

**WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE FIFTH ROUNDTABLE OF THE ORGANISATION
FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN NIGERIA (OHRN), UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, 21
MAY 2014**

Chairperson, Professor Bolanle Awe, our Distinguished Speaker, Professor Michael Omolewa, My Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Family, Friends, Colleagues and Former Students of Professor Emeritus J.F.Ade-Ajayi, NNOM, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Gentlemen of the Press.

The Organisation for Historical Research in Nigeria (OHRN) is grateful to God for the privilege of organizing one of the major scholarly events in the week dedicated to celebrating the living legend, Professor Emeritus J.F.Ade-Ajayi, NNOM, who will clock 85 on May 26. But before I proceed, I crave your indulgence to request that we rise to observe a minute's silence in honour of the memory of departed distinguished historians, Professor Okon Uya (University of Uyo), Professor R.O. Lasisi (University of Ilorin) and Dr. R.A. Adeleye (formerly of the University of Ibadan), and a notable culture historian and activist, Mr. Bolaji Uthman, Director-General of the Lagos State Archives and Records Bureau (LASRAB), who transited since the latest event of this body. The OHRN deeply mourns the loss of the late Bolaji Uthman, one of its major pillars and a veritable bridge between the academy and society.

That said, it is with great pleasure that I formally welcome everyone to this significant event, which celebrates the foremost African historian of our time. It is a measure of our gratitude to a man who has contributed disproportionately to the definition and projection of African historiography over half a century of active engagement. His abridged interview in *The Guardian* newspaper a few days ago confirms that he is still on top of his game as a leading thinker in the field. His advocacy of the imperishable utility of an enduring sense of history, of the rear mirror value of History and its continuing relevance to nation building highlights one of his enduring contributions to the development of African History as a respectable discipline. Fortunately, the eminent Professor's scholarly significance will be laid bare by one of his distinguished proteges, Professor Emeritus Michael Omolewa, former Nigeria Ambassador to UNESCO. The speaker will be formally introduced in due course.

I wish to state for record purposes that the host organization, the OHRN, took off on October 13, 2010 as the Network of Nigerian Historians (NNH). Its founders were driven by a burning desire to revive the study and practice of the discipline of History. Hence, the commitment to “Doing History Differently.” It was formally registered as a legal entity under its current name in June 2013. Since 2010, the NNH/OHRN has organized the following major activities:

- four Roundtables – addressed by Professor Taiwo Akinyele of the University of Lagos, Professor Akanmu G. Adebayo of Kennesaw State University, Georgia, USA and Professor Wale Oyemakinde, formerly of the University of Ibadan, and Professor Emeritus Akinjide Osuntokun, OON, FNAL, respectively;
- a most successful capacity building workshop on “Engaging with the Archives” - in collaboration with the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA), Ibadan; LASRAB and Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan;
- a colloquium at the Redeemer’s University in honour of Professor Emeritus Akinjide Osuntokun, and
- a joint Conference with the Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University on Security in Nigeria.

Today’s Roundtable – the fifth in three and half years - epitomizes the commitment of the OHRN to debates within the discipline toward ensuring the continued relevance of History in its engagement with issues of national policy and development. To be sure, the “Research” in the name of the OHRN does not limit its activities to research, as pivotal as that pursuit is to the discipline. For, we have been active in promoting the teaching of History, its restoration to the junior secondary school syllabus, the development of appropriate textbooks, capacity development and best practices in the discipline.

Let me conclude by thanking everyone for contributing to the success of today’s event. We are especially grateful to Mama C.A. Ajayi, a true Mother in Israel, for the key role that she played in making this event a reality. Among others, the Ade-Ajayi Family made a significant material contribution to this event. We are also indebted to our distinguished Chair, Professor Bolanle Awe, the erudite speaker, Professor Emeritus Omolewa, and all who came to honour “Baba Ajayi.” We duly acknowledge the coordinating roles of the facilitator, Professor Olufunke

Adeboye, Baba's *Beere*, Mrs Yetunde Aina, and Dr. Monsour Murtala, head of the task force in charge of the Roundtable.

I thank you for your patience. God bless.

Professor Ayodeji Olukoju, FNAL

Convener, NNH and Foundation President, OHRN

Vice-Chancellor, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State

21 May 2014