

FROM NISE TO ARONDIZUOGU  
AND TO THE WORLD

NMELONYE FAMILY HISTORY 1819-2004

**Edited By**

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## **FORWARD**

Back in the middle part of the nineteenth century, the young man, Nmelonye migrated to the present Akunwanta Uno, Arondizuogu from his native home Nise. Little did he know that through him, God would establish such an enviable lineage of professionals, academics, clerics, churchmen and women, politicians, industrialists and people of various callings in life. Many families have existed for centuries, having well educated personalities, occupying various enviable positions in society without thinking it necessary to trace their root or even put together the little they know in a book like this for posterity. Historical documentations of this nature have four pronged advantages for the past, present and future.

1. It enables us to know our root and the major historical events that have taken place in the past, which we could not have known. It enables us to know about some important members of the family that lived without offspring through whom they should have been remembered.

2. This knowledge of our past gives us some sense of joy, pride and satisfaction and provides the bond that holds us together – such bond that the Nmelonye family enjoys today. Going through this book, we shall be able to know a lot of details about the lives and activities of our relatives both past and present. This could not have been possible without some sort of documentation of this nature. Going through their histories and adventures therefore, we can get some clues on how to organise our own lives better.

3. It is my conviction that the greatest beneficiaries of this work would be the younger generation and generations to come. Anyone who does not know much about his or her roots would invariably have some vacuum to carry about in his life. I read the book “ROOTS” written by Alex Haley, a black American and a young descendant of an American slave boy who had to spend all his life and resources to trace his roots to Gambia in West Africa. The descendants of Mazi Nmelonye would certainly have no need to do the same because of the availability of this book, which I know will be revised and updated with time.

4. Besides, this work would definitely shed some light on an important and often neglected aspect of the history of Arondizuogu: Many sons and daughters of Arondizuogu are gradually forgetting that their

ancestral roots are somewhere outside of their present homes. This has often led to a gross neglect of some of those principles that helped to make Arondizuogu great in her diversity. This is the case with the neglect of the central importance, which the principle of complementarity played in the minds of the founding fathers of this great town as can be inferred from the mutual dependence between the peoples of Mazi Izuogu and Mazi Iheme.

I consider myself fortunate to be a part of the great grand children of Nmelonye directly involved in the grand project of putting together this epochal work. The credit to its emergence goes directly to all the sons and daughters of Nmelonye both at home and abroad. I know how tirelessly everyone has laboured to see that this work meets its target and takes the enviable shape that is its form now. Besides, I know how the thought of this work has acted as a catalyst in drawing the children of Nmelonye even still closer. Let the great deeds of our heroes never go unnoticed and may we always be united in those higher objectives that foster love, peace and progress among peoples. We thank our dear brother Rev. Fr. Professor Innocent I. Asouzu who accepted the challenge we put to him to research into our ancestral history and let us know how things were and how things came to be. I am confident that some of the clues he has provided in this work would help us understand more deeply and clearly our own personal histories as sons and daughters of Mazi Nmelonye. We are also confident that this work would inspire more people and communities, most especially in Arondizuogu, to research into their own histories to have concrete legacies for generations yet to come.

**Clifford A. Nwankwo**

26 July 2004

# CHAPTER ONE - FROM NISE TO ARONDIZUOGU

By Rev. Fr. Prof. Innocent I. Asouzu

## PREAMBLE

This chapter concerns itself mainly with searching for the roots of Mazi Nmelonye at Nise and about the lives and activities of his children of the first generation. As is unavoidable in matters of this nature, there is often the need to touch on matters that span into the second, third and even the fourth generation. However, the narration is structured in a way that minimises and indeed eliminates confusion of facts.

The desire to put together the history of the life and activities of Mazi Nmelonye and his children never came per chance. It has always been in the nature of man to ask himself the questions - where do I come from and where am I going? The sons and daughters of Nmelonye have always asked themselves these questions. They ask themselves the question where do we come from because they admire the lives and ways of their elders and this gives them reasons to ask further about their ancestral roots, as much as is historically possible. They ask themselves the question where are we going because they live in the hope of a greater and better life that joins and gives all good things their ultimate completion. Within this context, one thing has always been clear to the sons and daughter of Nmelonye: They are very convinced that they are from very honourable ancestral roots judging from the little that is known about their great-grandparents. They are convinced that their great grandparents Nmelonye and his wife Mmaku must be personalities of very high repute and indeed very good human beings in common parlance. To start with, the immediate children of Nmelonye and his wife were very proud of their parents and never ceased to tell wonderful stories about them, the same is true of some individuals who happened to encounter these two human beings. The children of Nmelonye consider such stories about their parents worthy legacy to next generations of their family. This oral history has proved a very big treasure in a project of this nature. For this reason, writing the history of the life and activities of Nmelonye and his children is made even easier due to availability of

authenticated materials. One can therefore say that we are very fortunate to have people who still remember some details concerning the life and activities of Nmelonye and his wife as this has been captured and preserved in oral tradition. Some of these people are Mazi Romanus Ikwuegbu (Omumaegbungwu) of Ndiakunwanta Arondizuogu, Peter Udoji (born 1927), Simeon Udoji (born 1930), Pricilla Anyakoha, Agnes Okonkwo (children of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye), Mazi Julius Nnabugwu the son of one of the immigrants to Ndiakunwanta Idozuka etc. We would not fail to mention our relatives at Nise. These individuals still have very vivid accounts of some of the incidents recorded in this book. It is important to remark that Mazi Romanus Ikwuegbu's ability to recall past events with exact names of peoples, places and times is phenomenal. I inquired from him on how he came about these facts and details and he told me that he was very close to his father and some other elders who often met to discuss events and matters. My discussion with him only shaded some lights on a puzzle that has always preoccupied me. This is the puzzle concerning how Richard Igwegbe was able to write "The Original History of Arondizuogu from 1635 to 1962" the detailed way he did. The ability of these gifted oral traditional historians to recall events and details is better experienced than imagined.

It is widely known within the larger Nmelonye family that the young man Nmelonye was a native of Nise and his wife Mmaku a native of Neni. Nise and Neni are towns in the present Anambra State of Nigeria. Among the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Nmelonye, patches of stories have always been in circulation concerning the circumstances of Mazi Nmelonye's migration from Nise to Arondizuogu in the mid 19th century. There was the version that he emigrated along with Ajagu the father of Orji Okoli Mgba (Orji Akwaka). The late Maxwell Orji from Ndiianiche Uno, Arondizuogu was a businessman resident at Aba. He is well known to many of us grandchildren and great grandchildren of Nmelonye. He was the son of Orji Okoli Mgba. In my childhood days, he often visited us at our residence at 141 Ehi Road, Aba. Whenever he paid us a visit, my father, Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu, always accorded him extraordinary welcome mixed with much nostalgia and excitement. He loved speaking with him but I never understood the reasons for this ritual of cordiality. As a child, I often approached Maxwell's visits with some feeling of jealousy and uneasiness because my father often gave him too much attention such that he

constituted the focus of discussions whenever he visited. I hardly understood their highly exciting, never-wanting-to end conversations, which was for me, as a child, very boring anyway. My father made spirited efforts to get us better acquainted with Maxwell but I, personally, hardly understood his complicated explanations about our relationship with this man. The only thing I understood was that Maxwell was related to us and indeed that he was our brother. I had no patience to know more because I thought that such facts were reserved for adults and not for kids. The reasons for my father's nostalgia about this Maxwell eluded us then and we cared less. How I wish I had paid more attention, been a little more patient and careful.

In hindsight, I now know that Mazi Charles Asouzu, my father, saw in Maxwell someone whose father was very close to his own grandfather Nmelonye whom he longed to know and see physically but could not. Nmelonye, my great grandfather migrated to Ndiakunwanta Arondizuogu from Ngodo Nise together with Maxwell's grandfather. This, at least, is the story in circulation.

The town Nise is a recurring decimal in the lives of our relatives. Many undertook journeys to Nise for one reason or the other but did not make spirited efforts to find out in details the circumstances surrounding Nmelonye's emigration from Nise to Arondizuogu. Besides, they did not make serious efforts to find out the actual relatives of Nmelonye at Nise or delineate accurately his ancestral home. When the serious question was then posed concerning Nmelonye's actual roots, there were more vague guesses than clear answers. Some said that he came from Nibo Nise. Others said that he came from "Ndi be Adojii".

It is to be recalled that some sons and daughter of Nmelonye have often gone Nise to perform some rites in the past. Thus, the late Sunday Nwankwo (Onye isi ya na awu aja) used to escort members of Nmelonye family to Nise for this purpose as is customary among Igbos in such circumstances. Emma Ofolee a man from Nise and a relative of Nmelonye's, who lives at 218 Ehi Road Aba, once met Gabriel Asouzu at Aba and informed him of the need for the sons of Nmelonye to come to Nise to have some matters sorted out. The matter involves the circumstances surrounding the departure of Nmelonye from his father's compound. There was a noticeable move in the 1990s by Nmelonye's relatives at Nise to find their brothers and sisters at Arondizuogu. It is a well-known fact that within the 1990s some of the relatives of Nmelonye from Nise visited some members

of our family at Arondizuogu. Some of them even attended our family meetings at Arondizuogu and requested that we come to Nise and take possession of Mazi Nmelonye's portion of land. However, no immediate descendant of Mazi Nmelonye at Arondizuogu appeared to be interested in this gesture of good will since the stories involved were intricate enough. Sunday Nwankwo (Onye isi ya na awu aja) was however in close contact with them.

Most of the visits, which Nmelonye's children made in the past to Nise had nothing to do with concrete efforts to trace their ancestral roots. They went to Nise purely out of personal needs. Besides, they presumed that finding Nmelonye's roots was as simple as going to Ngodo. Upon closer observation, not only was the nomenclature in relation to Nmelonye and his home was inaccurate, some of the facts were mixed up and very imprecise. Thus, some said that if you wish to find Nmelonye's home you go to Nise and ask for Ngodo and at Ngodo one should ask for the family of Adum Ojii.

As presumptive as these assertions are, one needs to investigate them and piece them together to get a clearer picture of our ancestral roots. Agnes Okonkwo the daughter of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye who is now married to Mazi Okonkwo at Ndiadimoha, lived at home, as a girl, for a long time with her father Udoji, who is one of the longest surviving sons of Nmelonye. She relates with excitement some of the stories her father Udoji told her about Nmelonye. When asked about the origin of Nmelonye she said that he came from Nibo Nise. She said that her father often associated Nmelonye with Ezebinagu. She is not sure if Ezebinagu is a place or a person. However, listening to her interesting stories about Nmelonye's ancestry as related to her by her father, one easily becomes very curious for more details. Peter Udoji is 77 years of age this year 2004 and he is one of the sons of Udoji Nmelonye. He still remembers much details about Nmelonye from oral tradition. He is certain that Nmelonye comes from Nise and mentions Ezebinagu vaguely in connection with Nmelonye. Simeon Udoji another son of Udoji Nmelonye is about 75years of age and handicapped by illness. He made vital contributions in the family history most especially with regard to his father Udoji. Mrs. Christiana Asouzu the wife of Gabriel Asouzu gave vital pieces of information most especially with regard to the visits of some members of Nmelonye's family to Nise in relation to their problems. Besides, she recounted how the photograph of a man called Adojii at Nise was almost a true copy of that of Mazi Charles Asouzu, my father.

From all these stories and pieces of information, it is to be inferred that: Nmelonye has much to do with Nibo, Nise, Ngodo, with Ezebinagu and with Adojii. All these details were waiting to be fully investigated and be pieced together to a coherent story and the opportunity came at one of the annual meetings of the sons and daughters of Nmelonye.

At the annual family meeting of December 30, 2002 at the Obi Nmelonye in Ndiakunwanta Uno Mazi Clifford Nwankwo suggested that this book be written to help finance the on-going project of the modern Nmelonye Family Hall (Obi Nmelonye). His suggestion was received overwhelmingly with joy and was unanimously adopted. It was suggested that the onus to research into the matter and coordinate the writing of the book fell on me as the highest ranking man of letters in the family. I accepted this challenge with gratitude and went to work immediately. I travelled to Okigwe the following day and bought a tape recorder for the onerous task. Since Okigwe is close to Ndiakunwanta Idozuka, I travelled to Ndiakunwanta Idozuka from there and had some oral interviews with Mazi Peter Udoji. While we were having the interview, many people assembled and all wanted to testify but I picked out some people whom I considered old and credible enough to offer useful information. Julius Nnabugwu and another man were selected for this task. After they spoke everyone was visibly happy with their contributions. The following day, I went to Ndiadumoha to interview Pricilla Anyakoha and the sister Agnes Okonkwo. These two daughters of Mazi Udoji with their sister Maria are married to Mr. Anakoha, Mr. Okonkwo and Mr. Arodiogbu respectively of Ndi Adimoha, Arondizuogu. Other people later interviewed included Simeon Udoji, Romanus Ikwuegbu, and many others.

Since I am resident in Calabar, about four hours drive from Ndiakunwanta Uno and on very bad road, I reasoned that it might be expedient to go to work immediately and achieve what could be achieved within the confines of my possibilities and resources. Again, it was Christmas and New Year period and most Igbos come home to spend their annual holidays at this time of the year. As such, it was the best opportunity to get at them. Not to cease this opportunity might be catastrophic in a project of this nature. For this reason, I decided to go to Nise immediately and find out things for myself. I was to travel to Nise with Vincent Asouzu my cousin. He lives at 212 Ehi Road Aba near to the residence of Okeke Ofolee (Ofuruzu) and his children at

218 Ehi Road. Members of Mazi Gabriel's Asouzu's family often talk of their meetings with members of Nmelonye's family living at Aba. Going with Vincent would have been very advantageous since he already has some knowledge of what we wanted. When I came out in the morning of the scheduled day for the journey, it turned out that he had a very urgent message to accomplish. Since he had travelled to Nise recently, he gave me the exact direction on how to get to Nmelonye's village. He mentioned some people that I should try to meet who have vital pieces of information about Nmelonye. He mentioned a certain wealthy man from Lagos. He talked of Ofuruzu. He talked of a certain musician turned native doctor who is directly related to Nmelonye etc. In the absence of Vincent, I had to find a companion for the journey and found this in the person of my cousin Cyril Enugaekwu Asouzu, the son of Michael Asouzu.

### **JOURNEYS TO NISE IN SEARCH OF NMELONYE**

We arrived at Ngodo Nise on January 1, 2003. When we arrived at the place indicated by Vincent Asouzu, we hired a motorcycle rider to escort us to the quarter of Umuadumojii. Since we came with our car, the motorcyclist rode before us and we followed him. Since we had no specific contact person, we asked him to take us to the home of a wealthy businessman from Lagos. We reasoned that this would probably be the easiest person to locate. Our reasoning paid off. Without wasting time, the motorcyclist brought us to the residence of Chief Emmanuel Ejike Ikeji, a very wealthy man, who is in the shipping business in Lagos. Chief Ikeji received us warmly in his magnificent building and offered us dried meat in place of cola nut. He had a guest that morning and all of us, having prayed, ate the dried meat; each at his own pace. On our part, we ate the meat with the joy of people returning to their ancestral home. He let us know of his preoccupation at Lagos and that he is in the shipping business and that they arrange for ships that load and off load goods at the sea port.

We told him about our mission and he was very excited concerning it. We requested for an interview and this he promptly granted. He spoke into the tape recorder we brought with us. First, he gave his name and informed us that he is a member of Umuadumojii family in Umugbulu quarters of Ngodo village in Nise Community of Awka South, Anambra State. According to Mr Ikeji, Adojii is the great ancestral father through whom all the present larger families developed into the quarters and villages of the present day at Ngodo.

Adumojii had some brothers and these included Umunwufo, Umugbulono, Obunano, Umuezeokpala. According to him, these brothers make up Umugbulu quarters of Ngodo village in Nise. His explanation was interesting but he did not mention Nmelonye to our greatest disappointment. For this reason, we asked him if he had ever heard of Mazi Nmelonye. Wilily, he said that he had heard of Nmelonye from their elders but was no longer sure what the story was about. At this, we were delighted that he had at least heard something about Nmelonye. Since he was, apparently, not in a position to comment authoritatively on Nmelonye, he referred us to some elders who, according to him, were then about seventy to eighty years old and who would be in a better position to tell us more. He named such people as Ofuruzu, Idago da Missa, Raymond Ezenwaka. He asked two young girls to take us to the house of Ofuruzu.

When we arrived Ofuruzu's house, he was not at home. We returned to the house of Mazi Ikeji and he asked the girls to take us to the house of Timothy Ezenwaka (Ogò adi igbo mma). When we arrived at his compound, he was equally not at home. Timothy himself is visibly a native doctor with his trademark dotted around. We reported to the house of Mazi Ikeji once more. He asked the girls once again to take us to the house of Mazi Raymond Ezenwaka. Fortunately for us, Raymond Ezenwaka was at home. He received us warmly but said that he did not know much about Nmelonye. He offered us cola nuts and a bottle of alcohol free wine. He said that it was Ofuruzu and Timothy Ezenwaka (Ogò adi igbo mma) who could help in the matter and volunteered to take us to their houses a second time. Our second visit to their houses yielded no results and for this reason, we returned to Raymond Ezenwaka's home.

