

The Last Ofala Festival

By: Princess Ezenwa Okenwa

Ofala Festival is an annual celebration that commemorates a King's coronation in Igbo land, the Eastern part of Nigeria, a West African country. Usually celebrated in December with lots of pageantries, entertainment, cultural activities to engage and satisfy all in attendance.

In the days of our fore fathers, before the advent of Christianity, no one is allowed in the presence of a King without a genuine dispute resolution case or other case that needs his immediate attention. The "Ofala" or "Iguaro" which means anniversary, therefore, is not only a coronation anniversary celebration but also a day the King's subjects come to pay homage.

The reign of His Royal Majesty, Eze-Igwe Dr. Silas O.C. Ezenwa II, MBE, the Obi & Traditional Ruler of Awka-Etiti, Anambra State, Nigeria, and the Last Ofala, are the perfect fit for the African Culture. His humility and determination of purpose and accomplishments were recognized by his subjects, the Federal Government of Nigeria and around the world. Eze-Igwe (the King) reigned for 46 years, the longest in the history of Igbo land. He was a true

leader, a legend and one of the greatest Kings of Africa. Despite the numerous challenges that confronted him in his lifetime, he remained patient and focused to the end.

"The Last Ofala Festival" for His Royal Majesty, Eze-Igwe began with a 21 gun salute. Soon after the gun salute followed the Igba-Eze – the King's Drummers (for Kings only) played the sensational musical as they danced delicately from one end of the palace to the other announcing that "The King is on his way". The members of the King's Cabinet (Ndi-Ichie) arrive, dressed in their finest. The Prince and the Princess, required by tradition to dress up in the King's regalia, welcome other Kings, government officials, dignitaries from all over the country Nigeria and around the world. People arrived to be part of The Last Ofala a Celebration of the Life of His Majesty, Eze-Igwe, Dr. S.O.C. Ezenwa, II, MBE. They come bearing gifts to pay the final homage to The Great King. Just like in the past, all in attendance were entertained by several cultural dances and masquerade performances.

They ate, drank and take home lots of souvenirs. Note: The rope in the photos represents the gift of a cow.

As the Ofala progressed, when His Royal Majesty was expected to appear, dance around, and see his subjects, he did not show up.

The Prince and the Princess, accompanied by other visiting Kings, His Majesty's Cabinet—the Ichies and the Titled Chiefs including all the princes and princesses, appear without His Royal Majesty, Eze-Igwe (Dr) S.O.C. Ezenwa, II. They dance around accompanied by the music from the Igba-Eze (King's drummers).

The dancing is abruptly stopped for an announcement. Chief Okpala, Ichie Oku, Okwuluora of Awka-Etiti announced that His Royal Majesty who had traveled; whom he thought would have been back from his far journey while the Ofala Festival was in progress, obviously had departed to the other side. In Igbo land, the King lives forever. They pass on to a greater place.

Nna-Anyi Igwe, ima na mu buru gi na-anya nke ukwu!!!

