

## **“ARCHIVISTS AS ACTIVISTS”**

### **CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS AT THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES DAY 2013 WORKSHOP ON “FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: ROLE OF ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVISTS,” TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2013**

Honourable Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Lagos State, Mr. Lateef Ibirogbu, My Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Director-General of the Lagos State Records and Archives Bureau, Mr. Bolaji Uthman, Keynote Speaker, Professor G.O. Elegbeleye, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am grateful for the opportunity to chair this event, this being a homecoming of sorts as I was a speaker at the Official Inauguration of LASRAB House on February 28, 2012. While I could not attend the other event for unavoidable reasons (but was duly represented), I am happy to be here today in person. I thank the DG of LASRAB for this privilege.

Today, I speak as a Professor of History and Convener of the Network of Nigerian Historians (now formally registered as the Organization for Historical Research in Nigeria), an active partner of LASRAB’s, with which we organized a workshop on “Engaging With the Archives” on March 16, 2012. On a personal note, I have been an active user of Nigerian and United Kingdom archives (the National Archives at Ibadan and Kaduna, and the UK Archives/Public Record Office and Newspaper Library/Archives at Kew Gardens and Colindale, London) since 1979. At least sixty percent of my publications are based on archival documents, an indication of my indebtedness to this invaluable resource.. As an aside, an anonymous assessor of one of my papers (published in the Netherlands-based journal, *Itinerario*, 30,1, 2006) remarked that it fitted into “a well-established Nigerian historiographical tradition of high-quality archival research.” So, it is internationally acknowledged that Nigerian historical scholarship upholds the best traditions of archive-based scholarship.

Archives are of interest to many disciplines and a variety of users from many backgrounds. Indeed, they are at the interface of many disciplines – History, Law, Media, Librarianship, Technology, etc. Hence, there is the need for collaboration among the stakeholders to project the importance of archives and ensure the protection, proper storage and usage of their holdings. Everyone must be involved as archives represent our common heritage. The potential loss of valuable archival material calls for the evolution and sustenance of digital and conventional storage, and for a proactive management of the impending transition to a paperless economy. Permit me to make a special plea – an “SOS” – for the National Archives at Ibadan and elsewhere, where valuable holdings are wasting away due to poor storage and handling. I also enjoin the government and all well-wishers to buy into this salvage

operation and offer generous support. I urge everyone present and other stakeholders to take up the challenge to be both **archivists and activists**.

I commend the organizers of this event, ably led by the DG of LASRAB, Mr. Bolaji Uthman, for making this event possible. I look forward to robust and illuminating exchanges following the lead of our erudite Keynote Speaker, Professor Alegbeleye, and other presenters.

I thank you for listening. God bless.

**Professor Ayodeji Olukoju**

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