

# **Igbo Historiography: Parts 1, II & III**

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## **Abstract**

Igbo historiography has advanced since the publication of the epic narrative of Olaudah Equiano in 1789 and its different versions, especially that of Paul Edwards, a British literary historian in 1969. The main objective of this essay is to demonstrate the vitality and diversity of Igbo historical studies and provide informative and thoughtful interpretations of its strengths and weaknesses. In three parts, the essay examines the origin, dispersal and settlement of the people; sociopolitical institutions and organization; economic systems, including slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and the colonial economy; Igbo religion, Islam, Christianity and Western education; colonial encounter; the Igbo in precolonial and modern Nigeria with focus on intergroup relations, ethnicity and the Nigeria-Biafra War; and Igbo intellectual history. The essay makes a spirited critique of areas of overemphasis and the conceptual and methodological issues. It suggests important neglected themes that require further historical investigations. Its primary goal is to nudge Igbo historiography in new and challenging directions and inspire historians interested in Igbo studies to adopt a historiographical approach that emphasizes currency, relevance and usability.

## **Igbo Historiography: Part III**

This is the last section of this three-part essay. The focus of this Part III is the historiography of the Igbo and British colonial encounter; precolonial intergroup relations and colonial and postcolonial ethnic politics and dynamics; the Nigeria-Biafra War; and Igbo intellectuals. In the conclusion, this section summarizes the highlights of the entire essay with suggested topics for future studies.

## **Colonial Encounter**

Important historical works have been published on the British colonial conquest and Igbo resistance. Some of them include Ohadike (1991), Ekechi (1981a, 1974, 1973), Nwabara (1978), Isichei (1976, 1973), Igbafe (1971), and Afigbo (1966). These studies have shown that the colonial conquest of Igbo territory began in the mid-1880s and lasted till the 1920s, a protracted military action that made Igbo resistance to colonial conquest the most tenacious in Nigeria. Notable military campaigns included those launched against the Aguleri (1892), Akwete, Obohia, and Ohuhu (1896), Anioma/western Igbo (1898-1910), Arochukwu (1901-1902), Bende and Onitsha (1905-1906), Ezza and Ahiara Mbaise (1905-1916), Udi-Okigwe area (1914), and the Ikwo (1918). At the end, the Igbo lost for a number of reasons, including inferior military technologies and chronic shortage of ammunition. The defeat paved the way for the imposition of British colonial rule on the Igbo and increased presence of foreign trading companies and missionaries in the area. Consequently, the colonial project introduced a new political order that was dominated by men, taxation, new monetary system, land alienation and commercialization, improved transportation systems, urbanization, and new technologies. It also led to the erosion of Igbo culture and religion.

Nwabara's study of the hundred years of the British contact with the Igbo (1860-1960) focuses on the three pillars of commerce, Christianity and colonization in which the British traders were the first to arrive and were later accompanied by the Christian missionaries who engaged in the evangelization of Igbo society and the introduction of formal education; and both commerce and Christianity paved the way for the conquest and colonial domination of the Igbo people. Patterns of Igbo military resistance to British occupation feature prominently in the book. As Nwabara aptly suggests, despite gallant

and protracted military resistance, the Igbo lost due to a number of factors, including political fragmentation, sabotage, inferior military technology and discipline, and lack of coordination and unified command (Nwabara, 1978: 159). One would have liked to see in Nwabara's book an analysis of the commercial relationship, particularly, the activities of the Royal Niger Company in riverain Igbo states, the palm oil trade, the wide variety of imported goods and how they impacted Igbo people and their society. Moreover, the narrative would have been enriched if the author had gone beyond a complete reliance on British colonial official records by including relevant scholarship and oral sources. Contrary to his colonialist-oriented presentation of the resistance from the Ekumeku of Western Igbo societies and the Umunoha through their Igwekala oracle as acts of selfishness, terror and danger to foreigners and natives, one could see these and many other resistance movements as nationalist struggles against foreign invaders (Nwabara, 1978: 127).

