

News From The Dalai Lama Foundation —

December 2008

His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Nigeria

In his own words Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba recounts this historic visit.



It was a dream come true and it happened in front of my very own eyes. The date was November 27, 2008. The event was the Annual Memorial Lecture of the

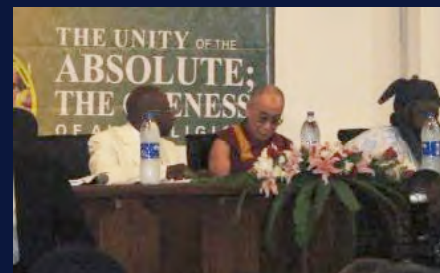
Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation and the location was the Nigerian Institute for International Affairs, located at Kofo Abayomi Road, Victoria Island, Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria. The theme of the program was *"The Unity of The Absolute; The Oneness of All Religion: Value-Guided Conduct As a Universal Tenet and Propriety as a Way of Life for Mankind"*. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was invited by the organizers of the Lecture; a Lagos-Nigeria based international Organization, the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, to present the Keynote Address at this year's lecture, which also coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Foundation. In inviting His Holiness the Dalai Lama as Keynote Speaker at the 2008 Lecture, the Organizers made the best choice, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama came, and in his usual best self, kept all participants on their toes in that 500-capacity Conference Hall of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. I traveled all the way from Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria to Lagos to witness this historic event of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's first visit to Nigeria.

The Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation:

The is a Lagos-Nigeria based International Organization, with presence and projects in South Africa, USA, Europe and many other parts of the world. It is a people oriented Organization with a special commitment to the stimulation of research on ethical, values-based and human development issues. The Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation is led by a young, dynamic, hardworking and talented Nigerian by name Nze Michael Anyiam-Osigwe. The Foundation is committed to the promotion and facilitation of scholarship aimed at articulating a composite approach to human existence and development.

The Lecture and Tenth Anniversary Program:

Registration and Accreditation of participants started as early as 8:00am (Nigeria Time), and at about 10:30am, the Conference Hall was filled to



maximum capacity. Participants came from all walks of life, and in the Hall some sat, while some stood. Several media houses were on hand to cover the event. Then came in His Holiness, led by the Organizers and the Chairman of the event, His Eminence Alhaji Muhammed Sa'ad Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto, who was represented by His Royal Highness, the Emir of Birnin Gwari. This was immediately followed by the singing of Nigeria's National Anthem, as directed by the Master of Ceremony, Mr. Ikenna Ndaguba. The Opening Prayer was led by a Catholic Priest from the Catholic Diocese of Imo, in Eastern Nigeria. The Chairman then gave his opening address, and was briefly followed by an update on the programs and activities of the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Founda-



tion, by Mr. Coetzee Bester; Executive Director of the South African based Africa Institute for Leadership, Research and Development. Professor Oladipo of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ibadan then took time to present a book on the developmental philosophy of the Anyiam-Osigwe, a collaborative project between the University and the Foundation. I was particularly inspired by the address on the Central Theme of the Program by the Coordinator General of the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, Nze Michael Anyiam-Osigwe.

Introduction of Keynote Speaker:

Nze Charles Anyiam-Osigwe introduced and welcomed the Keynote Speaker, His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the stage. The theme of His Holiness' presentation was:

"The Unity of the Absolute; The Oneness of All Religion".

Before proceeding to the details of his address, His Holiness took time to observe protocols, and he did in his native Tibetan Language after which his Secretary interpreted. This according to him was to avoid the difficulties in pronouncing Nigerian names, and also ensuring that nobody was left out. He then introduced himself as a simple Buddhist monk, now in exile in India, and away from his native Tibet.



The feeling of self, the "I", according to His Holiness, is the center of the Universe. This self, though it constitutes the universal center, according to His Holiness, it is still elusive, and therefore, it is extremely difficult to pin-point precisely what the self is. He therefore proposed a sense of appreciation as the universal bonding factor, arising from a profound sense of compassion. Only genuine compassion for others can sustain humanity. The cultivation of compassion, he continued, constitutes the basis for all human existence. Using the exact words of His Holiness the Dalai Lama:

"It is compassion that can conquer the ills of the society"

The Dalai Lama commended the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation for its efforts at promoting religious harmony, stating that he has been advocating the development for a long time. He stated further that he was delighted with the emerging democratic systems around the world, but especially in Africa, which he called his "Native Land". His presentation also touched on issues of conflicts in Africa, HIV/AIDS, illiteracy and hunger, among others. According to him:

"There are parts of Africa that still remain enmeshed in conflict, where starvation continue to constitute a big problem, where poverty, illiteracy and HIV/AIDS continue to affect people"

The Dalai Lama was categorical about the level of religious harmony in Nigeria, stating that the entire world stood to gain a lot from Nigeria's demonstration of inter-religious tolerance. In his own words:

"Basically here in Nigeria, I think the large number of Muslims, the large number of Christians. I think basically remain very harmoniously. This is wonderful, please keep this type of harmonious relationship"

In the end, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was officially admitted to the membership of the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation and received a membership plaque. He also expressed his willingness to return to Nigeria whenever the need arises. Before his departure, His Holiness the Dalai Lama took time and visited the Catholic Cathedral and the Central Mosque, all in Lagos, Nigeria.

Other very important dignitaries at the program included Ambassador (Prof.) Arthur Mbanefo, Chief Dr. Kalu Idika Kalu, Chief Olu Adeyemi, Sonam Tenzing of the Office of Tibet in South Africa as well as Chief (Mrs.) Dorothy Anyiam-Osigwe, President of the Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, among several others and the principles he embodies through the work of artists.

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