

CHIEF STEPHEN OSITA OSADEBE

K E D U

A M E R I C A

XENO  
4044

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A M E R I C A

## CHIEF STEPHEN OSITA OSADEBE

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FILE UNDER: AFRICA/NIGERIA

## XENOPHILE

xeno  
phile

CHIEF STEPHEN OSITA OSADEBE

& HIS NIGERIAN SOUNDMAKERS INTERNATIONAL

Kedu America (4044)

Highlife! Africa's lilting dance music,  
performed by "The Doctor of Hypertension"  
Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe and  
his rollicking ten-piece band.



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43 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, CT 06810

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Produced by: Andrew C. Frankel for GRAViTON 

Associate producer: Nnamdi Moweta

Recorded December 1994 at Studio Unicorn, Redding CT

Recording Engineer: Paul Avgerinos

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Mixdown Engineer: Jack "That Dog'll Hunt" Burke  
Crow Recording, Seattle

Mixdown engineer: John Nelson

Mastered at Disc Master, Issaquah, WA

Mastering Engineer: Ross Nyberg

Lyric transcriptions and transliterations by: Obi Osadebe,  
edited by Andy Frankel

Photography: Adam Traum

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All songs composed and arranged by:  
Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe

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Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe *Lead Vocals*

John Odagwe *Bass Guitar*

Ezikel Uti *Lead Guitar*

Fidelis Mazua *Rhythm Guitar*

Dede Uzoma *Drums*

Chukwodozi Obi *Igbo Congas*

Christian Ibekwe *Trumpet*

Stephen Udechukwu *Trombone,  
Backing Vocals*

Joseph Ugokwe *Tenor Saxophone,  
Backing Vocals*

Willie "Pepper" Chijioke *Claves,  
Backing Vocals*

Obi Osadebe *Backing Vocals*



G R E E T I N G S F R O M A M E R I C A



K E D U

A M E R I C A

ONUIGBO

Onuigbo Onuigbo Onuigbo Ajaho  
Odogwu n'wa onye ado jezili owoyibonu  
Oluo oluo n'obu onwu

Yes Sir

Ogini se Ogini selu Onuigbo ji nao  
Oluo oluo olu oyibo  
Onuigbi nwelu umu nabo debe  
n'enuwa nabanu

Emeka nwa na Okwuolisa Akwazina  
oluo oluo oluooo

Onuigbo Onuigbo Onuigbo  
Onuigbo n'inabanu

KA - ANYI JIKOTA

Onye ga agwam obodo di nuwa n'adi ese okwu  
Onye ga agwam obodo di nuwa  
n'enwedo nsugbuoo

Owebulo nke Nigeria ga bu zi n'okwu  
Umu nnemo biko n'udo Kanyi ga eji we meli  
Onye chili gbaba lbe ya ekpelugaba  
Onye ga ekwenu Unu afugo ipe ipele ka onabia  
Ife ga eme na be ndi uzo

Anyi ejenu je dozibenuo

Owe bulu nke di na be anyio

Ka-anyi na-amaedozi

Umunnamo biko ka-anyi jikota n'udo n'uwa

Umunnamo ka-anyi jikota n'udo n'uwa

Onuigbo Onuigbo Onuigbo Onuigbo Ajaho  
A brave man from Ado had gone to civil service  
There, he met his death.

Yes Sir

Why? Why did Onuigbo die?  
Service, service oh civil service  
Onuigbo was survived by two children

Emeka and Okwuolisa, weep no more  
Service, service oh civil service.

Onuigbo Onuigbo Onuigbo  
Onuigbo you are no more.

Tell me a nation without a problem  
Who will tell me a nation without a problem

Why is Nigeria different  
My brothers, in peace we shall overcome  
How can we compromise if we continue to disagree  
There is shame in the making  
We help maintain peace in other nations

Why can't we make peace in our own country

My brothers, let us unite in peace on earth  
My brothers, let us unite in peace on earth

## AYE MAMA

My brothers, I say, wetin man go do  
For this world wey people no go talk?  
You chop dem go talk  
You no chop dem go talk  
Wetin make we do for dis world  
I say make we do the things  
Wey we carry for our hearts  
Na so world want am  
Abi no be so? Na Sooooooo!

Wetin make we do wen people no go talk?  
We chop dem go talk  
If we no chop dem go talk  
I waka from morning to night  
I dey find wetin I go chop  
Wetin I go chop I no see am  
And dey begin dey talk  
Now I begin dey happy  
I find small small to chop  
Dem begin dey talk  
Na so so iyanga Osita dey do  
Na so una dey talk.  
Aye Mama ohh  
Aye Mama

## MERENGE SPOSA

An instrumental dance song

## NYEM OBI GI

Ezi ogeli nye mu obioo  
I ga enyem obi gi kanyi bilio  
Biko nyem obi gi nu  
Di na nwunye bu nwanne nu  
De na muna gi kpaluakpanu  
Anyi kwekolu ekweko

My brothers, I say what can man do  
In this world where people won't talk (gossip)?  
If you eat, they will talk  
If you don't eat, they will talk  
What can we do in this world?  
I say let us do the things  
That we carry for our hearts  
That's how the world wants it  
Is it not so? It's soooooooo!