Ohadike (1991) on the Ekumeku movement shows how the men of Asaba and its hinterland (the Anioma) mounted the stiffest resistance that lasted for more than three decades against the three "Cs:" European commerce that undercut the economic base of the elite, Christianity that undermined the socioeconomic fabric of their society, and the colonial draconic brutality and violence that threatened the people's long-cherished independence. Igbafe (1971) on the subject is a testament to the value of oral sources which are missing in Ohadike's book. However, the role of the Anioma women in the movement is omitted in both works. Were the women passive and unconcerned with the impact of the three Cs that the men fought against?

The British colonial government apparatus was established in the Igbo area in 1896 when parts of southern and western Igbo (Aboh, Obohia and Ohuhu) were incorporated into the Niger Coast Protectorate (former Oil Rivers Protectorate, 1891). With the revocation of the charter given to the Royal Niger Company (to administer the Niger territory from Aboh northward to Nupe) due to the company's ruthlessness and increased hostilities against the indigenous populations and the passage of the 1900 Native Courts Proclamation No. 9, colonial officials were authorized to establish Native Administrations through the creation of native courts and the appointment of indigenous administrative personnel. They introduced the warrant chief system of administration in which certain male figures were issued warrant of authority to sit in the native courts where they exercised both executive and judicial powers. Most often, these individuals were not true representatives of the people they oversaw. Afigbo (1972) examines how the new colonial political order transformed Igbo indigenous sociopolitical organizations and why it failed. Because the study ends in 1929, it does not cover the 1929 Women's War—the so-called Aba riots—which was instigated by the imposition of direct taxation on Igbo men and the attempt to extend it to women and consequently became a catalyst to the reorganization of local administration in Igbo society and other parts of Eastern Nigeria. (See, Falola and Paddock, 2011; Matera, Bastian and Kent, 2011, for the historiography on the Women's War of 1929).

One expects that Gailey (1970) would have filled the gaps in Afigbo's stimulating book, but it does little to enrich our understanding of the nature of British administrative policy after the warrant chief system especially since the author conducted research for the book in the late 1960s. Not only that the title is misleading with a third of the

narrative devoted to the Women's War, the book focuses on the administration instead of on Igbo and Ibibio societies that were undergoing major upheavals associated with modernization processes. However, the brief biographies of major British administrators provided in the "Appendix" are valuable. Nwaubani (1994), Ekechi (1989), and Ubah (1987) fill many of the gaps in the above books in their nuanced studies which demonstrate how the Native Authorities of the warrant chiefs and the native courts were replaced in the 1930s with village group and clan councils and courts. They examine the flaws of the council system which by the late 1940s had demonstrated the need for a new class of leaders—the Western educated elite—that understood the financial regulations and efficient modern bureaucratic practice associated with the reorganized Native Authorities as agencies for local administration.

In 1950, the system of "massed benches of illiterate" family heads and village elders described as "democracy running riot" with unmanageable numbers of council and court members was replaced with a three-tier democratic local government structure: county, district, and local councils with elective principle (Nwaubani, 1994; Ubah, 1987; Nwaguru, 1973). This marked the end of the British indirect rule and the beginning of a real local government system in Igbo area. The new local government of educated representatives of Igbo people became a training platform for a new leadership associated with modern political parties, the first party in Igbo society established in 1951 being the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC, founded in Lagos as a nationalist organization in 1944). Although British colonialism radically transformed Igbo political structures and whittled down the power and relevance of the chiefs, the indigenous village-group leadership never lost its appeal as efforts were made to rehabilitate and

protect chieftaincy institution in Igbo society (Harneit-Sievers, 2006, 1998; Nwaubani, 1994).

Colonial encounter affected the Igbo and their society in other ways. It led to the establishment of new banking system; new legal system; new bureaucratic structure; new business, political and military elite; infrastructural development; emergence of urban centers; and increased migration of the Igbo to towns and cities within and outside their homeland. Important studies on urbanization, rural-urban migration, urban dwellers and lifestyles, and tension between indigenes and non-indigenes in southeastern Nigeria include those by historians, political scientists, and anthropologists such as Okeke (2010), Mbajekwe (2006), Ottenberg (2005), Falola and Salm (2004), Dixon-Fyle (1999, 1989), Wolpe (1974, 1969, 1967), Melson and Wolpe (1971), and Smock (1971).

