

“Indigenous” Institutions in Colonial Igboland: The Imilike Revolt of 1918

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Abstract

The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 officially gave Britain suzerainty over Nigeria. The British government lacked sufficient personnel to administer the colony. In fact, many were unwilling to embark in a voyage to the unknown. Fortunately, British India faced the same dilemma and local elites were successfully used in the administration of India. Britain quickly adopted the same method in Nigeria, but the non-centralized Igboland of Nigeria posed a greater problem to the government. Therefore, warrants were issued to people who initially submitted themselves as friends of the alien forces. This negated the indigenous socio-political structure coupled with the fact that those appointed by the the British overlords, they were mainly the social misfits. These warrant chiefs, as they were called, wielded absolute power over their chiefdoms, imposing taxation arbitrarily, confiscating properties, especially farm lands, manipulating justice in the Native Courts they presided over, among other abominable acts. People became uncomfortable with the new power structure and subsequently resisted every move to impose warrant chiefs on them. It was against this backdrop that Imilike revolt of 1918 occurred. This research interrogates the crisis. It uses multi-qualitative method of case study and narratives for data collection, analysis and interpretation of results.

Introduction

One of the memorable traditions held and guarded over by Imilike elders, is the story of their war with the *Oyibo*(British), as they call it. This war was aimed at resisting the imposition of alien political values on their indigenous governance structure. Scholars have identified three main types of Igbo resistance to the British military invasion. The first relates to those communities who were not prepared to go into any diplomatic negotiations with the British and from the beginning reached out for their guns and machetes. The second refers to those communities that negotiated with the British and their messengers hoping to keep them away from their territories, but resorted to armed resistance later. The third had to do with those

communities that did everything possible to avoid armed encounters, relying instead on magic and the intervention of their gods (Afigbo, 1973:14-23). The Imilike response, which was informed by the structure of its society and circumstances of the time, belongs to the first category.

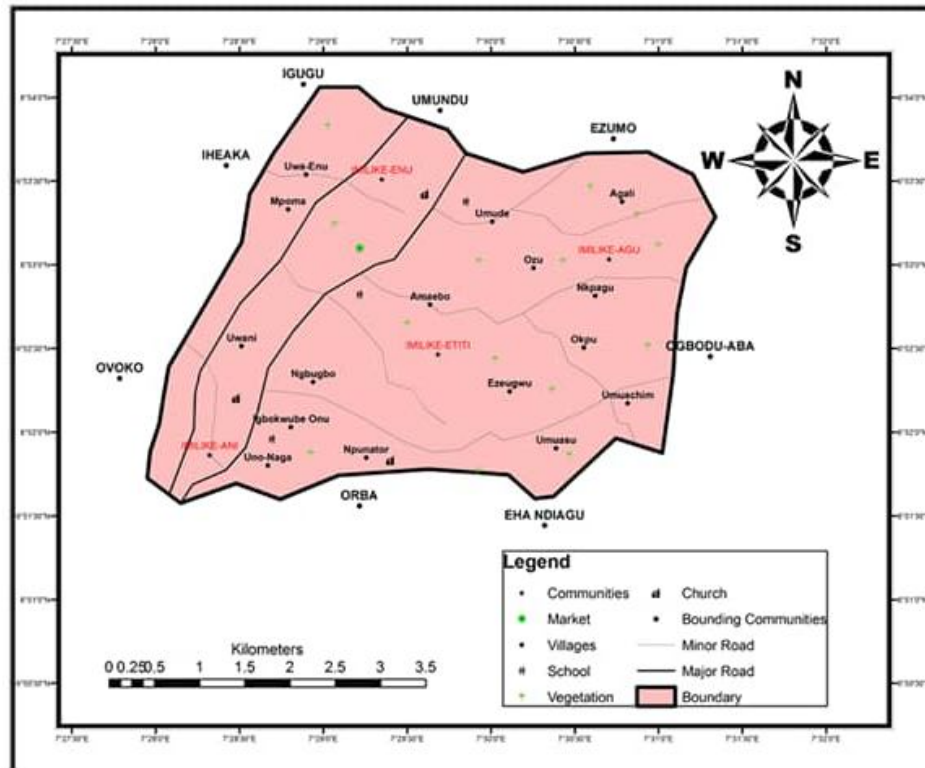
Copious literature abounds on the Igbo people of Nigeria and their reaction to the imposition of colonial rule that disrupted their political, economic and social structure. This is evident in numerous European accounts of the prolonged pacification of the people. From archival records of mostly anthropologists, one gleans from the intelligence reports on virtually all clans in Igboland of their struggle to repulse the British invaders to little avail. Some of these literatures are highlighted herein. For instance, *A History of Imilike* by S.E Ogbu (2011) traced the genealogical ladder of Imilike town, including the socio-political and economic life of the people from precolonial period to 1976. He mentioned the various skirmishes between Imilike Enu and Imilike Ani as well as conflicts among Imilike and her neighbours, prominent among which is the *Ogbo* land case of 1939. Although a passing remark was made on the Imilike revolt, the author failed to give details on the causes, course and consequences of the resistance. It is this oversight that this research tends to fill. Other Imilike indigenes who had written on the people namely, Ignatius Odoh (2015) and Lawrence Onah (2012) dwelt on the precolonial history of Imilike people, while Osita Asogwa (2013) tried to justify the behavioural pattern of the people which contributed to their reaction against the colonial government. Lawrence Onah's work is a total departure from the myth of Imilike origin thereby deflating the notion that Imilike Enu and Imilike Ani are brothers. Ignatius Odoh recorded the relationship between Imilike and her neighbours and the extent it had influenced her past. The cultural influence of other Igbo and non-Igbo groups on Imilike was also highlighted. The above literature, though veritable sources, are silent on the subject of discourse.