What can we do where people won't talk  
If you eat, they will talk  
If you don't eat, they will talk  
I wander from morning to night  
Looking for some way to get ahead  
I don't see any way  
And people begin to talk  
Now I begin to be happy  
I prosper little by little  
And people begin to talk  
Osita is doing such and such business  
That's how they talk  
Oh mother ooh  
Oh mother

Sweetheart give me your love  
Give me your heart and we live  
Please give me your heart  
Husband and wife are one  
Both are agreed and decided  
Both families were present

Umaman so kwam bia nu  
Bee na gi k'anyi bialu  
Unanna gi fa sokwa  
De na anyi likolu eliko  
Na anyi nukolu anuko nu  
Ezi ogeli gini ka ina emezinu N'enuwa  
Nwanyi Omaooc  
Biko nyem obigi Kanyi bili Ezi ogeli Nyem obi

## AGBALU AKA NA AZO ANI

Kweke Kweke Kweke Kweke  
(PROVERB)  
Asi na agbaluaka nazo ani  
Onye ji ji gana akonye ji nani  
Okwa onu ge kwu  
Ma na Obuzi Onye agwalu kwe  
Nya bu na oka okwu ekwu kanu

Kweke Idu

Ezi oyi ka isi emeooo  
Azu nyeluyi chebe lu num echebe  
Onyeoma Okwero izi  
Okwero abo ijide nia lisienu  
Amazim n'ibu oke mana oke  
Adi eliazu enye lu nia  
Chebe oyi mu  
Agwo anyi gbuzilu kazi ko si ganu  
Onye moa anyi di nizu gbuo nkili  
Anyi Aputa niru ora ijubanumu Oyimuoc  
Nkili Anyi gbuzilu kedu kosi jenu Oyima  
Obuzi ka isi eme Oyima (repeats 3x)

We ate and drank  
Why treat me like this sweetheart  
Please give me your love and we'll be together  
Sweetheart give me your love  
Sweetheart come and give me your heart

Let's live  
Please give me your heart and let's live in peace

Kweke Kweke Kweke Kweke

Are you engaging in land dispute without money . . .

The person with yams  
Will be cultivating the land (Are you engaging in a  
dispute that you do not have the resources to win?  
The resourceful person will emerge victorious)  
People will talk

My good friend is this how you behave?  
The fish I gave you to tend,  
Not one, Not two, you ate them all  
I never knew you were a mouse  
But mice do not eat fish  
Under their care  
My friend

What about our secret?  
We had a secret  
Why did you ask me about the secret publicly?  
Is this how you behave? (repeats 3x)

## OSONDI OWENDI

Osondi Owendio

Osondi Owendio

Ife Solumu Solumi' nobi muo

Nke soliu solu chi

Ekwutozina ibe yi nu

Bikozì n'ò díoo nmanu

Ada Onwamaeze bilinu

Osondio Owendio

Osondio Owendio

Osondio Owendio

Osondio Owendio

Osondio Owendio mu lu

Ife Solumu Solumi' nobi muo

Nke soluyi solu chi nuwanu

Bikonu nodíoo nmanu

Onye n'azo onwe ya n' uwanu

Odizie K'ogbalunu ajo mmadu

Mana oburozi ka chi si kwu nuo

Onye ekwutozina mmadu ibe ya

Ne nu uwa nkea anyi no

Osondi Owendio

(repeat until fade)

## NWANEM EBEZINA

Nwanem ejena ejena ejena ije benuo

Onyeoma ejena ikachienti jebenu

I luzie solunu akwuna bili

Inatao ikwalu alili biao

Inakwa zio ka mme yi ana

Okwu ngwali gbo lkachie nti jebenuo

I luzieo welu nanya yi fulu

Some people are happy, some are unhappy

Some people are happy, some are unhappy

My choices makes me happy,

Yours make you happy

Don't assassinate one's character,

For that is wrong

May you live Onwamaeze's daughters

Some people are happy, some are unhappy

My choice makes me happy

Yours makes you happy

Don't assassinate one's character

For that is wrong

When you try to protect yourself

It seems you are bad

But that is not the way God wants it

What pleases you may not please another

All these are lessons from God

Some people are happy, some are unhappy

I told you, "My brother do not go."