Colonialism had contradictory effects on Igbo socioeconomic organization and gender relations. Chuku (2012b, 2012c, 2010, 2005, 1999, 1995), Ejikeme (2011), Korieh (2010b, 2007), Achebe (2005), Ekechi (1989, 1981b), Martin (1988, 1984), Isichei (1976), Ekejiuba (1967), and others have systematically analyzed the ambivalent consequences of colonialism on the Igbo economic and social development at the grass roots, emphasizing how the people coped with global and local trading conditions, new technologies and other innovations introduced to their economic system as food and export crop producers and why and how some of them moved into new non-farm occupations. Korieh and Martin shed light on the problems of poverty and agrarian change in Igbo area. Export-oriented oil palm industry; food economy of yam and cassava; and the colonial government's promotion of new technologies—mechanical oil mills, graters, nut crackers—shifted economic power from female producers to male

producers, migrant laborers and traders. While acknowledging the underprivileged position of Igbo women under colonial socioeconomic policies, Chuku highlights new opportunities created which few Igbo women maximized to become successful entrepreneurs. The opening up of new frontiers of trading opportunities created new class of wealthy individuals. Thus, Igbo society under colonialism witnessed a history of mobility, flexibility and diversification of local entrepreneurship.

In spite of gains made, Igbo people and their land witnessed increased militarization and massive exploitation and discriminatory practices during the WW II years as stringent measures were adopted by colonial officials to stimulate and increase export production in palm oil, palm kernels and cassava starch. In addition to their voluntary contributions, compulsory levies were imposed on government workers, cultural organizations, villages and other groups. Price control measures were tightened up and foodstuffs diverted from civilian populations to the military. Chuku (2010) and Njoku (1978) have meticulously examined win-the-war measures adopted by the colonial officials, the increased hardship they brought to the Igbo and how the people responded. Specifically, Korieh (2014, 2010a), Brown (2003), Nwaka (1987), and Jaja (1982-1983) have captured the general frustration and disillusionment of the period as demonstrated by the numerous letters of petition by Igbo producers and traders, the strike of the coalminers at Enugu, the violent protests by WWII veterans, and the general unrest in Igbo towns during the late 1940s and 1950s.

In spite of stiff propaganda campaigns mounted by the colonial officials, Igbo resentment and anti-colonial sentiments increased. Igbo nationalist leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Mbonu Ojike, Nwafor Orizu, Kingsley O. Mbadiwe and others

mounted open opposition against the colonial government. With his chain of newspapers and under the platform of the NCNC, Azikiwe launched a multi-pronged campaign against the excesses of the British colonial government in Nigeria. He also inspired many Nigerians, especially the youth, who mounted militant nationalism under the Zikist Movement (Chuku, 2013; Iweriebo, 1996; Olusanya, 1966; Coleman, 1958). The cumulative effect was the negotiation and granting of independence to Nigerians on October 1, 1960.

### **The Igbo in Precolonial and Modern Nigeria: Intergroup Relations, Ethnicity and the Nigeria-Biafra War**

Historiography on intergroup relations is part of the efforts to unearth and highlight those things that promoted cooperation and unity among various Nigerian ethnic-nationalities in the past. Historical studies on intergroup relations between the Igbo and their Annang, Edo, Efik, Ibibio, Igala, Idoma, Ijo and Ogoja neighbors highlight the relatively high degree of mutual interdependence, peace and equality the people enjoyed. The Igbo had for centuries interacted with these neighbors on different aspects of human endeavor, including wars, peace, trade, intermarriages and cultural exchanges. The historiography emphasizes the symbiosis of cross-cultural borrowings and fertilization of ideas in which for instance, Eastern Igbo borrowed age-grade and masquerade institutions from their Efik and Ibibio neighbors; western and northern Igbo got aspects of their monarchical institutions from the Edo, Idoma and Igala; in exchange for certain kingship practices, religious rituals connected with agriculture, and the primacy of oracular institutions of the Igbo people.