While we waited, we had some discussions on some matter concerning our mission. He was able to tell us the following details about Nise: According to him, Nise is made up of four parts Ara, Ngodo, Isiakpu and Umuazu. Ngodo is made up of Umuono and Umugbulu. Umugbulu is made up of six kindred (umunna) they are: Umuadumojii, Umugbulono, Umunwufo, Obunano, Umuezeokpala and Aniyi. What he told us tallied with what Mr Ikeji said only that he added Aniyi in his account. <sup>1</sup> At this juncture, I convinced myself

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed analysis of the history and social structured of Nise as a town can be read up in the booklet "Nise In Diaspora. Who is Who in Nise –

not to follow all the details of the history of Nise but to focus on my mission, that is, to trace Nmelonye. Of all the names these people mentioned, I was delighted to know more about those that had to do directly with our object of inquire. This is the case with the name Umuadumojii that is often mentioned in connection with our great grandfather Nmelonye. Thereupon, Mazi Raymond Ezenwaka said that they had scheduled a meeting of the larger Umuadumojii family that day, January 1, 2003. This was a sweet and delightful thought for my companion Enugaekwu and me. We all saw it as providential that we came on a day they were having this family meeting where all knowledgeable members of Umuadumojii would be assembled. He remarked that that meeting was scheduled at an earlier date but was postponed to January 1, 2003 and as such it was providential that we came. His brother and himself accompanied us to the obi Ezenwaka (main gathering hall of the children of Ezenwaka) where the meeting was scheduled. He said that the meeting would offer any members of the larger Umuadumojii family opportunity to speak up openly on the issue. We were delighted, indeed very delighted at this thought. We arrived the obi Ezenwaka some minutes to 12 noon. When we arrived, the obi was virtually empty since no one had shown up for the meeting. We had to return to his house and we waited there till about 2pm when the meeting eventually started. In the interim, Raymond Ezenwaka was served his lunch of cooked yams with vegetable and oil as sauce. He offered us some to eat but we were satisfied at the thought of meeting members of Nmelonye's family and thanked him for his generosity. He ate his lunch while speaking with us.

At about some minutes after two in the afternoon, we went back to the assembly hall of Umuadumojii. To our delight, some men had started arriving for the meeting. It was men's-only meeting since no woman was present. When a sizable number of men arrived, the meeting started. The assembly received us warmly. The chairman, Mr Paul Ezenwaka – Omeito, was a young man in his forties. Someone people present suggested that the minutes of the meeting be read while we wait for other members to arrive. There was a counter suggestion to the effect that it would be better to hear us first so that if our mission was something that could be handled immediately before the actual meeting started they would prefer to give it attention and

proceed without further interruption. This suggestion received overwhelming support and I was asked to tell them what our mission was. They were evidently curious to know what brought us to them: I was fully dressed up in my clerical white soutane and it is not very usual for strangers to appear in such meetings without previous invitation what more clerics. I stood up and recounted our mission to the assembly. First, I introduced myself and then my cousin Enugaekwu Asouzu. I had already drawn up a list of questions to ask should this be necessary and indeed it proved very helpful. Without wasting time, therefore, I requested the following facts from them.

- 1) If Nmelonye is known to them.
- 2) The surname of Nmelonye.
- 3) Who his immediate relatives were and are. That is to say, how many brothers and sisters had he and what became of them?
- 4) Was he the eldest or the youngest in his family?
- 5) What type of person was he?
- 6) Why did he leave his father's compound for Arondizuogu and with whom?
- 7) What did they know about him since he left?
- 8) Was he married before he left or not?
- 9) How did he die?
- 10) What or who was Ezebinagu?

After my speech the chairman said that since my questions were detailed, they needed detailed answers also. I noticed some uneasiness in some members of the assembly but I could not explain really why. The chairman asked if it might not be better if we came another time to enable them research into the matter. There were other contrary opinions to this issue. Some were of the view that it would be better if those who knew something on the matter told the assembly immediately so that everyone would hear it and have the case closed.

The first speaker, a fairly elderly man, said that the name Nmelonye was not known to them. Another man rose and was inclined to supporting his opinion. By this time more people had started coming into the assembly hall; almost twice the number that was there before I started my speech. For this reason, I was requested to repeat my story to enable everyone participate fully in the deliberations. I very happily accepted the offer and repeated the reasons for our mission and my questions. About fifty men, in their thirties and up to the age of eighty years were in that hall. By this time Ofuluozu, Timoty Ezenwaka, Nobert Udezuo Nwaeke and the rest had

arrived at the meeting ground. When I finished with my speech, a young man with curled long dada hair, I later on learnt that his name was Donatus Ezenwaka, who had listened to the deliberations from the beginning of the meeting came out in front of everyone and stretched out his hand to us in very warm welcome. He said that he was welcoming us as his brothers and testified that Nmelonye was a member of their family and that they themselves are descendants of the same great grandparents as Nmelonye. All in the hall clapped their hands and cheered very happily. While this was going on, another man in his early sixties went outside; ostensibly to ease himself. This was Timothy Ezenwaka; popularly called *Ogọ adi Igbo mma*. Some in the assembly mentioned his name in subdued tone as he left and muttered inaudibly, others looked very delighted to his direction.

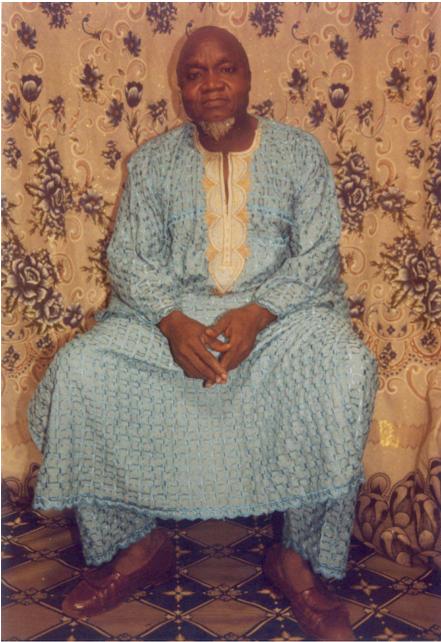
It is as if Timothy Ezenwaka and his closest relatives had been waiting for this great moment. After easing himself, he came back to the assembly ostensibly happy and excited. He was beckoned upon to go to the centre of the assembly and relate his tale. Before he started, someone asked me to position my tape recorder properly to his mouth in evident hope that something interesting was coming. I did not know what to expect myself but I obeyed promptly. Timothy narrated a very interesting story about Nmelonye, which was taped.

According to Timothy Chika Ezenwaka (*Ogọ adi igbo mma*), Nmelonye was born at Nise. According to him, the relatives of Nmelonye wanted to use him in the olden days for their own purpose. He formulated this in Igbo thus: “*ha choro iji ya mekunota ihe*” i.e. they wanted to use him to make ends meet – probably for sacrifice or something of sort. It was for this reason that upon a tip-off he took to his heels and sought sanctuary at Umuchukwu / Arondizuogu and settled there eventually. According to Timothy, Nmelonye never went back to his father’s home at Umugbulu Ngodo in the compound of Ezenweneke. He gave the name of Nmelonye’s father as Ezenweneke. According to him, Ezenweneke was the son of Okpana and Okpana was the first son of Adojii. Okpana had three wives and one of the wives gave birth to Ezenweneke. On his part, Ezenweneke had three sons 1) Aboghu (meaning: *Abọ na ọbọ- you should not revenge*), 2) Nwaegbo and 3) Nmelonye. Aboghu gave birth to Adojii etc. Nwaegbo gave birth to Ezenwaka. Nmelonye himself took refuge at Arondizuogu. His account received a very resounding applause to the satisfaction of everyone. It is to be noted, as I found out, that when one talks of Adojii in this connection, one may not be referring to the

same person since many people within different generations answer the same name.

Others who spoke after Timothy had spoken praised his account. These included Mazi Emmanuel Ejike Ikeji who was introduced as the Traditional Prime Minister of Nise or the Onowu of Nise. Nobert Nwaeke spoke and called attention to the fact that Ogo adi Igbo mma was still to clarify the relationship existing between Nmelonye and Ezebinagu as I had asked in my question. He heeded this request and explained this relationship splendidly. According to him, Ezebinagu was a member of the Adojii kindred. However, as it turned out, the family of Ezebinagu and Ezenweneke became very close and friendly. This is why Nmelonye used to mention Ezebinagu to his children. Timothy Ezenwaka called attention to the fact that there was a relative of Ezebinagu's in that gathering by name Fidelis Nwufo or Fan Nwufo. He said that Fan Nwufo is a barrister and the accountant general of Anambra State. Someone also called attention to the fact that a man present at the meeting had a brother who had written a book on Nise. They asked him to give us a copy of the book since this could help us in our research. The man went home, brought a copy of the book and gave it to us free of charge. The book is titled "Nise in Diaspora. Who is Who in Nise-Aniyi" by Ezenwaka Bosco C. After deliberations at the obi Ezenwaka, I thanked the assemble and they presented Umunmelonye a bottle of hot wine and a cola nut and asked us to visit them. Thereafter, we left them. We were urged by the assembly to follow those who they said were descended from the same parents as Nmelonye to their compound. They requested them to show us the place where Nmelonye was born over hundred and eighty years ago. We left the obi highly delighted and excited since we were going to see the very place where Nmelonye was born over a century ago. About eight men accompanied us including Fan Nwufo and Nobert Nwaeke. We were shown the foundation of a fallen mud house, which they said was the original walls of the house where Nmelonye was born and from where he took off to Arondizuogu for refuge. Hurriedly, all those who identified themselves as having the same ancestral roots with Nmelonye organized a reception in our honour.

Below: Mazi Timothy Chika Ezenwaka (Ogo adi igbo mma)



The excitement was immense and all wanted to see and touch us. It was a wonderful emotional reunion. They brought out a picture of an old man, Adojii Aboghu i.e. the son of Aboghu, from their archives to show the similarity between him and some members of Nmelonye family they said they had seen in the past. They gave us the impression that they had been yearning for this momentous occasion. All those who claimed the same ancestry with Nmelonye rallied round us and introduced themselves: These were the great grandchildren

of the two brothers of Nmelonye. Timothy Ezenwaka who narrated the story before the assembly at the Obi Ezenwaka was one of them. He reintroduced himself as if we had not understood him well. Others who introduced themselves were Donatus Onwuegbuna Ezenwaka, Emmanuel Ezenwaka Nwaegbo The last two are brothers of Timoty Ezenwaka. Others were, Caroline Nwaegbo, Christopher Oguejiofor Adojii Aboghua, Benson Adojii Aboghu, Ekene Adojii Aboghu, Jude Adineze Aboghu. They offered us drinks and gave us a cola nut, one hot drink and N50.00 to give to Umunmelonye. A little argument ensued as to the complex nature of the relationship existing between the brothers of Nmelonye, this was carefully handled in order not to kill the joy of the day. Besides, some hinted at some issues that I did not quite understand well (It was during my visit later on September 22, 2004 that I was given more insight into the nature of some of these thorny issues). They insisted that Umunmelonye should visit them and take possession of the piece of land that belongs to Nmelonye. They said that the land belongs to Nmelonye and it is only the children of Nmelonye who can decide on what shall be done to the land. They

emphasised that under no circumstance should the land of Nmelonye be disposed of. After the reception, Fan Nwifo, the distant relative of Ezebinagu, insisted that we should visit his home. We reluctantly accepted this offer since it was almost 5pm and we wanted to leave before it was night. When we assembled at his home, we were served a sumptuous meal of rice, stew and wine. When we finished our meal all accompanied us to our car and we left.

I returned to Nise on September 22, 2004 to discuss the manuscript of this book and some other issues earlier on raised with some of the key people we met in 2003. I arrived Nise on my way back from Awka at about 4 pm. It was raining heavily on this day. Since I had practically no fuel in my tank, I had to buy some fuel at the filling station opposite the community bank at Nise and at the junction leading to Umugbulu. There were many people assembled at the filling station taking shelter from the rain. I inquired if anyone knew Ogo adi Igbo mma. At this, my inquiry raised some eyebrows. It was whispered around that I wanted to go to this man's house. From the nature of the reaction of those around, I could infer that Ogo adi Igbo mma was a famous man. They were however hesitant to take me to his house due to the bad road and the bad weather. They said that there was another road leading to his house besides the usual road. The only problem was that I had to find it myself since no one volunteered to accompany me. They however gave me exact instructions on how to find the road and what to avoid. Their instructions rather sounded more complicated to my ears. At this moment, a young lad of about twelve years old emerged from nowhere at the filling station with an umbrella and a jelly can to buy fuel for his father's generator. Immediately the people called my attention to the fact that that was the son of Ogo adi Igbo mma himself. I was overwhelmed with joy at this coincidence. After he bought the fuel, I asked him to accompany me to his father's compound. He obliged me without hesitation and jumped into my car. To be sure, I asked him on our way what his father's occupation was. He said 'my father is dibia'. That is my father is a native doctor or the so called medicine man. When we arrived their home, I drove close to the wall because the house stood very close to the narrow path called road. It was a steep slope and for this reason, the lad had to find a big piece of stone to place at my front tyre as wedge to prevent the car from rolling back on the marshy road. He did this with joy and immediately ran into their compound to look for his father. I came out

of my car and looked on; he searched through the first house and had to go to another building next to his father's "consultation" to find him. There were obviously many clients waiting for this famous "dibia" even at that heavy rain. On the floor outside lay a rather queer animal. I could hardly discern what it was. I guess it was a monkey or something like that. The poor creature rolled itself together as a measure against the rain and the cold. I pitied it and I wondered what fate awaited it bearing in mind what happens in such matters. Since I stood outside in the rain, they beckoned someone to send me an umbrella. When Ogo adi Igbo mma arrived, he was very happy to see me and he requested me to come inside. We went in and after the usual exchange of greetings he offered me cola nut and the rest of them. I thanked him but I made it clear to him that it was getting late and as such we should hurry. I informed him that my main purpose for coming was to discuss the manuscript with them before publication. Besides, I wanted to know more about the information he gave me in January 2003. I had by then stipulated what to discuss in order not to waste time. When the news circulated that I was around, people started to come to the room where we were. Among those who came was Donatus Ezenwaka Nwaegbo. We went through some parts of the text and they made suggestions and corrections. Among other things, it was on this day that they narrated to me the full story about the tragedies in their family and what they think is the main cause of this. I asked Ogo adi Igbo mma how they came about the whole story most especially the one that he narrated before the assembly at the Obi Ezenweneke on January 1 2003. Ogo adi Igbo mma told me that his story is well known and collaborated among his kit and kin since it was handed down to them by their ancestors. He mentioned such credible people as Ofolee Mgbafo who died at the age of 110 and Ezenwaka Achuke. For him these elders are very credible custodians of this oral information. Ofolee Mgbafo died sometime in the 1980s and about the same time that Mazi Udoji Nmelonye died. We have to remember that Ofolee Mgbafo was the father of Okeke Ofolee (Ofuluozu). Okeke Ofolee died last year at the age of about eighty years and he was the person who has been making desperate efforts to re-unite the children of Nmelonye and the rest of Ezenweneke family. He lived at 218 Ehi Road with his children close to Mazi Gabriel Asouzu house at 212 Ehi Road. Okeke Ofolee and his brother Okechukwu Ofolee who lives at Onitsha are well acquainted with this oral history.

They revealed that they have been having series of misfortune and tragedies in their family and for this reason they started tracing the causes. From their findings, they believe that the root cause of this is the fact that they were very unjust to Nmelonye the youngest son of Ezenweneke and subsequently to the descendants of Nmelonye himself. They recalled that the main reason Nmelonye absconded from his father's compound was because he noticed that his life was in danger. He escaped to Arondizuogu to save his life from his relatives. They said that their ancestors told them that since Nmelonye left his father's compound for Umuchukwu/Arondizuogu and never to return, his two brothers Aboghua and Nwegbo pretended as though their father had only two sons. For this reason these two brothers Aboghua, Nwegbo and their descendants have been sharing the property of their father amongst themselves and have been denying Nmelonye and his descendants their rightful share of their inheritance. They believe that it is due to this gross act of injustice that untimely death and other misfortunes have taken abode in their homes and are threatening to wiping out members of their families. Example of those who suffered such untimely death are such young men as Benjamin Adineze, Samuel Adojii, Edwin Ezenwaka who died in Cameroon, Ikwunne Ezenwaka, Cyril Ezenwaka the only one that was married, and many others. For this tragedy to stop, they believe that the gross act of injustice against Nmelonye and his descendants must be redressed. Ogo adi Igbo mma revealed that they are thinking of having a lady married and placed in the land of Nmelonye to bear children in the name of Nmelonye. For them, it is under this condition that sudden death and avoidable hardship should stop in the family of Ezenweneke. I did not find it very necessary to dabble into the intricacies of this matter with them on this day. I however told them that it would be good if the members of their families and the members of Nmelonye's family at Arondizuogu meet to discuss the issue. They were delighted by this suggestion.

After our meeting, Ogo adi Igbo mma gave me his picture and I promised him that it shall appear in this book. I left them about 6 .30 pm and travelled back to Ndiakunwanta Uno Arondizuogu since we had to bury Simeon Udoji (Ebekuodike) the son of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye the following day Thursday, September 23, 2004 and attend to the funeral obsequies.

## COMMENTS

My journeys to Nise confirm that Nmelonye came from Nise and settled at Ndiakunwanta Uno Arondizuogu. He belonged to the larger Umuadumojii family. He has some relatives who are equally yearning to know what became of him since he left his father's home to take refuge at Umuchukwu/Arondizuogu. Besides, on our first journey, we were able to confirm some of the speculations about some names that were mentioned in connection with Nmelonye: Ezebinagu who was mentioned in connection with Nmelonye actually existed and came from Nise.

