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Historical Context II: The Creation and Colonization of Nigeria

CHRONOLOGY

1808	Great Britain acquires Sierra Leone as its first West African territory
1817	France acquires Senegal as its first West African territory
c. 1880	Great Britain acquires Gambia, Gold Coast, and some territories along the Niger River—the nucleus of what becomes Nigeria in 1914
c. 1880	France acquires Western Sudan, Bamako, Upper Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Dahomey
1880–1887	Great Britain acquires the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria
1897	The British West African Frontier Force (WAFF) patrols the Northern Protectorate, thereby halting French incursions into the Niger territories
1900	The protectorates become Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria
1914	Sir Frederick Lugard amalgamates the two protectorates into one colonial country, Nigeria
1929	The Aba [Igbo] Women's Riot is staged

1948	Great Britain establishes the University College, Ibadan, Nigeria
1957	Nigeria becomes a dominion of Great Britain
1960	Nigeria gains political independence from Great Britain
1963	Nigeria becomes a federal republic

HISTORICAL ALLUSION TO THE PARTITION OF WEST AFRICA

In the final paragraph of *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator makes the following remarks:

> The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learnt a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting down a hanged man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about the book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (147–48)

This passage calls the attention of readers to two important interconnected issues by which the author explains why and how the white men gained a foothold in Igboland and Nigeria, respectively.

The first issue is the bigoted attitude that the whites maintained in their encounter with the Igbo. The whites saw themselves as possessing a superior culture and civilization that must be imposed on a people they, out of ignorance, considered primitive and uncivilized. However, the natives, as well as the narrator (who represents Achebe, the Igbo author), knew that neither were they primitive nor were their culture and civilization inferior to those

of the intruding whites; they were simply different. And that is why they fought hard, under the leadership of their strongman Okonkwo, to resist that imposition—a resistance effort that produces much of the tension and conflict in the novel. So, when the Igbo discovered that their leader had taken his own life, they were stunned. They had to regroup under the leadership of Obierika, Okonkwo's best friend and fellow Igbo elder, to keep their clan together. However, the white leader, the District Commissioner, had a sense of accomplishment after the death of Okonkwo, who was a stumbling block to his "civilizing" effort. The Commissioner was already thinking about writing a book in which he would describe his foreign service experiences and accomplishments to his home audience, the English. That way he would become an authority on African affairs.

Achebe points to the bitter irony of the title: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. This echoes Conrad's Kurtz, whose pamphlet, *Suppression & Savage Customs*, ends with "exterminate the brutes!"

The second issue touched on in that final paragraph of *Things Fall Apart* is a historical allusion to the rivalry between the British and the French that developed as they struggled to gain permanent control of that part of West Africa referred to in nineteenth-century colonial history as the Lower Niger. An examination of that British-French struggle and its aftermath, which eventually brought Nigeria under British rule, is the main focus of this chapter.

THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH RULE IN NIGERIA

As discussed in Chapter 2, the scramble for Africa, and specifically for West Africa, was embarked upon by some European nations purely for commercial reasons. However, the missionary activities that followed the commercial interests helped to prick the conscience of European governments and peoples, especially the British and the French, who began the campaign against the slave trade, as they also sought effective ways of protecting the legitimate commerce of their nationals in West Africa. Britain and France built forts and garrisons along the coastal towns of West Africa for that protection. As time went on, however, the humanitarian effort to stop the slave trade and the idea of protecting le-

gitimate European commercial interests gave way to the idea of European conquest of West Africa.

