspects of the social sciences. Given his rich academic backgrounds from the University of Ibadan and the LSE, he was convinced and determined to make substantial contributions to the growth of the department.

The University of Benin at that time was well organized with about 5,970 students in eight (8) Faculties, with over 90% of the students being hosted in hostels on campus. The library was good, and the social environmental was convivial. Compared to what he was used to at the University of Ibadan, Onoks had heavier teaching load, but this did not dissuade his interest in research.

### ***As Head of Department***

In October 1, 1981, exactly one year after his arrival at UNIBEN, he was appointed Head of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning. As Head, he had the opportunity to work with serious academics with diverse interests.

A major innovation during his tenure as the Head was the establishment of a professional master's degree in urban and regional planning in the 1982/1983 academic session. Professor GED Omuta assisted by Dr S Otaigbe, two professional town planners in the Department, led the process. Unfortunately, after four rounds of accreditation visit by the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), the program was discredited in 2004, when the University was not able to meet the minimal professional standards for establishing the course.

As head, he narrated how he strengthened the postgraduate programme of the Department. At peak, he single-handedly supervised 25 PhDs and 30 Masters students. Additionally, he promoted research in the department through advice to junior colleagues on research principles, journal publications, and also on ways to write fundable research proposals. Later, he was appointed the faculty representative in the University Publications and Research Committee (URPC), which enabled

him to provide support to the staff of the faculty, enabling them to attract more funding from the URPC.

He was also appointed the Editor of the Benin Journal of Social Sciences by Professor Iyoha, the then Dean of the Faculty, which enabled him to publish the journal repeatedly for 3 years, after which he handed over to Professor Bob-Osaze,

His tenure as the Head of the Department attracted numerous opportunities and research funding to the Department. He added a new theme to his research engagement which was population and its determinants. This was on account of the rising importance of population on development trajectories especially in African countries. At this time, he completed and published his book titled “urbanization and environment in Nigeria” in 1995.

He received many research grants from several donor agencies which enabled him to engage many staff in collaborative research in the areas of urban development, population activities, and social sciences. These included grants from the Social Science Council of Nigeria; the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; the Rockefeller Foundation, the African Development Foundation; the World Health Organization; and the Ford Foundation.

Based on his numerous research outputs and publications, he was promoted to the post of full Professor in October 1982. The report of his external assessment showed that he was rated A by two assessors and B+ by a third assessor. He was then only 37 years old, one of the youngest to be so appointed a professor at that time. Ladies and Gentlemen, please recall that he entered primary school at the age of 11 years, and now 26 years later he was already a professor. Without the delay in school, he would have been a professor some five years earlier – really phenomenal. This speaks of his high-level industry, his steadfastness in whatever he does, his courage, and his extraordinary brilliance.

After becoming a professor, he started taking part in university-wide activities. He delivered the 35<sup>th</sup> inaugural lecture of the university on November 21, 1991 on the topic “Development, Equity, and Spatial Justice”, nine years after he became a professor. He was then the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University. The lecture was the second inaugural lecture in the Department of

Geography and Regional Planning and the fourth in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

This period was most difficult for Nigeria as it witnessed the structural adjustment program (SAP) and the devaluation of the Naira. On the recommendation of the IMF and the World Bank, governments and donor agencies began to direct funding from tertiary to basic education. This led to loss of scholarships to university students and high cost of quality journals and books in university libraries in response, Onoks published his textbook “Social services in Nigeria”, which because it was published by Kegan Publishers, UK was not readily available in Nigeria. As a result, he began to emphasize the publication of local textbooks, which resulted in his publishing 25 textbooks with his colleagues, under the Benin Social Science series.

#### *As Dean of Faculty*

In April 1986, Onoks was elected the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, unopposed. Given the propensity for university professors to contest the post of Dean with gusto and rigor, it was outstanding that he could be so appointed without a contest, despite being one of the youngest professors in the faculty at the time. This speaks volumes of his social acceptance and high ranking among the academic staff of the faculty at the time. After successfully completing his first term as Dean in 1988, he was re-elected for another term of two years again unopposed and without contest, yet another remarkable achievement in any Nigerian University system.

Some of his most visible accomplishments as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences included the following: 1) his fastidious application of the committee system of governance; 2) promotion of academic culture among staff by sticking to the rules of academic engagement, but also building the capacity of staff to do so; 3) increased promotion of staff; 4) protecting staff who were to be inordinately punished; 5) his successful defense of students’ rights to repeat examination after the introduction of the course unit system; and 5) his promotion of a culture of good administrative practice based on equity, transparency, and social justice.

