

OBITUARY

Dr. Osarẹn Solomon Boniface Ọmọregie, 1933–2015

Benin and Edo studies suffered a great loss in July 2015 with the demise of Dr. Osarẹn Solomon Boniface Ọmọregie, popularly known as OSBO. Born in the Ogbesọn village, Omoregie claimed his family was descended from the Oghorọn guild (the record keepers of the Ogisos, the first kings of Benin), and thus he was exposed to the stories of the Ogisos. Using these very stories, he reconstructed the Ogiso period of Benin history in his magnum opus, “Benin under the Ogiso Monarchs: Foundations of Benin Civilization” which was advertised as a forthcoming in the 1980s by Heinemann Educational Publication Nigeria Limited, the book remained stillborn. Undaunted, Omoregie self-published the work in 1999 under his Neraso Publishers imprint. The book, *Great Benin*, comprises five thematic volumes: *The Age of Iso Norhọ (850 BC–600 AD)*, *The Age of Odionwere (600–900 AD)*, *The Age of Ogiso Foundation (900–1050 AD)*, *The Age of Ogiso Reform (1050–1130 AD)*, and *The Age of Ikaladerhan (1130–1200 AD)*. Though this had been a hazy period in Benin history, which the late Robert Bradbury and some other scholars dismissed as “mythical,” Omoregie’s tenacity in researching and documenting this period filled a major hiatus in Jacob Egharevba’s works.

Omoregie graduated with a degree in history in 1963 as a pioneer student of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. After a stint teaching high school history and publishing *Emotan and the Kings of Benin* (Prentice Hall, 1973), he proceeded to the University of Toronto, where he bagged a doctorate in educational planning in 1980. He worked University of Benin (1982–1985) and the National Universities Commission and retired in 1987. He subsequently devoted his life to his first passion—promoting and documenting Benin and Edo history and culture. He founded and led the Edo Readers Association and the discipline of Ubinology and published *ISPU, the newsletter for the International Society for the Promotion of Ubinology*, to foster the promotion and study of Benin culture and language.

His scholarship was vast and touched on many disciplines, ranging from history through linguistics to literature derived from Benin and Edo history and culture. Some of his publications include *Seat of Wisdom: Tribute to Apostle Samuel Eriamiatọ Agbọnifo (1917–92) as a Great Spiritual Leader* (1992); *Stem, Steps and Caps: A History of Christ's Chosen Church of God, 1949–1989* (1995); his autobiography *The Days of My Gates* (2013); and *The Ironmakers of Great Benin: A History of the Unẹmẹ People* (1998). His books on the Edo language are *Edo Grammar for Schools and Colleges*, *Edo Grammar in Simple Terms*, and *the New Method Edo Book* as well as elementary school readers. He also wrote plays and novels for both children and adults. Some of his plays are *The Trials of Ogiso Owodo* (1990), *The Harrowed Hare: A Folklore Play from Africa* (1992), and *The Sparrow Manifesto* (1993). His novels are *Ikaladerhan: The Prince of Benin Kingdom*; *My Childless Mother: An Old Foster Child Remembers Mother Emotan of Benin* (1991); *The Slaves of Odomuomu: A Novel about the Problems Posed by the Atlantic Slave Trade in the Old Empire of Great Benin*; *The Death of Alo, Great Benin's First Beauty Queen* (2000); *Idẹn N' Okpokhuo: A Novel on Queen Idẹn, An 18th Century Great Heroine in Benin* (2010). He also published a collection of poems for schoolchildren, titled *Poems Old and New: An Experience with 50 Say-It-Out Poems* (1997). Adieu OSBO.

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