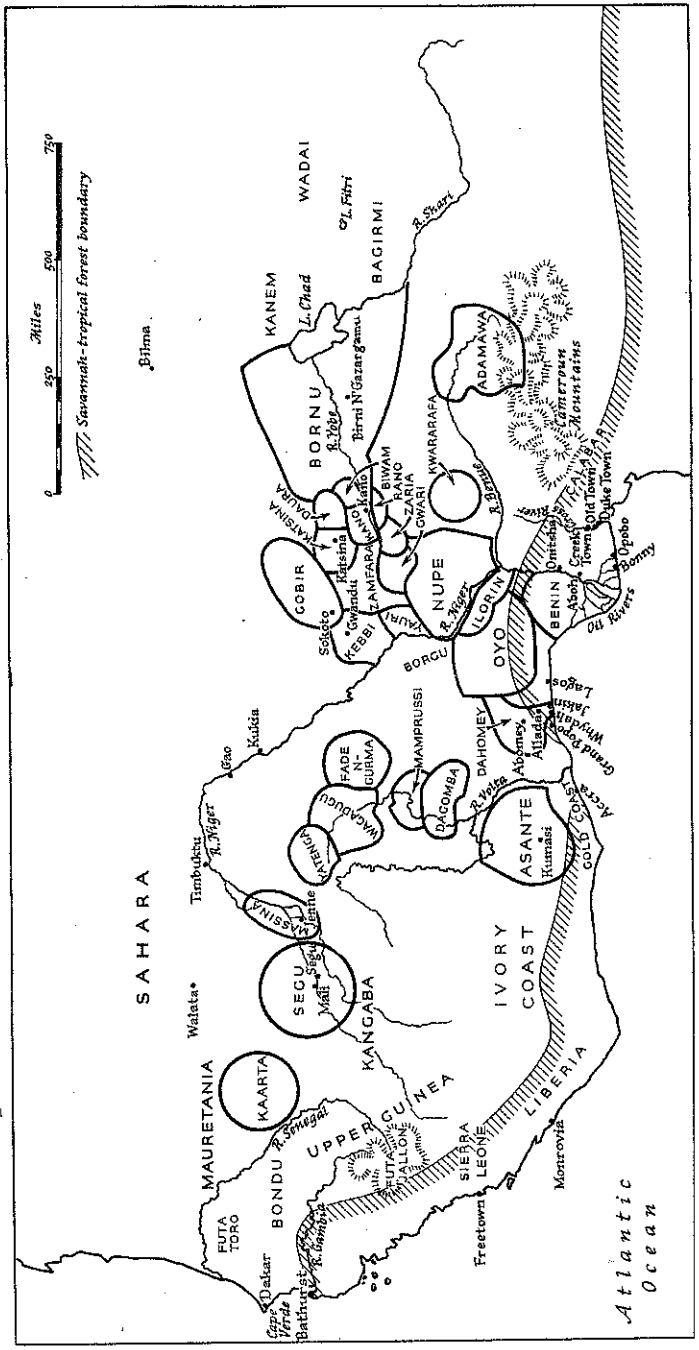
Britain became the first European nation to acquire a West African territory over which it exercised direct political control. That territory, Sierra Leone, acquired in 1808, prompted the French, who would not be outdone, to acquire Senegal in 1817. From these two coastal colonies, the British and the French sought to extend their colonial possessions into the interior of West Africa—a task that necessitated the navigation and exploration of the Niger and the Benue and the territories they drain. By 1880, the French had acquired Senegal, Western Sudan, Bamako, Upper Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Dahomey. By then the British had acquired only Sierra Leone, Gambia, Gold Coast, and some ethnic communities along the Niger River, including Lagos, Abeokuta, Lokoja, and Jebba, that formed the nucleus of the territory that became Nigeria in 1914. Subsequently, the British and the French bought such territories as Togoland and the Cameroons from the Portuguese and the Germans and thus became the only two European powers in West Africa after World War I.

LORD LUGARD AND THE CREATION OF NIGERIA

Nigeria, the most populous country on the African continent, came into being in its present form only in 1914, when the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard. Sixteen years earlier, Flora Shaw, who later married Lugard, first suggested in an article for the *Times* of London that the several British protectorates on the Niger be known collectively as Nigeria (Crowder 11).

The protectorates were groups of culturally and linguistically divergent but geographically adjacent ethnic communities which, through the use of powerful gunboats and cunning diplomacy, the British brought together for administrative purposes, and for protection against French and German ambitions in West Africa.

The Southern Protectorate was comprised of the ancient kingdoms of Ife and Benin, the Yoruba Empire of Oyo, and the slave center of Lagos; the city-states of the Niger Delta, where the first European contacts and slave trade began; Old and New Calabar; and the largely politically decentralized but technologically advanced lands of the Igbo-speaking peoples of southeast Nigeria.



Map 2
West African Area of European Contact

Source: J. D. Omer-Cooper et al., eds., *The Making of Modern Africa: The Nineteenth Century to the Partition*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, 1968).

The Northern Protectorate included "the great kingdom of Kanem-Borno, with a known history of more than a thousand years, and the Sokoto Caliphate which for nearly a hundred years before its conquest by Britain had ruled most of the savannah of northern Nigeria" (Crowder 11).

The peoples of Nigeria in both protectorates had their own cultures and civilizations, as well as complex political systems, which the intruding British agencies both misunderstood and underrated. In fact, the British, like the French, believed that their culture and social institutions were the best in the world, and made serious efforts to impose them on the Nigerians, whom they perceived as backward. They introduced the idea of "modern" government to the "savage" peoples of Nigeria. But they could not do so effectively without the local assistance of warrant chiefs and court messengers (*kotma* in *Things Fall Apart*).

The method the British used to govern the conquered peoples of Nigeria was called "Indirect Rule." The system originated in 1891 when slave traders along the Niger Delta in the south appointed local chiefs, whose cooperation they needed to run their court of equity, as government agents to assist British officials in bringing law and order to the region. In the north, the Royal Niger Company, which held the Northern Protectorate until British officials came to rule it in 1897, also allowed emirs (Muslim leaders and chiefs) to exercise limited authority over their people. When the British government eventually took over the authority from the trading companies in both protectorates, they "selected some people whom they compelled to become chiefs. They gave these people 'certificates of recognition' which were called "warrants." For this reason these men were popularly known as "warrant chiefs." Apart from trying cases and passing bye-laws, the warrant chiefs also recruited and supervised the men who built the main roads and government stations" (Ayandele et al. 154). The corruption of the warrant chiefs and court messengers is re-created in *Things Fall Apart*, where Okonkwo and other members of *egwugwu* are made to pay more money than the District Commissioner ordered as restitution for the church that the villagers burned down (137–39).