Indeed, he became known throughout the university system as someone who can protect the weak from injustice, and someone who is bold,

assertive, fearless, and confident in the managing the university system. However, due to the fact that he appeared to be sympathetic to activists in the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) who were mainly located in the Faculty of Social Sciences, he did not appear to be in the good books of the university administration. Many of his requests to the central university administration were turned down in preference to those recommended by Heads of departments and other pliable professors in the University system at the time. But given his nature, Onoks remained undaunted and continued to pursue his interest and vision for the university with great proclivity.

During this period, Onoks concurrently held various administrative positions in the University, including being an elected member of Senate to the University Governing Council; member Development and Physical Planning Committee; Member, Finance and General Purposes Committee; member, Tenders Board; and member, Appointments and Promotion Committee.

In Senate, he was a member of several committees including Honorary Degrees Committee, the University Press, staff disciplinary committee, the motor vehicle loans committee, and the Senate estimates committee. He also represented Senate in several external boards and agencies of the University, including the Board of the College of Education, Igueben; and that of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital. Membership of these committees exposed him to the inner recesses of the governance structure of the university which was to be of immense use to him later.

### ***As Deputy Vice-Chancellor***

When he completed his term as Dean in 1990, his intention was to proceed on Sabbatical Leave. But several other options were being suggested for him, including being Dean of the Postgraduate School. However, he did not think much of this because of his being in the bad books of the university administration at the time. To his surprise and contrary to expectations, he was invited by then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alele-Williams to be one of two new Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs) to join in the central administration. Upon approval of the nomination by Senate, the Governing Council failed to confirm the nomination under the pretext

that they were not sure that the government would support the appointment of two DVCs. During the same period, the then Governor of Midwest State, Col. E. Yeri invited him to join him as a commissioner. Not wanting to shift his focus from academics, he politely but firmly rejected the offer of a State Commissioner. Interestingly, at the same time, the Council of the university was dissolved and a new Council under Professor C. Ike was appointed, who promptly approved the appointment of the two DVCs.

As DVC, he focused on 1) staff and students' welfare; 2) chaired the Rehabilitation and Capital projects committee; and 3) managed students' crises especially when he acted for the VC in her absence.

What was most demonstrative of his strength of character and vivacity was the way he handed his application for the office of Vice-Chancellor, when his boss Professor Alele-Williams was still desirous to continue as VC for an additional one year. Three months to the end of the tenure of Prof Alele-Williams, a new law came into being as recommended by the Longe Commission requiring VCs to do a second term of 4 years rather than 3 years. Professor Kayode Eso was then the Chairman of Council. While some of her close friends advised her not to seek an additional one year, others urged her on. Despite the controversies, the new Council decided to advertise the post of a new VC. Given that Professor Alele-Williams sat in Senate over the election of members to elect a new VC, Onoks decided to apply for the position. He later informed her boss, who did not disagree with him at that point.

At the end, when the selection committee completed its assignment, he came first in the interview and his name was forwarded to the Visitor for confirmation. However, the same day, he and his co-contestants were reported to the Police by the VC with the accusation of attempts to burn down the Vice-chancellor's lodge. Abuja also returned the sole submission of his name as VC, requesting the submission of the first three successful contestants, instead. Despite these shenanigans, Onoks was appointed the 5<sup>th</sup> substantive Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin on November 12, 1992.

His success at being appointed as VC despite all the rigmaroles testified to his resilience, his strength of character, his fortitude, the extraordinary grace of God on him, and his wide acceptance by the larger university system.



### ***Community and national service***

Community and national service is one of the tripodal functions of university academics. In the book under review, Onoks divided his community service roles into 1) those internal within the university system, and 2) those external to the university. Within the university, he served as head of department, dean, Deputy Vice Chancellors, and Vice-Chancellor, and 30 committees of the university, which were roles which enabled him to contribute substantially to improving the quality of Nigeria's tertiary education system.

His contribution to external community life tended to be in the realm of academics, technicality, and intellectualism, rather than in politics. Throughout his professional life he has repeatedly shunned political engagements, preferring academic appointments instead.

Some of the academic/professional contributions he made to community development include the following 1) action plans on his key research findings contributing to urban development in Oyo, Enugu, Delta, Kwara and Ogun States; 2) active participation in the Association of Nigerian Geographers, for which he was an elected president, 1990-1991; 3) chairman of a federal government committee to examine the feasibility of manufacturing small tractors, 1980; 4) member of committee to enhance tourism in Bendel State, established by Lt Col. JM Inieger, 1985; 5) Member, National Committee on Brain Drain, 1994; and 6) chairman of a 5-member committee established by Governor Ibru in 1992 to carry out land survey in Delta State.

