

The Twenty Years War
Invasion and Resistance in Southeastern Nigeria
1900-1919

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ABBREVIATIONS

C.O.	Colonial Office
F.O.	Foreign Office
NAE	Nigerian National Archives, Enugu
NAI	Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RE	Rhodes House, Oxford

PREFACE

This study is based on one year of research in the libraries and archives of Great Britain and Nigeria. It also incorporates oral traditions collected in Nigeria in 1966/67 and again in 1974. The range of materials utilized, both published and unpublished, is delineated in the Bibliography. The preparation of this study was made possible by funds provided under a Graduate Prize Fellowship and a Traveling Fellowship from Harvard University.

During the course of several years of research, I have received help, advice, and encouragement from a great number of people. Foremost among them is Professor K. Onwuka Dike of Harvard University, who, as my Thesis Advisor, has been a constant source of guidance and support. He, together with Professor William A. Brown of the University of Wisconsin, has been the main formative influence in my intellectual development and is largely responsible for whatever of merit exists in my work.

I have also benefited greatly during my research from help provided by large numbers of people whom it would be impossible to list completely here. The most prominent among them are Professor T.N. Tamuno and Mr. I. Uzoechi, both of the University of Ibadan; and Professors A.E. Afigbo and Don Hartle, Messrs. C.C. Ifemesia and S.C. Ukpabi, and Mrs. Nina Mba, all of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. I have received abundant courtesy and assistance from the officials and staff of the national archives of Nigeria and Great Britain; of the libraries of the Universities

of London, Ibadan, and Nigeria; of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London; and of Rhodes House, Oxford.

Furthermore, numerous colleagues and friends at Harvard University and elsewhere have offered advice and encouragement at all stages of the preparation of the thesis. I owe special thanks to Mr. W.J. Harvey and to Misses F.I. Ekejiuba, Nancy Kilson, Marie Roehm, Lynn I. Shapiro, and Sharon Weiss. I must especially note my great debt to Mr. S.E.J. Etuk, who served tolerantly and tirelessly as my guide and interpreter in the South Eastern State of Nigeria.

In the course of field research I interviewed scores of village elders, both male and female, and without their openness and generosity I would have developed few of the insights into history and interpretation that I have been able to gather. Finally, I must record my immense debt to my many close friends in Mandala, who have, more than any other single factor, enabled me to understand the intellectual and emotional complexity of life in a small village.

INTRODUCTION

African resistance to European expansion has received increasing attention during the last decade as part of a general effort to reconstruct indigenous history from the viewpoint of Africans, rather than from the perspective of the colonial powers. Numerous studies of specific instances of resistance have revealed the great extent, intensity, and pervasiveness of opposition to the European invasion throughout the African continent.¹

With few exceptions, however, these studies have focused on regions with traditions of large-scale, centralized political organization. Resistance in such regions was usually characterized by massive and climactic military encounters, culminating in a clear victory for the invaders and an unambiguous surrender for the Africans. Because this resistance was centrally directed and coordinated, it is relatively easy to identify and assess such factors as leadership, motivation, organization, strategy, and tactics. Moreover, the narrative of events can be clearly reconstructed, since resistance was limited in time to one or two sharp engagements involving a few weeks of active hostility.

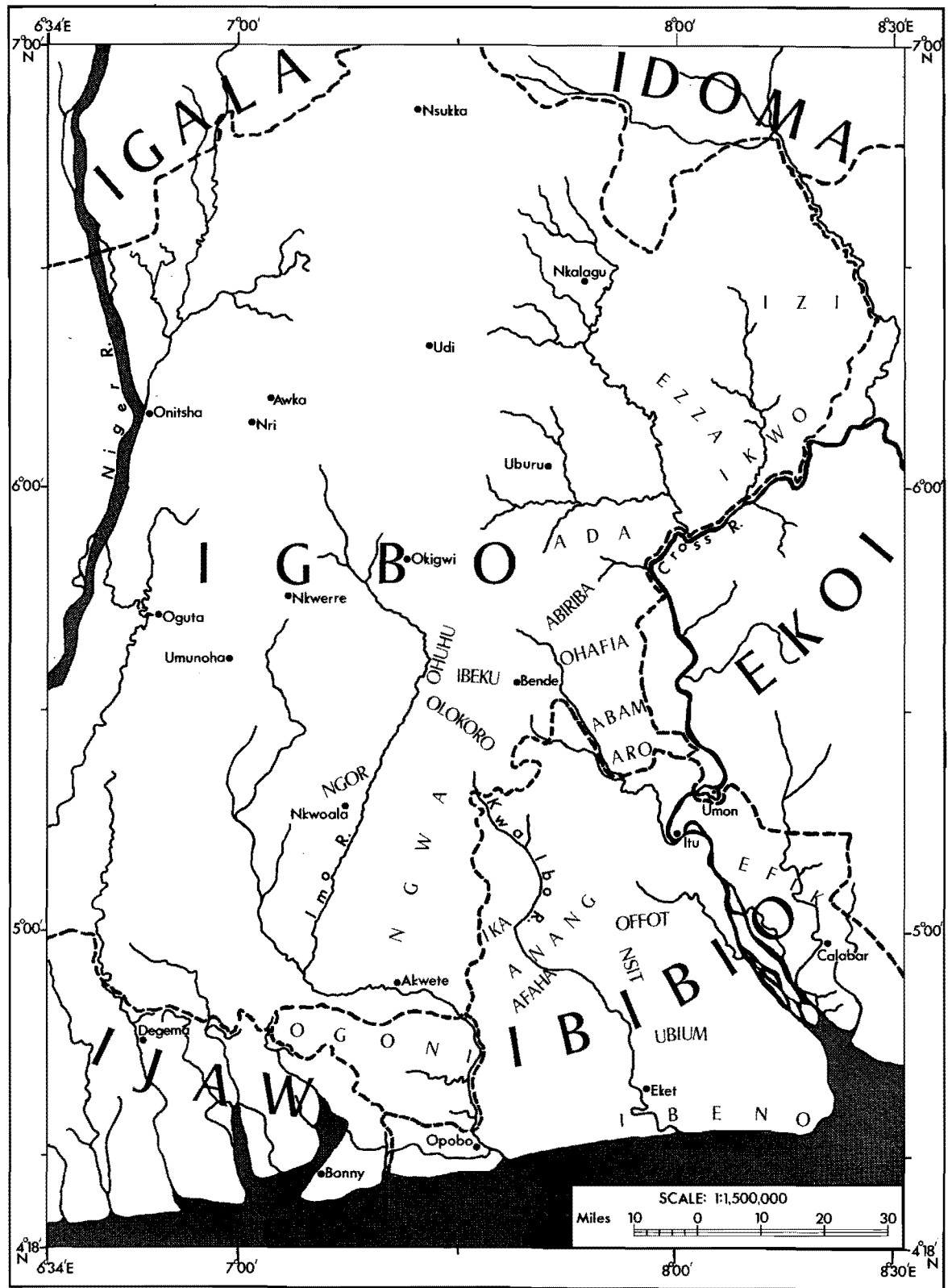
Large areas of Africa were not highly centralized, however,