Major historical studies on precolonial relations between the Igbo and their neighbors include Kolapo (2004), Ohadike (1994), Afigbo (1987, 1981b, 1981c), Ijoma (1984), Oguagha and Okpoko (1984), and Shelton (1971). Works by art historians such as Aniakor (1997), Neaher (1979, 1976), and Odita (1973), and anthropologists—Onwuejeogwu (1981, 1979), Boston (1977, 1964, 1960), and Ottenberg (1958)—have contributed to our understanding of Igbo relationships with their neighbors through cross-exchange and fertilization of Igbo artistic ideas and artifacts, religion and sociopolitical institutions such as the Ibiniukpabi oracle. The Ibiniukpabi has been described as the most powerful and influential oracle in precolonial West Africa, extending its influence to eastern Edo, Igala, Ibibio, Idoma, Ogoja and beyond through its agents and clients (Afigbo, 1987: 42-43). There were also the Igbo Ikenga spiritual force of male achievement in Igala and parts of Edo; and Igbo metalsmiths in southern Edo, Ijo, Isoko, Urhobo and Itsekiri (Neaher, 1979, 1976; Boston, 1977; Odita, 1973).

Ohadike (1994: 33-96) covers the Anioma-Benin wars, Igala-Anioma relations, the evolution of sociopolitical institutions of Anioma, and the cross-fertilization of ideas and cultural exchanges among the groups, especially the cultural impact of Edo of Benin and the Igala on the Anioma Igbo. Ironically, he omits the Igbo influence on the Edo and Igala people. Part of the historiography has highlighted the Igbo-Niger Delta relations, an area which witnessed influx of Igbo people, mostly enslaved men and later free male traders. The high proportion of Igbo males in the Niger Delta city-states and communities resulted in the infiltration of Igbo language into local vocabularies and the expansion of the use of the language as a medium of communication and the adoption of Igbo names by parents of both Igbo and non-Igbo ancestry (Dike, 1956: 29-33; Isichei, 1976: 95-96).

The Igbo adopted certain cultural practices of the Niger Delta peoples, including new vocabularies and dressing habits such as the Ijo hombre hat popular among Onitsha-Igbo chiefs. The high proportion of Igbo men in this region meant increased sexual encounters between the Igbo and their neighbors. Oral traditions claim that women of Andoni, Degema, Efik, and Ibibio descent entered into short- and long-term relationships with thousands of successful Igbo male entrepreneurs of servile background; as Efik, Ibibio and Kalabari men favored Igbo women due to their fair complexion and beauty. Andoni men in particular were fond of marrying Igbo women from Umuahia area (Njoku, 2016: 125, 127). Marriage and sexual relationships between the Igbo and the Niger Delta peoples have received inadequate attention and therefore require serious historical investigations. There is need to expand historical studies on the cultural transformations and complex hybridization occasioned by social relations between the Igbo and their Niger Delta neighbors, and the influx of Europeans and non-Europeans such as the Saro (freed slaves who migrated from Sierra Leone. See, Dixon-Fyle, 1999, 1989)

For northern Igbo, Shelton (1971), an ethno-historical survey of the northern Nsukka borderland, focusing particularly on the mode by which the Igala “colonized the Igbo villages through the introduction of Igala and Okpoto lineages of shrine priests,” remains significant in spite of its flaws. Shelton notes that “the central factor in social control by the colonizers was not political but religious” (240). Two major problems of the book are Shelton’s basic linguistic disability of not having a working knowledge of the Igbo language; and a dint of exaggeration of the Igala’s influence on Nsukka area. Thus, as Afigbo has suggested, there are Nsukka lineages which claim to have been founded by immigrants from the ‘north’ who bear Igbo names but whom some writers

have claimed to be Igala; moreover, cultural borrowing in border zones is a two-way process and does not necessarily require conquest and the imposition of alien authority to take place.