The two protectorates continued to enjoy the protection of the British Parliament and the Royal Niger Company on the Niger territory until 1897, when the Northern Protectorate was threatened

by the French. French officers garrisoned permanently in Boussa noticed that Borgu Province on the bank of the Niger was not occupied by the Company or militarily protected by the British garrison, unlike the Southern Protectorate, which was permanently garrisoned by the British West African Frontier Force (WAFF) and patrolled by powerful gunboats. So the French ventured to capture the province. But "in 1897, Mr. J. Chamberlain [a British parliamentarian] sent out Captain Lugard, with the rank of Brigadier-General, to raise a force of 2,000 men, with British officers and N.C.O.'s, stores and guns, with the result that a convention was signed with France in June 1898, and British rights were saved" (Geary 8).

The British government paid the Royal Niger Company for its assets and investments on the Niger, and it ceased to rule the protectorate in 1899. Following his successful military campaign, Brigadier-General Lugard was appointed the first governor of Northern Nigeria that year. In 1914, when Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria were joined, he (now Sir Frederick Lugard) became its first governor-general. That way, Nigeria, like the thirteen original American colonies, became both a British colony, and later a member of the British Commonwealth.

As the British established a foothold in the Lower Niger, they divided the territory into administrative districts and appointed district commissioners to govern them. One of these district commissioners is in charge of the Igbo districts that Achebe writes about in *Things Fall Apart*.

EARLY REACTIONS TO THE COLONIZATION OF NIGERIA

The creation and colonization of Nigeria by Britain took the form of a three-pronged frontal attack on the ethnic peoples of the Lower Niger: the commercial front, the socio-religious front, and the paramilitary administration front. The attack was so cunningly coordinated and simultaneously executed on all three fronts by various British forces that before the natives realized what had happened, their land, their culture, their wealth, their gods and goddesses, and their own people had been won over by the alien agencies. Hence it became very difficult for the Nigerians to counterattack their white enemies effectively without harming their fel-

low clansmen. For not only had some Nigerians become Christians and catechists, teachers and students in mission schools, or court messengers and interpreters, but, above all, the *efulefu* or outcasts (such as the *osu*, the twins and their mothers, and the poor and the sick) had been freed by the new dispensation. In a word, the alien people and their way of life, which offered Nigerians new job opportunities, individual freedoms, and a new and apparently more compassionate religion, understandably now had to be defended by their native converts.

The situation created serious conflicts between the colonized Nigerians and the colonizing Englishmen. And, obviously, the two sides reacted to the situation in different ways. The following pages discuss some of these reactions.

CHINUA ACHEBE AND COLONIALISM

Chinua Achebe, born thirty years after the creation of Nigeria and thirty years before it attained political independence, had direct experience of the British colonization of Nigeria and Igboland. He was raised in the village of Ogidi, one of the first centers of Anglican missionary work in Eastern Nigeria, only a few dozen miles away from the Niger River. As a Christian convert, he was named Albert.

> I was baptized Albert Chinualumogu. I dropped the tribute to Victorian England when I went to the university, although you might find some early acquaintances still calling me by it. The earliest of them all—my mother—certainly stuck to it to the bitter end. So if anyone asks you what her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria had in common with Chinua Achebe, the answer is, They both lost their Albert! As for the second name, which in the manner of my people is a full-length philosophical statement, I simply cut in two, making it more businesslike without, I hope, losing the general drift of its meaning. (*Morning Yet on Creation Day* 98).

Achebe received his elementary, secondary, and university education, respectively, from a mission school, a (colonial) government secondary school, and a (colonial) university college in Ibadan, staffed and run by London University. All three institutions exerted colonial influences on him, be they religious, administrative, or academic. In his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, his general reaction to colonialism in Nigeria is unmistakable:

> But apart from the church, the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial. Many of these messengers came from Umuru on the bank of the Great River [Niger River], where the white men first came many years before and where they had built the centre of their *religion*, and *trade* and *government* [emphasis added]. These court messengers were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and high-handed. They were called *kotma*, and because of their ash-coloured shorts they earned the additional name of Ashy-Buttocks. They guarded the prison, which was full of men who had offended against the white man's laws. Some of these prisoners had thrown away their twins and some had molested Christians. They were beaten in the prison by the *kotma* and made to work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white Commissioners and the court messengers. Some of these prisoners were men of title who should be above such mean occupation. They were grieved by the indignity and mourned for their neglected farms. (123)

WILLIAM NEVILL M. GEARY AND NIGERIA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Coming to West Africa from England as a practicing lawyer, William Geary first landed in Sierra Leone in 1894. From 1895 to 1897 he was appointed attorney-general of Gold Coast (now Ghana). After a leave of absence in England, he returned to West Africa in 1898, this time to Lagos, Nigeria, as a private lawyer. While there Geary worked with British and Nigerian businessmen and British colonial officials, but he also interacted with ordinary Nigerian citizens. His experiences enabled him to write with the kind of authority apparent in the excerpt that follows.

FROM WILLIAM NEVILL M. GEARY, *NIGERIA UNDER BRITISH RULE* (1927)

Progress of Nigeria

How has England benefited, how have the Africans benefited in the result from our self-imposed task of governing Nigeria? How, when, and by whom, has the great task been carried out in the last thirty years? For 1895 is the starting point in this great adventure.