¹ See for example Michael Crowder, ed., West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation (New York, 1971); Robert I. Rotberg and Ali A. Mazrui, eds., Protest and Power in Black Africa (New York, 1970); Terence O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97 (Evanston, 1967); and Obaro Ikime, Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936 (London, 1969).

and such generalizations apply only marginally to their initial contacts with Europeans. Southeastern Nigeria, the subject of the present study, is highly fragmented, both ethnically and politically. Resistance, though widespread, was in no way coordinated. Consequently, it is impossible to identify a single pattern of aims and methods that can be applied equally to all instances of resistance. It is difficult, in fact, to say precisely when resistance began and ended.

For the purposes of this study, Southeastern Nigeria is defined as the mostly heavily forested area stretching northward from the Niger Delta between the Niger and Cross Rivers (see map, page 3). Today, it constitutes the East Central State of Nigeria and major portions of the South Eastern and Rivers States and has a population, according to the 1973 census, of approximately twelve million people. Traditionally, and to some extent even at the present time, it was made up of a large number of relatively small, lineage-based clans without central political institutions. Although it was politically diffuse and contained several mutually unintelligible languages, however, Southeastern Nigeria was characterized by a number of social and cultural features relatively common to all groups in the area which served to link them together in informal but pervasive ways.

While the economic basis was mainly agricultural (a hoe culture based on the West African yam), substantial opportunities existed for local interchange of foodstuffs and handmade items such as pottery and cloth. Moreover, considerable potential



Southeastern Nigeria, 1900

existed for interchange over longer distances of coastal products, such as fish and salt, for items from the interior, such as agricultural staples and livestock. Thus, for centuries the region was drawn together by a network of middle distance trade routes managed and exploited by a succession of trading and professional groups. The last of these to dominate the area before the British invasion, the Aro, maintained a sphere of economic influence that was virtually coterminous with the area I have defined for this study.

Scholarly research in recent years has thrown considerable light on the history of Southeastern Nigeria.² It has been established by archaeological and linguistic methods that the area has been populated by the present groupings for between three and five thousand years. There has been, therefore, considerable stability of habitation, though not without constant small scale movement in search of better land and resources. It is evident from oral traditions, for example, that the Igbo and Ibibio peoples have been moving gradually southward and eastward for many centuries, displacing or absorbing the groups originally located there.³ Nevertheless, such movements have been small,

²See for example K.O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885 (Oxford, 1956); J.C. Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906 (Cambridge, 1966); G.I. Jones, The Trading States of the Oil Rivers (London, 1963); and Elizabeth Isichei, The Ibo People and the Europeans: The Genesis of a Relationship--to 1906 (London, 1973).

³Patterns of migration and settlement are dealt with at great length in the "intelligence reports" compiled in the 1930s by British administrative officers and now on file at the Nigerian National Archives in Ibadan and Enugu. See L.C. Gwam, "A Preliminary Index to the Intelligence Reports in the Nigerian Secretariat Record Group" (Mimeographed, National Archives, Ibadan, 1961).

and the general pattern of habitation has been one of relatively dense population (even before the present century) exploiting the comparatively fertile land resources of the area. It is also evident that long distance trade routes have brought Southeastern Nigeria into contact with surrounding regions for at least a thousand years.⁴

The arrival of Europeans on the West African coast in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries induced significant changes in the economic patterns of Southeastern Nigeria. Yet it would be a distortion to describe the European impact as either revolutionary or cataclysmic. Although growing demand for ivory and other tropical products, as well as slaves, greatly increased the scale of trade in the interior, this trade was generally managed in the same way as middle and long distance trade had been before the arrival of the Europeans. It also tended to follow routes that had been in existence for centuries. For the purposes of this study, the most important change associated with European trade demand was the infusion of large amounts of new wealth into the interior, with associated alterations in local social and political arrangements--a theme I shall deal with at length in the first two chapters.

By the eighteenth century the Niger Delta had become the most important source of slaves for the Americas. Yet it was not until the nineteenth century and the abolition of the trans-Atlantic

⁴David Northrup, "The Growth of Trade among the Igbo before 1800," Journal of African History, XIII, 2 (1972), 217-36.

slave trade that European, and particularly British, involvement took on a political character, ostensibly to enforce the transition from the trade in slaves to the production and export of palm oil and kernels. During the period of the European "scramble" for Africa in the 1880s, Great Britain established its own sphere of influence in Southeastern Nigeria. But numerous attempts to penetrate and explore the interior of the area between 1885 and 1900 and to impose British-dominated trade arrangements ended, as we shall see, in virtual failure. By 1900 Southeastern Nigeria, as compared to the savanna regions to the north and west, had become a backwater of the Empire--a great blank space on the map.

By the time that British forces entered the interior on their first major military incursion, in 1901, the atmosphere of enthusiastic imperial expansion of the previous decade had altered significantly. British optimism had been blunted by the war against the Boers in South Africa, and the Foreign and Colonial Offices found themselves under increasing pressure to cut expenses and to restrain their explorers and adventurers. Consequently there was little encouragement, support, or even interest in Southeastern Nigeria, and a curious moral indifference settled over activities there. Officers were left largely on their own, so long as they did not overspend themselves, and they were given considerable latitude in the use of force to establish the British administration.