I presented the first draft of the story to the entire Nmelonye family during their annual family meeting on December 30, 2003. The content was received with great happiness, was debated and complemented. During this meeting, Mazi Christopher Asouzu was present. He was on a short visit from USA for the ceremony of Igbu Ehi, which was performed in honour of Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu, his father, who died in 1987. He attended the meeting with his first son Christopher Asouzu Jr., who was born in USA and a native of that country. Christopher Junior came to Nigeria for the first time in his life. His presence at this family meeting is in so far remarkable as he became a part of the historic event of piecing together his ancestral history of which many sons and daughters of Nmelonye scattered all over the world are a part. In this sense, Umunmelonye consider his presence as providential insofar as represents the interests of many sons and daughters of Nmelonye scattered all over the world and thereby giving the work a comprehensive touch. Like many sons and daughters of Nmelonye in many parts of the world, Christopher is resident in USA with his mother Jill Anita Asouzu, and his three sisters, Amber Adell Asouzu, Ariel Anita Asouzu and Jennifer Adaeze Asouzu. Besides, in USA alone, Nmelonye has found very firm roots in that great nation of immigrants. Thus, many citizens of USA have their ancestral roots in the family of Nmelonye. Some of these include, Classic Nnadika Nwankwo, Chinua Swiss Nwankwo, Briteny Nneoma Chidimma Nwankwo. These are the children of Henry Egbeukwu Chukwuemeka Nwankwo and his wife Carolyn. Others include Maurice Alexander Asouzu, Ashley Elizabeth Asouzu, Charles Robert Asouzu. These are the children of Professor Maurice Ugochukwu Asouzu with his wife Gwanda. One should also mention that many citizens of UK have their ancestral roots in the family of Nmelonye. Among these are the children (Anezi Juliana and

Ogochukwu Rachael Asouzu) of Anthony Amazu Asouzu and his wife Jennifer. Besides Emeka Anselm Chikata and Ikenna Chikatah who are citizens of UK are children of Martina Chikatah the daughter of Mazi Charles Asouzu.

Corrections and additions were made at the meeting of December 30, 2003 to the draft and all were urged to submit all pieces of information that would help enhance the quality of the work to me to be articulated in the final book. Such suggestions and attendant additions were presented to sons and daughters of Nmelonye on June 5, 2004. The meeting was held at 141 Ehi Road, Aba, the house of Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu Nmelonye. At this meeting, an argument ensued as to the way the family surname should be written. What precipitated this argument is the fact that different members of the family spell the family name differently. It was unanimously agreed that the family should answer Nmelonye and not Mmelonye or any other thing. Besides, it was suggested that a family tree should be drawn to complement this book. Mazi Christopher Asouzu sent a software “Family Tree Maker” from USA to help achieve objective. The compilation of the family tree has proved to be an on-going process to which many members of Nmelonye family have responded and others are yet to respond. Certainly, this compilation would be interesting when it is finished and shall be published as a work of its own later.

From my findings, the oral testimonies of the children of Nmelonye, other historical sources and witnesses, I am able to piece together this story as a true tale about the life of Mazi Nmelonye Ezenweneke and his descendants.



Above: Rev. Fr. Prof. Asouzu presenting the first draft of this work to Umunmelonye at their meeting on December 30, 2003. In the picture are from left to right Mazi Clifford Nwankwo making a point, Mazi Cyprian Nwankwo, Fr. Asouzu, Mazi Hyacinth Asouzu, Mazi John Asouzu, Mazi Vincent Asouzu.



Above: After the Christmas Holy Mass on December 25, 2003 at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka. Mazi Christopher Asouzu with his hands around the neck of his son Christopher Asouzu (Jr.) and Mazi Julius Nnabugwu. Alexander Nduka Asouzu in suit right looks on.

## **NMELONYE AND HIS FAMILY**

Nmelonye was the third son of Mazi Ezenweneke of the larger Adojii family of Umugbulu quarters in Ngodo, Nise Awka South, Anambra state. The family is today popularly addressed as Umuadumojii in Umugbulu quarters in Ngodo, Nise. He was born about the year 1819.

About the year 1840, Nmelonye emigrated to Arondizuogu partly out of constraint and partly out of his own free will to look for better conditions of living. His time was a turbulent period marked by Aro domination of most of Igbo land. It was a time of adventure for young men and women seeking alternative ways of life. He may have emigrated out of his own freewill because it was customary then to go to an Aro colony to start a new life devoid of fear and wrangling and to take advantages of the vast opportunities provided by life in such colonies. He may equally have emigrated out of constraint because, as we are informed, his relatives wanted to use him to make ends meet. Arondizuogu was a very good opportunity for many people seeking refuge and alternative means of sustenance and lifestyle since it provided a safe haven for many young people, looking for adventures and better conditions of existence. One has to remember that the Aros and their collaborators fought so many wars at this time whereby they subjugated and in some cases ravaged many weaker communities. To ally oneself with the Aros was to be on the safer side. A very famous war at this time was the one between Okoro Ijoma of Aro Ndikelionwu and Okoro Udozuka of Ndiakunwanta Uno – Arondizuogu, which raged around the year 1862 (Dike and Ekejiuba 180). This Okoro Udozuka is the same person as Okoli Idozuka because many people who migrated from Anambra state to Aro territories changed their names to their Aro equivalents (Isichie105). Okoli Idozuka immigrated to Arondizuogu from Umuohi near Neni in the present Anambra State. Akunwanta himself immigrated from Adazi in the present Anambra State. Going to Arondizuogu may have been the most natural thing for Nmelonye to do when he did not feel safe any longer in his home town Nise. This is even more probable if one considers the fact that some of his town's people from Nise had become successful and influential at Arondizuogu. A typical case was that of Mazi Iheme and his people Ndi Iheme. Iheme was a co-founder of Arondizuogu together with Mazi Izuogu Ogbunukpo. Iheme himself, to be precise, was a native of Isi-Akpu-Nise in Awka District (Igwuegbe 9-15). Nmelonye's emigration was therefore not something

unusual since many from neighbouring towns and villages and most especially people of present day Anambra state availed themselves of the wonderful opportunities that Arondizuogu offered and emigrated there and settled for a better living. His case was however peculiar because he was the only immigrant from Nise that settle at Ndiakunwanta Uno, Arondizuogu. Ndi Aniche Uno, Arondizuogu, the home of Mazi Maxwell Orji is greatly populated by people from Nise.

After he settled at Arondizuogu, he got married to Mmaku a woman from Neni. They had seven children: Five boys and two girls. The boys were in the order of seniority: 1) Agosi (born ca. 1852) 2) Nwankwo ( born ca. 1854) 3) Asouzu (born ca. 1856) 4) Udoji (born ca. 1858) 5) and Okoli (born ca. 1860). The girls were 6) Anyaga (born ca. 1862), and Nwanjiaga (born ca. 1864). These dates were calculated and hinged around Mazi Udoji Nmelonye's claim in his autobiography that he was born in the year 1858. Interestingly, these five sons of Nmelonye Ezenweneke were known by the name of their mother, Mmaku and not by the name of their father. Thus they were popularly called Agosi Mmaku instead of Agosi Nmelonye; Nwankwo Mmaku instead of Nwankwo Nmelonye; Asouzu Mmaku, Udoji Mmaku, Okoli Mmaku, Anyaga Mmaku and Nwanjiaga Mmaku. The second daughter of Mazi Nmelonye, Nwanjiaga died young and not much is known of her except that she was beloved by the parents, hence the name Nwanjiaga (*vade mecum*) – the one we take along with us. The fact that the sons were named after their mother, could be explained by the polygamous marriage arrangement of those days: It was normal then to name children after their mothers for easier identification. Ofolee Mgbafo is a typical case also since Mgbafo is the name of a woman.

Remarkably, Nmelonye, himself, was not polygamous and his children had the exceptional privilege of being born by the same mother. This was something very rare in those days when the number of children one had mattered much since for the average traditional Igbo human being is wealth (*madu bu uba*). Nmelonye was not deterred by this folk wisdom. The philosopher he was, he decided to follow deeper insight and for this reason, he put the ideals of one united family under the loving care of a husband and wife above other considerations. In this, one can say that he was right since his speculations and calculations paid off. One stands to admire and appreciate the foresightedness of the goodness of this man and his wife judging by the unparallel cohesion, love and harmony that has

ever characterized the lifestyle of members of Nmelonye family till this day. All the sons and daughters of Nmelonye are children of one woman and one man. They would remain ever grateful to the goodness and foresightedness of their great grandparents Nmelonye and Mmaku. These laid very solid filial and family foundation for them

Except Udoji Nmelonye, all the sons of Nmelonye followed the example of their father and married only one wife. Even then, Udoji followed suit later in life since he took one of his wives to the altar and they were wedded in church. The lives of the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Nmelonye have ever been characterized by the high level of exceptional fraternal relationship since they are children of the same parents.

Nmelonye settled in the present Ndiakunwanta Uno with his wife Mmaku. According to sources, he was a quiet man who devoted himself to his farm work and his trade. He traded in cloth, uhie (dye) and odu (arm band). As new comers to Ndiakunwanta, they were soon well established in their new home. Their efforts to be fully integrated into the new community got a new boost from a spectacular incident. This incident demonstrated their unflinching loyalty, commitment, sense of gratitude and generosity, all at the same time, to their new community of residence. When Mmaku gave birth to Agosi, their first son, Mazi Okoli Idozuka, a very influential co-founder of Akunwanta village found himself in very serious trouble. He was accused of abduction of some human beings. His accusers, Ndi Iheme, wanted to discredit him through this means. To underline his innocence, he consented to taking the biggest oath in the land then called the seven big oaths (alusi asaa or ita alusi asaa). What this entailed was that, to underscore his innocence, a person was required to go to the big market square (Eke Izuogu) and swear not only with his own head but had to join the fate of six other persons very close to him while taking the oath. In this case, should the accused be guilty, the gods would not kill only himself but all those whose fate was joined in the oath-taking. Mazi Okoli Udozuka who was accused of abduction was therefore required to swear the big oath together with six persons drawn from his immediate relatives. According to many sources and among them Mazi Romanus Ikwuegbu (Omumaegbungwu) this incident happened when there was scarcity of guns and human beings. Mazi Romanus Ikwuegbu spoke of this period as when human beings and guns were scarce (mgbe madu na egbe di uko). Okoli Udozuka

proceeded to take the big oath with six more persons but when he arrived, his accusers refused and insisted that he had to come along with six persons from his household whereby these persons must be people born in the land of Ndiakunwanta. Unfortunately, he could not find all the six male persons, due to the fact that human beings were scarce, as was stipulated by law in matters of seven big oaths. His accusers gave him three months to produce those qualified for the oath. Nmelonye Ezenweneke as an immigrant belonged to Mazi Okoli Udozuka's household but he was not eligible as a candidate for the oath since he was not born in Ndiakunwanta soil. By this time however, Nmelonye and his wife Mmaku had given birth to their first son Agosi. In this capacity, they could be of some help to Mazi Okoli Idozuka since Agosi was born in Akunwanta soil and as such qualifies as a candidate automatically. When now Mazi Okoli Idozuka was told that Mmaku gave birth to a son he was overwhelmed with joy. To highlight the depth of his joy, Mazi Okoli Idozuka set out immediately to meet Mmaku and Nmelonye to confirm the good news personally. He was carried or transported in his amoku or agbada i.e. a palanquin, as was customary in transporting such great and influential warriors. When they arrived at the home of Mazi Nmelonye, Mazi Okoli Idozuka saw and confirmed the birth and presence of the child, Agosi. Immediately he gave orders that gunshots of jubilation should be fired at Obi Akunwanta; that is at central Akunwanta Hall. Mazi Okoli Idozuka requested to have the child as one of the candidates for the big oath. Nmelonye and Mmaku immediately granted his request. He thus added Agosi to the number of people required for the big oath. According to Romanus Ikwuegbu, Ikwuegbu Egbebu his grandfather and his elder brother (Obioha Ejiofor), were the last of the six persons who were selected for the seven big oaths. These last two children as candidates for the seven big oaths were carried in a wooden substance called mgbo – a carved door-like piece of furniture used to carry children in those days. It turned out however that Mazi Okoli Idozuka and his relatives never took the seven big oaths as required because the accusers dropped their charges for lack of evidence. Igwilo Nwchukwu from Ndiakeme whose duty it was to counted the people to take the big oath, at Eke Izuogu, confirmed that they were actually six males from Okoli Udozuka's household. He observed that there was sufficient evidence to believe that the accused was innocence. For this reason, he warned that the seven big oaths was the so called alusi ndudu ma anya which kills retroactively or backwards. In this case, it

would kill the accusers should the accused be found innocent. The accusers had no option than to drop their charges for lack of evidence. For this reason, Okoli Idozuka and his people were acquitted of all wrong doings. This incident was celebrated in the whole Ndiakunwanta with great rejoicing and gunshots.

Hitherto, Nmelonye, his wife and first son had lived at a piece of land in Ndiakunwanta called Egbechukwu. It was located in a remote area not exceptionally conducive for habitation in those days. They were to be rewarded by Mazi Okoli Idozuka for their singular show of solidarity, generosity and bravery. Mazi Okoli Idozuka rewarded them by giving them another choice piece of land. This land later became the Obi Nmelonye. Remarkably, this baby boy, Agosi, grew up to be a very strong warrior reminiscent of the events surrounding his birth. One can say that he was destined to be sacrificed for the freedom of many. In the war with Amazu Uno, he was true to the circumstances surrounding his birth and died fighting for freedom, truth and justice. Since Agosi died a bachelor and had no offspring, Nwankwo took over his place as the first son of Nmelonye. Nwankwo build his house at this new site that was given to Nmelonye by Okoli Idozuka. A part of the land was used to build the magnificent modern Nmelonye Hall (Obi Nmelonye) later in the 20th century.

### **AGOSI MMAKU (NMELONYE)**

Agosi , the first son Nmelonye, was a very tall young man of huge physique and enormous strength. Besides his role in the matters involving ita alusi asaa, not much is known about his life. He was however a warrior who died in war with Amazu Uno in the later part of the 19th century. Many disputes in those days centred on land acquisition and adjustment of boundaries and the fittest often sought to be accommodated on the available land spaces. Although Ndi-Amazu and Ndiakunwanta are villages in Arondizuogu, they were nevertheless, not spared the rivalry and hostilities connected with land acquisition and occupation. It was during one of these land disputes between Ndi-Akunwanta Uno and Ndi-Amazu Uno that the conflict consumed Agosi Nmelonye. In one of these battles between Ndi Amazu Uno and Ndi Akunwanta Uno he was reported to have been captured along with his younger brother Asouzu. Asouzu however escaped captivity having unbound himself from the rope with which his captors used to tie him. This singular feat of untying himself and escaping from captivity earned him the endearing war name Onyiri Uđo (impossible for the rope i.e. the one who cannot be fastened with

rope). Agosi never made it alive from that captivity. Oral history has it that during their captivity, the people of Ndi-Amazu Uno saw this as an opportunity to lure their younger brother Udoji also. For this reason, they beckoned on Udoji from their fortress to come to the rescue of his brother. They called loud: Udoji oo Agosi Nwannegi na akpogi ( Udoji your brother Agosi is calling you). Mazi Udoji Nmelonye often recounts this incident himself. According to Udoji, he nearly fell into this trap and each time he heard the voice suggesting that his brother needed his help, he attempted to charge towards the fortress to rescue his brother. His but his colleagues held him back.

Below: Madam Akumbu the wife of Nwankwo Mmaku (Nmelonye)



### **NWANKWO MMAKU (NMELONYE)**

After the death of Agosi, Nwankwo took over his place as the first son of Nmelonye. This entitled him to occupy the obi i.e. the main family compound as is customary among the Igbos. Nwankwo was married to Akumbu from the family of Okoli at Isieke Ndi Akunwanta Uno, Arondizuogu. Akumbu's mother came from Akuabara family of Ndiakunwanta Uno. They had the following offspring in the order of seniority Moses Nwankwo (Aku wu Mmadu), Godwin Nwankwo (Omenanya Oha),

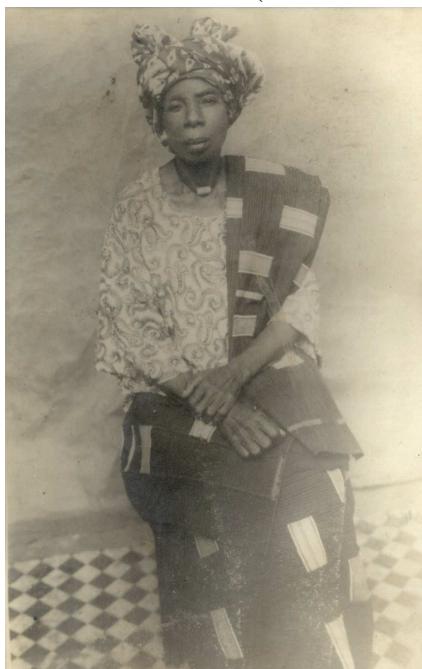
Luke Nwankwo (Ome Nyiri), Patrick Nwankwo (Okwubie), Donatus Nwankwo (Onye isi ya na awu aja) and Nwaobiala their only daughter. Nwankwo was a very successful farmer and he died in the year 1918 of influenza. At the time of his death, Udoji was working at Okigwe as a prison warder. When the news of the death of his brother got to him, he obtained permission to go home and join in the funeral obsequies of his elder brother. This became necessary because the

children of Nwankwo were still very young and the burden of burying him fell on the remaining brothers, Udoji, Asouzu and Okoli. The prison authorities gave him only two days to go home and return to his duties. Since he considered the time limit too short and inadequate, he had to resign his appointment in order that he would have time to give his brother a decent and befitting burial as is customary among the Igbos.