Adiele Afigbo (1972), Ikenga Ozigbo (1999) and Elisabeth Isichei (1976) were the forerunner writers of Igbo history. Afigbo's (1972) *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929* examined the attempt made by the British to rule the people through their indigenous political institution. He opined that the warrant chief system failed primarily because it was based on assumptions which had no root in indigenous soil and secondarily because it brought on the people, burdens which were either unnecessary or whose purpose they did not understand and at the end it was a monumental failure in Southeastern Nigeria. The imposition of this alien institution was also what majorly triggered Imilike revolt of 1918. Ozigbo equally averred that the first two decades of the 20th century was characterised by the conquest of and imposition of colonial rule on Igboland

which was in the main accomplished through warfare, and which met pockets and pockets of resistance here and there. Elisabeth Isichei x-rayed the history of the Igbo people from time immemorial to the post-war Igboland, highlighting Igbo socio-political and economic development before colonial rule. The Igbo embrace to western institutions saw to their dispersal along the colonial railway construction to various parts of Nigeria. Though, the above literatures did not mention Imilike colonial resistance, it is a critical source material for the completion of this research. Paul Obi-Ani's (1990) "The Udi Revolt of 1914: A Case Study in Indigenous Resistance" narrated the remote and immediate causes of the Udi revolt which were the Aro grudges against Akegbe-Ugwu people for denying them permanent settlement, internecine wars between Akegbe-Ugwu and her neighbours of Ozalla and Obe, their killing of Hausa traders and their planned invasion of communities that accepted colonial rule. These among other causal factors precipitated the colonial pacification of Akegbe-Ugwu people in 1914. Although, this work is not on Imilike revolt of 1918, it is relevant to this research as it shares some historical circumstances with Imilike revolt.

Imilike is one of the numerous communities in Udunedom Development Centre, Udenu Local Government Area, Nsukka Senatorial District, Enugu State of Nigeria. It has an estimated area of about 120 square kilometers, and it is about eight kilometers east of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Odoh, 1983:1). Like other parts of Nsukka Area, Imilike lies in the transitional zone between the savannah grassland of Northern Nigeria and the rainforest of southern Nigeria. The community is traversed by a low hill that divides it into two nearly equal parts, the area uphill being Imilike Enu, and the lowland being Imilike Ani. Imilike Enu has three villages namely Umu Afia, Umu Nzu and Umu Obiagwu. Imilike Ani has four: Umu Azu, Ihenwucha, Dimuneze, and Ajimeze. Each of these seven villages is composed of other sub-villages, groups, and quarters (Odoh, 1983:2). It is bounded on the North by Igugu, Umundu and Ezimo, on the South by Orba and Ehandiagu, on the East by Ogbodu Aba and Ehazu-Abo, and on the West by Ovoko and Iheaka (Odoh, 1983:3). In the period under study, *Imilike* could be described as a typical traditional Igbo community, made up of people that had a common apical ancestor – *Nna Ogene Idike*, portrayed as a fearless warrior and hunter. Imilike people were seemingly well organized, dynamic, and independent. The political stability stemmed from active control of affairs at village and town levels through different political agencies. Their domestic and external relations were carefully enforced to maintain peace, tranquility and orderly government among the component village units. A jury kind of judicial system operated whereby disputants obtained justice without delay, thus enhancing the rule of law and equity