There is consensus, in the few general studies that exist, regarding the overall pattern of events in the ensuing twenty years. Resistance to British patrols is described as scattered, uncoordinated,

and ineffective, since the many autonomous villages were unable to devise a common plan of action. It is also generally agreed that "by 1906 the process of consolidating British rule had been virtually completed."⁵ The little resistance that occurred is described as badly directed and inappropriate to the wholly unanticipated nature and scale of the British invasion. Moreover, the British conquest is claimed to have utterly destroyed the culture and society of Southeastern Nigeria. J.C. Anene, the prominent Nigerian scholar, has paraphrased Meek in writing that

British rule unleashed forces which almost completely transformed the social and economic life of the peoples of Southern Nigeria. . . . [W]hen "backward" peoples were suddenly confronted by a powerful modern state and were not given time to adjust themselves to the new situation, the peoples invariably lost their stability and became disorganised.⁶

In the resulting "chaotic" environment, initiative passed from African to European hands, and Southeastern Nigerians were left powerless: "[I]t was the officials who planned, directed, and imposed nearly all the measures of material development, on peoples powerless to affect the course of events to any great extent, whose greatest efforts had previously been absorbed in the struggle for survival and subsistence."⁷

⁵ Anene, Southern Nigeria, 2. See also Michael Crowder, A Short History of Nigeria (New York, 1966), 232; U.I. Ukwu, "Markets in Iboland," in B.W. Hodder and U.I. Ukwu, Markets in West Africa: Studies of Markets and Trade among the Yoruba and Ibo (Ibadan, 1969), 141; Harry A. Gailey, The Road to Aba (New York, 1970), 59.

⁶ Anene, Southern Nigeria, x, 1; C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe: A Study in Indirect Rule (London, 1937), 326.

⁷ I.F. Nicolson, The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960: Men, Methods, and Myths (Oxford, 1969), 2.

The present study will demonstrate, I believe, that these conclusions are incorrect. Resistance in Southeastern Nigeria, though uncentralized, was not merely sporadic and isolated. Each area was fully aware of the plans of other areas, observed the execution of those plans, and arranged its own actions accordingly. Furthermore, resistance did not end in 1906; by that year barely half the area under study had been visited by even a single military patrol. As late as 1914, the District Officer at Okigwi conceded with regard to his extensive territory that "The country is practically unopened," and in 1915 the District Officer at Uyo wrote that "The Annang country . . . is as yet hardly under Government control."⁸ In fact, military incursions and concerted resistance continued, with a few brief lulls, until 1919. As one officer put it in 1909, "The regiment may be considered as being on perpetual active service."⁹ In 1916 the Staff Captain of the Nigeria Regiment acknowledged with regard to all of Southeastern Nigeria that "patrols and escorts never cease [in] these districts."¹⁰ Far from willingly conceding their territory to the military patrols, the people of Southeastern Nigeria opposed the British advance in more than three hundred pitched battles over a twenty

⁸R. Hargrove to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 16 April 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/7); M.E. Howard, report of 18 October 1915 (NAE Calprof 4/4/16).

⁹R.H. Rowe, "The Soldier in Southern Nigeria," The United Service Magazine, new series, XXXVIII, 962 (January 1909), 427.

¹⁰Staff Captain, Headquarters, Nigeria Regiment, to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 30 November 1916 (NAE CSE 21/5/3).

year period, suffering at least ten thousand casualties.¹¹

It is my intention in the following pages to describe in detail the course of the British invasion of Southeastern Nigeria and the patterns of resistance to that invasion. But beyond the immediate task of description, I shall explore the broader aspects of political and cultural conflict between the Nigerians and the British. I believe that it is incorrect to describe the society of Southeastern Nigeria as collapsing in face of the European advance and to depict the British as the active participant, in control of all the variables, with the Nigerians as passive reactors to their policies. A more balanced perspective on this period will reveal that Southeastern Nigerians were well prepared by both environment and history to encounter the British and, to some extent, to use them in achieving their own local political and economic goals.

As stated above, the numerous villages of Southeastern Nigeria had been linked for centuries by a variety of middle and long distance trade routes. But in the absence of centralized political institutions, the control of these routes was subject to competition and conflict among a number of itinerant trade-professional groups who also sought to gain predominance in such fields as medicine, religion, and the adjudication of disputes. In purely local terms, the relationship of the various villages to these competitors was one of management, of manipulation, of balancing one against another.

¹¹On the estimation of African casualties due to British military action, see Appendix B of the present study.

To a considerable extent, I believe, the British were perceived and dealt with as yet another competitor in the lucrative trade and judicial arrangements of the area. While they introduced technological innovations on a scale previously unknown in Southeastern Nigeria and were able to enforce their demands with overwhelming military power, these innovations and demands were largely absorbed in ways similar to the impositions of previous trade competitors. Although violent resistance could not halt the British advance, it was effective in moderating and speed and thoroughness of that advance and in enabling Southeastern Nigerians to retain a measure of self-determination over the rate at which they absorbed technological and other changes.

At the deepest level, this study deals with the central issues of the colonial episode in African history: the actual power and influence of the European administration as imposed on the African social framework, the question of initiative and response in a variety of circumstances, and continuity and change in African institutions in face of new outside influences. In short, I hope to place what has previously been described as British "rule" into a historical and environmental context and to understand its functioning at the most local levels.

The basic framework for this study will be a general survey of all instances of resistance involving a substantial amount of violence, as well as an analysis of the patterns of resistance that emerged between 1900 and 1919. Additionally, I shall examine in detail a few selected examples of resistance so as to delineate

the various aspects of local motivation and organization. As noted above, however, the period of resistance in Southeastern Nigeria was not characterized by climactic, easily summarized encounters, but was rather a fluid process with many nodes of intense conflict interspersed with sporadic violence. It has therefore been possible for me to gather detailed data on only a relatively limited number of specific encounters. A complete history of every instance of local resistance will require years of painstaking collecting of oral traditions by teams of scholars-- a process already begun on a moderate scale by the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Nigeria. In the meantime, it is my hope that the present survey of resistance, along with a basic analysis of the patterns of conflict, will facilitate the direction of future field research.

There is one problem for the historian of Nigeria that should be mentioned at this point. For the purposes of narrative and analysis it is necessary to adopt geographic or ethnographic labels for the various areas under consideration. The selection of such labels is almost wholly arbitrary; the name Nigeria is itself an anachronism that distorts the ethnic complexity of a large area of West Africa. With this reservation in mind, I have chosen to employ the administrative boundaries adopted by the Nigerian Government since 1968 (see map at end of this study). They are small enough to allow of precision, and their shape and size often correspond to traditional ethnic divisions. Unfortunately, there remains some possibility for confusion, because older administrative

labels that appear occasionally in the quotations and footnotes, while similar in form to the new divisions, usually encompassed substantially larger amounts of territory. It is hoped that the consistent use of the newer divisional terminology in the maps and text will eliminate any potential confusion.

