Some people still believe that stories should be several years old to be called folktales. But this is an erroneous belief. A tale is not defined in terms of the number of years it has been in circulation. It suffices that such a story is communicated orally. Another misconception is that tales of nonliterate people should be quaint; consequently, these narratives ought not to mention plates, knives and forks, aeroplanes, hydrogen bombs, and all other gadgets that characterise modern living. The reason behind such a belief is that tales are a survival from an earlier age or culture.

The Igbo people of Nigeria enjoy a good story and are prepared to travel to neighbouring villages and towns in order to be entertained by a really talented raconteur. Unfortunately, no scholarly collection of their oral lore has been done. Words Are Sweet is an attempt to begin a systematic collection and study of Igbo oral literature.

Names of the narrators have been provided in the appendix. Some, however, have been omitted because of the raconteurs' desire to be anonymous. Field work ethnics demands that the wishes of informants be respected.

No attempt whatsoever has been made to censor or 'doctor' the materials in this volume. All the stories were given in Igbo; the translation into English is mine. My objective has always been to produce a translation that is intelligible to non-Igbo readers while retaining the structure and flavour of the tales. It is hoped that the present work will appeal to both professional and ordinary readers. It is, I hope, scholarly enough to be used by such colleagues as folklorists, psychologists, and anthropologists. The general reader will no doubt find part two of the volume a folkloric treasure. Words are indeed sweet; I do hope the reader will accept this observation of Mazi Mbaga Otuonye.