In 1991, President IB Babangida appointed him to train Local government officials in Edo, Delta, Ondo, and Rivers State, as part of efforts to strengthen local government administration in then the new states.

### ***As 5<sup>th</sup> Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin***

It will be a herculean task to attempt to summarize the extensive work undertaken by Onoks as the 5<sup>th</sup> substantive VC of the University of Benin. Fortunately, these have been documented in a book titled "On the hot seat" published by Spectrum Books, Ibadan (ref). I remember reading the 20-chapter book, and being familiar with some of the

issues documented in the book, I laughed loud at every point in reading the book because of the jovial and commonsensical way it was written. I could not drop it after I started reading it. I will strongly recommend that book to anyone desirous of become a leader and decision-maker in the Nigerian university system. Indeed, I read it when I aspired to be Vice-Chancellor and I learnt considerable lessons from it.

His first task after he was appointed VC, was to undertake a visioning process, and given his past role in governance of the university, this was not difficult. He simply focused on issues which he thought past administrations could have done better and also on issues that epitomized his passion for equity, justice, and fairness.

Indeed, throughout this book, he repeatedly reported how he fought for equity, justice and fairness in the system, and so, when he was appointed VC, he developed a 12-point transformative agenda, all based on these basic principles. The vision and agenda item included fairness, justice and equity for staff and students while consolidating research and teaching excellence, and the maintenance of discipline and orderliness in the university.

Thus, within a short time of his administration, some of his key accomplishments were visible and included the following: 1) improvement of students' admission policy that ensured equitable admission of students, regardless of their social backgrounds, with the university of Benin then emerging as the most sought after university by at least 50% of students seeking admission to Nigerian Universities; 2) intense promotion of research through the repositioning of the university's library, purchase of over 350,000 books and many foreign journals with support from the Federal Government; 3) the initiation of the first internet integration into the University system through the NUC (NU-Net), with many staff trained in the use of computers; 4) training of staff in research and proposal writing; 5) promotion of staff (with 125 professors promoted), including the return of staff who had been inappropriately dismissed from the University; and 6) establishment of the inaugural lectures committee with 16 lectures delivered during his tenure.

With respect to infrastructural development, he noted delay due to the University of Benin not

having a Master Plan as demanded by the NUC for release of infrastructural funds. He worked hard to ensure the development of the Master Plan, after which he embarked on three strategies for infrastructural development. The first was the completion of all projects commenced by his predecessor. These included Phase 1 of the Medical Students hostel, students' community centre, College of Medical Sciences building, the fencing of the Vice-Chancellor's lodge, and the completion of the Efionayi Iyayi computer building.

The second of his physical structural development plan was the rehabilitation of existing buildings including those in Ekenwan campus. Under this strategy, the following buildings were rehabilitated: 1) Pro-Chancellor's building; 2) students' hostel hall 2; 3) restructuring of the central administration access road and car parks; 4) the rehabilitation of buildings destroyed by frequent hurricanes at that time, including the Ogbemudia Sports Centre; and 5) the construction of a perimeter fence around the Ekenwan campus.

Other major issues that he completed during his administration as VC included the rehabilitation of the internal telephone system (Intercom), paying rising monthly electricity bills, ensuring constant supply of water, and maintaining environmental maintenance through the clearing of bushes, etc.

Three major infrastructural development projects were completed during his tenure. These were 1) the Phase 1 of the Faculty of Education building; 2) Two 500 lecture theatres in the Faculty of Social Sciences. These were uncompleted during his tenure because of funding difficulties; and 3) the naming of the districts in Ugbowo campus.

A third area where the administration of Onoks featured prominently was in addressing staff union matters. This was the period of intense agitations during military rule and repeated strikes by Unions. He used his knowledge and friendship with Unions to reduce the negative consequences of the strikes on the university system. His staff welfare policies included the equitable staff promotions, provision of car and housing loans to staff, and provisions for their health, considerably helped the process of union reconciliations.

However, there continued to be intense rivalry among the unions. He told a hilarious story of how some ASUU staff in Engineering tried to repair the university's borehole when the non-

academic staff union were on strike just to give the impression that the activities of the university can still go on when the non-teaching staff are on strike. Not only were they not able to repair the borehole to ensure continued supply of water, the non-teaching staff actually accused ASUU of damaging the borehole. The book is full of anecdotes of this type which makes it very entertaining and indeed, hysterical to read.