You insisted on going

You went and came back with tears

Are you crying for me to do

What I warned you not to do

You went and you have seen

For yourself

## KEDU AMERICA—GREETINGS FROM AMERICA

In this more or less traditional Ibo Highlife praise song, Chief Osadebe greets all of the people whom he met and who helped and supported him on his tour of the U.S.

# HIGHLIFE

music, best known as Ghana's top pop music, also has an historical stronghold in Nigeria. Historically it has been the territory and passion of Easterners, in particular Igbos. Like juju, its Yoruba counterpart, highlife has its origins in Nigeria's urban centers. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new subculture of African elites began to emerge in many of Africa's booming cities. This new elite class sought new forms of expression, blending traditional African aesthetics with imported western ideas to create a unique subculture. Musically, this new subculture found expression in a variety of new styles. Blending elements of military brass bands, African percussion, Kru guitar music and other styles, new songs emerged which were at once African, yet new and international. As a reflection of the social status of its patrons, this new music was dubbed highlife. Various accounts have highlife music migrating from Ghana to Nigeria or having a simultaneous evolution in both countries. Whatever the case, by the mid part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nigerians had made highlife their own.

Constructed around repeating guitar ostinatos over a web of polyrhythmic African drumming and punctuated by jazzy horn lines and solos, highlife was (and remains)

the perfect music for dance halls and parties. Lyrics often in English reflect a variety of social themes and celebrate prominent individuals. Highlife quickly caught on in Nigeria and grew in popularity. Today highlife still enjoys a prominent role in Nigeria's pop music scene. While it is performed primarily by people of the eastern states, it is enjoyed throughout the country.

Among the stars of Nigerian highlife music, none has achieved greater heights than Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe. His official byline, "The Consistent Highlife King", is eclipsed by his unofficial one, "The Doctor of Hypertension," referring to the effect his music has on its listeners. Born in the small town of Atani in Anambra State on March 17, 1934, Osita had a fascination with music from childhood. As was often the case in Africa, his prominent family forbade him from wasting his time pursuing such a lowbrow occupation. Nonetheless, his love of music remained strong and in the late 1950s, with the help of sympathetic relatives, he was able to move to Lagos, capital of the Nigerian music scene. Though the move was ostensibly to further his educational opportunities, Osita had another agenda in mind.

Within a few months of his arrival he had joined the popular highlife band of Stephen Amechi as a backup singer. Eventually he worked his way up to second band-leader, leading the group in Amechi's absence. As his

popularity began to grow, word filtered back to Atani where it was received with distress. Bowing to family pressure, in the early 1960s, Osita took a hiatus from music to further his education. He travelled to the Soviet Union where he earned a law degree specializing in trade unionism. Upon his return to Nigeria, his path was clear in his mind, and he immediately set about to forming his own band, eventually to be known as Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe and his Nigerian Soundmakers International.

Early on in his career, Polygram Records Nigeria (Ltd.) spotted Osadebe's potential and signed him as an artist, a relationship that lasted until Polygram sold their Nigerian operation in the early 1990s. By 1975 the wisdom of Polygram's decision became clear. A continual string of hits brought both Osadebe and Polygram to higher levels of prominence. A recitation of classic Nigerian highlife hits reads more or less like an Osadebe bibliography. In the early 1980s Osadebe released an album which was to become one of the classics of all time. Osondi Owendi (surpassed in sales only by Nico Mbarga's Sweet Mother) sold so many copies that Polygram awarded Osadebe the first and only Platinum record to be received by any Nigerian artist.

A quiet and unassuming man, Osadebe is a most gracious host who loves to tell stories of Nigeria and the music industry. His bright eyes and his characteristic

mischievous grin are a small indication of the sharp mind on this savvy bandleader and hit maker. Backstage after a show one commonly finds him relaxing with a bottle of warm Guinness Stout, surrounded by an unending line of admirers. Unlike most of his contemporaries in Nigerian pop music who live amid the hustle and bustle of the music industry in Lagos, Osadebe chooses these days to reside in his home town of Atani, a rural village that can only be reached by one road. In spite of this remote home base, Osadebe is not isolated. His fans and patrons constantly seek him out to pay homage, seek advice, and to book the band for live performances.

In 1994 Osadebe and the Soundmakers came across the seas for their first North American tour of some 50 cities. It was during an unusual few days off that we had the good fortune to make this recording. Like many top African groups, Osadebe and the Soundmakers were well-rehearsed (performing many times a week) and knew exactly what they want to do. Thus when he was approached about a recording, Osadebe was sure we could record all the material we needed in one day. When it was suggested we reserve a second day "just in case", the chief queried how many records we wanted to make. So here it is—the fruit of one very productive day with the brilliant King of Nigerian Highlife. The title sums it up well . . . Greetings America.



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