The burial naturally took place at Ndiakunwanta Uno where Nwankwo was living with his family. By now, Asouzu and Udoji had settled at the place they fondly called Umunono or Ofeimo (the present day Akunwanta Idozuka). They immigrated to this place along with many other families from Ndiakunwanta Uno because living space and arable land at Akunwanta Uno was not sufficient for everyone as the population grew. This was quite normal in those days. Not only Udoji and Asouzu emigrated to Ofeimo but other families like the families of Igbonba Nnabugu, the father of Louis Nnabugwu, Amakwe's Family, Ogbanu's Family, Ugbogulu's family etc. All of them joined in the expedition. They came as a group and acquired land from the people of Umunono to settle. In the same fashion, people from other parts of Arondizuogu came to settle at Ofeimo today. They are immigrant Aro settlers looking for better conditions of living. Okoli Mmaku, the younger brother of Udoji and Asouzu, did not join in the expedition, he preferred to settle at Ndiakunwanta Uno at the place called Ndi Ikpa. Here, he acquired vast expanse of land through his personal resourcefulness. Udoji and Asouzu acquired choice pieces of land at Umunono after the ibii river, that is moving from their present homes towards the river. Their parcels of land had a common boundary to each other to underline the closeness that existed between these two brothers. Udoji had to leave home often because he took appointment as a prison warder in 1910. Because of this occupation, he lived and worked at Okigwe. However, he often came home and whenever he came home he lived with his brother Asouzu. One has to note that during this colonial period of Nigerian history, working as a prison warder was one of the highest positions in civil service open to natives. He got this appointment not because he was literate but because he was considered very intelligent and as such very qualified for the post. With time, he could read and write through personal efforts.

One has to underline the fact that of the sons of Nmelonye, Udoji and Asouzu were very close to each other. They built their houses at

Ofeimo and returned to Ofeimo from Ochie Uno (Ndiakunwanta Uno) after the burial of their brother Nwankwo. They were prosperous farmers and traders and had by now acquired the peculiar Aro entrepreneurial spirit in the home of emigration of their parents Nmelonye Ezenweneke and Mmaku his wife. In addition to their farm work, they were itinerant traders. Trading became necessary because it was not possible for one to farm all year round. Their trade took them to such big markets and business centres as Uzuakoli and Arochukwu. When they acquired some wares from these distant locations, they took them to such places as Enu Nkanu. Nkanu is the name used by people of Arondizuogu to designate most of the inhabitants of the present Anambra state. Thus the people of Arondizuogu made sharp distinction between Nkanu and Isu. Since many of them came from the so called Nkanu, they use the word “Isu” pejoratively for people from the towns surrounding Arondizuogu and beyond. At Enu Nkanu, they in turn purchased wares which they sold at Uzuakoli and Arochukwu. The trade at Enu Nkanu was popularly called *ahia enu nkanu* (the trade of Enu Nkanu). Since many people



from Arondizuogu were settlers from this Enu Nkanu, these far away trade expeditions to their ancestral homes provided Udoji and Asouzu with the opportunity to know people and to have brides recommended to them. Thus Asouzu got married to Amanso from Agba village in Ekwulobia, while Udoji got married to his first wife, Oduagu from Amichi. Oduagu came from the Ezeoke family at Amichi. They were referred to as Ezeoke *ndi be* Umeagugoesi Umeohimiri in Amichi.

Left: Madame Amanso Asouzu, the wife of Asouzu Mmaku (Nmelonye). She died 1958 and picture taken in 1954.

## **ASOUZU MMAKU (NMELONYE)**

He was the third child of Nmelonye Ezenweneke. He was married to Amanso Okeke a lady from Agba village in Ekwulobia, Aguata Local Government in the present Anambra State of Nigeria. The marriage was blessed with four children and the children of Asouzu's in the order of seniority were: Charles Ijoma Asouzu, Gabriel Asouzu, Regina Asouzu and Michael Asouzu. Asouzu was jovial and kind-hearted, likable and consistent in character. He lived happily and peacefully with his wife Amanso. Hardly did they quarrel as husband and wife. Of all the sons of Nmelonye, Asouzu and Udoji were very close to each other and they shared lots of things in common. Mazi Udoji used to tease Asouzu by calling him ajo eghu na ata ede (the bad goat that eats cocoyam). Asouzu used to call him in return Okulo na afo ime i.e. pregnant okulo.



Okpulo is an animal. This close relationship was such that towards his last days, Mazi Udoji wrote his will and gave it to Charles, the eldest son of Asouzu for execution. Among other things, he requested to be given a befitting burial. Asouzu died in the year 1936 and was given a befitting burial by his son Charles.

Left: Mazi Paul Udoji Mmaku (Nmelonye)

## **UDOJI PAUL MMAKU (NMELONYE)**

Udoji was the third son of Nmelonye and Mmaku. He was the only polygamous son of his parents. His first wife was Oduagu while his second wife was Ihudiye. Ihudiye came from

Ndiakunwanta and from Okeke Ogbukiyi's family. His third wife was Igbomba also from Ndiakunwanta and from the family of Nnabugwu. The first wife gave birth to three boys and one girl. His first son was Fredrich born to Oduagu. The second son was Samuel Udoji, who

was not married before he died. The third son, Joshua Udoji equally died a bachelor. The daughter from his first wife is Ejiagha who is married to an Abonema chief in Harris Bank, Rivers State, Nigeria. She is still alive and is the mother of late Silas and late Jimima. The second wife to Mazi Udoji Nmelonye, Ihudiye, gave birth to Peter Udoji (Ezenaaguoha). Ihudiye had a daughter Elizabeth who was married to Anwuhuebo Ogwaraonyeekwe of Akunwanta Uno. Another daughter to the second wife was Ugekwe. She was married to Ndiogbuonyeoma. She was the mother of Nze na Ozo who died in a motor accident at Aba. But Nze na Ozo's five sons are growing up well. The third wife of Mazi Udoji gave birth to Simeon Udoji, Pricila Anyakoha married at Ndi Adimoha, Agnes Okonkwo (Udime) married to Ndi Adimoha and Maria Arodiogbu equally married to Ndi Adimoha. Maria Arodiogbu is the mother of Chris Chiedozie Arodiogbu, Managing Director of INTECIL Ltd., Enugu, Nigeria, whose generosity continues to speak volumes of the stock of which he is made.

Although Mazi Udoji Nmelonye was polygamous, he was the one that brought Catholicism to Ndiakunwanta Idozuka. Before Asouzu and himself left Ochie Uno for Ofeimo, they had good idea of the church then. When they came over to Ofeimo, the only church that existed there then was the Methodist church. They belonged to this church for a while. Udoji however told his brother Asouzu that he would build a church and this he did. Together with his nephew Daniel Nwosu and other willing helpers, they build the church and made a fence around it with bamboo sticks. Udoji and his household together with Asouzu, his wife Amanso and their children and some members of Louis Nnabugwu's family were regular and punctual members of this church. Out of the early Church built by Udoji and his people arose the present day St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Ndi-Akunwanta Idozuka. The church has not always been at its present location. It was relocated to its present site from the original place Udoji and his people built the first church. Through personal effort and dedication, Udoji encouraged others members to remain faithful to St. Joseph's Catholic Church. He recognized the binding force of the church and made it a point of duty to go even from house to house to encourage and at times admonish lukewarm members. Udoji's efforts paid off because St. Joseph's church was soon privileged to be ministered by priests who came to the station to spend some nights.

Udoji was the longest surviving child of Mazi Nmelonye Ezenweneke and his wife Mmaku. Because of his exceptional old age, many descendants of Nmelonye of the fourth generation were privileged to know him. He died only in 1983 at the ripe old age of 125 years. Many of us knew him. He was an extraordinary kind man who was very much interested in the affairs of others positively. He can be described to be a man of noble disposition. He took great happiness and satisfaction in seeing and welcoming his nephews, nieces, grand nephews and grand nieces whenever they visited him. He made spirited efforts to remember each by name and gave personal attention and care to each. Whenever they visited, he provided them with gifts and provision such as yams, coco-yams, meat, akidi (brown beans) etc. Many members of Nmelonye family came to interpret and understand his exceptional old age as a special favour to them since he was an epitome of the type of love that has always bound the sons and daughters of Mazi Nmelonye Ezenweneke and his wife Mmaku together.

Udoji was never tired of exhorting his children, grandchildren, nephews and grandnephews. He always reminded them of the need to excel and be exceptional in their lives. Some of his regrets were that men and women of character had died and he always alluded to this fact in his discussions with people. He deplored and condemned all forms of lukewarm behaviour and lack of love. He often reminded people that deviant behaviour was subhuman and monkey-like. In comparison to the olden days when most people endeavoured to live to the demands of very high values and ideals he often exclaimed in Igbo language that mmadu anwuchana ihe no ugbua wu so enwe enwe – that is to say real human beings and people of character have now almost died out, it is mostly monkeys that are hopping around now in the guise of human beings. As the last surviving son of Nmelonye Ezenweneke and his wife Mmaku, he had the responsibility of defending his brothers, sisters and their children in the face of injustice and oppression. This he always did with exceptional brilliance and courage. He was a man of remarkable leadership ability. He was a highly respected community leader, whose words were decisive in matters of policy. During his lifetime, he was generally recognized as the paramount head of Akunwanta Idozuka. There was even a time the village was named after him as Akunwanta Udoji due to his recognized achievements, influence and exceptional leadership position. Through personal effort, Udoji was to some extent literate.

He could read to some extent but at least good enough to read and understand the bible. He could speak the English language well. As a community leader, he often intervened in very critical moments. This was the case during a peculiar crisis that engulfed Akunwanta Idozuka. This incident involved the lack of commonsense and indiscretion of Mazi Ukegbu Ogbunike who committed abomination by unmasking the masquerade (itikwo isi mmonwu). Although the crime was the act of one man, the whole of Ndizuogu decided to go to Akunwanta Idozuka at Ofeimo to teach the whole community a bitter lesson. This measure was in keeping to the Igbo proverb that otu aka ruta mmanu ozuo ndiozo, that is to say – if one finger is soiled by oil it soon soils the others. It was through the timely intervention of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye that the calamity that was to befall the community was averted. When the people of Ndizuogu arrived at Akunwanta Idozuka, Mazi Udoji promptly called the police who warded off the invaders. Simeon Udoji, son of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye, narrated this incident that is widely known and said that he was told that it took place before he was born in 1930. Mazi Udoji has often mediated, from his far away home at Akunwanta Idozuka, in the misunderstanding between Umu-Okoli and Ndi-Okoli of Akunwanta Uno. This is attested to by one of his letters to them in the height of the crisis. Thus, he writes:

To - Umukoro and Ndi Okoro Akunwanta Uno Ndizuogu

From Mazi Udoji Nmelonye of Joseph's Coll. Mission Akunwanta Uno Okoro 11/2/69

Sirs,

I heard through story that you both Umukoro and Ndi Okoro is having trouble among you. Since then I have waited from both Ndi Okoro and Umukoro to message me but none.

Why I write this without waiting to hear from both of you is that I have said that peace is to be in that lands among other people.

Now, no body in our town with name (ichi) both Umukoro and Ndi Okoro are all some some of Okoro no ichi man again.

During the time our father Okoro he called man of the man slave and Nankwo also did not call any of the man slave.

When Mazi Okoro want to talk to the man that bring the news to say

Ndi Okoro who owned Okoro and Okoro owned them and at the time of Mazi Nankwo - Okoro he used to say when he want to talk to Ndi Okoro - Ndi Okoro who owned me and I owned them, he never at all called any of them slave.

Brothers, why I never know what to say is that I never know what cost the trouble.

My brother stand you up and we make the sign of the cross - by the name of the father of the Son and of the Holy cost.

Please Ndi Okoro and your brothers Umukoro I beg you do not divide your selves. If Umukoro told you any bad word better find them that on to divide your selves.

Who I am sorry for this dividing is Mazi Colonel Okoro for the chief which broke came on this face has to be blamed. Please Brothers I am waiting to hear from you. God be with you.

Mazi Udoji Nmelonye

*From Mazi Udoji Mmelonye  
St. Joseph's Cath. Mission  
Akunwanta Umuele  
Okigwe  
11/5/69*

*To Umuokoro and  
Ndi-Okoro  
Akunwanta Uno  
Arondizuogu  
Sirs,*

*I heard through story that you both Umu-Okoro and Ndi-Okoro is having trouble among you. Since then I have waited from both Ndi-Okoro and Umu-Okoro to message me but non.*

*Why I write this without waiting to hear from both of you is that Jesus had said that peace will be to him that wants peace among other people.*

*Now, no body in our town with marks (ichi) both Umu-Okoro and Ndi-Okoro are all sons of Okoro no ich man again.*

*During the time of our father Okoro he called non of his man slave and Nwankwo also did not call any of his man slave.*

*When Mazi Okoro want to talk to his men that time he used to say Ndi-Okoro who owned Okoro and Okoro owned them. And at the time of Mazi Nwankwo – Okoro he used to say when he wants to talk to – Ndi-Okoro – Ndi Okoro who owned me and I owned them, he never at all called any of them slave.*

*Brothers, why I never know what to say is that I never know what cost the trouble*

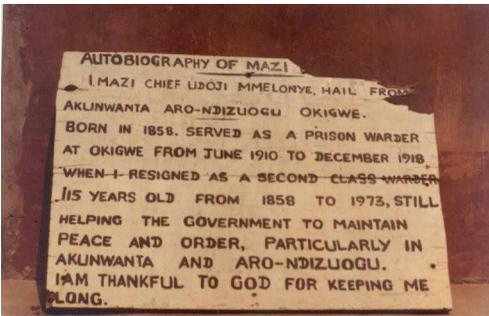
*My brother stand you up and we make the sign of the cros –by the name of the father of the Son and of the Holy gost.*

*Please Ndi-Okoro and your brothers Umu-Okoro I beg you do not divid yourselves. If Umu-Okoro told you any bad word better fined them than to divid yourselves.*

*Who I am sorry for this dividings is Mazi Edward Okoro, for the chief which trouble came on his face has to be blemed. Please Brothers I am waiting to hear from you, God be with you. Yrs – Mazi Udoji Mmelonye.*

Mazi Udoji as the last living son of Nmelonye's took his time to ward off unjust claimants who wanted to take advantage of the demise of his brothers for their selfish purposes. A typical example is the

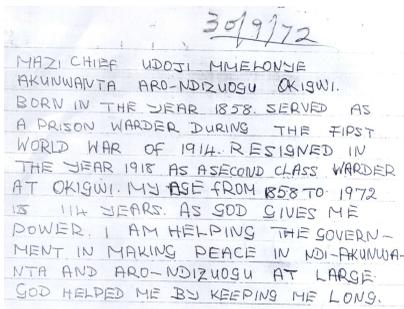
trouble surrounding an Iroko tree situated in Nmelonye's compound, which was claimed by the family of Mazi Ugbaja. Udoji undertook the troubles of recovering from the family of Ugbaja the Orji (iroko) tree behind Moses Nwankwo's compound, which is the Obi Nmelonye. Mazi Ugbaja and his people who claimed the Orji tree are in-laws to the family of Nmelonye since the second daughter of Okoli Mmaku, Mgbafo Bridgett (popularly called Mgbafo gharighari) was married to late Gabriel Ugbaja Asoanya. The dispute was settled amicably as a family matter and the Orji tree reverted to the possession of Nmelonye family due to Mazi Udoji's immense knowledge of history. He took time to keep written records as can be seen in his autobiography where he wrote :



*I, Mazi Chief Udoji Mmelonye, hail from Akunwanta Aro-ndizuogu Okigwe. Born in 1858. Served as a prison Warden at Okigwe from June 1910 to December 1918 when I resigned as a second class warder. 115 years old from 1858 to*

*1973, still helping the government to maintain peace and order, particularly in Akunwanta and Aro-ndizuogu. I am thankful to God for keeping me long.*

*The version of this autobiography he submitted to his nephew Charles Asouzu reads:*



*30/9/72 MAZI CHIEF UDOJI MMELONYE AKUNWANTA ARO-NDIZUOGU OKIGWE BORN IN THE YEAR 1858 SERVED AS A PRISON WARDER DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR OF 1914. RESIGNED IN THE YEAR 1918 AS A SECOND CLASS WARDER AT OKIGWE. MY AGE FROM 1858 TO 1972 IS 114 YEARS. AS GOD*

*GIVES ME POWER I AM HELPING THE GOVERNMENT IN MAKING PEACE IN NDI-AKUNWANTA AND ARO-NDIZUOGU AT LARGE. GOD HELPED ME BY KEEPING ME LONG.*

He attached the following request to this autobiography:

Mazi Chief Udoji Mmelonye,  
St Joseph's 'Cath' Church,  
Akunwanta Umuele Aro -  
Ndiuzuogu Okigwe,  
Nigeria E.C.S.  
5/10/72.

Dear Mazi Charles Asouzu,  
I want to write you this letter to know your condition of health, now. How is my wife and the children, with hope all are well. I am with hope your boys are doing well in there business & with hope your business is moving normal.