A dominion where Onoks excelled as Vice-Chancellor was in staff welfare. Recognizing that staff would be unable to work with him to attain his vision for the university, he paid particular attention to promoting staff welfare. Some of his activities in this regard can be summarized as follows: 1) the renovation of the staff school established in 1992, with free primary education to all children of staff of the University; 2) the physical development of the University Demonstration Secondary School (UDSS) despite the embargo on funding placed by the Federal government; 3) renovation and expansion of the Senior Staff Club and Staff Canteen; and 4) the intense rehabilitation and return to service of staff that were wrongly terminated.

With regards to item 4, Onoks told the story in the book of how those he helped to return to the system lambasted and made mockery of him later. This was a lesson too hard to handle, and it spoke volumes of the nature of people. In his words "one described me as a murderer that wanted to kill me, while another described me as an illiterate vice-chancellor (page 304).

Students Union activism was a major narrative in the book. Mr. Mike Igini (former INEC state coordinator) was the president of the students' union during Onoks' first year in office. He described Mike as an "effective leader", who laid the foundation for the peaceful resolution of students' crises. As a result of the suggestions of Mike Igini, he directed the opening of "students services account" in the bursary and also re-ordered teaching and exam calendar to reflect the interest of students. In these days that the University of Benin has now adopted the mantra of students centered' learning, this was a transformational approach that must have galvanized students' involvement in active learning. Through Igini, he also curtailed the excesses of "professional students" who refused to leave the university after graduation but continued to ferment one trouble or the other.

However, two unsavory events happened during the tenure of Mike Igini. One was the visit of Chief MKO Abiola to the university on the invitation of students supported the government of Edo state under Odigie Oyeogun to commission the June 12 building despite the discomfiture of the Abacha government at the time. The other was during the convocation ceremony at which Admiral Aikhomu, a member of the Abacha government was to be conferred honorary degree of the university. These were testing times of high-level students' activism, strikes, and demonstrations. He handed all episodes with great wisdom, forcefulness, and always on the side of protecting the interest of the university.

The Students' Union President who took over from Mike Igini was Mr. Seji Odufejo. Although he took office with support from the students' Christian community, and he had promised peaceful engagement with the university, due to no fault of his, the period was characterized by pro-democracy activism, prolonged strikes, student's demonstrations and vandalism which led to prolonged closure of the university. Again, he managed the situation with great wisdom and gusto.

Amidst all the difficulties, Onoks continued to adopt a strategic approach on students' welfare by providing, renovating, and expanding on-campus accommodation; supporting the improvement of Ekosodin, the adjacent community that hosted a large number of staff and students; and establishing a functional and active students' welfare board.

In the book, Onoks provides a detailed narrative of events that surrounded his exit from office as Vice-Chancellor. While his term in office was to end on November 12, 1996, he recognized that there was then an existing provision for him to apply and be assessed for second term in office. After initial hesitation, he accepted to apply for the advertised post of VC to enable him continue in office for second term. Of three professors who showed interest and applied for the position, he came first after the full assessment. It was at this point that General Abacha promulgated the University Miscellaneous Amendment Decree No,25 of 1996, which reduced the tenure of Vice-Chancellors to a single term of five years. Despite this, the then Minister of Education, Mr. Liman wrote to him to continue in office until further notice, especially because he came first in the interview.

However, the minister wrote not soon after that, directing that the post of VC at the University of Benin should be re-advertised with a specific message to him that he should re-apply. He felt this was unnecessary and would cause further problems and so, he decided not to re-apply. His tenure in office as VC therefore ended on March 31, 1998.