among the people. The economy depended on agriculture, craft, and trade. The last two appeared to have been contingent upon agriculture and were practiced not as a full-time economic vocation but an adjunct to the proceeds from agriculture. They were hunters, another occupation inherited from their ancestral fathers. Before the British intrusion, the people also produced gun powder, *Adaka* (Dane guns) and iron bullets, an indication of a vibrant economy, suffused with manufacturing subsector. Unfortunately, this manufacturing activity was banned with the outset of British colonialism.



Map of Imilike Community (Igboeli: 2016)

Remote and Immediate Causes of the Revolt

The British penetration into the Igbo heartland met stiff resistance in some communities. The Igbo had no centralised authority, and each village or town cherished its sovereignty. The British had to subdue every community at a significant cost in men and material. Although most of the Imilike neighbours had been defeated and the British rule prevailed, Imilike remained recalcitrant. The British, without consultation, appointed a Warrant Chief over the people, which Imilike people considered an affront and an imposition. Thus, the stage was set for open rebellion and defiance. However, the resistance can be traced to two major grievances of the people.

The first was the forceful grouping of Imilike people under Obollo Ulo Customary court with a surprising and strange instruction that all her disputes should be referred to it. The second was the appointment of Chief Nnadi Eze Aba as Imilike Warrant chief.

The British first penetrated into Nsukka area through the commanders of the Igala Expedition of 1903-4, while colonial administration first came through Awka sub-district (established in 1906) (Ogbo,2011:16). The distance between Awka and Nsukka made it very difficult, if not impossible, for the colonial masters to administrate Nsukka Zone from Awka. The people, therefore, continued with their traditional ways of life undisturbed by the imperial presence. This state of affairs, however, did not last long because in 1908, the Nsukka area was pacified.

Professor Adiele Afigbo (1972:8) captures the new development in these words:

The faithful year for Nsukka... was 1908 when the Niger Cross River Expedition under Colonial (later Lord) Trenchard undertook a military promenade through Awka, Udi and Nsukka from where they continued to Okpanga....

It was from this Okpanga Division Headquarters that Imilike first tasted British administration. British rule came nearer home to the Imilike when, in 1914, Obollo Native Court was established. The commencement of British administration in the Obollo Division was marked by wars of subjugation carried out against rebelling village groups. As soon as they were able to establish their presence by a show of force, the colonial government ordered all village groups in the Obollo Court Area to end all wars and settle their dispute in courts. Having heard and seen the inevitability of the white men, most of the communities decided to comply with this order. But the Imilike were relying on their time-honoured reputation as great warriors and chose not to comply. However, the British did not seem to have noticed this isolated resistance.

Imilike people, being famed warriors, could not understand why they should defer to another authority. They were feared by the neighbours and could not understand why they should take their disputes to a weaker neighbour who had in the recent past deferred to them. As if that was not enough, Warrant Chief Nnadi Eze Aba was imposed on the people. Nnadi Eze Aba was an Imilike indigene, who was appointed by the colonial government in 1918 to represent Imilike in the Obollo Ulo Customary court. His appointment came after the people of Imilike ignored the instruction from the court, which said that they should appoint a chief to represent them in the customary court. His appointment seems to have been unprecedented,

for no one had been able to determine the reason why he was chosen as the people's representative by the colonial government. Although he was from the town, he did not reject this appointment. This may have been because he had weighed the benefits associated with occupying such a position. Even though the news of his appointment was received with hostility by his people, he went ahead and assumed his duties.