We have benefited by a great and increasing market being raised up for British manufacturers, carried in British bottoms.

In 1925 the Nigerian imports were over £16 million in all, whereof the United Kingdom supplied 71 per cent. In 1895 the imports were under one million.

Our payment has been some £5 million in all granted by the British Treasury mainly for subvention of Northern Nigeria and the West African Frontier Force. It was an emergency grant when without it Northern Nigeria could not have been occupied, and granted when England was rich and income-tax low. Now that Nigeria is prosperous, why should not the over-burdened English tax-payer be refunded?

This sum of £5 million is independent of and different from the ordinary debt of Nigeria. It was given for Northern Nigeria, which had no sufficient revenue to offer as security and so could not come on the market to borrow. On 18 March 1926 the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Amery, said these grants-in-aid were free grants, not loans, and neither capital nor interest can be claimed.

The benefit to the Natives is that the *Pax Britannica* has been extended over the whole of Nigeria at a minimum of cost mainly met out of import duties on articles which to the African are luxuries.

Natives of Nigeria

There is no unrest in Nigeria—no political assassination—no non-co-operation—no bombs. The Prince of Wales had a universal welcome of enthusiastic loyalty. The Intelligentsia in West Africa is Christian and Protestant mainly; so there is not that division of caste and creed. The Mohammedans are not fanatical. Still there is faithful and shrewd criticism of the Administration. However, these African critics combine a hearty dislike and contempt for official methods with affectionate regard for England, just as many a good Christian has a loathing for the clergy. I have heard the phrase and wish expressed that West Africa will be another India. God forbid. The condition of India is not so satisfactory to either the governors or the governed; and let us avoid methods which might lead to similar results. The sound old system in West Africa was to consider the African as an "Englishman with a black face". In return the African used to talk of going "home to England". A snob might sneer. But this good feeling is the result of the statesmanship of Wilberforce and his friends, including William Pitt; and of Lord Palmerston's ordering the taking of Lagos. Let us take care that no latter-day policy, or lesser men, and least of all any "dam-nigger" prejudice, may undo the work of the great men of the past and estrange the love of our adopted children.

The Indian never laughs. The African, on the contrary, has a loud laugh and is boisterous and noisy, which may irritate the European: in compensation the African has an inherent common sense and an appreciation of a joke whereto one can appeal. The European can never do manual work in West Africa, therefore the execution of all work, whether Government or commercial, depends on Native labour. So the European who would be efficient must be able to handle Native labour so as to secure willing co-operation; for there cannot now be nigger-driving by the lash. The African is utilized as a marine-engineer and also on the railway; and a Krooboy at the donkey-engine can deal quickly and carefully with cargo.

There are in fact twelve Native main line drivers on the railway and twenty-five shunters, who can rise to a maximum salary of £300 a year. Colonel F. D. Hammond, in his report on the railway, recommends that more Native engine-drivers should be employed. The African frequently becomes a skilled mechanic in repair shops and all purely clerical work is done by Africans.

In the professional class the Bar is almost entirely African, though there are one or two European lawyers in Lagos and one in Northern Nigeria. In medicine there are numerous qualified physicians and surgeons, some

in the Government service. There has been some tension as to the treatment of African doctors in the Government service, but in contrast thereto stands out a story of African gallantry and patriotism. A young Lagosian returned to Lagos during the War as a qualified doctor, the Nigerian forces were then going on the East African expeditions; this young man sank his rank as a doctor and volunteered to go as a dresser; his services were accepted and he was mentioned for his bravery under fire. Ecclesiastically there are African Bishops of the Church of England and clergy of the Church of England and other denominations. There are but few African Roman Catholic priests—the African has no predilection for celibacy.

Lastly, it is often said, "Black men smell bad." It is difficult to prove a negative, and I can only give in evidence my own experience. For several years when practising, I sat in court on the bar benches side by side with African barristers; and I had numerous African clients, male and female, and I personally never perceived any unpleasant odour. Perhaps carriers coming in after a long march and freely sweating, do smell; but there are similar smells even in Europe.

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Missionaries

The missionaries have been a wide-reaching influence for good in coastal districts of Nigeria. The Protestants were first in the field, at Badagry and Abeokuta before the taking of Lagos, at Lagos itself after its capture, and in the delta at Bonny, and from these centres they spread churches and schools. The Roman Catholics came later.

In the temporal side of their work the Protestant missionaries educated their converts and thereby provided the Native staff on which the Government and traders depended and without whose help the Government and trade could not have been carried on. It was only later that the Government undertook education, firstly by subventions and secondly by establishing Government schools, as the King's College at Lagos, for secondary education and primary schools, and also training schools for teachers.

The Roman Catholics have undertaken the upbringing of half-castes, "snuff and butters," as is the slang local phrase for their colour, at the convent at Lagos for girls whose parents pay, and at Taupo up the lagoon gratuitously.

On the religious and moral side of missionary effort it is as difficult to judge in Africa as it is in Europe; and many delight in pointing a finger of scorn at any delinquencies of Christian Africans.