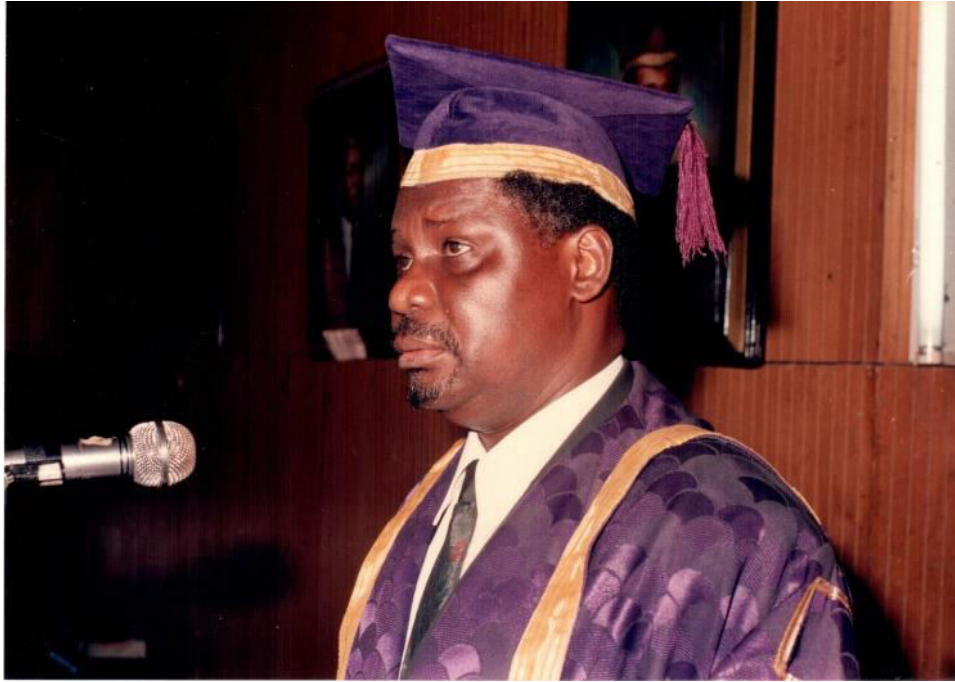
The summary of his narrative of his tenure as VC showed that he demonstrated grit and resilience and a determination to maintain the longtime traditions and culture of the University system. He worked under General Abacha during the period, but he came to the conclusion that the president did not like the University of Benin given the pro-democracy and activist stance of the staff and students of the University. He was singled out as a pro-ASUU VC who would not support the political movements of the government at the time.

He singled out a particular occasion during which some supporters of Abacha came to his office to ask him to distribute badges with the eponym "Nigerians Earnestly Want Abacha (NEWA)" to members of Senate of the Senate. He bluntly refused to take the badges for distribution to staff because he knew that the Senate of those days would be very angry with him if he ever accepted to distribute such badges to staff. His further retort in the book is worth recounting here: "I have no doubt in my mind that if a VC carries such badges to the Senate during this period, there would be struggle by members to collect them". This speaks volumes of the present intellectuals in Nigeria, and is indeed, a serious food to thought.

### ***Life continues after Vice-Chancellor***

#### *At Harvard University*

Soon after completing his tenure, and still young and enterprising, Onoks grappled with several alternatives. His major determination was to go on Sabbatical leave, which he had not enjoyed since joining the University. His preference was to do his sabbatical at an academic institution in the United States, not previously been exposed to the academic methods of that region. After many delays, pontifications, and different offers he finally secured a position to join the Takemi Program in International Health at Harvard University for a one-year stint.



Professor AG Onokerhorhaye as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin in Nigeria

The Takemi Program in International Health at Harvard is an interdisciplinary program named after a former President of the Japan Medical Association, designed to bring together experts from different parts of the world, to focus on solving the challenge of mobilizing, allocating and maintaining limited resources to improve health.

Onoks enrolled in the program and arrived in Boston on November 9, 1998. Some of the new things he learnt in Harvard were 1) the use of computer for word processing, not previously having the skills in computer use; 2) his attendance and auditing of several related courses in Harvard; 3) the development of a published research thesis titled “Access and utilization of modern health care facilities in the petroleum-producing region of Nigeria”; 4) intense reflections on the establishment of an action research centre focusing on development; and 5) meeting with and sharing with donor agencies, Harvard academics, and colleagues from other countries on ways to develop fundable international proposals aimed at establishing a research centre. Indeed, the budding research centre which he intended to firmly develop on his return to Nigeria received a research grant from the European Commission upon his return to the country. This further helped his process of returning to Nigeria from Boston, which he did in May 2000.

#### *Establishing CPED: 1999-2009*

From Harvard, he returned to the Department of Geography and Regional Planning at the University of Benin. His aim was to conduct research and deepen his academic potentials. He jettisoned the idea of political or non-political positions, given the uncertainty that pervaded the country at the time. The establishment of the Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) was then uppermost in his mind. He applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for registration of CPED. Despite attempts by some individuals in ASUU to block the registration, CPED was registered by the CAC in October 1999. CPED was an idea that came from an initial Action Research group (the Benin Social Science Research Group) with the mission to “apply research to address sustainable development and the poverty reduction challenges facing Nigeria.”