At that time, Imilike, like most if not all other parts of Igboland, maintained a democratic system of government. Every adult male had a say in the village meeting. Leadership was maintained through gerontocracy, not through election or inheritance. The new system of appointing a chief contrary to the above principle was alien to the people. Thus, Imilike warriors saw this change as tantamount to a denial of freedom. So, like the Carthaginians' action in North Africa, they decided to maintain their honour instead of being cowardly and cowering in a corner. They decided to settle it with the colonial masters and, therefore, laid in wait for an auspicious opportunity to teach them a bitter lesson. As Fanon (Mamdani, 2001:13) observed:

The native's violence was not life-denying, but life-affirming: for he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely when he realises his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which to secure its victory. What distinguished native violence from the settler violence was that it was the violence of yesterday's victims who have turned around and decided to cast aside their victimhood and become masters of their own lives.

The people knew that the only language the British authority understood was a force and being aware of its devastating effects, prepared for the day of reckoning. However, this turned out to be blind heroism on the part of the Imilike people, as weapons of war between the two factions differed significantly.

The opportunity finally came in 1918 following the actions of Aleke Arua of Obulege Imilike. Aleke Arua was alleged by informants to be a very strong and troublesome man who waded in troubled water. He had borrowed some money from a woman who was a native of Eha Alumona. The name of the woman and the amount of money he borrowed was in dispute. Some accounts say the name of the woman was Ona Eje Ugwuowo while other accounts say Abonyi Ogbona. Just as some accounts suggest that he borrowed two *Echi* (Brass rods) while other accounts suggest six pence. The agreement was that Aleke Arua would pay back the loan two days after. But he could not honour the agreement even after four days; the result was that his creditor started demanding for her money (pers.comm.,2015). After

several demands by the creditor, Aleke Arua became annoyed and warned the woman against further demand. However, this warning fell on deaf ears. The next time the creditor demanded payment, she was mercilessly beaten by Aleke Arua. Consequently, she cried home to her husband. Unfortunately, both of them were no match to Aleke Arua in physical combat. So as a last resort, they lodged a complaint against him at the Obollo Ulo Customary Court.

A court messenger was sent to inform Aleke Arua that he had been mandated by the court to pay his debt. When the court messenger arrived, it was alleged by an informant that the people saw his dressing preposterous, having been sewn in a way that was not familiar to the Imilike people. Most of them had never, in fact, seen a man wearing a pair of trousers (pers.comm.,2015). He promptly delivered his message to Aleke Arua who hauled abuses on him. He categorically told the court messenger that he would not pay his debt. As the altercation between Arua and the court messenger raged on, the former initiated a fistfight with the later. Of course, the court messenger was no match for Aleke Arua and was severely wounded. The story has it that Aleke Arua became jittery and scared of the repercussions of fighting the white man's messenger. He quickly reported what transpired to his kinsmen, and he got support from the council of elders who had some issues to settle with the British intruders. Indeed, the moment the Imilike people had been waiting became handy. Aleke Arua's intransigence provided an opportunity for a strong protest to the British to leave Imilike or face further humiliation.

A few days later, the District officer sent six police officers to arrest Aleke Arua and all able-bodied men in *Obulegu* village, but they defied arrest. This resulted in a free for all fight between the colonial policemen and the *Obulegu* heady young men (pers.comm.,2015). The six policemen narrowly escaped death, a risk they faced because they were far outnumbered. The idea of sending policemen to a people who did not understand the implication of resisting arrest was a misnomer. The officers went back to Obollo and narrated their experience to the Divisional Officer (D.O.). The defiance of the colonial government by the Imilike people was a strong signal that they were not ready to trade away their sovereignty. The attendant loss of power and its implications could aptly be seen in Fanon's description of indigenous resistance to colonial rule. He opined that:

The logic of native violence was that of an eye for an eye, a response to prior violence. It was the violence to end violence, more like a utopian wish to close the chapter on violence in the hope of heralding a new humanism (Mamdani, 2001:10).

With such a development, the D.O. decided to visit Imilike, perhaps to preach peace and make them realize the enormity of Aleke Arua's offenses. On his arrival to Imilike with a convoy of bodyguards and warrant chiefs from neighbouring communities, the people assembled to hear from him. The D.O. allegedly told them that his motive was to make peace with the people. After his explanation, the people unanimously appointed a spokesman to respond on their behalf (pers.comm.,2015). The man stepped forward to address the D.O. armed. The D.O. insisted that he should not address him while armed with machetes. Informants alleged that in total, he had about four machetes. When he was ordered by the D.O. to get rid of his machetes before addressing them, he stubbornly refused, stating that he had them for security reasons. His effrontery embittered the D.O. who left the gathering in anger. The people made a mockery of the D.O. by jarring at him. The incident opened the door for the military expedition of Imilike in 1918.