My son what I hope in writing this letter to you, is that I want to give you my address and my tables of living in the world. Why I give you this is perhaps at my last day, if you can transfere it to the Radio house you do. Because in this 1972, I from old man to olden age. As you have seen that my olden age now is hard, perhaps an olden aged man may not see the enough money to help him self from the night every go across the day light. Do live in peace.

Yours Paul Mmelonye

Mazi Chief Udoji Mmelonye  
St Joseph's 'Cath' Church.  
Akunwanta Umuele Aro -  
Ndiuzuogu Okigwe.  
Nigeria E.C.S.  
5/10/72

Dear Mazi Charles Asouzu,  
I want to write you this letter to know your condition of health, now. How is my wife and the children, with hope your boys are doing well in there business with hope your business is moving normal.

My son what I hope in writing this letter to you, is that I want to give you my Address and my tables

of living in the world. Why I give you this, is perhaps at my last day, if you can transfere it to the Radio house you do. Because in this 1972, I from old man to olden age. As you have seen that the olden age now is hard, perhaps our olden aged man may not see the enough money to help himself then the night may go across the day light. Do live in peace. Yours Paul Mmelonye.”



Picture left: Mazi Udoji Nmelonye on June 26, 1949 with his children, nephews, grandnephews and grandnieces. Standing from left to right: Paulina Asouzu (Sr. Mary Paul Asuzu IHM), Luke Nwankwo (Melos) , Charles Asouzu, Peter Udoji, Martina Asouzu (Martina Chikatah), Sitting from left to right: Mrs Juliana Asouzu, Mazi Udoji, Mrs Pricila Udoji

(Pricila Anyakoha). Sitting on the floor from left to right: Angelina Asouzu (Angelina Ohuche), Hyacinth Asouzu, Agnes Udoji (Agnes Okonkwo), Nicholas Anyakoha

The discovery of the autobiography of Mazi Udoji has necessitated the correction in the estimation of the date of birth of his father. I had elsewhere estimated that Mazi Nmelonye Ezenweneke was born around the year 1840 this would hardly be probable if his son Udoji was born in the year 1858 (The Method and Principles, 15-18). Udoji's foresight in keeping some written records has thus proved very vital in this ancestral research in as much as it has helped in fixing the date of birth of his father around the year 1819 and that of the sons of Nmelonye Ezenweneke.

### **OKOLI MMAKU (NMELONYE) –ABANI DI EGWU**

He was the last son of Nmelonye and Mmaku. Okoli Mmaku Nmelonye was a very strong personality. He was married to Mgbekwe, a lady from the family of Obi ako nwa of Isuofia in Anambra State. He was a stammered and was remarkably known for his impressive stature. He was said to be very tall, dark complexioned, robust and a very strong man whom only very few men could be courageous enough to face. All these attributes earned him the name, 'Abani di egwu' meaning, 'night is dreadful'. He was equally an enterprising and successful farmer who acquired and bought large expanse of land in Ndiakunwanta Uno. He was infected with leprosy. Romanus Ikwuegbu (Omumaegbungwu) never ceased to emphasise this fact in his account of this man. He said that if one wanted to come near Okoli Mmaku, he used to remind the person to keep a distance because his disease was infectious. His poor health notwithstanding, he had more land than any single individual in the whole of Ndiakunwanta Uno did. Acquisition of landed property in those days was not by money nor was it for the lazy, feeble minded or coward rather it was for the hard working, strong and courageous farmer. Hence, Mazi Okoli Mmaku acquired a large expanse of land spanning from Ugwuda down to the Uchu stream, which is the boundary, in Akunwanta Uno, between the present Imo and Anambra states. He had two sons and two daughters.

The first daughter of Okoli Mmaku was Jeni Ogbonneye married to late Mazi Abel Anyogu, but she had no children. The second daughter Mgbafo Bridgett (popularly called Mgbafo gharighari) was married to late Gabriel Ugbaja Asoanya from Akunwanta Uno. Ugbaja Asoanya, was the Father of Godwin Ugbaja of Ndiakunwanta Uno. After Bridgett gave birth to Goddy she died while Goddy was still a child.

When Okoli Mmaku died, many people tried to take his land by tricks and by force but Mazi Udoji Nmelonye took the responsibility of defending the property of his brother since the first son of Okoli's, Raphael was still a child. Some of those who wanted to take the land were the people of Umuorji, a town near Ndiakunwanta. Mazi Udoji did everything to see that no inch of his land was lost to intruders, he was the person who took the oath (ita alusi) when it became necessary. Mazi Oti Okoli, a traditional chief of Ndiakunwanta was one of the key witnesses to the effect that the disputed land belonged to Mazi Okoli Mmaku. Mazi Udokwu Okoli died in the early years of 1960s.

### **ANYAGA NMAKU (NMELONYE)**

She was the only surviving daughter of Nmelonye. She was a very beautiful, strong and business like woman. She knew how to make money through her trade. She specialized in the making of ogili (a typical igbo spice for soup). Her brand was unique. Anyaga was married to Mazi Nwosu, a man of Amazu Ndi Igwilo Ijemoa but now called Amazu ikpa Akaputa. When her husband died, the in-laws started to maltreat her. The climax of their injustice towards her was the occasion when they put Omu (fresh palm tree leaves) around all her possession. With this, she was, in effect, ostracized from her husband's home. For this reason, she sat near her home and wept bitterly. When the news got to Mazi Udoji, he put his knife around his waist, gathered some men, prepared for the worst and set out on a rescue mission to Amazu ikpa Akaputa. When he got there, he saw for himself what had happened. He tried to mediate in the trouble but to no avail. They could not leave the children behind because the in-laws had not the wherewithal to train and sustain the children. For this reason Mazi Udoji and his sister Anyaga took the children, Daniel Nwosu the first son, Sylvanus Nwosu and Joseph Nwosu and the daughter Mgboli and came back to Ndiakunwanta Ofeimo now called Akunwanta Idozuka. When the children of Anyaga grew up, they were given their own piece of land to inhabit. It was here that they married and raised their children. By implication, they became indigenes of Ndiakunwanta and never went back to Amazu ikpa Akaputa. Daniel himself was married to Ihejiaku, the daughter of Mazi Enendu in Ndiakunwanta Uno. Daniel and the wife gave birth to other children and among them Grace. Daniel Nwosu's first daughter Grace was married by Denis Nwafor and she gave birth to the first son of Denis Nwafor. Anyaga's son Joseph Dimkpagu Nwosu was married to Alice

Nwosu. Okoli Amobi resident in Akunwanta Ofeimo is one of the grandsons of Anyaga's sons. Mgboli was the daughter of Anyaga and she was married to Osisi of Ndiamazu Ikpaocha. Her son is Okoli Osisi at Amazu Ikpaocha.

Nmelonye Ezenweneke was not a Christian, neither had he formal western education. Likewise, the sons and daughters of Nmelonye did not have the benefit of formal western education. However, they cherished early, the unfathomable value of western type of education and ensured that their children went to school. This fact is clearly attested to in the life histories of their children in this book. The children of Nmelonye were characterized by their fairly tall and strong built. Udoji was a typical example. Judging from the complexion of their children and grandchildren, one would conclude that neither Nmelonye nor Mmaku was too dark nor too light complexioned. Udoji, Asouzu and Okoli who were better known by many grandsons and daughters of Nmelonye attest to this fact. The close relationship and brotherly love that existed between the children of Nmelonye continued among their children. Udoji and Asouzu epitomized this close relationship. When Moses Nwankwo settled at Aba first, all sons of Nmelonye who visited Aba, like Luke Nwankwo, Charles Asouzu, Godwin Nwankwo always found shelter in his house. When Charles Asouzu built his own house at Aba, it also became a haven for all Nmelonye children who went to Aba.

## **ELEODU OKEKE**

**By Romanus Okeke himself**

When Asouzu married his wife Amanso, Amanso came to Ndiakunwanta with her younger brother Eleodu. Eleodu Okeke was therefore a native of Ekwulobia who followed his sister Amanso and settled at Arondizuogu as many people did in those days. When Eleodu arrived, he lived with his sister, Amanso, and the husband Mazi Asouzu Nmelonye. From the proceeds of his trade and labour, later, he bought a piece of land to cultivate and built his home. As time went on, he grew up to become a successful farmer and was very famous as a palm wine taper. As was almost customary in those days, he went back to his hometown Ekwulobia to look for a wife. He however ended up marrying Mgbekeocha, a woman from Aguluezechukwu, a neighbouring town to Ekwulobia. The marriage

was blessed with four children - two sons and two daughters. The first child was Rebecca. The second child was Joseph, who died a bachelor. The third child was Angela. The last son is Romanus who was born in 1946 at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka. Rebecca married Samson Ibetowusi of Akokwa in Ideato North Local Government. Angela married Ebeneza Okeke of Ndianiche Ikpaenyi. Eleođu and his wife died during the Biafran-Nigerian civil war between 1968 and 1969. They were buried at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka. Before Eleođu died, he called his children and requested them to be members of Umunmelonye and to be attending their meetings. Following this request, the members of his household are today some of the staunchest members of Nmelonye family.

Left: Romanus Okeke: Taken ca. 1971



### **ROMANUS OKEKE**

The last son of Eleođu is Romanus who was born in 1946 at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka. He followed Mazi Gabriel Asouzu to Aba to learn trading. He specialized in the trade of building materials and has been successfully in it. He opened his own shop at 60 Etche Road Aba. He spent most of his life at 212

Ehi Road with his family. His is happily married to Anthonia Okeke a lady from Ndiakunwanta Idozuka and from the family of Olisakwe Ogbanu. Nkiru, their first daughter, was born at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka. The rest of his children were born at 212 Ehi Road Aba. Besides Nkiru, Romanus and his wife have nine other children - Obinna, Leonard, Osita, Ugochukwu, Chidinma, Okechukwu, Azuwike, Chigozie, Onyiyechi. He makes very serious efforts to raise his children in spite of the stroke he suffered in the year 2002.

NB: This piece was extracted from Mazi Romanus Okeke in interview with Fr. Asouzu, September 27, 2004.

## CHAPTER TWO - FROM ARONDIZUOGU TO THE WORLD

This chapter handles issues concerning the lives and activities of the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Mazi Nmelonye in their diverse capacities as they start to spread from Arondizuogu to other parts of the world. For the sake of citation and easier referencing, the different sections bear the names of those who compiled them.

Below: Mazi Moses Nwankwo (Aku bu mmadu)



### MOSES OGUJIOFO NWANKWO (ALIAS AKU BU MMADU )

By Sir/ Engr. Davidson  
Nwankwo (son)

Mazi Moses Ogujiofor Nwankwo was born to the family of Mazi Nwankwo Nmelonye and Oliaku Akumbu Nwankwo from the family of Okoli at Isieke Akunwanta Uno and her mother came from Akuabara family of Ndiakunwanta Uno. He was born at Arondizuogu in the dying years of the 19th century about the year 1893. He was the first son of his

parents. He did his primary school at Akunwanta Uno and must have read up to standard 4 (four). His school peers or mates included Felix Emesionwu, Jerome Unegbu , Joseph Onwuatuegwu etc .They schooled as adolescents , combining schooling with farm work and petty trading.

By 1918 at the outbreak of the First World War, Mazi Nwankwo Nmelonye died of influenza. The young Moses was therefore forced to assume the role of the breadwinner for the family. For this reason, Moses gave up schooling and devoted his energies towards the upkeep

of the family. This mission carried him to Aba in 1920 to look for greener pastures. He followed the footsteps of such his contemporaries as Michael Agba , Samuel Okonkwo ( Ono mkpuru ede ) , Isaac Nwankwo Ahigbo etc who had gone earlier to make a living in the new promising townships of Aba.

At Aba, Moses quickly learned tailoring from one Mr. Oleru from Egbu in Owerri and established a flourishing tailoring workshop within five years of his sojourn at Aba. Fortune smiled at him in this trade as he discharged the burden of catering for the family he now inherited successfully. He was then supporting his widowed mother, four brothers namely Godwin, Luke, Patrick, and Donatus or Sunday and a sister Nwaobiala. His prosperity as a progressive young man led him to court and marry Mrs. Teresa Nwankwo (nee Ohuche) - the sister of his bosom friend - Mr. Peter Ohuche who had also become a prominent motor driver, fondly called “Peter Dodge” after the lorry he was driving; and later to own. This marriage was celebrated at Adazi with Rev Fr. Anyogu officiating in the year 1931.

Theresa was blessed with their surviving child, a daughter, named Christiana (now Lady Amakwe) in 1935. Attracted by his prosperity, his younger brother abandoned schooling in the late 30’s to join Moses at Aba in search of the new found town wealth. He did his best to assist all of them settle in Aba and other places. In the dying years of the 30’s he switched from tailoring to bicycle spare trading. This change in trade pushed him to even greater heights. Swimming in this apparent prosperity, Moses married his second wife Celina Olieji Nwankwo (nee Okeke Ogbuchiuzo) alias Jegheje, in 1940. By this second marriage, Moses raised his first surviving son Davidson in 1942.

Moses was able to see his children through their early education. He was a hard disciplinarian - a stance which got him the nickname of “**German**” by his contemporaries. With this character, blended and punctuated with his unblended stand for the truth, honesty, obedience, hard work and humanity, he infused a firm sense of responsibility and justice in all his children.

Although firm in character, Mazi Moses Ogujiofor Nwankwo showed great flexibility and commonsense in his business enterprise. Here, he was unrelenting though adaptable. Thus, when there came a down turn in the bicycle trade business in 1955, he quickly embraced the palm produce trade and made a success of it. He built houses of his own both at Ndiakunwanta and at Aba. One of such houses is at

No. 132 Ehi Road Aba - now in Abia State. In this house, most of his children were born and nurtured to maturity.

Papa - Mazi Moses Ogujiofo Nwankwo also lived and died peacefully at his Aba residence at the blessed mature age of about 105 years - on November 12, 2001. He surely died fulfilled!

His surviving offsprings to date include: Lady\Mrs. Christy Amakwe, Mrs/ Leatitia Enemmuo, Sir\Engr. Davidson Nwankwo, Mr. Cyprian O. Nwankwo,(teacher), Mr. David Nwankwo (accountant), Lady\Mrs. Cecilia Nmaju, (Nursing Sr.), Mrs. Rita Okafor (teacher), Mrs. Maryrose Kanu (trader), Miss Ifey. T. Nwankwo. Grand children and great grand children are indeed numerous.

Below: Godwin Nwankwo and wife Maria Nwankwo



**GODWIN UBAEZUONU NWANKWO  
(ALIAS OMENANYA OHA )**

**By Mr. Henry Nwankwo (son)**

Mazi Godwin Nwankwo was the second son of Mazi Nwankwo Nmelonye and Oliaku Akumbu. He was born in 1900 in Ndiakunwanta Uno. He grew up in the company of his parents and entire family. His father understood early the value of Christianity and western education and enrolled him at the St. Philip's Catholic School Ndiakeme Uno in August of 1910 where he had earlier registered his other two young sons. Young Godwin was a very gifted child who successfully completed and graduated in standard six. His mother loved him very dearly such that when he was ready to leave home to make a living outside she wept but then blessed him with lots of worldly instructions. Driven by the urge for success, and as a gifted child in graphic design technology, he left home in 1920 to a town

known as Afionyiong and Nwaniba in Cross River State of Nigeria to start his own cabinet and upholstery business, which at that time was called carpentry. There, as soon as there was a little success in his business he didn't forget his mother; he went and erected a small house in his fathers compound next to his mother's.

As his business grew and was blessed with success, he requested his younger brothers Luke and Patrick to join him. The two brothers lived with him and they learnt the trade until his mother sent a message and ask him to come home briefly, there she advised him on the idea of marriage. Young Godwin (a mothers favourite) listened and admired the advise. He married and wedded in April 14, 1941 his beloved Oliaku Maria Aka Ogboo Okonkwo, who her father, Mazi Ogboo Okonkwo Anozie from Ndi Adimoha Ndizuogu, resist to give up for marriage because she was at a very young age of 16 years at the time. Mazi Okonkwo Anozie who married his wife with six children; where Maria emerged as the second daughter of her family found out later that her daughter was placed in good hands after all. Newly married pretty Maria, quickly found a friend in the family, Juliana Asouzu. Juliana had in less than a year earlier married to Goddy's cousin Charles - the beginning of a friendship that will span for over half a century.

In 1943, Rose was born to Godwin and Maria as their first daughter. It was a memorable event for the young man Godwin. He wasted no time in sending message home to his mother (Akumbu) that a daughter was born of Maria. At this time, Luke had started experimenting with the help of his brother, on a liquid mixture (practically of bush herbs) which will later become Melos Conquer Mixture. Shortly after Rose was born, young Patrick left home in 1944 in search of other professions. At this juncture, he sent young Luke and his young wife to his senior brother, Moses. In the midst of these successes came a very serious illness that sent the young man Godwin away to a medical facility in Uruakpani in Cross River State for two years. Before he went for medical treatment in 1945, ailing Godwin entrusted the fate and care of his wife and daughter including all his properties and business to his younger brother Luke. While Luke

assumes authority and responsibility for all in the family, no sooner did Maria Godwin's wife accused Luke of abuse of authority, mistreatment and misappropriation of amenities. Citing lack of understanding among them, she left with the baby (Rose) and went home to Ndiakunwanta Uno where she lived with her husband's mother (Oriaku Akumbu). A few years later, after a constructive treatment, {it should be noted that at that time it was all European white medical management facility} young Godwin had fully recovered.