Afigbo (1981b) refers to an era of intergroup relationships between the Igbo and their neighbors prior to European contact as “an age of innocence” dominated by peace and exchange of goods and services which was facilitated by Igbo professional traders and servicemen who conducted their businesses outside Igbo territory. While attempting to maintain and spread their cultural heritage outside Igbo homeland, these professionals became bearers of new ideas and cultural practices from outside Igbo society, and also bilingual or even multilingual depending on their various spheres of influence where they carried out their business pursuits and also enjoyed special privileges. Afigbo (1987) emphasizes commerce, marriage, and other peaceful means—stressing the role of markets, religious priests and clients, age-grades and societies—and downplayed militarism as factors that shaped Igbo relations with their neighbors. He stresses that even in war times, other kinds of contact and exchanges such as seeking for allies, medicines and ritual specialists, weapons, and engaging in espionage and camouflage often intensified. He suggests that during the precolonial period, “none of the ethnic nationalities was internally self-conscious as a group ... nor did they mobilize in totality against its neighbors. Such cleavages or dichotomies as Igbo/Ibibio, Ijo/Ibibio, Ibibio/Ogoja, Igbo/Igala, or Igbo/Edo which mean so much to certain persons today would have meant nothing to the peoples ... before 1900” (Afigbo, 1981b: 16). These ethnic nationalities were unaware of the ethnic cleavages and therefore held no destructive ethnic stereotypes and prejudice against one another.

Afigbo (1981c) criticizes the assumption that Igbo communities as mini-states were dependencies of centralized mega-states of Bini/Edo, Igala and Ijo from which the Igbo derived certain institutions and cultural practices. He refers to this historiographical tradition that emphasizes the dominance and supremacy of these mega-states as a “mirage.” He strongly stressed that it was a relationship based on autonomous actions of intergroup give and take; of mutually enriching processes of diffusion and borrowing of ideas, of trade relationships, intermarriages, reciprocal visits and gifts, and of migration and flights to neighboring territories during hard times. He also examines carefully the integrative and disintegrative effects of the colonial situation on the Igbo; the tensions resulting from the arbitrary partitioning of the indirect rule system which lay emphasis on local, ethnic and cultural particularism with conveniently carved out administrative boundaries that fostered crises of identity and intergroup tension and hostility as different ethnic and linguistic groups became intensely self-conscious.

Colonialism had ambivalent effects on Igbo relationships with their neighbors and other ethnic nationalities by strengthening intergroup relations as it simultaneously engendered ethnic divisiveness among the people. It brought the Igbo and their neighbors together more than never before, and led to the creation of new forms of identity and power hierarchies which promoted ethnic and class tension and hostility. One agrees with Ikime (1985: 17) that “in terms of inter-group relations, colonial rule was something of a paradox: on the one hand, it brought Nigerian peoples together in new groupings and for new purposes; on the other, it emphasized already existing differences and introduced new ones.” But attributing ethnic nationalities such as the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa to twentieth-century developments and products of colonialism as Ikime has done

simply because prior to colonialism none saw itself as a single united ethnic group is subject to individual interpretations. What is unquestionable is that the creation of colonial administrative units—districts, divisions, and provinces—added new forces of discord to the dynamics of intergroup relations as friendly and hostile groups were arbitrarily lumped together and as they began to compete for limited resources.

However, increased urbanization, infrastructural development, “Pax Britannica,” the colonial civil service, the use of English as the official language, and the establishment of government colleges and the University College, Ibadan became powerful catalysts for movement of people from Igbo rural areas to towns and cities within and outside Igbo territory. As the Igbo migrated to various parts of Nigeria to advance their economic wellbeing, they enjoyed both the admiration of their hosts and neighbors for their resilient spirit, fearlessness, and enterprising and entrepreneurial skills and yet at the same time vilification for the contradictory stereotypes of their hubristic behavior, malleability and stubbornness (Bersselaar, 2005; Osaghae, 1994; Amaazee, 1990; Anikpo, 1979; Onwubu, 1975; Morrill, 1963). Igbo success in education, civil service, parastatal corporations and commerce led to the perception of their being a tightly knit group of “tribalists” helping one another at the expense of other ethnic groups.