CHAPTER I

TRADE AND SOCIETY IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

Political and social intercourse in precolonial Southeastern Nigeria was highly localized and was based on kinship groupings.¹ There was no centralized state or government as these terms are understood by political theorists. The focus of the daily interaction of the Igbo and Ibibio peoples was the patrilineage, numbering a few hundred individuals, which maintained considerable autonomy from surrounding patrilineages. Among the Igbo, there are about 2,800 groupings of this type, with a median size of 640 persons.² Each of these patrilineages shared a common marketplace and ancestral shrines and experienced strong internal cohesiveness based on kinship ties. For purposes of mutual defense, management of trade, and exchange of brides, the patrilineages in a given area combined in loose groupings usually referred to as villages and village-groups. But cohesion within these groupings was normally sporadic. Government everywhere was localized and was based on assemblies consisting of all adult

¹See Daryll Forde and G.I. Jones, The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria (London, 1950); C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe: A Study in Indirect Rule (London, 1937); Simon Ottenberg, Leadership and Authority in an African Society (Seattle, 1971); M.M. Green, Igbo Village Affairs (London, 1947).

²U.I. Ukwu, "Markets in Iboland," in B.W. Hodder and U.I. Ukwu, Markets in West Africa: Studies in Markets and Trade among the Yoruba and Ibo (Ibadan, 1969), 118.

males from the grouping, led by lineage elders and other influential persons. The decisions of the assemblies were implemented by young and middle-aged men organized in age-grades or in title and secret societies.

Although the general functioning of local government in Southeastern Nigeria is relatively well understood, little attention has been paid to the tenuous relationships that existed among the three hundred village-groups of the region, since these relationships had virtually no formal structure.³ Yet it is evident that extensive and continuous intercourse has occurred for at least the last ten centuries across the entire region, especially in the fields of economic, judicial, and religious activity.

The most pervasive impetus to short-range intraregional contact was probably the need to exchange foodstuffs on a small scale. This need arose both because of periodic overpopulation with consequent food shortages and because of differential land fertility and growing conditions over relatively small areas. As Ukwu has noted, "With the recurrent juxtaposition of food surplus and food deficit village groups, the scope for trade at even the local level is very great."⁴ Yet exchange of foodstuffs was not limited to such short distance trade, for imbalances of a much more extensive kind affected the entire region. In particular,

³An exception is Simon Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, XIV, 3 (Autumn 1958), 295-317.

⁴Ukwu, "Markets in Iboland," 117. See also Green, Igbo Village Affairs, 39.

the requirement of the inland forest areas for salt, in which they were nearly totally deficient, rendered them dependent upon seacoast salt producers, as well as upon certain isolated salt pans and lakes, such as Uburu.

While it is impossible to date the origins of the middle and long distance trade in salt, it can be stated with considerable certainty that it preceded the arrival of Europeans on the West African coast in the sixteenth century. Shortly after 1500, and therefore considerably before the rise of the extensive trans-Atlantic trade, "a vigorous trade in salt between the eastern Niger Delta and the hinterland" already existed, according to contemporary accounts.⁵ Yet middle and long distance trade was not limited to salt, nor was its primary orientation toward the coast. Recent archaeological investigations have established that at least ten centuries ago Southeastern Nigeria was already integrated into the extensive long distance trade--primarily in luxury goods--of the western Sudan and the Sahara. The hoard of beads and cast bronze items unearthed at Igbo Ukwu, dated by radiocarbon methods over a range of years between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries, indicates that Southeastern Nigeria was receiving ore and metallurgical techniques from the Sahara as well as substantial amounts of trade items (especially beads) from as far away as Venice and India.⁶ In exchange for these items,

⁵David Northrup, "The Growth of Trade among the Igbo before 1800," Journal of African History, XIII, 2 (1972), 219. See also A.J.H. Latham, Old Calabar, 1600-1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society (Oxford, 1973), 5.

⁶Thurstan Shaw, Igbo Ukwu (London, 1970), I, 225-39.

Southeastern Nigerians probably sent northward a variety of forest products, such as ivory and kola nuts, as well as slaves.⁷

The trade northward followed several established routes, as delineated by the recent research of A.E. Afigbo in the local traditions of northern Igboland and the Benue valley.⁸ A major trading link was the Niger River itself, providing an avenue of commerce from the Niger Delta to the savanna regions of the north.⁹ But equally important were the inland routes to the east of the Niger, which served central and southern Igboland as well as the Igala, Idoma, Tiv, and other peoples to the north. The westernmost of these routes proceeded up the highland ridge from Bende through Okigwi and Udi to Nsukka, while just to the east another route led from Bende through Uburu and Nkalagu to Nsukka. From the Nsukka area, both routes continued northward. Further to the east, land links connected Calabar and the Cross River with the Tiv and Jukun areas of the Benue valley.¹⁰

The antiquity of these routes is subject to speculation. Northrup has presented convincing evidence that the Niger River

⁷Ibid., I, 284-5.

⁸A.E. Afigbo, "Pre-Colonial Links between Southeastern Nigeria and the Benue Valley," Paper presented at the Niger-Benue Valley Seminar of the Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, April 1974.

⁹Ibid. See also Northrup, "Growth of Trade," 221-5.

¹⁰Afigbo, "Pre-Colonial Links." See also F.I. Ekejiuba, "The Aro System of Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *Ikenga*, I, 1 (January 1972), 15, 21; W.R.G. Horton, "The Ohu System of Slavery in a Northern Ibo Village-Group," *Africa*, XXIV, 4 (October 1954), 311.

trade was flourishing well before the nineteenth century, carrying salt and fish northward from the Delta in exchange for foodstuffs.¹¹ Moreover, the dating of the Igbo Ukwu finds indicates that a substantial trade, whether by land or river, was already in existence over a thousand years ago. It may be suggested that the land routes, as described above, were in operation by the fifteenth century at the latest, since the rise and consolidation of the Jukun state, among others in the central Sudan, would surely have drawn considerable trade northward. Furthermore, oral traditions in the Uburu area claim that the collection and export of salt to the north preceded the rise of the Aro (eighteenth century at the latest).¹²

Although it is impossible to reconstruct with certainty the organization of trade several hundred years ago, a number of characteristics, supported by oral and documentary evidence, may be suggested. To some extent the various trade routes were subject to immediate, local control. Each village along a particular route ensured the cleanness and safety of its segment of the path and charged tolls in return. The operation of this toll collecting has been the subject of scholarly debate, and it has by no means been established that tolls were charged everywhere. However, it is evident that throughout a substantial part of Southeastern Nigeria paths were maintained in this way.