A crucial test of the moral effect of Christianity is the conduct of the Christian inhabitants of Nimbe in the Akassa raid. The Royal Niger Company, acting under their charter, had imposed a customs barrier which destroyed the trade and prosperity of Nimbe, and all the inhabitants of Nimbe, Christian and Pagan, determined to raid and destroy Akassa, the head station of the Niger Company. The raid was successful and forty captives were taken, who were divided between the Pagan and Christian inhabitants of Nimbe. The Pagans killed and ate their captives, making a cannibal feast, described by a Roman Catholic missionary, Father Diedenhofer, accidentally present, as a spectator, not a dietary. The Christians refused to kill their captives, treated them fairly and ultimately returned them safely to the Government. A fine instance of fidelity to the faith; but there was one renegade who, though trained for years in a missionary school in the Isle of Man, was one of the cannibals and was observed eating a man's leg.

London: Methuen, pp. 13–17.

C. K. MEEK ON THE EVIL EFFECTS OF INDIRECT RULE IN IGBOLAND

When Lord Lugard assumed office on January 1, 1914, as the first governor-general of Nigeria, he extended the application of the principles of indirect rule, which had worked so well in Northern Nigeria, to Southern Nigeria, which included Igboland. He did so without regard to the peculiar political nature of the individual peoples of Nigeria, especially disregarding the egalitarian nature of the Igbo, who are opposed to any form of imposed government. Furthermore, the native courts and the warrant chiefs that were appointed to run the system of indirect rule became a disastrous failure in both their administrative and judicial functions. As the years passed, the warrant chiefs became oppressive tyrants, imprisoning arbitrarily whoever criticized them openly, receiving bribes from litigants before their cases were tried, and often giving disputed lands to the wrong claimants. In 1929 the women of Aba, an Igbo community, seeing how their husbands, fathers, and brothers were cruelly beaten and falsely imprisoned, engaged in an unprecedented riot that took the government months to put down. The federal government was invited to come and solve the problem.

Lord Lugard sent C. K. Meek, the anthropologist to the government of Nigeria, who had already established a high reputation of conducting invaluable research on Nigerians in the Northern Provinces, to study the problem posed by the 1929 Aba Women's Riot, which became a historic example of feminist movements in Nigeria. In the excerpt that follows, Dr. Meek comments on the riot as well as on indirect rule, which he considers another form of local government, but one without the participation of the people. He makes suggestions on what the federal government must do to improve the system, if the principles of indirect rule are to be applied to Igboland.

FROM C. K. MEEK, *LAW AND AUTHORITY IN A NIGERIAN TRIBE: A STUDY IN INDIRECT RULE* (1937)

Introduction

Towards the close of 1929 riots of an unprecedented kind broke out with startling suddenness in two of the South-Eastern Provinces of Nigeria. The rioters were women—not a few enthusiasts, but women *en masse*—who formed themselves into mobs, armed themselves with cudgels, and marched up and down the country, holding up the roads, howling down the Government, setting fire to the Native Court buildings, assaulting their chiefs, and working themselves generally into such a state of frenzy that on several occasions they did not hesitate to challenge the troops sent to restore order. The rioting continued vigorously for several weeks, and then faded gradually away, as the frenzy subsided and reason began to resume its place. But in the meantime many of the rioters had lost their lives and heavy damage had been done to the property of the Native Administrations and of numerous European trading firms.

Nigeria had always been noted and quoted for the success of its methods of administration and the contentment and friendliness of its twenty million people. This violent and widespread rebellion, therefore, fell upon the Government like a bolt from the blue. A Commission was appointed to inquire into the causes of the disturbances and, after hearing hundreds of witnesses, produced a report which is one of the most interesting commentaries on colonial administration that have been published in recent times. The riots, it appeared, were primarily due to an unfounded fear that direct taxation, which had recently been applied to the male members of the community, was now to be extended to the female. And this fear was intensified by the scarcity of money caused by a heavy fall in the price of palm-produce, the principal source of the people's income, without any corresponding fall in the price of imported goods. But the manner in which the riots had been conducted had made it evident that there were other predisposing causes of discontent, and chief among these was the widespread hatred of the system of Native Administration conducted through the artificial channel of Native Courts, the members of which, under the name of "Warrant Chiefs", had come to be regarded as corrupt henchmen of the Government, rather than as spokesmen and protectors of the people. Had there been a genuine system of Native Administrations based on the institutions of the people and giving full freedom of expression, the riots, if they had occurred at all, could not have attained the dimensions they did, and would not have taken the form of vicious attacks on "Warrant Chiefs" and the wholesale destruction of Native Administration property. Nor were the opinions

expressed by the women confined to them. They were shared also by the men. But the women had believed that they could show their resentment with an impunity which would not be accorded to their menfolk.

Elsewhere in Nigeria the form of government known as "Indirect Rule" had been applied with marked success for many years, pre-existing native institutions being fully utilized for the establishment of local self-government on progressive lines. From the large emirates or states such as Sokoto, Bornu, or Kano in the north, and Oyo, Abeokuta, or Benin in the south, to the numerous petty chiefdoms scattered all over the country, there were few areas that could not boast their own Native Administration, including chiefs, counsellors, judges, police, treasuries, hospitals, and schools.