There was also fear of Igbo domination by their neighbors and hosts, fear which escalated ethnic tension and animosity against the Igbo following the military coup of January 1966 and the ascension of Major General T. Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo and the highest ranking officer in the country, as the head of the federal military government and his replacement of federation of four regions with a unitary government and a unified

civil service. Fear led to resentment which was exploited by the military, political and business elite. The results were violent disturbances against the Igbo. It was estimated that over 30,000 Igbo were killed in Northern Nigeria, thousands wounded, and over two million returned to their homeland in the eastern part of the country (Chuku, 2018a: 331). Aspects of the historiography on postcolonial Nigeria and intergroup relations have focused on the violent disturbances and pogrom against the Igbo residents of Northern cities and towns; the failure of the Federal Military government of Yakubu Gowon to protect Igbo lives and property, especially in the northern part of the country; and the unsuccessful peace attempts that finally led to the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra War in July 1967. Also captured in the historiography are the Igbo experiences during the war and in postwar Nigeria (Moses and Heerten, 2018; Chuku, 2018a, 2002; Falola and Ezekwem, 2016; Korieh, 2012; Bird and Ottanelli, 2011; Nwaka, 2011; Nwauwa and Korieh, 2011; Achebe, 2010; Omenka, 2010; Uchendu, 2007; Harneit-Sievers, 2006; Anthony, 2002; Tamuno, 1972).

Since the war, Igbo people have with or without state assistance pursued reconstruction and development of their homeland and other parts of the country where they reside. They have continued to engage in their traditional patterns of migration and interethnic interaction, including migration beyond the shores of Nigeria to different parts of Africa, Europe, East Asia, and North America, with more settling in the United States (Aham-Okoro, 2017; Reynolds, 2009, 2002; Kleis, 1980; Jerrome, 1978). Studies on Igbo business activities have focused on their entrepreneurial acumen, enterprising and competitive spirit, and resilience. They stress the continuation of Igbo communal solidarity and symbiotic forms of institutionalized collaboration with other ethnic groups

and nationalities as central to their entrepreneurial advancement (Meagher, 2009; Brautigam, 1997, 1995; Silverstein, 1984; Egboh, 1976). Igbo ability to develop and nurture complex trading and productive linkages across ethnic and national boundaries made them one of the most successful enterprising groups in Africa. Their informal economic activities which involved cooperative rather than exclusivist relations with other ethnic groups in Nigeria have helped to strengthen Nigerian interethnic cohesion from below even when political struggles tended to weaken it from above.

In spite of the restlessness of Igbo youth due to high rate of unemployment, poverty and feelings of marginalization and neglect by the federal government which led to the formation of Igbo ethno-nationalist organizations such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOP) with resultant state repression through the police, the military and other security agents, Igbo elite and elders have continued to pursue the maintenance of peace and order in their homeland and Nigeria. Notable Igbo elite have continued to serve as public intellectuals by speaking truth to power while offering their cautious advice to Igbo youth and others. The delicate role of Igbo intellectuals in promoting Igbo identity and interests while they strove to build a stable united Nigeria has been captured in Igbo historiography as demonstrated by Chuku (2013), Lynch (2012), Falola and Heaton (2006), and Njoku (2006). In spite of lingering problems and challenges, the intellectuals have continued to play important roles in nurturing and preserving Igbo cultural heritage and in expanding our knowledge of Igbo people, their culture and history through their publications, lectures and public speeches, and the Ahiajioku Lecture series established in the late 1970s. It has been a daunting task for the Igbo political and intellectual leaders to foster a sense of unity among the people

through the Ohaneze Ndigbo, a pan-Igbo organization committed to protecting Igbo human rights in Nigeria, and through other intellectual and cultural performances.