The Course of the Revolt

The British colonial government used force to compel recalcitrant towns to obedience. The intransigence of Imilike people required a patrol force to pacify them. O. P. Gunning (NAE 1936:12), in his Intelligence Report on Udunedem Confederation and other towns in Obollo Court area, stated:

In 1918, Imilike took up arms against the government and were visited by a patrol. The Udunedem alliance did not prove strong enough on this occasion, and the other towns refused to join them and remained friendly to the government.

This report confirms oral tradition, which states that Imilike fought this war alone. Imilike, in precolonial days, were in alliance with their neighbours – the Udunedem confederation. Udunedem confederation was made up of several autonomous communities namely, Obollo, Igwugwu, Umundu, Imilike, Ezimo, Agbodu Aba and Amala ... the unity of which was anchored on a war pact (Odoh:6). However, this alliance could not help Imilike in her war with the government (*Oyibo*). Other members were not courageous enough to take a step they believed would incur the wrath of the British. The neighbouring village groups used *omu* (tender palm fronds) to demarcate their borders with Imilike during the expedition (Odoh:47). *Imilike* was betrayed and left in the cold. It became apparent to the people that they needed to either fight or face extermination. They chose the former, and as Fanon also observed: "it was not that the natives were willing to take the settler's life, but they were willing to risk their own:" the colonised man finds his freedom in and through violence" (Mamdani:11). Imilike warriors prepared to face the colonial forces at *Ijejeje* (gully) Imilike.

Relying on the euphoria resulting from the fact that the *Udunedom* military alliance had collapsed, the D.O. sent only two European military officers and few West African Frontier Forces to attack *Imilike* warriors. They met a huge surprise as the encounter was catastrophic to the colonial government. The D.O. failed to understand that *Imilike* people were not living in ignorance of what the colonial forces could do to any community that resisted their administration. They knew and expected a reprisal attack for their audacity towards the D.O.; thus, they were fully prepared for that encounter. The victory achieved by the *Imilike* warriors was due to the *Ukporo Ijejeje* (natural bunker) which acted as a natural defense platform for the people. The story has it that the warriors took cover in the gully awaiting the arrival of the colonial forces. They ambushed the colonial force and decimated it. Again, the *Imilike* war charm, *Okwulu Okwuru*, was said to have contributed to the defeat of the imperial forces. *Okwuru Okwuolu* was used by the warriors during war with their neighbours. The work of the charm was twofold. First, it was said to make the men courageous. Secondly, it was believed to deflect enemy ammunition away from *Imilike* warriors. For the war charm to be efficacious, each warrior must avoid sexual intercourse or eating of cocoyam a day before taking the concoction, and alcoholic drink throughout the duration of the combat.

Magic was an important weapon that almost all the Igbo communities employed to ensure that the warriors were not wounded by guns or machetes depending on the type of military engagements. It has been noted by some scholars that some communities, including *Imilike*, killed the *dibia* (native doctors) who prepared such charms to prevent them from making the same charms for another community or develop the antidotes for such charm. Affirming such practice among the Igbo, Afigbo has this to say:

There are conspicuous traditions about the effort made by the famed medicine men of the different communities to stir up local gods and the ancestors against the British. Some towns would not rely on local doctors and magicians alone but would travel long distances to invite more famed medicine men to strike the invading troops blind, or to scatter them with swarms of bees, to make their guns backfire or to make the Igbo warriors bulletproof. The fact was that since the gods and the ancestors were regarded as forming parts and parcels of the society, they were called upon to defend it against the alien invaders (Afigbo,1981:41).

Ozigbo (1999:6) subscribes to this idea in these words:

Diplomacy and insane reliance on charms and intervention of the gods were too often resorted to in the bid to ward off the encroaching British....

Thus, the use of war charms and magic was part and parcel of Igbo warfare as each community applied these means to achieve victory in intra and inter-community conflicts (pers. comm.,2015, See also Obi-Ani, 2013:70). *Okwuru okwulu* war charm was housed at *Ukwuolu* village square at *Imilike Agu* under a thatched roof about ten meters high.