He returned home and quickly reorganized his family and his business. In 1948, he stopped upholstery business having now discovered a very lucrative and promising business in fashion in the offshore port of Calabar. He then moved to Calabar seaport with his family where he established a Fashion Boutique enterprise. He opened two stores at the edge of the sea where the overseas imports and export business looms. In the face of expanding business, he beckoned on his brother Patrick to temporarily help hold the business in check. He later sent for one of his extended family relatives Chukwuma Kokere to help him in the business while he learnt the trade. Godwin and his family lived at 12 Odwyire Street where his wife gave birth to twins (a boy Eric and a girl Virginia). A heart-breaking incident occurred when Eric died as a baby of chronic children syndrome (ihe nkpatu). This incident cast a dark shadow on Goddy (as his friends and relatives call him) and his family. It was all the more sad because Eric was the first son of the family over whose birth he had earlier on informed his close friends and relatives with joy. This notwithstanding, except Florence and her twin sister, Maria gave birth to all four of her children at this trading seaport of Calabar. These four children include Margaret, Helen, Henry and Beatrice. As the years went by, Goddy's business expanded and was blessed with success and the family had the honour of hosting many family members as visitors. These included his brothers Luke and Moses and his cousin Charles, Sunday, Frederick, Gabriel, Simeon, Peter and numerous other friends. Besides these family members, young Goddy had lots of friends from Ibibio, Aguata, and Port Harcourt who came over to Calabar for business. Goddy cherished friendship, love and peace and was highly revered for these qualities. He could go to any length to demonstrate the love he had for his kith and kin. Once, young Goddy defiled thick forests, bushes, marshes, rivers, wild animals, night and cold and trekked all the way from Ndiakunwanta Ochie Uno to

Ndiakunwanta Ofeimo to visit his relatives. Upon his arrival after midnight, members of his families; Asouzu, Udoji and Udokwu etc. were amazed at his late arrival but marvelled at the extraordinary love that propelled his journey.

His efforts were often punctuated by misfortune. This is the case when thieves stormed one of his business stores and carted away goods valued at thousands of then British Pounds. He was undeterred by these setbacks and could always quickly restock his two stores with merchandise. Some of these setbacks were the reasons his elder brother Moses advised him to move to Aba where he would be close to his brothers and relatives. In 1960 therefore, Mazi Godwin and his wife bought their house at the corner of Ochefu Road and School Road (No. 64 School Road) in Aba, a little less than 100 yards to Christ the King Church compound and the Holy Rosary convent. He also acquired two new stores on Kent Street and later settled his family and transferred his business to Aba. A year after their settlement at Aba, his wife gave birth to their twin girls. Of the twins, only Florence survived. Her twin sister died suddenly of infant sickness at the Aba general hospital. His business at Aba prospered such that he had to look for helpers. This he found in the person of one Isiala Ngwa boy named Rafael Agbai who lived with him and did some house work while he learnt the trade. Rafael was an honest, intelligent and obedient young boy. These qualities made Raph the longest serving and favourite of Goddy's servants. As the business progressed he accepted Okoli and his brother Nwankwo to serve him. These two were orphans who took the opportunity of their stay with him to learn the trade. Okoli and Nwankwo came from the heart of Ndi-Akunwanta uno (Obi-uno). Their house overlooks Charles Asouzu's home, across Akunwanta Road.

Goddy had been a devout Christian who made spirited efforts to fulfil his religious obligations. He was a regular churchgoer who attended services every Sunday. He summoned his family for prayers session every night before bedtime. When he moved over to Aba, he received much inspiration from his cousin, Charles Asouzu, who was a very active member of Christ the King Parish Aba. Goddy did his best in whatever capacity he could serve in this church and was outstanding in his contributions to some of the committees that needed his services. He was selected a member of the planning committee during the old Church reconstruction and improvement project. He

remained an active member of this church until the Nigerian-Biafran civil War.

The civil war sent everyone packing to his hometown for refuge. Mazi Ubaezuonu took his family and retreated to his father's compound but the house he built next to his mother's had fallen. After six months he bought a piece of land from the parents of his servants (Okoli and Nwankwo) in the heart of Ndi-Akunwanta Obi-Uno, near his brother Luke's' house and cousin Charles, and build a five bed room house and moved his family in. At the time of erecting the house, during the process of clearing he sustained a very serious injury of a tree branch that broke the bone of his right thigh. Demean Amalughalu (a gifted bone mender) that lived near Obi,Ndi-Akunwanta was called in to action. His mother Akumbu was so sad that she cried day and night for his beloved son whom she thought was going to pass because of the injury, but Ubaezuonu later recovered fully only to limp.

Immediately after the war, in 1971 he went back to Aba with his son Henry to evaluate the condition of his properties in the war-devastated city. When he returned, he developed a stomach ulcer, which he had earlier been diagnosed of. Series of medical attention could not rescue him. He died in November 1971 with all the blessings from his family, the whole family was on his side. Mazi Godwin Ubaezuonu Nwankwo was survived by his wife Mrs. Maria Nwankwo, a son - Henry; six daughters - Rose, Virginia, Margaret, Helen, Beatrice, Florence and his Mother (Oliaku Akunbu). Mazi Godwin Ubaezuonu Nwankwo Nmelonye (Alias - Omenanyaoha) will be remembered for his love for peace and humanity and his appreciation of brotherhood.

Mazi Godwin Nwankwo Nmelonye and his wife Maria Aka Nwankwo were blessed with seven children – one boy and six girls. Rose their eldest daughter is married to Patrick Ezekwem of Ndi Ogbuonyeoma Arondiziogu. They are blessed with four sons. Virginia their daughter is married to Mr. Donatus Okolorie of Nzerem, Mbano with seven children (three boys and four girls). Margaret their daughter died in 1972 a year after her father's death. Helen Nkemegina is still not married. Henry Egbeukwu their only son is married to Carolyn Mbadugha from Nnokwa in Anambra state. They have two sons, Chinua and Classic and they are resident in USA. Beatrice Nwaobiara their daughter is married to Ben Okonkwo from Ndi-Izuogu. They have four boys and two daughters. Florence is married to Emmanuel Onyema Nwankwo from Obi-Ndiakunwanta

Uno Arondizuogu with five children four boys and a girl. His wife Maria Aka Nwankwo died in January, 2004 at the age of seventy nine. Below: Mazi Luke Nwankwo (Omenyiri)



**LUKE EZEANA  
NWANKWO  
(OMENYIRI)**

**By Chief Linus Nwankwo (son)**

Chife ( Mazi) Luke Ezeana Nwankwo , alisa Melos was born about the year 1910 at Ndiakunwanta Uno , Arondizuogu to the family of Late Mazi Nwankwo Nmelonye and Madam Akumbu Nwankwo Nmelonye. He was the third child of his parents who had six children. His father, Nwankwo was a dreaded warrior of his time. Although his parents were not affluent as to finance his education, the young Ezeana was privileged to see the four walls of primary school from 1928, at the central school Nkwoachi and later at Amaudo in Ndiakeme village where he called it off in 1932 in standard 3 owing to financial difficulties. Luke was very resourceful and for this reason, he got himself self-employed tapping palmwine and searching for “agu”in “ude ngwo” for subsistence until late in 1934 when his brother Mazi Moses Nwankwo picked him up and travelled to the commercial city of Aba. He gave him one shilling and six pence to start petty trading on provisions and empty bottles. After one year, he found trading unprofitable. He sold all his wares and returned his brother’s money to him.

His other brother who was his immediate senior by name Godwin picked him again to the mid-west to learn carpenter between 1937 and 1940 after which he returned to Aba to embark on mobile trading on bicycle spare parts. He had neither a shop nor capital and so he collected the spare parts from traders in Aba and hawked them around the market after which he settled the traders and took his profits. He traded in this way up till 1946 when he left bicycle spare

parts trade and went into patent medicine trade maintaining the same pattern of payment.

In 1950 , while hawking his drugs in Uyo , Luke came in contact with an Ibibio man who was also dealing in drugs and requested him to allow him carry his drugs on credit and to settle him after sales . This man who was a Lagos-trained chemist and who was vast in the use of herbs agreed to his request with mixed feelings. He pointed out that his fellow kinsmen, the Ibibios, were so dishonest that they had duped him several times after granting them credit facilities. Luke maintained good relationship with this man for many years. The man was simply astonished at the degree of honesty displayed by this “uneghe”man (the name they normally used in referring to an Igbo man). The Ibibio wondered why his people were dishonest with him whereas the “uneghe” proved very honest. For this reason, he decided to reward him for his honesty. He took him to the bush and showed him all the local herbs with which he produced his drugs. Luke collected these materials and returned to Aba to experiment on his own. From this experiment resulted the legendary and popular anti - malaria medicine “Melos Conquer Mixture” which is a household name not only in Nigeria, but also throughout West Africa and beyond. In 1975, the company, L.E.N. Melos & Sons (Nig) Ltd was incorporated.

Mazi Melos as Luke Nwankwo Nmelonye was popularly called got married in 1947 to Grace Arodiogbu from Ndiakeme Uno. They have ten children ,7 boys and 3 girls . His first son Linus is presently the managing Director of his company, L.E.N. Melos & Sons (Nig) Ltd. Leonard, the second son is a marketing graduate of an American University and proprietor/managing Director of a pharmaceutical Industry. Fidelis is a pharmacist and a product of an American University, while Vincent is a U.S. graduate of political Science. Anthony is an American graduate in Estate Management and now a licensed Real Estate Agent in the U.S. Others are in various fields of life and studies.

Mazi Melos' contributions to the course of Arondizuogu are immeasurable both through the Aba branch of Arondizuogu patriotic Union and central Headquarters. He was one of the founding fathers of Arondizuogu Patriotic Union Aba branch and served in many committees, both at Home and Abroad. He featured prominently in all the major matters concerning Arondizuogu. He was instrumental to the construction of road network in Ndiakunwanta Uno. He was a member of peoples club of Nigeria, which has built an ultra- modern court hall complex at Ndiawa. His contribution are also reflected in the Arondizuogu social club of Nigeria. He was a devout Catholic and enjoyed relaxation and social discussions. He and his wife died later in the year 2003. Chief Omenyiri died at the age of 93 years while his wife died at the age of 73. Adhering strictly to the biblical injunction that what God has put together let no man put asunder, Mazi Melos

and his wife were given a very befitting burial, the same day, on April 17, 2004 by his children, friends and well wishers. May their souls rest in bosom of the Lord!

Left: Mazi Patrick Nwankwo (Okwubie)



### **PATRICK IGBANI NWANKWO (OKWUBIE)**

**By Mr. Clifford Nwankwo (son)**

Mazi Patrick Igbani Nwankwo, the fourth son of Mazi Nwankwo and Akumbu Nmelonye, was born at Akunwanta Uno, in Arondizuogu within the second decade of last century.

#### **EARLY SCHOOL LIFE:**

Little Igbani, as his father called him attended St. Philips Catholic School, Akeme, Uno, Arondizuogu. At a time when the attainment of standard six was a rare achievement, Patrick did so and obtained his first school-leaving

certificate in flying colours. Apart from his intellectual excellence at school, he was a renowned flutist and was one of the leaders of the school band. At that time when African traditional wrestling was a popular sport, young Patrick was one to admire and this won him the respect of his mates.

**HIS LIFE ENDEAVOURS:** At the end of his primary school education, he stayed at home for some time and helped his parents in farming which was their occupation at that time. In 1943, he went to Calabar where he joined one of his elder brothers, Mazi Godwin Nwankwo. After a few years of business training, he established his own business, dealing on textiles and men's' ready-made wears. This business was very successful as he did a lot of business with the then British colonialists many of whom lived in Calabar at that time.

As an adage says, 'to leave is to change and to change is to make progress', not withstanding the notable achievements made by Mazi Patrick at Calabar, his endeavours at Calabar were punctuated by an avalanche of trials and tribulations which informed his decision to move over to Aba in 1961. At Aba, he established a patent medicine business shuttling between Aba and Port Harcourt and other towns in the present Akwa Ibom and Cross River States.

Within a few years after arrival at Aba, he had made enough money to buy the present 13 Onyekwere Street from his elder brother Chief L.E. Nwankwo.

**HIS MATRIMONIAL AND FAMILY LIFE:** In the fullness of time, Patrick married former Miss Theresa Igbomba Nnajoifor of Ndi-Okereke kindred of the same Akunwanta Uno, Arondizuogu. This Union did not last up to twelve calendar months with the sudden death of his wife, Igbomba, leaving a twelve day old son they named Clifford: Man, they say, proposes but God disposes. He never lost his faith and trust in God as he strongly believed that the all-knowing God had His good reasons for everything He did. Eight long years after the death of his first wife, Patrick married another wife, again from the same Akunwanta Uno but this time from the Okeke-Ogige family. This marriage with his young teenage-wife, former Miss Patricia Mgbolukwe Okeke is blessed with seven children-four sons and three daughters, namely, Mrs Victoria Kanu, a business woman and student of Alvan Ikoku College of Education Owerri; Catherine Nwankwo – a business-woman, Mr. Uchekukwu Nwankwo, a business man, Mr. Ikechukwu Nwankwo, a business man; Mr. Chidi Nwankwo, a graduate of the University of Calabar; Miss Chinonyerem Nwankwo,

a seamstress and Mr. Okwudiri Nwankwo, an undergraduate of the University of Calabar.

His first son Clifford is a biochemist (B.Sc; M.Sc.) and was the Quality Assurance Manager of Leo Melos pharmaceutical Industries Ltd, Aba. He has his own private company (CLINPAT INVESTMENTS LTD) dealing on Industrial chemicals and manufactures the “MERIT” school Chalk. Clifford is presently the Vice Principal (Administration) of Okpala Secondary School, Okpala, Imo State on the rank of ‘Principal Grade I’.

**HIS END:** Mazi Patrick Igbani Nwankwo’s journey on earth was very short-lived. His own portion was that of a man that suffered to establish a family but never raised any; a man that planted but never saw the yield let alone reaping any. A few years after he came over to



Aba, precisely on the 14th day of November 1965, he died of hepatitis-a disease that came as a strange one and little or nothing was known about it at that time. Patrick is however remembered by those who knew him as a peace loving and honest man who stood for justice throughout his life-hence he was fondly called OKWUBIE (meaning, he whose verdict or contribution is never faulted).

Left: Mazi Sunday Donatus Nwankwo

**DONATUS SUNDAY  
NWANKWO  
(ONYE ISI YA NAWU  
AJA)**

**By Peter Nwankwo (son)**

Mazi Donatus Sunday was born in 1927 in the family of Nwankwo Nmelonye and Madam Akumbu of Ndiakunwanta Uno Arondizuogu in the present Ideato North Local Government Area of Imo State. He was the sixth son of his parents. He attended his primary school at St. Philip’s Primary School Ndiakeme Uno Arondizuogu and obtained his first school-leaving certificate. He was

a very versatile man whose life embraced most aspects of human life. He could not continue his education due to some circumstances. Later on, his attention was directed towards Aba in pursuit of a more fulfilling way of life. Here he joined his elder brother Moses (Aku bu Mmadu) in his business. He progressed and prospered but it was not so easy for him in the beginning. He later got married to Eunice Ekodu Nwankwo (Nee Muojekwu) of Ndiakunwanta Uno in 1961. They were blessed with six children. Their union was very strong and it lasted for thirty - six years when death did them part. Their marriage was full of love and care. As time went on Sunday joined his brother Luke Nwankwo (Melos) in his business as a sale man of **Melos Conquer Mixture**. That was what made him travel throughout the country and also to be able to understand about 18 ethnic languages in Nigeria. Though in his early age he was attacked by fire but that didn't stop him from anything until in 1982 when he was also attacked by fire accident again at Aba - Port Harcourt Express way with his driver. They were rescued and sent to Hospital where he recovered and was nicknamed (**Onyiri oku**) one who refused to be destroyed by fire.

Sunday served the community and humanity very well and creditably. Many people in the town can testify to this. His social behaviour, good moral, good sense of judgement and his organizing ability made him to be the first Ndiakunwanta Youth Leader and earned him the name Ochioha – the one that organises the public.

On the side of religion, he was born into the Catholic faith and he upheld and treasured his faith until his death. He was active in the church and was the first leader of Ndiakunwanta Catholic Youth in the 1970`s. He was also the patron of St. Joseph's Catholic Choir, Ndiakunwanta Uno until his death. Besides, he was a member of the parish council, chairman PTA (Parents Teacher Association) of St. Theresa Commercial School, Arondizuogu. He was a member of Eze Ndubuisi Kanu`s cabinet, the Eze of Ndi IHEME Autonomous Community. Furthermore, he was an Akajiofor representing Ndi Onyeachonam ward in Ndiakunwanta Uno; leader Anajemba cultural dance Ndi Onyeachonam, Ndiakunwanta Uno. He was also a member of Ekpe na Mboko society and of Njima Arondizuogu traditional masquerade club. He mastered the rudiments of first aid and general medication and functioned as a quasi village doctor. Many benefited from his art and medical prowess.

Sunday was a man full of ambition and optimism. He was humble, obedient, respectful, cheerful, yet fearless. He was modest

and was often a bridge between peoples, between the majority and the minority, between the rich and the poor. He was a blessing and a treasure to his people, intelligent, tactful, just, principled, strict, a disciplinarian and a man of good judgement.

Sunday meant different things to different people, to some people he was a moralist and adviser, to some people he was a helper and a pace - setter and a focus of emulation ,while to many he was an epitome of fatherhood, a bulldozer, a planer, a peace maker, a mobiliser, in fact he was a hero of his time, he died on 22nd January 1998 and buried on 6th of February 1998, aged 71 years .