But in South-Eastern Nigeria indirect rule on these lines had not been considered possible, as no framework had been discovered on which Native Administrations could be erected. There were no chiefs with substantial territorial jurisdiction. Indeed, in most areas there were no chiefs at all, and there was no higher unit of government than the commune or small group of contiguous villages. The British system of administration had therefore been direct. For judicial purposes central Native Courts, each with jurisdiction over a large area, had been established to dispose of all but the most serious crimes and torts. No objection had been taken to these courts as such, but the judges of the courts soon became unpopular when they began to assume, as they were often compelled by the British District Officer to assume, executive authority within their own villages. They became, in fact, "chiefs" armed with an authority far in excess of that possessed by the village-councils in former times. This and their venality as judicial officials had made them feared and disliked, though many individuals among them were men of the highest character. With the introduction of direct taxation in 1927 the dislike of the Native Court members became intensified, as they had been used by the Government to persuade the people to accept taxation, and indeed had become the principal agents for collecting the tax. Thus, when in 1929 the price of palm-produce fell to an uneconomic figure, it merely needed the spark of a rumor that women, the preparers and marketers of palm-produce, were to be taxed to set the whole country ablaze.

It might be inferred that the Government of Nigeria had not devoted sufficient attention to the administration of these South-Eastern Provinces, and it must be admitted that there is some ground for this opinion. Yet it had been no mean achievement on the part of the British Administrative Staff that in a single generation the most lawless part of Nigeria had been converted to a state of comparative peace and contentment. Moreover, the administrative difficulties had been largely inherent in the situation, owing to the absence of any form of central authority. The

Government had made numerous attempts to bring to light the indigenous leaders of the people, but little progress had been made prior to the riots, as investigations had not been carried out in the intensive, scientific manner which would alone reveal the framework on which stable Native Administrations could be built. The Secretary of State for the Colonies was not therefore unjustified when he endorsed the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor and of the Commission of Inquiry that direct taxation should not have been introduced into the South-Eastern Provinces of Nigeria until fuller knowledge had been obtained of the social institutions of the people. The cart had been put before the horse.

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In the Southern Provinces of Nigeria there is almost a mass movement towards Christianity and Western education, and it is true to say that in the most populous tribes the majority of the younger generation are already professing Christians and have some knowledge of reading and writing. The result has been a cultural clash between the old and the young. It would be a fatal mistake, therefore, to concentrate local authority exclusively in the hands of the elders, most of whom are still pagans, and to fail to give to the younger generation, who no longer respect the ancient sanctions, a reasonable share in the administration of local affairs. This would merely alienate or create active hostility among the educated members of the community, and give them just ground for believing that the policy of "Indirect Rule" is indeed an anachronism and a means of keeping them in a state of subjection to institutions which have outlasted their usefulness. "Indirect Rule," after all, is merely another name for the local self-government, and self-government implies a form of government acceptable to the people as a whole. The pursuit of a static policy would defeat the main purpose of "Indirect Rule," which is to enlist the activities of all the social elements in a common loyalty and solidarity. The old and young will have to work out the synthesis by tact and forbearance, but the Government can assist in the adjustment by adhering to a broad dynamic policy. Such a policy has been well and truly laid down in Sir Donald Cameron's recent memorandum on "The Principles of Indirect Administration," and this memorandum should be sufficient to allay, once for all, the fears that have been expressed in recent years regarding the wisdom and purpose of the policy of "Indirect Rule."

London: Oxford University Press, pp. ix–xvi.

ELIZABETH ISICHEI ON THE BRITISH INVASION OF IGBOLAND, 1902–1906

The Aba Women's Riot was not the first instance of Igbo resistance to British rule. On the contrary, the fight the men gave the British between 1902 and 1906 before they were subdued and severely punished gave the women the impetus to fight the British later. The Igbo, who believe in complementary dualism, see the 1929 riot as a complement to the men's armed combat with the British earlier in the century.

In the following excerpt, Elizabeth Isichei, a renowned Igbo historian, gives a partial account of the war of liberation that the Igbo men waged against the British before they were defeated and punished, and their cherished land occupied and colonized.

FROM ELIZABETH ISICHEI, *THE IBO PEOPLE AND THE EUROPEANS: THE GENESIS OF A RELATIONSHIP—TO 1906* (1973)

The Invasion of Iboland, 1902–1906

In the mid 1890s, the rulers of the states of the western Ibo interior gradually came to a resolve to unite in an effort to expel the Royal Niger Company, using the Ekumeku societies as their instruments. Several years of negotiation were necessary to resolve the problems created by the need for united action, and the jealously guarded autonomy of each little state, and even when agreement was reached, each Ekumeku band fought independently, under its own commander, though side by side.[1] In 1898, they rose in an insurrection "for the express purpose of . . . driving out of the country all foreigners and everything foreign."[2] Both missionaries and Company officials fled to the relative safety of Asaba, and soon the Ekumeku controlled the whole Asaba hinterland, except for Asaba itself, the village of Okpanam, some four miles distant, and Issele-Uku, garrisoned by the Company's troops. They used guerilla tactics, attacking, and then disappearing along a maze of forest paths. They sacked the deserted mission stations, and news of their success reached the neighbouring Ishan peoples, who sent reinforcements for the struggle. After suffering several reverses, the forces of the Royal Niger Company succeeded in crushing the rising, with much bloodshed. Strub considered that if it had been united under a single capable leader, the movement could have

taken over the whole west bank of the Niger, and threatened the European presence there.[3]