Among the southern Igbo and the Ibibio, for example, there are oral traditions describing particularly widespread toll

¹¹Northrup, "Growth of Trade," 223-5.

¹²"Uburu and the Salt Lake," Nigeria Magazine, 56 (1958), 91.

collecting, and a typical Calabar trader in the 1880s set aside as much as £500 per year to cover his transit charges.¹³ Before the establishment of the British military presence, Europeans were stopped and charged road tolls at every major village along their route, since they usually traveled with parties of traders who frequented the path.¹⁴ Rivers were often controlled in a similar way. A system of wooden booms was built across the Kwa Ibo River and Azumini Creek to control access to the upper reaches of these waterways, and the first British to reach northern Uyo Division found a similar system of "booms which had been placed by the natives across the Ikpa Creek for the purposes of levying toll from traders."¹⁵

To a considerable extent, the prosperity and power of a village depended upon its ability to control the trade along its paths and in its markets. It is evident that the wealth that accrued from

¹³Annesley to Anderson, 21 May 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020). See also Ekejiuba, "Aro System of Trade," 25; Simon and Phoebe Ottenberg, "Afikpo Markets: 1900-1960," in Markets in Africa, ed. Paul Bohannon and George Dalton (Evanston, 1962), 125; A.J. Fox, ed., Uzuakoli: A Short History (London, 1964), 14.

¹⁴See for example Casement to MacDonald, 10 April and 2 May 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63); Gallwey to F.O., 2 June 1898 (PRO FO 2/179/93); A.G. Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society, XIV, 4-6 (April-June 1898), 196-7.

¹⁵On Ikpa Creek, see Montanaro to Moor, 12 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 19 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/10514). On Azumini Creek, see Hewett to F.O., 22 January 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/1) and 12 February 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/4). On the Kwa Ibo River, see Whitehouse to Moor, 15 August 1895 (NAI Calprof 6/1/2); Whitehouse, "Report on a journey to the upper Kwo Ibo and from thence overland to Itu on the Cross River," [May 1897], extracts: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 20 May 1897 (PRO FO 2/122/56).

road and river tolls was increasingly concentrated in the hands of small numbers of men in each village, who formed themselves into title societies, both to increase the efficiency of their toll collection and to enhance their voice in general village affairs. In northern Igboland it was usually the local lodge of the Ozo society that collected tolls, while in southern and eastern Igboland this task was carried out by the comparable Okonko society.¹⁶ Naturally, the control of paths and rivers became the subject of much competition, both between villages and between factions within the same village. In the event of conflict among neighboring villages, one of the most widespread and effective tactics was the blockading of paths in order to enforce a market boycott on the opposing village.¹⁷ Traders who refused to pay tolls or to respect boycotts were deprived of their goods and driven away.

For the solitary traveler or trader, such an atmosphere could be perilous, and in fact very little middle or long distance travel was attempted by individuals. Instead, trade and travel were facilitated by certain religious and professional specialists

¹⁶ Meek, Law and Authority, 183; W.I. Ofonagoro, "The Opening up of Southern Nigeria to British Trade, and its Consequences: Economic and Social History, 1881-1916," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1972; "Southern Provinces: Tribal Customs and Superstitions compiled from the Reports of District Officers, 1922," Part 1, Chapter XVI, "Secret Societies," 2073 (NAE CSE 36/1/11).

¹⁷ Such boycotts, against both Africans and Europeans, are described in Hopkins to F.O., 18 November 1878 (PRO FO 84/1508/40); MacDonald to F.O., 12 October 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/23); and Moorhouse to Egerton, 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24796).

whose particular vocations rendered them generally immune from attack on the paths. Blacksmiths, such as those from Awka and Nkwerre, whose closely guarded, quasi-religious powers of metalworking afforded them an aura of protection, accompanied groups of traders and travelers, as did certain clans of religious specialists, such as the priests of Nri and of the Igwe-ka-ala oracle at Umunoha.¹⁸ Each of these groups organized and led periodic caravans to which itinerant traders attached themselves for a fee.¹⁹ All of the groups to some extent--and in the case of Awka to a considerable degree--engaged in trade. Much of the middle distance commerce was, however, in the hands of villages that had turned from agriculture to trade, often because over-population and poor land resources had necessitated the development of alternatives to agriculture.²⁰

Each of the trade-professional groups developed and maintained its own sphere of operations in the interior areas, although the spheres were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The agents of

¹⁸ On Awka, see Ukwu, "Markets in Iboland," 132; Meek, Law and Authority, 18; G.T. Basden, Niger Ibos (London, 1938), 77-84. On Nri, see M.A. Onwuejeogwu, "An Outline History of Nri--10th Century A.D. to 1972," Symposium Leo Frobenius: Perspectives of Contemporary African Studies (Cologne, 1974), 196-228. Very little has been published on the history of Nkwerre and Umunoha, although the local oral and documentary record is rich in data on their activities.

¹⁹ H.F. Mathews, "Field Notes from a visit to Akegbe," 27 May 1926 (RH MSS Afr. s. 783, box 3). For a description of the comparable Aro travel escort arrangements, see Ekejiuba, "Aro System of Trade," 17-19.

²⁰ Meek, Law and Authority, 19, 91-2; K.O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885 (Oxford, 1956), 28.

Awka, Nri, Nkwerre, and similar groups cultivated a variety of social and economic connections along their routes so as to ensure their safety. They entered into a form of blood-brotherhood, called igbandu in Igbo, with influential men in each village along the route and enhanced this connection through marriage into the families of such men.²¹ Above all, they cultivated supporters in each village through liberal gift giving and thus invariably became involved in local politics. The repercussions, both social and economic, of this infusion of wealth into the villages will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

A unique feature of the trading networks of Southeastern Nigeria, and one crucial to their functioning, was what Northrup has termed the "common nexus of religious and economic functions."²² We have already seen that the priests of such villages as Nri and Umunoha were facilitators of trade over long distances. The Awka and Nkwerre, too, emphasized the quasi-religious nature of their blacksmithing skills. The Awka also served as agents for their own local oracle, Agbala, sending hundreds of petitioners to Awka each year from all over Southeastern Nigeria in search of medicines, judicial judgments, and prognostications. The cause of this pervasive nexus was the need to provide safety along the trade routes, for given the politically fragmented character of

²¹F.I. Ekejiuba, "Igba Ndu: An Igbo Mechanism of Social Control and Adjustment," African Notes, VII, 1 (1971-2), 9-24; Ukwu, "Markets in Iboland," 131-2; Green, Igbo Village Affairs, 152; Ofonagoro, "Opening up of Southern Nigeria," 84-8.