Below: Mazi Charles Asouzu (Omezioha)



## **CHARLES IJOMA ASOUZU (OMEZIOHA)**

**By Rev. Fr. Innocent I. Asouzu  
(son)**

Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu Nmelonye (KSM) was born in 1912 at Ndiakunwanta Ofimo Arondizuogu as the first son of Mazi Asouzu Nmelonye and Oliaku Amanso Asouzu. His mother hailed from Ekwulobia in Aguata local government of Anambra state. The young Ijoma had a very happy and memorable childhood, which he spent in the company of his parents, his two brothers- Gabriel and Michael, and his only sister

Regina. At a time when it was usual for the first son to follow the occupational life style of their fathers, the young Ijoma remained at home under the tutelage of his father who was a farmer and a trader. His father however, discovered early the immense and invaluable importance of sound western education and had his son registered for basic primary education at the nearest school then at Umuedi-Umunono. Since the school at Umuedi had the provision only for standard 2 education, the young Ijoma remained there only for two

years until 1926. In 1927, he went to St Philips Ndiakeme Uno where he continued his primary school education until 1931. It is to be remembered that at the beginning of the twentieth century many people in Ndiakunwanta had converted to Christianity. Asouzu Nmelonye together with his household were initially members of the Methodist church until 1920 because this was the only church within their geographical area. Together with Mazi Udoji Nmelonye, they changed to the Catholic Faith in 1922 and embraced the new faith with the zeal of converts. Charles relates with great excitement how in May 1929 he was baptized into the Catholic faith after very thorough and stringent catechetical instructions. His zeal and industry paid off since he could receive the sacrament of confirmation the same year through the hands of Bishop Joseph Shanahan C.S.Sp. of blessed memories. He strongly believed that the good, deep and firm impression left on him by the Catholic Church at this stage of his development greatly and positively influenced his whole attitude to life later. He is to devote his life to the service of this church and in love to fellow human beings.

After his primary school education in 1931, he left his parents and went to Aba to try his fortune. He carried his newly won faith with him and became one of the early staunch members of Christ The King Church Aba in 1932. At this time in Aba, his cousin Mazi Moses Nwankwo (Aku bu mmadu) had established himself as an artisan of the tailoring branch and later on as a trader in the bicycle spare parts branch. Moses accepted young Charles as a tailor apprentice from 1932 to 1933. Already in 1934, the young Charles had opened his own tailoring workshop. In 1936, misfortune struck. This was when Charles as a bachelor lost his father. Charles gave a befitting burial for his father Asouzu. He performed the traditional rites for his father – Igbu Ehi, that is the killing of the traditional cow for his father- Izuogu and IHEME attended the funeral.

The sad incident of the death of his father was not a big setback for Charles because he saw it as a challenge to his manhood. He embraced this challenge of supporting his widowed mother and his little brother Gabriel with courage and determination. After the funeral, he returned to Aba together with his younger brother Gabriel and their first cousin Raphael Okoli, the son of Okoli Nmelonye and the father of Comfort Okoli Ugbaja. The fraternal love that characterized the children of Nmelonye showed itself in Charles' life. His home was open to all children of Nmelonye who visited Aba. He

gave them shelter when they came to Aba to trade or do other business. Back to Aba, he went about his tailoring business with great sense of duty and devotion to the extent that in a very short time he could afford a workshop in the prestigious Hundred Foot (now Azikiwe Road Aba).

In 1938 he returned home and relocated his family from the Okigwe side of the Ibii river at Akunwanta Idozuka to the other side. He had by now erected a decent building of corrugated iron sheet and cement wall for them. This was the mark of affluence and achievement in those days. In 1940, he stopped his tailoring business and it was at this time that he married and wedded his dear wife Juliana Anezi, the daughter of Mazi Godian Okoli of Umuejezie Arondizuogu. This year blessed the new couple with new hopes and aspirations. Charles himself took to importation of bicycle spare parts and was very successful in this business. Not even for a day did he doubt that the Lord had important work for him. Thus, he placed himself and his success at the service of God. In a missionary spirit, he devoted his energy to the growth of Catholicism in Ndiakunwanta Ofimo from where his father, Asouzu and his uncle, Mazi Udoji had stopped. He played a major role in erecting the “modern” St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Akunwanta Idozuka in 1955. This was the same year he started importing stockfish from Iceland. Soon after his business connection in Iceland, he was able to establish flourishing business links with Holland, Norway and Germany. These connections attracted many eminent pioneer overseas merchants to Nigeria among whom was Mr. Thoroddur. E. Johnson P.O. Box 61, Hafnarstraeti 15, Reykjavic Iceland. He was a very important business associate of Union of Stockfish Producers, Reykjavik, Iceland. His local business associates included Nnanna Kalu, Ilobunsi, Elendu Ibe, Nnopus etc. As early as 1961 he was invited to Iceland, Norway, Holland and Germany to negotiate grounds for the expansion of stockfish trade in Nigeria. Offshoots from this trip were very vital business stopovers at Scotland and England. He undertook this trip in a spirit of nationalism and service to many small-scaled traders and big business associate alike. Many small-scale traders benefited immensely from his generosity since he was famed in granting interest-free loans to his clients. They obtained quotas of bales of stockfish to sell and return the capital to him while retaining the profit. As his business flourished, he was able to erect more decent building for himself and his family at Aba and at his home town. Thus, he built the bungalow

at 141 Ehi Road in 1947 and the storeyed building along Ehi Road by Mosque Street in 1955. His Mother Amanso died in 1958 and he accorded her a very befitting burial.

His efforts were crowned with series of successes. Thus in 1961 he was able to erect an “ultra modern” home for his family at Ndiakunwanta Uno, Arondizuogu. This necessitated his transfer from Ndikunwanta Ofimo (Idozuka) to his present residence at Ndiakunwanta Uno Aro-ndizuogu. In 1964 he witnessed the consecration to the Lord of his first dear daughter Paulina Udeaku Asuzu (Sr. M. Paul Asuzu IHM). She was consecrated into the Congregation of Immaculate Heart Sisters. The event was well attended by sons and daughters of Nmelonye as a pride of the extended family. This event gave him, his dear wife and the entire Nmelonye family immense joy. Charles understood it not only as an answer to his prayers but also as a way of sincere commitment to the service of God.

Not only in the church circle did he see his prayers answered but in his daily undertakings. Thus within the same period, he acquired and developed plot 145 Ogbunabali West Layout, Port Harcourt Plot. He erected a very modern upstairs at this site in 1966/1967 but which was hardly occupied before the outbreak of the Nigerian/Biafra civil war. After the war, the building was considered abandoned property, which had to be sold at a pittance.

Not only in his community church of Arondizuogu but also in his domicile Aba did he express his love for God through active participation in the work of spreading the gospel. He was among those that organized the early bazaars of Christ The King Parish ever and participated very actively in the sales and auctions. He served in what was then know as the All Purpose Committee of this parish and was its treasurer from 1956-1967. He was a member of the parish council. He belonged to many pious societies where he held different important and key posts. He made very positive contributions towards the growth of Aba township as a merchant, a land lord, a ward leader and a reference person in diverse important matters. He was always in the forefront in pursuit of any project that would bring peace and progress to his home town Arondizuogu. For this reason, he was given the name **OMEZIOHA** – the one who brings peace and order to the community. He gave both financial and moral support to most important projects of his time towards the development of Arondizuogu. A typical example was the National High School

Arondizuogu where he was a foundation patron and one of the chief financiers. He is conspicuously documented in the photograph of the foundation members of this school along with other eminent sons of Arondizuogu and IHEME. He was a founding member of Arondizuogu Patriotic Union (APU). He made very generous donations towards the building of St. James Catholic Church Arondizuogu and received certificates of merit to this effect. He belonged to the building committee of that church at its critical stages. In his village Ndiakunwanta Uno Arondizuogu, he was the president of Akunwanta Improvement Union (AIU) from 1964-1976 as well as one of the chief financiers of St. Joseph's Catholic Church Ndiakunwanta.

His love for the Church and the saints carried him to many places of pilgrimage. In 1975, he made a pilgrimage to Rome and Lourdes and loved to reminisce his experience at these holy places. His efforts both at his home churches, at his Aba parish and the entire Umuahia diocese did not go unnoticed. Thus Bishop Anthony Gogo Nwedo C.S.Sp. recommended him to his Holiness Pope Paul VI as one of those to be awarded the papal medal **Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice**. On August 21, 1977 he was among the few who became recipients of this papal merit award. This honour was followed on 31, May 1980 by his initiation into the order of Knights of St. Mulumba, Umuahia Sub-council.

Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu (Omezioha) was married to Mrs. Juliana Anezi Okoli (1925- May 1, 1998) of Umuejezie of Ndiejezie, Arondizuogu. Their marriage was blessed with, six sons, Hyacinth Ndubuisi, John Okechukwu, Innocent Izuchukwu, Maurice Ugochukwu, Christopher Chukwuma, Anthony Amazu and five daughters-Martina Udenwa, Paulina Udeaku, Angelina Eneanya (Nwanjiaga the second daughter of Nmelonye re-incarnated in her), Frances Ngozi, Maria Chinyere. Hyacinth (Omemeboji) is married to Maria Asouzu and they have six children - Akumbu Asouzu, Onyinye Asouzu, Chukwuemeka Asouzu, Obianuju Asouzu, Ebuka Asouzu, Ijeoma Asouzu. He is a successful businessman at Aba. John (Oririagwuaku), is married to Lilian Nnenna Asouzu. They have three children - Adaobi Jennifer Asouzu, Chinonso Charles Asouzu, Nnaemeka Francis Asouzu. He rose to the rank of a bank manager in the banking sector. Innocent is fondly called Onyiriudofe because he is believed to be the reincarnate of his grandfather. He became a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. He was the first Vocation's Director of Catholic Diocese of Aba after its creation in 1990. He held this post for

fourteen years and worked very closely with His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Vincent V. Ezeonyia C.S.Sp., the first bishop of Aba diocese, in the wonderful apostolate of training and formation of future priests of the new diocese of Aba. Besides, he lectures at the University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria. Rev. Fr. Asouzu became the first Professor of Philosophy ever of that University in 1999, that is, twenty-four years after the founding of the University in 1975. Maurice (Moore) is married to Gwanda Asouzu. Moore has five children. Besides the three earlier mentioned, Chinyere Ngozi Harris and Marisa Christine Harris are his daughters. He rose to the rank of eHea University Professor of Chemistry at Troy State University, Alabama USA. He later resigned his teaching appointment, set up a factory, as an industrialist, for the manufacture of cosmetics, and allied products in Alabama USA where he made his home. It is to be remembered that “research by Dr. [Moore] Asouzu resulted in the first TSU [Troy State University] patent-a method of computer-based chemical analysis that allows the wood pulp/paper industry to produce better products faster and more efficiently at less cost” (Culled from Career Opportunities...The Troy State University System). Christopher (Omeziha) became an accountant and he is resident in USA with his family. He is married to Jill Anita Asouzu and they have four children. Anthony is married to Nkechi Jennifer Asouzu and they have two children. He is an eminent scholar and lectures Law at King's College London, University of London. He has published numerous scholarly articles and leading books in his field. He made Britain his home. Hon. Chief Martina Chikatah married to Imo Vincent Chikatah of Ndiakunwanta Uno. She graduated in English Language from the University of Nigeria Nsukka as an Educationist. She won election to the post of a Councillor for Ward One in the city of Aba in 1995. She was honoured with a chieftaincy title of “Ada di Ora Mma I of Eziamia” by Eze Ikonne of Aba for her contributions towards the growth and progress of Enyimba city Aba. She is now resident in London with the husband and two sons who are citizens of Great Britain. Her twin sister Paulina (Rev. Sr. Mary Paul Asuzu IHM) became a nun of the Immaculate Heart Congregation, Nigeria. She was the regional superior of her congregation for twenty years in Ghana and was honoured in Ghana in the year 2000 for her selfless and excellent contributions towards the growth of the church there with the papal medal pro ecclesia et pontifice. Angelina graduated from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria with a degree in pharmacy. She

is married to Engineer Cyril Ohuche of Amazu Ikpaocha Arondizuogu. They have three children, Ijeoma, Ugonwa and Nnamdi. They are resident at Onitsha. Frances has a degree in Economics from the University of Benin. She is married to Rev. Pastor Israel Obafemi from Kogi State of Nigeria. They have two children Ibukun-Oluwa Chidinma Obafemi and Ayo-Oluwa Chinaza Obafemi . She is a lecturer of Economics at the University of Calabar, Nigeria and besides her teaching and academic activities, she derives much joy and fulfilment in the community service of ministering to families via their “Happy Home Club”. Chinyere, the last daughter of her parents, has a degree in English language from the University of Nigeria Nsukka and works in the new age communication sector. She has a son, Kelechi Charles Kelly Onyike Kalu.

Charles had much fulfilment in the achievements and progress of his children. His family was for him a priority and he did everything possible to see it happy. At a time when lavish education for girls was viewed sternly, he stood behind his daughters and saw to it that they had sound university education. He loved his boys dearly and told his children often “don’t keep till tomorrow what you can do today”, a maxim which has helped them much in their search for meaning. He travelled to Austria with his wife Juliana in 1979 to witness the priestly ordination of their son Innocent. At their return from Austria, he engaged himself with joy and happiness to his preoccupation as a merchant. Some years thereafter, his health started to fail him but he enjoyed the consolation and loving care of his wife, the entire Nmelonye family, relatives and friends. In January 1987, he travelled to U. S. A. with his wife at the invitation of his sons for two major operations in the eyes at Brookwood Hospital under the supervision of the renowned Dr Thomas D. McKinnon. He came back in March 1987 and seemed fully recovered. It is God’s will that he should leave this world on Friday 31. July 1987 at 7 a.m. in the very arms of his dear wife after being anointed and having received the Holy Communion from his son. A very memorable funeral was organised to his honour. The funeral mass was celebrated first at Christ The King Church Aba by his son, Rev. Fr. Innocent Asouzu and then at his home parish Ndiakunwanta Arondizuogu by His Lordship Bishop Anthony Gogo Nwedo C.S.Sp. in the company of over fifty priests and thousands of mourners representing different associations. Arondizuogu Patriotic Union (APU), Aba Branch representing Izuogu and IHEME organised a separate hero’s funeral to his honour at his 141 Ehi Road residence on

Saturday 9th July 1988 to mark his innumerable contributions towards the development of his town. In this way ended a life well spent in the service of God and humanity since anything that has a beginning has an end.



Above: Invitation sent out by Arondizuogu Patriotic Union (APU Aba Branch) for the Heroic Funeral Ceremony of Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu. Right: Mazi Gabriel E. Asouzu

**MAZI GABRIEL  
ENUKAOHA  
ASOUZU  
(IKPEGHE ZURU  
ARO)**

**By Sir Christian Asouzu  
KSM (son)**

Mazi Gabriel Enukaoha Asouzu was the second child of Asouzu and Amanso Nmelonye of Ndiakunwanta Arondizuogu. He was born in the year 1914.

He had his primary school education at Okigwe and later migrated to



Aba. With the assistance of his elder brother, Charles he became a produce merchant, and was successful. In the year 1950 he married young Christiana Ihekerenma Onwumere with whom he raised his children upon completion of his house at 212 Ehi Road Aba. When the produce trade became cumbersome for his young family in the late fifties, he moved over to trading in building materials. He was a major importer of building materials and a partner to major multinational building material companies. He was a strong believer in community development. For this reason, he participated actively in all communal activities both at Ndiakunwanta Ofe-Imo, Ndiakunwanta Uno and at his place of residence Aba. He embraced Christianity with zeal and was a member, leader and patron of major organizations of the Catholic Church. He attended daily masses at his Parish, Our Lady Of Lourdes Church Aba and took delight in working and serving the Church. Mazi Gabriel was at peace with the world. He lived and died a realist. Nobody changed him, no matter what was put before him. His morals were beyond all standards. Mazi Ikpeghe zuru Aro believed firmly in justice and fair play. He was humble and caring to a fault. He never quarreled with anyone, rather he was always approached to settle disputes. Gabriel and his wife Christiana were blessed with eight surviving children- Christian, Emmanuel, Florence, Chima, Vincent, Beningnus, Ijeoma and Chinedu. The death of his second son Fabian who died after a motor accident was the lowest point of his life. He gave the best to his Children and he was always there when he was needed. He armed himself with Bible teachings on the one hand and wonderful advice on the other hand. Courtesy was his watchword and this he imparted to all his children. He never bothered any body when it was not necessary. Gabriel Enukaoha after a protracted illness died at the age of 82 years in 1996. He was buried at his home in Ndiakunwanta Uno on July 26th, 1996.