This was not, as was thought at the time, the end of the Ekumeku. Gradually, the societies regrouped, and recouped their strength. In 1900, the Royal Niger Company gave way to the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1902, in response to the fears of traders and missionaries that another rising was imminent, a patrol was sent against the Ekumeku, capturing many of its leaders and imprisoning them in distant Calabar.[4]

But the Ekumeku survived, and in 1904, despite their memories of the failures of the past, they broke out in another major rising. The immediate occasion was dissatisfaction with the workings of the recently established Native Courts, and the abuses and corruption they manifested.[5] Mission property was unharmed, but "Native Christians and others suspected of foreign sympathies have been made to suffer equally with the foreigners themselves."[6] None lost their lives, but many lost their property and were forced to flee.

In 1904, the Ekumeku changed their tactics. They abandoned the guerilla warfare, which had enjoyed much success in 1898, and concentrated on the separate defence of each town[7]—a decision which reflected the continuing paramountcy of local loyalties. The change of tactics was disastrous, for it was relatively easy to isolate and conquer the little states, one by one, and their defences—clay walls and ditches—offered no protection against machine guns. The turning point of the rising was the siege of Uburuku, a town which, unlike its allies, had excellent natural defences. After several days of gallant resistance, the town fell. It was the end of the rising, for "the others in the league understood that they could not resist an enemy who had conquered the bravest of their number, and returned to their homes."[8]

At least three hundred of those involved in the movement were imprisoned in Calabar, and many died there.[9] A missionary in western Iboland described the consequences of failure in war. "Result: many towns destroyed, four to five hundred killed; four hundred prisoners. On the British side, one European killed, another wounded, a dozen soldiers killed. All the farms are devastated, and yams, banana groves and cassava, all destroyed."[10] But it was still not the end of the Ekumeku, and in 1909, resistance broke out again in the Ogwashi area, which was only suppressed after five months of guerilla warfare.[11] And the western Ibo continue to cherish the memory of the Ekumeku, of those "select men, brave, courageous, with military prowess," such as Dunkwu Isusu of Onicha-Olona, and Nwadiaju, of Issele Mkpitma.[12]

By 1906, the conquest of Iboland was in no sense completed. A missionary wrote in 1910 that "Almost continual expeditions, which the newspapers never mention, take place in the interior of the country."[13]

This resistance continued through the period of the First World War and beyond. The Women's Riots of 1929, with their tragic sequel, were not an isolated protest, but were an affirmation of a continuing tradition of resistance.

Notes

1. Strub, fo. 13.
2. E. Dennis, "The Rising of the Ekwumekwu," *Niger and Yoruba Notes* (1904), p. 83.
3. This paragraph is based on *ibid.* and on Strub, folios 14–15.
4. C.O. 520/18, Fosbery to High Commissioner, Southern Nigeria, 2 January 1903.
5. C.O. 520/24, W.E.B. Copland-Crawford, "Report on the Rising of the Ekumeku Society in Asaba Hinterland, 1904," 25 April 1904; encl. in Egerton to C.O., 22 May 1904. Cf. E. Dennis, *loc. cit.*, p. 84.
6. C.M.S. G3/A3/1904/27, Dennis to Baylis, 19 January 1904. Paul O. Emecete, "Story of My Life," *The African Missionary* (November–December 1919), p. 3.
7. Strub, fo. 21.
8. Strub, fo. 22. C.O. 520/24, "Report on Asaba Hinterland Operations," 14 March 1904, encl. in Egerton to C.O., 7 May 1904.
9. C.O. 520/24, Copland-Crawford, "Report on the Rising of the Ekumeku Society in Asaba Hinterland, 1904," encl. in Egerton to C.O., 22 May 1904. Non-official sources put the number higher. Cf. C.S.Sp. 191/A/II, cutting from Depêche Coloniale, 13 June 1905, annotated "C'est très vrai dit le P. Lejeune."
10. C.S.Sp. 192/B/III, Lejeune to Superior General, 17 March 1904.
11. Ferrieux, letter of 1 October 1910, in *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* (1911), pp. 72 ff.
12. Asaba oral tradition.
13. C.S.Sp. 192/B/VI, Léna to Superior General, 21 December 1910.

New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 140–42.

MICHAEL CROWDER ON THE AFTERMATH OF THE UNIFICATION OF NIGERIA

A white professor, Michael Crowder taught history at the University of Lagos during the 1960s and 1970s. While there he researched and wrote an authoritative history of Nigeria so that both Nigerians and Britons could truly understand how Nigeria was created and colonized by Britain. In the following excerpt, Crowder discusses the unification of Nigeria and its impact on the ethnic peoples, especially the Igbo, who, under the leadership of the Aro, refused to be colonized until they were finally subdued around 1918.