As mentioned earlier, with the help of the charm and the gully at *Ijejeje*, the Imilike were temporarily victorious. The colonial forces retreated but did not surrender. The terrain was a significant challenge for the invading forces. Sun Tzu (Obi-Ani:75) opined in his book, *The Art of War*, that:

The terrain is to be sized up in terms of distance, degree of difficulty of travel, dimensions, and safety. The use of scouts and native guides is important here for "chasing a game without a guide leads to the bush.

The colonial force recognized this handicap and immediately sought for saboteurs and renegades amid the people. They found willing hands in the persons of Ona Aguiyi Owo of Imilike Enu and Agha Igbo Idoko of Imilike Ani who were familiar with the terrain and possessed knowledge on the potency of the war charms. With their support, they did surveillance and reconnaissance of the enemy territory. These two traitors betrayed their people because they were promised appointment as Warrant chief and court clerk (called *kotuma* by the people) respectively if they succeeded in Imilike expedition (pers. comm,2015). Ona Aguiyi Owo like the biblical Judas led the troops through a safe route, took the villagers unaware and set their houses ablaze. He led the troops through *Obollo Afor*, *Ogbodu Aba* to *Amagunze*. At *Ukwuolu*, Ona Aguiyi showed them the war charm - *Okwulu Okwuru*, which like the *Ibiniukpabi* of the Aro expedition of 1902-3 did not catch fire after several attempts to set it ablaze.

Despite this ugly scenario, Imilike warriors were not discouraged. In preparation to meet the colonial troops at *Okwulu*, to reinforce the war charm, a soothsayer advised the people to collect some powerful items in *Abalufie* shrine. *Abalufie* was another war charm situated at *Nkwo Imilike Uno* (Imilike Uno market square) (Onah, 2012:72). Unfortunately, Ona Aguiyi, who new the antidotes, touched the tassel from the shrine with the cocoyam four consecutive times before sweeping around the deity. He finally set it ablaze, and subsequently disabled the people (pers.comm.,2015). In the face

of such reality, the people immediately lost their willpower and courage to fight. The story has it that both men and women took to their heels abandoning the war.

He further led the colonial troops through *Oblegu* village to surround the Imilike warriors waiting at *Oye Imilike Ani*. The warriors were thus surrounded and helpless; their forces were easily routed. The battle was of course a hopelessly unequal one. Imilike military organization, tactics, and equipment had evolved to deal with local and not conventional warfare. The Imilike warriors were acquainted with local skirmishes that generally last a day or two but the British reinforced and invaded with modern weapons of the period. This battle marked the effective enthronement of British administration in Imilike, and for the first time, it dawned on the Imilike people that they had lost their independence, freedom of action and sovereignty. The colonial administrators compelled the Imilike warriors to surrender a specific number of guns as a fine as well as pay other war indemnities. Seven men volunteered to carry the war booty to the designated location. Some accounts had it that they never returned (pers. Comm., 2015), while others have gone further to say that they were shot to death, killed as a ransom for killing the white Divisional Officer during the war. As Gann & Duignan (1970:40) put it:

in the end, surrender to the British meant loss of freedom and sovereignty, besides the handing over of guns for destruction (*ntiji egbe*) and surrendering of the ring leaders in the resistance.

Aside from those warriors that never returned home, notable Imilike warriors like Eze Nwogwu Ojo, Eze Ugwu Ogbonna and Onah Nwenyi were sent to prison, (The last named was later made a warrant chief in 1922). Onah Aguiyi Owo was installed the Warrant chief, and Agha Igbo Idoko was rewarded with the office of the court clerk as planned. That was their reward for helping the colonial government in their pacification of Imilike.

Consequences of The Revolt

The capitulation by the Imilike people came with socio-political and economic consequences. Any military defeat entails a lot of hardship and loss of independence for the vanquished (Obi-Ani, 1990:36). Politically, they were forced to come under effective British administration and domination. British colonial laws were imposed on them without their consent, and other societal ills like tyranny, corruption, and injustice became rife in the community. L.H Gann and P. Duignan (1970:40) noted that:

as large areas of Igbo land fell to the British, they set about reorganizing the land, and introducing enabling structures for streaming and colonial administration.

The surrender of the Imilike community was followed by the partial dislocation of her traditional system of government and lifestyle.