Below: Mazi Michael Asouzu: Picture taken in 1954

## **MICHAEL ASOUZU (OKWUIKE NA AKPATA UZU)**

**By Mr. Raymond Asouzu (son)**



Michael Ikechukwu Asouzu was born to late Mazi, Asouzu Nmelonye of Akunwanta Arondizuogu on April 20, 1934. His mother Amanso Asouzu Nmelonye was from Ekwulobia in Aguata L.G.A of Anambra State. He was educated at St. Philip Catholic school Ndiakaeme Uno Arondizuogu. He was the last born of his parents. He was reared in the loving care of his brothers Charles, Gabriel and his sister Regina. After his education, he decided to become a patent medicine dealer. He became so popular that his colleagues,

notably Peter Owunna (Starline Ltd.), M.O. Kanu (Ochiriozuo) and others were admiring him. His business enterprise took him to the northern parts of Nigeria where he stayed until troubles broke out in that part of Nigeria in 1966. He escaped with his life, lost all his property in the North and came back home virtually empty-handed. When he came back, he made Ndiakunwanta Idozuka his abode. He was resident in his brother Charles' house and helped to maintain peace and security in the village. He was appointed the secretary general of Idozuka community council the highest decision making body in the community. He held this post for fifteen years. As a devout Christian, he was appointed the financial secretary of St. Joseph's Catholic Church Akunwanta Idozuka and the treasurer respectively. He held this post for many years. As a peacemaker he was loved by everybody in his community and beyond. He was a good advocate for love and peace like his brothers Charles and Gabriel. He was a champion in his field. He was one of the best farmers in Akunwanta Idozuka community. People came from different parts of the town and community in Arondizuogu to have a look at his fancied barn and yams and to seek advice on how to develop yam seeds. He

produced the best edible palm oil producer in Akunwanta Idozuka. He always told people never to trust in charms and did not associate himself with fetish activities. For Michael, God is supreme in everything; He is life, truth and the way that cannot disappoint those who trust in him.

Michael was happily married to Cecelia the daughter of Harris from Ntigha Isiala Ngwa, Abia State, Nigeria. Michael and Cecelia had six offspring - Raymond, Alexander Nduka, Cyril Enugekwu, Ngozi, Nnenna and Amauche. He died on the 14th June 2000 at the age of 76.



Left: Godwin Nwankwo; Right:  
Fredrich Nwakire Udoji

### **FREDRICH NWAKIRE UDOJI**

**By Emmanuel Udoji (Son)**

Mazi Fredrich Nwakire Udoji was born in the year 1912 the same year Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu was born. He was the first son of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye with his wife Oduagu. As the first son, his father loved him very much. Since he had realized the value of western education, he employed all his resources to ensure that his first son had the best

education. His father sent him to Adazi where he did standard one to six. He was a teacher at Aro Agbani in Okigwe, L.G. A. Imo State. He taught for some years at Agbani before he was employed by the Nigerian Railway Authorities. He trained as a principal accountant. In the year 1951 he married Mrs Florence Ohazurume of Ndiogbuonyeoma Ofeimo. In 1952, they had their first daughter who died immediately after birth. In 1954 their first son Charles was born.

His work in the Nigerian Railway Cooperation took him to many Nigerian towns. He started at Enugu and lived there for many years. From there he transferred to Makurdi where he put in many years of employment. Thereafter he transferred to Port Harcourt. He settled at Port Harcourt and built his house at 4 Ogbuagu Street Mile 3 Diobu. While in Port Harcourt, the family was blessed with a son Emmanuel who was born on November 24, 1958. Their daughter Augustina was born in 1960. In 1964 followed the birth of Christopher their last born. He lived at Port Harcourt until the beginning of the Nigerian Biafra civil war. Due to the civil war, he retired to his home town Ndiakunwanta Arondizuogu. After the war, he went back to Enugu and continued with the Nigerian Railway Cooperation. In 1972 he retired from active service. He then went to Aba and started trading on clothing materials at the Ekeoha market. During this period, he became very sick and died in the year 1973.

His first son Charles did his secondary school education and was employed by the Nigerian Ports Authorities, Port Harcourt. Unfortunately, he died in the year 1978 at Aba General Hospital. His second son Emmanuel is a transporter with National Union of Road Transport Workers, Aba branch. Emmanuel is married to Patricia Ohazurume the daughter of Nwankwo Ohazurume of Ndiakunwanta Uno Arondizuogu. They have two children, one daughter and one son. Fredric's first daughter Augustina trained as a nurse and rose to the rank of deputy nursing sister. She works at Ohafia General Hospital. She is married to Dr. C. U. Mmeregini a medical doctor and owner of Ucheoma Medical Center Amaekpu Ohafia, Abia State. The last son of Fredric's, Christopher trained as Navy officer of the Nigerian Navy. He was a Navy accountant and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Writer. He resigned from the Nigerian Navy and went to USA to further his education. Here he joined the US Navy. Christopher is married to Nnenna Okala from Amakpu Ohafia. They have two children, one boy and one girl. They are resident in USA.

**NB: The biography of Fredrich Udorji was extracted from Emmanuel Udoji and Peter Udoji in interview with Fr. Asouzu on April 19, 2004.**

Below: Mazi Peter Udoji (Ezenaaguoha)

## **PETER CHUKWUKA UDOJI (EZENAGUOHA)**

**By Peter Udoji himself**



Mazi Peter Udoji is the second son of Mazi Udoji Nmelonye with his second wife Ihudiye. He was born at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka in the year 1927. He grew up at home. He started schooling around the year 1935 and had some primary school education at St. Gabriel Catholic School, Ndiakunwanta Nkwofather. He studied up to standard two. And at the early age of about 12 years he left home with his aunt Theresa Obioha. His aunt was married to late John Obioha of Umuori in Neni, Njikoka

L.G.A. Anambra state. John was an elementary school teacher and as such had to migrate from place to place on account of his profession. Young Peter lived with his aunt and the family at differences places including Onitsha, Omuma in Oru division - Orlu in the present Imo State. While he was there he helped the aunt, who traded in clothing materials. He stayed with Obioha family for almost three years. Thereafter, he went home at the instance of his father who wanted his son to be more settled for his education. For this reason, young Peter went back to Ndiakunwanta Idozuka and continued with his education at home at St. Gabriel's. He studied up to standard four. Thereafter, he went to Enugu to live with Denis Okoli the brother of his mother. Denis was a trader who traded on provision. He lived with Denis and

his family for almost two years. While he was living with Denis Okoli, his late brother Fredrich intervened and said that he had to go home and continue with his education. He continued with his education at St. Philips Ndiakeme, Uno. Here he started with standard five. After his education in 1947, he went home to Ndiakunwanta Idozuka to stay with his parents. He stayed there a whole year and in 1949 Gabriel Asouzu his cousin took him to Aba. He lived in his house and was selling bicycle spare parts for him. In 1951 they changed to palm oil trade popularly called produce. In 1954 he was settled by his cousin Gabriel Asouzu who gave him money to start his own trade. As he became independent he took to a trade of his choice which was patent medicine trading. His first place of residence outside the house of Gabriel was the house of Mazi Luke Nwankwo at No 13 Onyekwere Street Off Ngwa Road, Aba. This house belonged to Luke Nwankwo then before he sold it to Patrick Nwankwo his brother. He married in 1958 to Charity Onwuka, the daughter of Mazi Izekiel Onwuka of Ndiokereke, Ndiakunwanta. His first son Ifeanyi was born in 1959. In 1961, his second son Ugochukwu Udoji was born. In 1963 the family was blessed with another son Anthony. In 1965 the family was blessed again with a boy Cyriacus. In 1967 Ifeeyinwa was born. This was at the outbreak of the Biafran Nigerian civil war. He was at home at Ndiakunwanta Idozuka during the civil war. He was a security officer during the war and worked with the Biafran Army at the Okigwe sector. During this time, he lost two of his sons on account of the Biafran war. He did not see their remains. After the war the family was blessed with two more children, Kingsley and Chiugo. He employed all his energy in train his children after the war. His first son, Iheanyi had University education and is a trained officer of the Nigerian Police force. Iheanyi is now married to Mary Udoji and they have four children. Iheanyi's wife is equally a police officer. Mazi Ezenaguoha's second son Ugochukwu is a successful lawyer who has his chamber at Kaduna (Nmelonye Chambers, Kaduna). He is married to Chinyere and they have three children.

In this year 2004 at the age of 77 Peter Udoji is the present patriarch of Nmelonye family after the death of his brothers and cousins. He features very prominently in all meetings and events of Nmelonye family. He is the spokes man of Nmelonye family at traditional marriages, funerals and all other major events. He is a practicing good catholic and a staunch member of St. John's Catholic Parish Iheorji, Aba. In recognition of his contributions to that church,

he was honoured with the award of the title of Ezinna by the parish in 2002.

**NB: The data about Mazi Peter Udoji was extracted from Mazi Peter Udoji himself on April 19, 2004 in interview with Fr. Asouzu**

Below: Mazi Simeon Udoji (Ebekuodike) and his Wife Bridget (Ediapamma)



**SIMEON AMOBI  
UDOJI  
(EBEKUODIKE)**

**By Rev. Evangelist  
Emmanuel Living  
Stone Udoji (son)**

“A difficult task is either an ordeal or an adventure . Adventurers are winners” (Rev. E.

Udoji). Some people are born great but some achieve greatness. Others still are neither born great nor do they achieve greatness, many also have greatness bestowed upon them .So goes a great saying . Mazi Simeon Amobi Udoji could be said to be in the company of those that achieved greatness, but not in the sense that he emanated from a mean family. His father Mazi Paul Udoji Nmelonye was a great man of high ranking, who not only fought for his children but for his brothers and sisters and the entire community at large.

“Amobi” as he was fondly called by his father, seemed to have been born with “shovel programmed for his hands”. He attended Nursery School and Standard -One at Nkwo Fada but finished at St. Theresa`s School Okigwe. He took the Common Entrance Examination at National High School Arondizuogu and passed but could not move further. His father was disposed at the time. His elder relatives were not disposed to train him so his dream of furthering his formal education could not materialize. Life goes on.

He moved to Aba and was lucky to meet one Ndubueze whom he met through his cousin, Late Mazi Gabriel Asouzu. Ndubueze allowed him to use his bicycle on hire. Ebekuodike as Simeon was later popularly known used the bicycle and was selling patent medicine,

which he got from people on credit. After selling, he would return the cost price and take the profit. That was how he started life.

Because riding Bicycle was strenuous, he left Aba and went to Onitsha where he started trading on wood. After a period of time, he discovered that his destiny tilted more towards drug business. He moved back to Aba and started manufacturing a popular and effective laxative that is equally effective in dealing with so many other ailments. This was known as Mobis 760 curative mixture and later as Mobis Conquer Mixture. This business boomed and brought him fortune. All thanks and adoration goes to the Almighty God.

Ebekuo, told me a story that challenged his life and his view of life. This incident took place during his school days. He was active as a footballer and during one of their matches, their team had gone to a medicine man to prepare a charm to enable them win. Before the match however, a priest came and shook hands with all their players inside the pitch. By the time the match was over, they lose the match by a high margin. They were all surprised. At the end of the match, some of the players went back to the medicine man and immediately he saw them, he started asking them what happened. The man said that he was in his house and the charm returned back to him. At this juncture, the lads told him how a man of God shook them before the match. This incident taught him always to trust in Almighty God in whatever he was doing in his life.

Since he was born in 1930, as the third child of his mother, he remained faithful to his promises. However, like all mortals he has his deficiencies. This notwithstanding, he was a good and loving father. He was an epitome of strong personality and character. He was highly dedicated to duty. He was all business like, excited and happy as I led him to give his life to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

He was President General Akunwanta Improvement Union, Vice Chairman Akunwanta Improvement Union and later its Chairman of Aba branch. He held the post of Chairman Akunwanta Idozuka, Chairman Arondizuogu Street Landlords Association, Secretary Nmelonye Family Meeting and President Ijeuwa Social Club of Nigeria

His personal ideology subsisted in his belief in God as the Supreme Being. His regrets were: After years of prosperity, then downfall due to ill health. Throughout his ordeal of sever sickness, he was grateful to God for keeping him alive and sustaining him.



18. Christian Udoji (son -late)  
 19. Mrs. Oby Ugboaja (daughter -Staff Nigeria Airport Authority Lagos)  
 20. Everistus Udoji (son -trader)  
 21. Amobi Udoji (son -Switzerland)  
 22. Eugenia Udoji (daughter)  
 23. Kenekchukwu Udoji (daughter and-Undergraduate Student)  
 24. Uchenna Udoji (son - automobile mechanic)

## **RAPHAEL OKOLI**

**By Anthony Udokwu**

He was the first son of Okoli Mmaku and the father of Comfort Okoli Ugbaja. Raphael grew to resemble his father. He was a very huge man who was often dressed like a soldier with a very heavy belt often tied round his waist. Many people have reported the fact of his tying a belt around his waist like a soldier and this must have been remarkable. He lived at Aba. He did not have children early in his life because he was not quite lucky with his spouses. Raphael became sick as a young man; for this reason, his first wife left him. He married his second wife Rachael from Maduik family of Akunwanta Uno. This woman gave birth to their daughter Comfort. Rachael later left the husband and the care and upbringing of the baby, Comfort, fell to the father. Comfort is, today, married to Mazi Lawrence Ugbaja (Oji ihe ka ndu) of Ndianiche Uno, Arondizuogu. Mazi Raphael Okoli died as a young man.

## **UDOKWU OKOLI**

**By Anthony Udokwu**

The second son of Okoli Mmaku was Udokwu (popularly called aputagwo uwa – we have born into the world). He was a farmer. Udoku was married to a lady from Umuchu a town in the present Anambra state that shares boundary with Ndiakunwanta Uno. He had three children. Anthony Udokwu (also called Aputagwo uwa), is the only son. Maria is his first daughter and Josephine (Orieji) his second daughter. Anthony has taken over the Obi of Okoli Nmelonye. Anthony is happily married to Scholastica Udokwu (Ezi aha ka ego).

Below: Anthony Udokwu (Aputagwouwa)



They have seven children - Patricia O. Udokwu, Obinna J. Udokwu, Ogechukwu J. Udokwu, Ukachukwu A. Udokwu, Chinenye C. Udokwu, Augusta M.

Udokwu and Chukwuebuka A. Udokwu. Anthony is a trader at Aba. He is an accomplished musician who is proficient in such native musical instruments as ekwe and udu. He belonged to the Njima group of the popular Pericomu music group whose first musical albums ISI NA UDO GA ADI and NJIMA SPECIAL were very successful in Nigeria and

internationally. Anthony played the ekwe of this famous composition. Besides, he has much joy accompanying the St. Joseph's parish choir of Ndiakunwanta Arondizuogu as an ekwe and udu player. Maria the first daughter of Udokwu Okoli is married to Mazi Vincent Onwumere of Ndiakeme Uno, Arondizuogu and Orijeji the second daughter of Udokwu Okoli is also married to Mazi Osu achara of Akeme ikpa Okoli in Arondizuogu.

**NB: This information about the Okolis was extracted from Anthony Udokwu in interview with Clifford Nwankwo).**

## **FAMILY ALBUM**

Below: Umunmelonye at the religious profession of Rev. Sister Mary Paul Asuzu (IHM) in December 1964 at Urualla. Standing at the rear from left to right are Mazi Patrick Nwankwo, Regina Asouzu, Mazi Godwin Nwankwo, Cecilia Udoji, John Asouzu. Standing from right to left Linus Nwankwo, Eliza Udoji (Eliza Anwuhuebo), Catherine Ugekwe Udoji, Simeon Udoji, Jerom, Mazi Charles Asouzu's driver. Sitting from left to right are Mrs Christiana Asouzu, Mrs Theresa Nwankwo, Mrs Martina Chikatah, Mazi Charles Asouzu, Sr. Mary Paul Asuzu IHM, Mrs Juliana Asouzu, Mazi Luke Nwankwo (Melos) Mrs Grace Nwankwo, Mazi Gabriel Asouzu. Stooping in front from right to left are Emmanuel Asouzu, Leonard Nwankwo, Frances Asouzu (Frances Obafemi), Christopher Asouzu, Angelina Ohuche, Maurice Asouzu.



Below: The wedding of Mazi Raymond Amakwe in 1968 at Ndiakunwant Uno. Standing second from left in the middle row is Mazi Charles Asozu. Near him to the right is Mazi Francis Obioha, then Simeon Udoji, the bridegroom, the bride, then Mrs. Martina Chikatah, then Mazi Udoji Nmelonye.



Above: About the year 1974: Umunmelonye at the send-off party of Mazi Leonard Nwankwo to U.S.A.

Below: Mazi Charles Ijoma Asouzu and his wife Mrs Juliana Anezi Asouzu in Austria 1979 at the ordination of their son Rev. Fr. Innocent Asouzu by Bishop Johan Weber of Graz at Feldbach. Also in the picture is Hon. Chief Mrs. Martina Chikatah with her son Emeka.



Above: Members of Umunmelonye welcoming Christopher Asuzu from USA with a dance during the meeting of Umunmelonye on December 30, 2003. From right to left: Bridgette Udoji and Lilian Nnenna Asouzu.

Below: Mazi Peter Udoji – Family Head Umunmelonye (centre), Davidson Nwankwo (left) and Emmanuel Udoji (right)



Above: Sons of Umunmelonye at Nmelonye family meeting on December 30, 2003

Below: Umuada Nmelonye at the funeral of Mazi Moses Nwankw. From left to right are Mrs Beatrice Okonkwo, Chief Mrs Martina Chikatah, Lady Mrs Christiana Amakwe, Lady Mrs. Ngozi Obioha.



Above: Daughters of Umunmelonye on December 30, 2003

Below: Some elders of Nmelonye Family at the meeting of Ununmelonye, December 30, 2003. Front row from left to right: Chris Asouzu, Emma Udoji, Rev. Fr. Asouzu, Peter Udoji, Davidson Nwankwo, Marcel Nwankwo, Anthony Udokwu. Middle Row left to right: John Asouzu, Christian Asouzu, Clifford Nwankow David Nwankwo. Rear from left to right: Hyacinth Asouzu, Cyprian Nwankw. In red cap rear: Vincent Asouzu.



Above: Wives of Umunmelonye with Christopher Asuzu

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