

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PROF. EUGENE NWADIALOR'S LEGACY: THE EMERGENCE OF INAUGURAL LECTURES AND THE MAKING OF TANSIAN UNIVERSITY A “*UNIVERSITAS MAGISTRORUM ET SCHOLARIUM*”

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INTRODUCTION

The Elgon forest dwellers say that “little dreams” are of no great significance, but if a person has a “big dream”, the entire community must be gathered and told. How then does an Elgoni know the difference between a big dream and a little dream? Upon waking up, there is an instinctive feeling about the significance of the dream for the community, and the thought of keeping such a dream secret never occurs. A cursory glance at the historical development of Tansian University, reveals that one of its biggest dreams that has been realized, is the emergence of inaugural lectures. In this way, Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor, the Vice Chancellor of the University has made Tansian university, not just a citadel of higher learning and research, but a *Universitasmagistrorum et scholarium*, that is, “a community of teachers and scholars” (Umeogu 2019).

This chapter in honour of Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor focuses on the emergence of inaugural lectures in Tansian University and the role he played in the provision of direction and motivation of Tansian

University scholars, which serves as a fundamental background for the springing up of inaugural lectures among young scholars raised to the rank of Professor. While it would also focus on the personal philosophies of Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor that has animated this academic tradition, it will not leave out a discourse on the value of inaugural lectures in the life of a university.

INAUGURAL LECTURES IN THE LIFE OF A UNIVERSITY

The University of Witswatersand (2020) observed that there is rapidly increasing quantities of knowledge, more and more specialization takes place in the world, which comes with the danger of making knowledge become isolated or 'siloes' and, therefore, fails to benefit from collective thinking and cross-pollination of ideas. This is the background that encourages the profession of knowledge with the general public and the larger academic community. Thus, an Inaugural Lecture becomes a platform for newly appointed professors to share their brilliant discoveries, innovative ideas and deep insights with the public and the larger academic community. This allows for random connections to be made that are so beneficial for the creative process we call science.

Kanu (2021) avers that a professorial inaugural lecture is a debt that every Professor owes the University community and in fact the whole world as a justification for his or her elevation to the professorial rank. It is also a time to showcase to the academic community of inquiry, the substance of his or her work and specialization. This does not mean that there cannot be a Professor without inaugural lecture, but just to say that inaugural lecture is at the heart of matured scholarship and productivity, and the flagship of academic distinction. Herein, tested men and women of letters show those things that mark them out as embodiments of farsighted solutions to complex problems through research and learning (Uduma 2015; Emenanjo 1988; Trevor-Roper 1957).

As a scholar with an African appetite, I would describe an Inaugural Lecture from an African perspective; precisely, in festive terms-

a. First in terms of the New Yam Festival. This is important, as this inaugural lecture is an opportunity for scholars to gather, in terms of a harvest, for their education, entertainment and edification. Implicit in the concept of harvest is a preceding period of sowing or planting. This explains why harvest is a period of blissful celebration, marked for us, especially as Africans, by thanksgiving, group dances and colorful masquerades, by goodwill visits and exchange of gifts (Kanu 2021; Afigbo 1981).

b. Second, an inaugural lecture can be described as the outing of an academic masquerade. It is in the nature of every serious masquerade to make an impression on the spectators. The nature of this impression cannot, unfortunately, be forecast beforehand as it depends not only on the dexterity of the masquerade or lack of it as a dancer, but also on the professionalism of the instrumentalists, the humor of the spectators, their ability to assess and appreciate an artistic performance (Kanu 2017; 2022; Kanu and Okoye 2022).

c. Third, in terms of the rite of passage. To become a professor in a university has for hundreds of years included the test of having to profess your knowledge to a lay audience and fellow academics. Indeed, the origin of the title 'professor' comes from the need to profess, or declare publicly, one's knowledge.

THE PERSONAL PHILOSOPHIES OF PROF. EUGENE NWADIakor AND THE EMERGENCE OF INAUGURAL LECTURES IN TANSIAN UNIVERSITY

“Nemodat quod non habet” is a Latin saying which is translated thus: “You cannot give what you do not have”. It is a saying that has great implications for the emergence of inaugural lectures in Tansian University during the tenure of Professor Eugene Nwadiakor. On Wednesday, 20th November 2019 at Hon. Justice Cordelia Chukwurah Convocation Arena, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, the Inaugural Lecture of Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor, a Professor of Accounting and Finance and the Vice Chancellor, Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State was done. It was themed "Increasing Nigeria's Tax to GDP Ratio: Challenges and the Way Forward".

Having done his own inaugural lecture, he injected a new spirit into the academic hemisphere of Tansian University, which led to the emergence of inaugural lectures. This began to spring up not only because he had done his own inaugural lecture, but because of his personal philosophies, which include:

a. Cheruouno Philosophy: A philosophy, which is at the base of several actions of Prof. Nwadiakor is the Igbo philosophy of *Cheruo Uno*, which means remember home or think of home. It is also connected to the Igbo saying: *akuruouno* (which means wealth must reach home). Home is home for the Igbo and so they are at home for the celebration of major festivals, and at death must be taken back home where true rest is attained (Kanu 2014). Having achieved his inaugural lecture at Godfrey Okoye University in Enugu, Professor Nwadiakor, ruled by the Igbo philosophy of *cheruouno* felt the need to bring back to his Tansian University home what he has seen and done abroad. This marked the beginning of inaugural lectures in Tansian University.

b. Onye Aghana Nwanneya Philosophy: Another philosophy which Professor Nwadiakor has adopted from his Igbo background is the Igbo philosophy that understands the human person as circumscribed within the *uwa* (the world) (Kanu 2012). In the contention of Oguejiofor (2010) “This unitary conception of reality pervades the Igbo world in a remarkable way” (p. 21). The Igbo, therefore, does not see himself or herself as an individual without noticing immediately the need for the other. No wonder the Igbo traditional philosopher often warns the other: *onye aghana nwanneya, which means No one should leave his brother/sister behind* (Kanu 2012). After his inaugural lecture at Godfrey Okoye University, Prof. Nwadiakor saw the need to take his Tansian University colleagues along with him on this journey of inaugural lectures.

These personal philosophies of Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor are at the base of the springing up of inaugural lectures in Tansian University.

Conclusion: The Outings of Tansian Academic Masquerades

2021 saw the emergence of the first inaugural lecture of Tansian University under the leadership of Prof. Eugene Nwadiakor. The Inaugural Lecture was delivered by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, and was titled: *Igwebuike: An Operative Condition of African Philosophy, Religion and Culture-Towards a Thermodynamic Transformative Ontology*. This inaugural lecture positioned Prof. Kanu as the first Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, the First Professor of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences and, in fact, the First Professor of Tansian University to deliver a Professorial Inaugural Lecture. It was *apropos* that it should begin from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies,

first, since philosophy has been and remains the entry point of all university studies at the inception of the university system of education, and second, since philosophy is the synthesis of everything as much as it synthesizes everything. No wonder, what is obtained at the end of the highest degree programme in every discipline is a PhD- Doctor of Philosophy. This maiden inaugural lecture was followed by two inaugural lectures in 2023: by Professor Uchenna Becky Onuh in September on *Educational Policies for Effective School Systems and Operations: Focus on Quality Assurance Policy*, and Professor Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi in November on *Humanism, the Paranormals and the African in a Changing World: Implications for the Contemporary Nigerian Society*. With these developments, the springing of more inaugural lectures in Tansian University is anticipated.

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