²²Northrup, "Growth of Trade," 231.

Southeastern Nigeria, one of the most effective ways of ensuring safety was through the intangible forces perceived to be imminent in religious symbols.

Yet it should be noted that what was at stake was not merely undefined supernatural powers, but also the suspicion that anyone wealthy or influential enough to have obtained such symbols must be a person of estimable power, protected by numbers of kinsmen and followers ready to retaliate in case of injury. Thus, while it has been customary to attribute the rise of successful trading groups to the possession of a powerful oracle, and therefore to stress religion over political and economic factors in the rise of trade in Southeastern Nigeria, it is more accurate to describe the relationship as reciprocal: economic and political success led to the increasing fame of the trading group's local deity, which in turn permitted the agents to travel in greater safety and thereby to expand their economic activities.

There was another nexus, particularly relevant to the present study, which was the interrelationship between trade and the judicial process. Just as the fragmented political structure of Southeastern Nigeria lacked centralized, hierarchical institutions for the management of middle and long distance trade, so it also lacked such institutions for the adjudication and settlement of disputes among the various autonomous village-groups. As long as a conflict remained within the confines of a village, and therefore within a particular kinship grouping, it could usually be mediated with success by the elders and other influential

members of the village.²³ But, between distinct villages the only means of dealing with a dispute was normally either some form of warfare or appeal to a third party with sufficient stature and power to ensure the implementation of the resulting decision.

As in the case of trade, the power of adjudication became the subject of competition among a number of groups, including the trade-professional clans. With their religiously sanctioned aura of immunity, they were in a strong position to enforce their judgments. In some cases the judicial function reached such proportions that it overwhelmed the other activities of these groups, and those such as the Umunoha became predominantly judicial in their orientation. But it was more customary for this function to be integrated with their other activities, as in the case of the Awka, who simultaneously traded, worked as blacksmiths, and acted as agents for the Agbala oracle. Each function complemented the others, the goal being the more thorough exploitation of the sphere of influence. For example, prompt settlement of disputes between village groups facilitated the steady flow of trade and permitted markets to operate without interruption.

The most prominent example of a precolonial trade-professional group, and the one most accessible to the historian, is that of the Aro, the largest of these groups ever to arise. While substantial attention has been focused on them by a number of scholars, there is still little agreement regarding the initial

²³Meek, Law and Authority, 29-30, 104-110, 125-33; J.C. Messenger, "The Role of Proverbs in a Nigerian Judicial System," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, XV, 1 (Spring, 1959), 64-73.

motivation and development of their powerful judicial and trading network throughout Southeastern Nigeria.²⁴ The Aro grew originally out of a small nucleus of Igbo, Ibibio, and Ekoi peoples located around Arochukwu, in the modern Division of the same name. By 1720 at the latest they had seized control of the land routes between Bende and Nsukka and had come to dominate the trade in slaves and tropical products with Europeans on the coast. The trade expanded astronomically, and the Aro soon found themselves in possession of large surplusses of wealth that could only to a certain extent be absorbed in such items of tangible wealth as wives, slaves, metal goods, and clothing. They were also pressed by the Calabar agents of the European traders to provide ever larger numbers of slaves. Eventually, in order to invest their new wealth and to procure more slaves, the Aro expanded into the heavily populated area to their west between the Niger and Cross Rivers. They introduced guns and other items of European manufacture to some parts of this area for the first time and established a number of new middle distance routes to carry their trade. Yet it must not be assumed, as Ukwu and Northrup have done, that the Aro were the first to integrate this area economically.²⁵ Although

²⁴The main sources for the history of the Aro are H.F. Mathews, "Discussion of Aro Origins and the Basis of the Widespread Aro Influence," 11 July 1927, and "Second Report on Aro," 19 November 1927 (RH MSS Afr. s. 783, box 3); Ekejiuba, "Aro System of Trade"; Dike, Trade and Politics, 37-40; G.I. Jones, "Who are the Aro?", Nigerian Field, VIII, 3 (July 1939), 100-103; "Inside Arochuku," Nigeria Magazine, 53 (1957), 100-118.

²⁵Ukwu, "Markets in Iboland," 133; Northrup, "Growth of Trade," 234.

they increased the amount of the trade, the geographical scope of their activities was not necessarily any larger than that of the Awka and other groups who had preceded them.

Apart from the trade itself, the most important economic activity of the Aro was finance and money lending, as they sought to invest their surplus wealth. They found that in the heavily populated inland areas there was a growing demand for the where-withall to pay bride wealth, land rentals, judicial penalties, and entrance fees to title and secret societies. By the early nineteenth century they had begun to acquire control of large tracts of high quality land in exchange for the capital they could provide. Although, according to Igbo and Ibibio custom, land ownership was vested in the lineage and could not be permanently transferred to outsiders, the Aro consistently offered such excessive loans for land that it was seldom worthwhile for the lineage to redeem the land by repaying the loan. Hence, though they did not own the land, the Aro possessed virtually irrevocable title.²⁶ Gradually they established colonies throughout the Igbo and Ibibio areas that were both trading centers and self-sustaining agricultural communities. The largest of these Aro settlements, Ndizuogu, was founded in about 1820. By the end of the nineteenth century it covered twelve square miles and had a population of nearly ten thousand. In the course of its gradual

²⁶L.T. Chubb, Ibo Land Tenure, 2nd ed. (Ibadan, 1961), 28-30; H.H. Marshall, "Report on the Omuma Area, Aba Division, Owerri Province," [1935] (RH MSS Afr. s. 413, or NAE E.P. 10963A); H.H. Marshall, "Intelligence Report on Ika," [1932] (RH MSS Afr. s. 413, or NAI CSO 26/3/27689).

expansion it had completely displaced or absorbed the original inhabitants of the land and in 1910 was still aggressively acquiring additional territory on its frontiers.²⁷