In consequence some of the research and interventions carried out by CEPD in its initial phase (1991-2009) included the following: 1) a pilot program to improve basic needs in post-disaster Jesse community funded by the Dutch Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (CORDAID); 2) improving the income of cassava staple food producers of Jesse Community, funded

by CORDAID; 3) research into the impact of globalization on primary health centres at the local level in the Niger Delta, funded by the WHO; 4) participatory population-based approach to reproductive health, funded by the European Commission; 5) non-formal education system and their impact on youth employment, funded by Shell Petroleum Development Agency (SPDA); 6) the demographic and baseline survey of the Niger Delta region, funded by the NDDC; 7) the empowerment of local organizations in Oghara, Delta State, funded by CORDAID, the Netherlands; 8) capacity building of grassroots women and youth civil society organizations on improved response to the HIV epidemic, funded by NACA; and 9) Training of community-based organizations on conflict management and peace building, funded by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). When CPED was externally evaluated in 2009, the results showed impressive contributions of the organization to Nigeria's development trajectory during the period.

### ***CEPD 2009 to 2019***

The 2009-2019 period of CPED was dedicated to establishing to strengthen the capacity of independent policy research institutions, with focus on low-income countries. The Think Tank (later called Think Tank Initiative, TTI) was launched in 2008 and funded by a consortium of donors including the IDRC, Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the UK AID (DFID), and the Hewlett and Flora Foundation. TTI focused on research, capacity building, research communication, and policy engagement, and general organizational effectiveness to support organizations. CPED was one of 30 out of 284 organizations from 11 countries that were selected to proceed for further review after initial assessment. After intensive interrogation with CPED's staff and requests for improvements of organizational strategic plan, CPED was one of 24 TTIs there were finally selected for the TTI project in March 2009. The TTIs were selected from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The TTI to CPED resulted in the capacity building of more than 1000 civil society

organizations on project effectiveness, research development, and the process of mentoring junior researchers. Other achievements of CPED under the TTI included the following: 1) addressing the developmental challenges posed by HIV/AIDS; 2) strengthening the capacity of civil society groups to claim civil and political rights; 3) building the capacity of CSOs on advocacy for sexual and reproductive health and rights; 4) promoting peace in the Niger Delta region; 5) strengthening health systems through promoting equitable access to primary health care; 6) promoting climate change adaptability, impact, and adaptation in rural Nigeria; 7) empowerment of women in pastoralism and agriculture in Nigeria's Sahel region; and 8) addressing gender inequality in rural women's health care post-COVID-19. Through the TTI, CPED promised to expand its scope of programming and to be the leader in research for development in Nigeria.

### ***His role in establishing private Universities***

The 1990 to the early millennium was the period during which there was extreme passion for establishing private universities in Nigeria. Onoks considered this a major and important development, and therefore assisted in the process of establishing several private universities in the country. Some of the private universities he supported at various stages included the following: 1) As VC of the University of Benin, the development of the Catholic Major Seminary as a degree awarding affiliate of the University in the 1995/96 academic session; 2) the establishment of the Benson Idahosa University when it started as the Christian Faith University before it was approved by the NUC as the BIU; 3) The Western Delta University (WDU) initiated and promoted by a group of Urhobo professors and supported by Governor James Ibori; 4) Advice to Chief Gabriel Igbinedion, which led to the establishment of Igbinedion University as the first private university in Nigeria in 1999; 5) advice and support to Michael Ibru which led to the establishment of the Michael and Cecilia University at Agbaro-otor and approved by the NUC in March 2015; and 6) the establishment of a study centre of the National Open University of Nigeria in his native place, Isiokolo in 2017.

### ***Awards and recognitions***

Professor Onokerhorhaye is a receipt of several awards and recognitions as follows: 1) double promotion from Infant 1 to Standard 1 in 1953/54 in his primary school days; 2) Federal government scholar for first degree at the University of Ibadan, 1967 – 1970; 3) postgraduate scholarships by the Midwest, the federal Government, and the Canadian government under the Commonwealth postgraduate scholarship scheme; 4) accelerated movement from MPhil to PhD at the LSE without going through MSc; 5) attaining professorship only 8 years after obtaining PhD at the age of 37 years; 6) Oba Akenzua II prize on Benin culture and history, by His Majesty Omo N’Oba N’Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa, the Oba of Benin in 1993 for distinguished research into the history of the Benin Empire; 8) Fellow of the Nigerian Geographical Association, 1994; 9) Delta State Merit Award of Excellence in Educational Service Delivery by the Delta State Government in 1995; 10) Publication of a book in his honor titled “Critical issues in Nigeria’s development, Environmental, Economy and Social Justice in 2010; 11) Appointment as Professor Emeritus by the University of Benin on November 28, 2010; 12) a Colloquium in his honor on his publication of the book titled “Social Services in Nigeria: An introduction” published by Kegan, UK in 1984; and 13) Multiple tributes on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He devoted 61 pages (pages 491-552) of the book to narrate in great detail his experiences when his appointment as Professor Emeritus was purportedly withdrawn by the Senate of the University of Benin, without the concurrent approval of Council of the University. Despite the seriousness of the matter, I was impressed that he narrated the episode with great rectitude, sometimes fun and equanimity, and indeed candor and openness (surely without evident bitterness). Despite that this injustice went on for about 10 years, his petition to Council for which he was granted reprieve was not communicated to him until 2023 under the tenure of the present VC, Professor Lilian Salami.