As British administrative officers and personnel were extremely few and scarce, it became necessary to utilize the services of local indigenes in the governance of the people. Consequently, local agents were selected (often arbitrarily) to serve as members of native councils and native courts. Such members obtained official letters (warrants) from the high commissioner or provincial commissioner appointing them to their respective native councils or native courts. The recipients came to be known as warrant chiefs. They were expected to see that the orders of the government were carried out and were held responsible for their towns. Their duty was a thankless one for it involved, among other things recruiting forced labor and collecting taxes. These functions did not tend to increase their popularity (Gann & Duigann :43).

This was one of the contexts under which the British appointed Onah Aguiyi Owo as a warrant chief. Unfortunately for the Imilike, Onah Aguiyi Owo was the worst person to represent them. Few days into office, Onah Aguiyi Owo started kidnapping beautiful women, whether married or unmarried, with impunity. He married some of them without paying their bride price, and kept others as sex workers who rendered a stipulated weekly amount to (pers.comm.,2015). He did not stop at that; he also confiscated people's properties daily. Imilike people never forgave him neither did they accept him as a chief. When the people could no longer tolerate his highhandedness, they planned and murdered him. When the news of his death filtered out, everyone was happy. Many who heard the news exclaimed that: "*Obuleg ya jeme Onah Aguiyi Owo,*" meaning: Death is nothing compared to what will happen to Onah Aguiyi Owo. His death became proverbial even to this date. After his death, the colonial masters appointed three warrant chiefs in the early 1920s; they were Eze Ayigbo, Ugwu Nwa Ugwuanyi Ude, Onah Nwa Enyi Ukwueze. Imilike people joyously accepted them. These were hard-working chiefs concerned with erasing the scars of the war and lessening the tension between the Imilike people and the colonial masters.

However, just as Gann and Duignan (1970:40) rightly pointed out, the appointment of these warrant chiefs did not stop the existence of local institutions. In his words:

Every Igbo town had one or several warrant chiefs. These chiefs were charged with law and order in their respective towns. The native court proclamation (1901) outlawed all traditional tribunals. It recognized only the native court for judiciary matters. In practice, however, the traditional tribunals continued to function in the villages.

Even with the appointment of warrant chiefs, the council of elders continued making laws, but this time, they were not to infringe on any human right. They equally continued to judge cases, even though the appeal was no longer restricted and they no longer handled criminal cases.

Socially,

The traditions of various villages, as well as the official reports of the military patrols, are full of stories of burning of towns and seizures of traditional village headmen as a means of overawing the people. It was the policy of the protectorate government to disarm any community; its forces overran as a means of ensuring its future good behaviour (Afigbo 1972:43).

This affirms what L. H Gann and P. Duignan (1970:43) gathered in their research, that:

...Burning of houses, farms, barn, and seizure or killing of domestic animals characterized the British expeditions and patrols.

This only came close to the Herero pacification of 1904 led by General Trotha the then commander of German army in Central Africa. He had the wrong perception that the "negro" does not respect treaties but only brute force. His army exterminated as many Herero as possible. The fleeing Herero were forcibly separated from their cattle and denied access to waterholes, leaving them with but one option: to cross the desert to Botswana, in reality, a march to death (Mamdani, 2001:11). Likewise, when the Imilike revolt failed, the entire village was razed to dust and ashes. It was alleged that any farmland, house or any material possession that was not burnt, was simply because it was not seen by the colonial troops. Also, Imilike people lost their children, parents, relatives, and nearly all able-bodied men as a result of the military patrol. It was also alleged that in 1918, the crying and wailing in Imilike could be likened to the biblical Ramah in

Bethlehem when Herod murdered all the male children from two years downwards. As the Holy Bible quoted that:

A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they were no more (Math.2:18)

People that were fortunate not to be killed became refugees in neighbouring towns that agreed to receive them. The Igbo who were pushed out of their homes, villages, and towns and who lost their children, relatives, and their belongings as a result of Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970(Obi-Ani, 2017) are in positions to understand the plight of Imilike people in 1918. People had to run away unprepared for their lives, and they ran to all directions. The immediate neighbouring towns were unwilling to accept them as refugees. Out of fear, people ran away to distant places and even took refuge in thick forests. Many who ran away refused to be identified as Imilike people for fear that they would be captured by the colonial masters or their agents. Some people refused to return to Imilike land to undergo the pains and pangs of the pacification. Imilike people lost half of their population, including children, women, men who died during the patrol and people who refused to return to Imilike land. It was actually as the British journalist puts it: "we have got the maxim guns and they have not"; it was a war of unequal combatants.