Like the trade-professional groups that had preceded them, the Aro enhanced their reputation as successful traders and ensured their safe passage on the paths by associating their activities with an oracle, called Ibinukpabi (or Long Juju), which they had developed from a much smaller pre-existing oracle operated by the Ibibio in the Aro homeland. Each Aro trader, in addition to his own economic activities, also served as an agent of Ibinukpabi. He advised petitioners to travel to Arochukwu to seek the medical or judicial judgments of the oracle and assisted them in their journey there. He also acted as a spy for the oracle priests, so that the pronouncements they gave in the name of Ibinukpabi would bear close correspondence to the political and social realities of the petitioner's village.²⁸

The Aro further enhanced their influence by serving as agents for certain warlike groups who lived to the north and west of them, such as the Abam, Abiriba, Ada, and Ohafia. Villages that desired outside military support in factional struggles applied to Aro living nearby, who arranged for these warlike groups to

²⁷C.J. Mayne, "Intelligence Report on the Village of Ndizuogu in the Orlu District of the Okigwi Division, Owerri Province," [1935] (NAI CSO 26/4/30836); Mathews to Secretary, Southern Provinces, [1927] (RH MSS Afr. s. 783, box 3); Ambrose to Bedwell, 2 September 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); K. Umoh, History of the Aro Settlements (Lagos, 1948).

²⁸Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 298-9; Dike, Trade and Politics, 38-40.

send contingents of fighting men as mercenaries. The Aro collected fees for this service, and the mercenary warriors received compensation in the form of booty from the destroyed villages as well as captives whom they sold to the Aro as slaves.²⁹

The religious, judicial, and military functions of the Aro have led to an unbalanced view of their impact on Southeastern Nigeria, largely fostered by the copious writings of colonial officials and journalists in the late nineteenth century in order to justify an expedition against them.³⁰ They were typically described as slave traders, provoking disorder in the interior and leading bands of mercenaries in slave raids. Moreover, Ibinukpabi was condemned as little more than a racket by which the gullible peoples of the interior gave themselves over to the Aro as slaves and human sacrifices in payment for worthless religious and judicial services.

While it may be granted that the Aro could and did profit from a certain amount of warfare among village groups, there is little basis for Afigbo's recent assertion that they displayed a thorough "hatred of peace."³¹ In fact, in the oral traditions now being gathered from all over Southeastern Nigeria by students of the University of Nigeria, there is increasing evidence that

²⁹Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 301; C.J. Mayne, "Intelligence Report on the Abam, Abiriba, Umuhu and Nkporo," [1932] (NAI CSO 26/3/28939).

³⁰See below, 121.

³¹A.E. Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition of 1901-1902 (An Episode in the British Occupation of Iboland)," Odu, n.s. 7 (April 1972), 9.

the Aro were more often conciliators and peacemakers than fomenters of conflict. For example, an elder of Okigwi Division has recounted the process by which Aro agents were able to end local wars:

To effect a peace settlement the Aro would first ask the Umu-Agaba [village elders] to enter the centre of the battle field between the belligerents and stop the fighting. They stopped the firing by entering their mother's camp holding palm fronds. When this had been done the Aro would plant young palm fronds between them as a sign of peace. Then he would call out both sides for a peace settlement.³²

The rationale for Aro peacemaking activities is not difficult to explain, especially if the full nature of their trade involvement is understood. While local wars could provide a certain number of slaves for sale to the Aro, such wars could also block pathways and close markets and thus impede many other aspects of Aro economic activities, such as trade in local and imported goods as well as money lending.

We may also question the degree to which violence and warfare were the chief means of obtaining slaves. Although it has been customary to assume that slaves were derived mostly from war and from the operation of the Aro oracle, the bulk of oral tradition favors a different interpretation. Harris, in his study of slavery in Southeastern Nigeria, found no evidence that there had ever been slave wars and instead attributed most slavery to punishment for "infractions of societal custom," such as adultery, theft,

³² Interview with Onyeje Okorafo of Umuaku-Isuochi (born about 1899), in U.A. Ike, "A History of Isuochi in the Pre-Colonial Period," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973, 105. See also S. and P. Ottenberg, "Afikpo Markets," 123.

sorcery, persistent indebtedness, and the like.³³ And throughout the Igbo and Ibibio areas it is repeatedly claimed that it was not through wars that slaves were procured, but rather that "Those who were unable to maintain their large families sold off their lazy sons or invalids or any of them that happened to be foolish or mentally depraved in any way."³⁴ While concrete evidence on this matter is difficult to obtain, the data gathered by Koelle in the course of his linguistic research among freed slaves in Sierra Leone in the 1840s is suggestive. Of the five Igbo-speaking informants he interviewed, two had been sold by relatives or acquaintances, probably to liquidate debts; one had been sold by his village as punishment for adultery; one had been kidnaped as an adult; and one had been kidnaped as a child. None had been captured in war or had been enslaved through the operation of Ibinukpabi.³⁵

It would appear, then, that the chief source of slaves was the operation of certain processes of social control, such as removal of criminals and misfits, as well as the demands of

³³J.S. Harris, "Some Aspects of Slavery in Southeastern Nigeria," Journal of Negro History, XXVII, 1 (January 1942), 40.

³⁴Interview with O.M. Uwaezuoke of Amuda-Isuochi (born about 1904), in Ike, "A History of Isuochi," 84. See also Fox, Uzuakoli, 22; S. and P. Ottenberg, "Afikpo Markets," 123; S.W. Sprosten, "The Punishment of Theft in the Awka District," 3 May 1912: enclosure in F.S. James to C.O., 19 June 1912 (PRO CO 520/115/22229); W.G. Ambrose, "Okigwi Escort, Final Report," 12 April 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7); Interview with Anyanwu Osuagwu of Lude-Ahiara, Mbaise Division (born about 1882), in A.M. Iheaturu, "A History of the Ahiara from the Early Time to 1905," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973, 75-6.