His firm narrative in this section of the book showed him to be a man with a forgiving heart, a political gladiator, indeed an academic oracle not to be distracted by political niceties – someone we will call the “Mr. Fix-it” or the “Jagaban” of the University system.

Not choosing to go to Court to seek redress was the masterpiece, which added to the continued high rating he continues to enjoy in the University community till this day.

In ending the narrative, he emphasized the point that he had forgiven all the actors by quoting from Everest Worthington’s book “Five steps in forgiving”, saying “we cannot hurt the perpetrator by being unforgiving, but we can set ourselves by forgiving”. Indeed, his strong Catholic faith must have helped him in forgiving all the partakers in the episodes he narrated.

### ***His role as a philanthropist***

Onoks is known to be a philanthropist to the core. When I debuted the African Journal of Reproductive Health in 1997, he not only chaired the launching ceremony as VC, he also made the single largest donation to the journal. To this day, that has been the largest donation to the journal. I have also witnessed several occasions when he made donations to worthy causes not only at the St Albert’s Catholic Church where he worships but to other sections and elements at the University of Benin.

In the book, he narrated several episodes of philanthropy he has carried out over the years in line with his philosophy of equality and his considerations for the less privileged.

Some of these include the following: 1) educational support including payment of school fees for disadvantaged nieces and nephews; 2) support for the sick especially those with sickle cell disease; 3) multiple Church philanthropy including support for the building of St Albert’s Catholic Church in 1982, and several others (the St Theresa’s Catholic Church in Isiokolo, and the St Thereas’s Catholic Church where he celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday; 4) his passion for Pentecostalism which led to his support to the Victory Salvation Church International and the God Covenant Ministry; and 5) his multiple developmental support to his native community in Isiokolo.

### ***His nuclear family***

In the book, he wrote extensively about his nuclear family. He met his wife, Josephine, when they were classmates in the Modern School. He described his wife as very beautiful, serious, and uncompromising at the time, which made suitors to shy away from

her. It was his proclivity to always get the best and his determination that enabled him to win the heart of the only love he has had in his life. She got pregnant when they were in college, and after the usual challenges and difficulties, the marriage was blessed at the St Patrick's Catholic Church in Eku. Despite her early foray into marital life, she pursued her education with gusto graduating as a Nurse from the St Margaret's Hospital in Epping's, Essex in the UK. After over 50 years of marriage, it is evident that this is one of the rarest and most effective anywhere.

They were blessed with six children (two boys and 4 girls)— Onoriode, female; Onajite, female; Omonigho, male; Erhi, male; Oghenekevwe, female; and Oroakpovweri, a female).

Unfortunately, the two boys Omonigho and Erhi later died from complications of sickle cell disease. As a medical doctor, I noted the fact that none of the girls had sickle cell disease, while the two boys had the disease and died from it. It makes me to reflect a possible research question as to whether there is an association between the sickle cell gene and the Y or X-chromosome. This is presently not known, and could form an interesting piece of research endeavor for the future. I pray that the gentle souls of Omonigho and Erhi rest in perfect peace.

It is noteworthy that his four daughters of Onoks are doing extremely well in their chosen professions. Onoriode (Roseline) obtained a degree in Physical and Health Sciences Education at the Ahmadu Bello University, and later obtained a Master's degree in Psychology in the UK. She married, but unfortunately, her husband has passed on.

Onajite graduated as a Medical Doctor at the University of Benin in 1996. She married her medical school classmate, Dr Esi, in 1997 and they both live in the UK.