Economically, their houses were burnt with all their household materials in ruin. The invading troops fed on even their yam seedlings, looted their many livestock and left the town desolate. By and large, the town lost all it had; the farms, food and economic crops were all destroyed during the occupation of the town by the military patrolmen. Nobody was left with anything economically as to help others. In this situation, people who survived the patrol were under torture and apparent starvation.

Furthermore, there was a shortage of crops for sale and acute depreciation of natural resources. More taxes were also imposed on the people with little economic justification for it. This was devastating economically. Thus, economic growth and social development became stunted. It is worth noting that, as the dust raised by the war settled, the adventurous ones that escaped with their lives began returning. They had to start all over again under the close watch of the colonial masters.

Conclusion

The battle between Imilike and the British was a mismatch of unequal combatants. This is evident in the marked difference in the weapons of war at the disposal of the two sides. While Imilike warriors used Dane guns and

machetes, the British used repeater rifles and Maxim guns. It suffices to say that the initial stance of the British in the misunderstanding between Imilike people and the D.O. appears to be pretentious. They claimed that they wanted to make peace with Imilike and intimate them with the gravity of the offences committed by Aleke Arua and the entire Obuleg village group. However, they could not exercise patience when the first attempt at this failed; they took up arms against the people they claim to have brought civilisation. It must be stressed that after their initial setbacks, they regrouped and collated adequate intelligence, and dangled some carrots and sticks before Imilike allies who swallowed the bait and abandoned their immediate neighbours. Thus, the British culled from their experiences in member European wars and colonisation of other parts of the world singly to bring Imilike to their knees. They, therefore, ended up committing more barbaric acts than the people they came to correct.

Although an attempt at resisting those that had the Maxim gun with Dane guns and machetes could be regarded as blind heroism, one cannot deny the fact that their actions were justifiable. The imposition of dictators on a people that were used to democracy and liberty of purpose in their relationship with one another resulted in a legitimate discontent that exploded into an uprising to correct and restore their dignity as greatly feared and respected warriors. What is significant is that the Imilike people did not fold their hands while strangers marginalised and dehumanised them in their homes. They put up a spirited fight in defence of their sovereignty and civilisation even though in the end, they lost to the superior weapons of the invaders and sabotage of some individuals. However, their calculated, articulated doggedness and farsightedness won them the admiration of their neighbours and saved them from the traumatic loss of honour that would have been their lot if they had not fought at all. The prestige of standing up against the colonial forces was a worthy compensation. This courage earned the Imilike the approbation of her neighbours and the appellation "Imilike Ike" (Great Imilike), which they are still called to this day.

The sabotage of Imilike war efforts by Ona Aguiyi Owo and Agha Igbo Idoko still rankles the mind. However, despite the betrayal, and the superior British firepower, the Imilike warriors' knowledge of the terrain aided them in inflicting a painful blow on the British. Nevertheless, these "blacklegs" helped to hinder African development, as recorded in almost all endeavours at Africa's development. Furthermore, Imilike neighbours, who had established a military pact with their warriors, were bought over by the British to renege on their agreement. Thus, they denied them intelligence support and material succour in the face of the overwhelming British

invasion. The British had an edge in terms of weaponry at their disposal, while the knowledge of the terrain by the Imilike was thwarted by the advice of their neighbours and some treacherous Imilike people. Consequently, their resistance was crushed, and their cherished independence was forcefully taken away from them.

Following the collapse of resistance by the Imilike, some of the ring leaders faced capital punishment and lengthy prison sentences. Imilike became a territory to recruit forced labourers, used in the construction of railway lines, building residences for the colonial officials and native courts. Those who survived the military onslaught became docile and incapacitated even to protest the highhandedness and tyranny of the warrant chiefs. Many of the survivors refused to take advantage of some rudimentary legacies introduced by the British such as Christianity and western education that had to do with the white man. Their neighbours later took advantage of their embrace of Western education to dominate them politically and economically. The Imilike people's bitterness towards the British though justified, in the long run, became counterproductive. There is no nation which had not at one point in its existence been defeated in war including the British. The critical lesson in defeat is the ability to rise again.

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