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Digital  
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# CHOBAB &

## other Towns

**CHOBAB** happens to be a town surrounded by a string of other towns, among which is the distant town of Port Harcourt.

The University of Port Harcourt itself occupies a few of these townscapes, the furthest of all – at least from Choba – being 'Abuja', the university's permanent site and future capital territory that at the moment houses stu-





► **dents** dormitories, a few faculties, **senior** staff quarters as well as a new expansive teaching hospital's complex, still under construction. And life bustles in Choba, beyond the university's walls – wooden-box eateries, mammy markets, motorbike parks, human habitations filled with peasants mostly natives and hordes who eke out a living in the university. The roads were filled with the same rush of humanity night and day, presenting a dizzying visage at once explaining why Choba was the song of poets and the exhilaration of those who come to recognise it as centre of the world.

Choba certainly was the centre of the world for

from a new poetry script entitled 'Tomorrow's Sun will Never Rise,' which literally, borrowing Odia Ofeimun's famous phrase, pulled giant vultures from the sky.

Even now, Choba and the other towns are rich in people working in the arts and literature. The university itself is headed by a well-known writer and scholar, Theo Vincent, who before coming to fill the office of the vice-chancellor ran the local PEN chapter from his base at the University of Lagos.

The novelist Elechi Amadi resides and works in the quiet precincts of Aluu, his hometown, northwards from Choba, towards the forests. Besides he has also founded a creative writing school right

down in the town of Port Harcourt, opened two years back and has about a hundred students. The school which runs intensive three-month writing courses has now he says, despatched crops of graduates that include army officers, engineers, parish priests, civil servants, customs officers, broadcasters and students. It was from him that we learnt, during conversation in the lush forest town of Aluu, the way being led by no less a person than Professor Nnolim himself, that the octogenarian author, Gabriel Okara lives rather too close to the sea, in a town no doubt inhabited by fishers.

Fresh in the memory of Nnolim (who just turned Sixty) and in fact that of the whole artistic community is the recent demise of the writer and former schools' administrator, John Munonye. For sure, the professorial house of the Nnolims was one of the haunting grounds for the ghost of that departed soul. Apart from the fact that Nnolim was the leading authority on the fiction of Munonye, they were family friends. He remembers Munonye's last moments. He remembers some of his happy times too for he was, like Amadi, a citizen of the old Nigeria and a griot of the former public service which was toppled by the civil war and the military.

Nnolim it was also who confided to me that the title of Munonye's best-known work *The Only Son* had a biographical edge to it. John was an only son of his own father and in fact, none of John's brothers, including himself, boasts of more than one son. It is therefore fitting to appropriate this as the title for the succeeding article on the late writer by Nnolim, originally composed for Bernth Lindfors' and Reinhard Sander's *Dictionary of Literary Biographies*. **GR**

*Tomorrow's Sun will Never Rise>A Burst of Fireflies>Arrow of God>Tomorrow's Sun will Never Rise>The Only Son>Dictionary of Literary Biographies>Sesan Ajayi>Charles Nnolim>Chinua Achebe>Odia Ofeimun>Theo Vincent>Elechi Amadi>Gabriel Okara>John Munonye > Bernth Lindfors > Reinhard Sander > PortHarcourt > Abuja > Ibadan > Lagos>Aluu>Tomorrow's Sun will Never Rise>A*

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the late Nigerian poet, Sesan Ajayi, whose song, 'A night out in Choba' finds a unique place in his only collection of poetry, *A Burst of Fireflies*. Ajayi, a former National Youth Corper at the University of Port Harcourt made such frequent recalls of Choba and of the denizens of its literary world that they loomed large in our contemplation. He would stand to address the poetry club in Ibadan during his visits down west making vivid, icons such as Charles Nnolim the literature teacher and critic who exposed the origins of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*. And it was at the Ibadan poetry club that Ajayi stirred the hornets' nest; once he read