## **Conclusion**

This three-part essay has demonstrated that Igbo historiography has witnessed evolutionary trends in its complexity, scope and depth, mirroring the people's historical experiences and existential reality. From the accounts of earliest Diaspora Igbo to those of early European visitors, and from the nationalist to subsequent waves of Igbo historiography, historical studies on the Igbo people, their culture and society have enriched our knowledge in many ways and contributed significantly to Nigerian and African historiographies. While the accounts of early Diaspora Igbo, who wrote from outside Igbo homeland due to the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement, focus on their recollections of indigenous Igbo society and slavery in the Atlantic world, those of the early Europeans, mostly explorers, traders, military officers, missionaries, colonizers, anthropologists and ethnographers, are dominated by their efforts to understand Igbo people and their culture in order to advance European imperial interests and mission evangelization in the area. The large body of work these Europeans produced was marred by racial arrogance and cultural insensitivity, language barriers, justification of European imperialism, distortions, and the denial of African agency in knowledge production. The limitations notwithstanding, early Diaspora Igbo and European visitors to Igbo homeland laid the foundation to the development of Igbo historiography as their publications became important research resource.



This essay has also demonstrated the important role played by first generation Igbo pamphleteers, and amateur and professional historians in the development of Igbo historiography. For instance, first generation Igbo historians, also referred to as nationalist historians, met the challenge when they were confronted to proof that their people had a history and a culture prior to European contact, whether they were documented or not. Despite their criticisms of being consumed by nationalist sentiments, oriented toward the history of mega-states and empire building, and elitist by focusing on the powerful, Igbo nationalist historians used historical enquiry and publications as ideological weaponry against colonization and ethnocentrism. They fundamentally changed Western historical methodologies and imperialist narratives that denied Africans any agency in historical enquiry and knowledge production by employing different analytical methods and genres of sources, including oral traditions, artifacts, material culture, and linguistic evidence in their studies and publications. They used their writings as a tool to preserve their people's heritage and acknowledge Igbo and African agency in history-making and the production of historical knowledge. Subsequent waves of Igbo historiography cover more diverse and broad themes and topics that have been previously neglected such as issues in social, economic, and gender histories.

Igbo historiography is expansive in scope and depth, covering the people's experiences and interactions with themselves, their environment and non-Igbo groups prior to European contact, during colonization, and since independence in Nigeria. Yet, there are still important areas that require further historical investigations. Igbo origins and patterns of migration and settlement within Nigeria and to different parts of Africa and the globe and their interactions with their host communities is one of such areas. The

influx and settlement of non-Igbo populations in Igbo homeland, including the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Saro, Cameroonians, Europeans and Asians since the transatlantic slave trade and the cultural transformation and complex hybridization occasioned by their social relations requires more meticulous historical investigations and analyses, using multidisciplinary methods and sources. An aspect of Igbo-Islamic historiography that needs penetrative historical studies is the experiences of Igbo women converts to Islam, including those who were or are married by Igbo and non-Igbo men. Was marriage a single factor in their conversion or were there others; and were there single independent Igbo women who became Muslim on their own? Similarly, marriage and sexual relationships between the Igbo and their neighbors in the Niger Delta and other parts of Nigeria since the transatlantic slave trade; and between Igbo women and non-Igbo men especially those occasioned by the Nigeria-Biafra War deserve the attention of historians. The same applies to Igbo marriage traditions and transformations.

In addition to more gendered historical studies in various aspects of human endeavor, Igbo indigenous knowledge base, medicines and healthcare—midwifery, bone-setting, psychiatry and others—and the history of diseases require further historical investigations. The history of local industries in Igbo society has received scanty attention and therefore demands more historical enquiry. So are historical studies of Igbo family, childhood experiences, socialization and rites of passage; Igbo warfare and weaponry, and conflicts and conflict resolution since the precolonial period. There are many other important neglected themes in Igbo historical studies that cannot be listed here. But what is important is that historians interested in Igbo studies should endeavor to adopt a historiographical approach that emphasizes currency, relevance and usability. If

this essay helps in nudging Igbo historiography in new and challenging directions, then I have achieved my primary goal.

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