FROM MICHAEL CROWDER, *THE STORY OF NIGERIA* (1978)

The Unification of Nigeria

On the withdrawal of the Royal Niger Company's charter [in 1897], the Niger Coast Protectorate and all the company's territories as far north as Idah were, as we have seen, amalgamated into the new Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The Lagos Protectorate, like the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, was brought under Colonial Office jurisdiction, and comprised all of Yorubaland except the Emirate of Ilorin, which was included in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. By 1900 the major areas of resistance to British authority had been overcome, but in some areas of the eastern provinces British authority was only extended with great difficulty. Yorubaland, with the exception of Ijebu, had been brought under British rule by treaty, Benin had been conquered and the Delta states had all been subdued in the interests of trade. However, it took many punitive expeditions to bring the whole of Igboland effectively under British administration.

The first major operation undertaken by the new Protectorate government was against the Aro, guardians of the famous Aro Chukwu oracle, which still retained its political influence over most of the peoples of the Niger Delta and its hinterland. The Aro bitterly resented the extension of British authority over an area in which for more than two centuries the religious and political supremacy of their oracle had remained unchallenged. They therefore did as much as they could to frustrate the alien administration, particularly by using their religious authority to place embargoes on trade with the Europeans. At first the British had hoped

to avoid using force in dealing with the Aro. However, when in June 1901 the latter attacked some Ibibio villages, carrying off a number of their inhabitants for sale as slaves on the domestic market, the British decided to take action. As Anene has put it, "there were no doubts . . . in the minds of the Protectorate administrators that the one remaining obstacle to the consolidation of imperial rule was the Aro." The attack on the Ibibio was considered by the Protectorate government as having been aimed at the frustration of trade in the interior. This, together with the continuing role of the Aro in the internal slave trade, gave them the excuse they needed to mount an expedition against the Aro and their oracle. However, as Anene has pointed out, the Colonial Office, while sanctioning the expedition, was not happy about extending the Protectorate by conquest. The expedition met with comparatively little resistance, and entered Arochukwu itself on 24th December 1901. A number of Aro chiefs were hanged, and the oracle was burnt. Though the destruction of the basis of Aro authority represented a major step forward in the extension of British authority over south-eastern Nigeria, numerous columns, named after the areas they patrolled, were kept on a standing basis. In Ogoja, Owerri, Ibibio, Urhobo and Western Igbo the new government had its most difficult task, often extending control village by village. The local people had the initiative despite their primitive weapons. Great rain forests, meshes of streams and rivers merging into swampland, made rapid communications almost impossible and put the villagers at a great advantage over their well-armed enemies. Thus for the first six years of the Protectorate's life the new administration, particularly in the eastern provinces, was concerned primarily with the assertion of its authority.

Though some parts of Igboland were not finally brought under British control until as late as 1918, the year 1906, when the Lagos Protectorate was merged with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the north was finally pacified, can be taken as marking the beginning of effective British administration in modern Nigeria. Before then cultural contact with the European, with the exception of the coastal ports and certain towns in Yorubaland, had been of marginal significance. During the three centuries that Europeans had been visiting Nigeria they had made remarkably little cultural impact on the bulk of the local population. This is in marked contrast to the trans-Saharan contact in northern Nigeria, which resulted in extensive changes in religion, law, architecture, technology and concepts of social stratification. It was only after 1906 that the way of life of the invaders had any appreciable effect on Nigerian society. From then on can be traced the rapid breakdown of the structure of traditional society, as the various peoples of Nigeria were brought under an administration which if not uniform in its application was at least controlled by a single power. Before then the British had been but a

handful and their main interest in Nigeria had been economic. With the exception of the missionaries they had neither deliberately nor unconsciously attempted to alter Nigerian society except in so far as customs hindered trade, or where practices such as human sacrifice were openly repugnant to them.

The period 1906–12, which preceded the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, is one of the most crucial in the history of Nigeria, for it marks both the beginning of effective administration and the beginning of the rejection of standards and customs that had endured almost intact for many centuries. It was the first time that Nigerians were subjected in any large measure to Western influences, which in the next fifty years were to have such a great effect on Nigerian society. A whole new economic world was to be opened to Nigerians. Christianity, as the official doctrine of the colonial masters, began to spread throughout Southern Nigeria and the non-Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria. New forms of administration and justice were introduced. Finally, education in the Western way of life was made available to a wide range of Nigerians as a result of the spread of missions. So although this period appears from the annual reports as a static one, it was in effect the beginning of major changes in Nigeria.

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Neither the economic nor administrative policy of the government set out deliberately to upset the traditional social structure. Indeed the core of the philosophy of indirect rule as it came to be practised in Nigeria from 1906 onwards was the ensurance of minimum interference with "native society." It attempted only to create favourable conditions for trade and to ensure what it considered the basic essentials of human behaviour. By contrast the missionaries, who were excluded from the Muslim areas of the North by Lugard's agreement with the Caliph of Sokoto that he would not interfere with Muslim religion, approached Nigerian societies with a very different attitude. They were convinced that their own society was superior, and also that conversion of the local people would have to be not only from the traditional religion but from the whole way of life which was intertwined with it and supported it. They therefore deliberately set out to change the very structure of traditional society. Until the beginning of the twentieth century they had made only comparatively small inroads into Nigerian society.

London: Faber and Faber, pp. 188–93.