Oghenekevwe obtained a degree (Second Class Upper Division) in computer science from Leicester University in 2008. She obtained a masters degree in international public policy in 2011 and currently works as a quality assurance engineer with the MTN. Oroakpovweri (Akpor) obtained a degree in Business Management from the University of Surrey in 2011. She subsequently obtained a Masters degree in international business from the University

of Salford in Manchester. She presently resides in Abuja and manages her private business.

In the book, Onoks regrets that none of his daughters has agreed to obtain a PhD degree and pursue a career in research and academic in pursuance of his legacies. My comment is that he should not worry, time is still on their side, they may yet decide to come to academics later.

### ***His Adopted children***

It was nice to note that he identified two persons as his adopted children, even though the adoption was not done in the normal legal process.

The first was Christy Rhima, the daughter of her cousin. He stayed with his family and was treated the same way she treated her daughters. She later graduated with First Class degree in Forensic Science.

The other is Barr Mike Igini, the well-known resident commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria. He admitted Mike into the University of Benin, and as a student he related with him as a son. Indeed, when he contested the President of UNIBEN's students' union when he was VC, it was rumored that it was on account of his support that he was elected the students' union president. Their relationship of which I am familiar, and which Mike has related to me as well, has remained strong till this day. I often wonder whether the strong willpower of Mike, his determination for the truth and excellence, and his perchance for fairness, fair play, equity and justice were inherited from Onoks himself. These are matters that only God himself can tell.

### ***His adoration of his friends and associates***

The chapter I loved most was the second to the last chapter, where he acknowledged the role that friends played in his life. He took time to specifically mention about 53 friends and associates who helped him and worked with him, detailing every single support they provided. He concluded this chapter with these words: "In this last paragraph of this rather long chapter, let me reiterate once again, the importance of friends, associates, and members of family in my life. Reflecting on my life journey, I have concluded that nothing was ever accomplished alone. Every goal I have achieved in my life, I can

trace back each of them to a friend or a mentor that helped me to achieve it". I found this to be very phenomenal and says volumes of the quality of a man who cannot forget what friends did for him from the very beginning of his over 70 years in life.

### ***Perspectives on his life's journey***

As we conclude this review, it is noteworthy that Onoks reminisced on his life course in the final chapter of the book. He described this as "nomadic"; his father and family having migrated from Urhobo land to Okitipupa. His father having four wives and 14 children, made to be determined to pursue his education, eventually resulting in the fact that he was the only educated child among the 14 children. His delay in starting school resulted in his determination to succeed in life. This was accentuated by his early marriage not wanting to disadvantage his children and family in any way. However, given the limited education in his family, he worked hard to extend educational opportunities to his children, grandchildren, his nieces and nephews. Again, his father could not complete the building of his personal house in his village which is contrary to the Urhobo culture, but he later rebuilt his family house and built a house for himself in the villages.

From these experiences, Onoks imbibed the following features: 1) spirit of self-help and community service; 2) adoration of his mother who single-handedly supported his education; 3) recognition of the Importance of access to health care; and 4) his research focus, especially those related to promoting equity and social inclusiveness for the less privileged.

On page 735, he gave several reasons why he titled the book "Why the title "Riches of his Grace". These include 1) God's grace in all things

that happened to him in life; 2) the remote environment in which he was born; 3) the difficulties he experienced in starting school and continuing in school; 4) support from others that enabled him to go to school; 5) his early marriage to Josephine, who became the blessing and love of his life; 5) the myriad of good friends he had who helped him in many ways; 6) his retirement at the age of 65 years and his founding of CPED; and 7) now 78 years, his long life has been a blessing from God Almighty.

In sum, this book is truly exemplary and is a documentary that I recommend strongly to anyone who intends to take up academia and research as a career. The book epitomises Emeritus Professor AG Onokerhorhaye to be 1) a painstakingly meticulous man; 2) an academic to the core who has never departed from the pathway of academics, sticking to it and not attracted by the lure and opportunism of politics, etc.; 3) .a man who represents a good example of what academics can bring to the table if they devote time and energy to it; 4) a devoted Catholic and Christian right from his birth to this day; 5) A dogged fighter for social justice, equity, and social equality; 6) a benevolent and egalitarian philanthropist ; and 7) a man who deeply appreciates his friends, family, and benefactors, but who has kind words for his adversaries.

The book is highly recommended to all students (especially those in the social sciences), academics with fervour for true scholarship, those who are in leadership or seeking to leadership in tertiary educational systems, and to patriots everywhere.

### **References**

1. Onokerhorhaye AG. The Riches of His Grace, Published by Safari Publishers, Ibadan March, 2024.