³⁵S.W. Koelle, Polyglotta Africana (London, 1854), 8.

financial solvency and mobility. It is likely that these processes predated the ascendancy of the Aro as well as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and continued to be the source of most slaves as European demand increased, although a certain number undoubtedly resulted from the Aro-led mercenary attacks and from kidnaping.³⁶

It may be argued that such social processes as these could not possibly have expanded to meet the demands of the trans-Atlantic trade, especially since by the eighteenth century Southeastern Nigeria, through its main ports, Bonny and Calabar, was exporting upwards of 20,000 slaves per year, or one-third of all those carried in British and French ships.³⁷ However, there is considerable evidence that a significant proportion of those slaves--perhaps more than half--originated not from the area of this study but rather from further north. The seventeenth century observer, Barbot, noted that this was the case.⁵³ Yet in the late eighteenth century traders claimed that over three-fourths of the slaves exported from Bonny and Calabar were "Heeboes" (Igbos).³⁸ This apparent discrepancy may be explained, however, by the fact that the term "Heebo" was often used with imprecision to describe people originating anywhere in the interior. Oldfield, who was

³⁶Traditions of widespread kidnaping, with attendant insecurity, can be heard everywhere in Southeastern Nigeria today. For a European description of kidnaping, see Frank Hives, Justice in the Jungle (London, 1932), 85-9.

³⁷Northrup, "Growth of Trade," 232.

³⁸Cited in Meek, Law and Authority, 7.

³⁹Ibid.

more sophisticated in his use of such ethnic terms, reported in 1837 that in fact Igbo and Ibibio slaves constituted only part of those sold at Calabar, while many others came from Nupe, hundreds of miles to the north.⁴⁰ It may be suggested, therefore, that a considerable proportion of the expanding European demand for slaves was met by importing them from central and northern Nigeria, and that it continued to be possible to collect slaves in Southeastern Nigeria by the traditional methods outlined above. If this is true, then the claim that Aro activities contributed substantially to an increase in the level of violence in the interior is incorrect.

It is equally incorrect to describe the Aro as a "conservative slave-trading oligarchy," unable to adapt themselves to the British-imposed abolition of the slave trade and therefore in decline by the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ While the trade in slaves continued to be a major Aro enterprise until well into the twentieth century, it must be remembered that it was only part of a much larger trading complex that included European manufactured goods and local handmade items. Furthermore, a large proportion of Aro activities were in fields related to, but not dependent upon, the slave trade, such as money lending, judicial mediation,

⁴⁰R.K. Oldfield, "A Brief Account of an Ascent of the Old Calabar River in 1836," Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII (1837), 198.

⁴¹For this view, see A.E. Afigbo, "The Eclipse of the Aro Slaving Oligarchy of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1901-1927," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, VI, 1 (December 1971), 3-24; Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition," 8-9.

and management of trading caravans. Aro enterprises, even in the eighteenth century, were already considerably diversified, and there is abundant evidence that by the late nineteenth century they had successfully converted to the new trade in palm oil while maintaining as much of an internal trade in slaves as the market could consume.

Even in the 1840s the Aro involvement with the palm oil trade was extensive enough that they were able to absorb the entire output of the upper Cross River, which, because of a conflict between Akunakuna and Calabar, could not be taken directly downriver.⁴² From there the Aro carried it overland for sale in Bonny and the other Niger Delta ports. In the 1890s some of the best oil available in the Bonny area was that sold by the Aro, who had collected it in such areas as western Ibibioland.⁴³ The first Europeans to visit Arochukwu, in 1901, noted with some surprise--since it contradicted what they had been led to expect by their superiors--that the Aro trade in "factory goods" was no less than their trade in slaves, and that in fact "Palm oil seems to be the main export."⁴⁴ Even Sir Ralph Moor, the chief creator of the myth

⁴²J. Beecroft and J.B. King, "Details of Explorations of the Old Calabar River in 1841 and 1842," Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, XIV (1844), 272.

⁴³Koe to Moor, 5 May 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/37); Egerton to C.O., 6 May 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/24/19269).

⁴⁴W.J. Venour, "The Aro Country in Southern Nigeria," Geographical Journal, XX, 1 (July 1902), 88-9; D.A. Macalister, "The Aro Country, Southern Nigeria," Scottish Geographical Magazine, XVIII, 12 (December 1902), 631.

that the Aro were solely slave traders and brigands, was compelled to admit that "the individual profits of the slave traffic, owing to the heavy tolls exacted on the roads, together with other market tolls, have not really been great."⁴⁵

While it is thus possible to assess in some detail the economic role of the Aro, it is more difficult to analyze their political impact on the villages that they dealt with. Oral traditions are understandably ambiguous on this subject, the elders recalling the great local influence of the Aro yet claiming that their own particular village retained its autonomy.⁴⁶ But there is considerable oral and documentary evidence that the Aro were deeply involved in many aspects of local politics throughout Southeastern Nigeria. For example, in their judicial role as agents and managers of the Ibinukpabi oracle, they were able to adjudicate local disputes so as to favor their own trading interests. Although peace and good order on the trade routes were to their advantage, they did not hesitate to apply force, in the form of mercenary warriors, on uncooperative villages.

Above all, through their control of the vast profits accruing from trade with the coastal areas they were able to assume a role in the financial life of Southeastern Nigeria that gave them substantial local leverage. We have already seen that the Aro employed much of their capital in founding

⁴⁵Moor to C.O., 12 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18698).

⁴⁶See for example the interviews in the University of Nigeria B.A. Projects, such as C.B.N. Okoli, "Akokwa from the Earliest Times to 1917" (1973); A.I. Atulomah, "The Establishment of British Rule in Umuopara" (1973); U.A.C. Amajo, "Old Umuahia under British Rule" (1974).

colonies based on land rentals that amounted to outright sale. In these secure bases the Aro became a magnet for political and social refugees, such as debtors, criminals, and slaves, who fled to them for protection and were consequently incorporated into the social structure of the Aro colony. Chief J.U. Eka of Uyo recounted to me the process by which this occurred:

If you get into trouble with your next door neighbor or your village and you see that they are going to mistreat you, if you have money you approach the Aro settlement in the next village, tell them you want help, and they will arrange to come and assist. They take up the matter. They say "Let this case be settled this way, that way, and that way." And then they claim you unto themselves.⁴⁷

The impact of this process is remembered vividly today throughout Southeastern Nigeria. In the words of another elder,

The Aro, they were wizards. . . . They were like leprosy which starts from just a spot and gradually spreads all over the body. An Aro would come and live as a tenant in somebody's house but before long more of them would come from home. They would form a small settlement and start influencing the politics of the people.⁴⁸

But even more pervasive in terms of local politics were the trade alliances formed by the Aro with influential men in each village through which their routes passed. These men provided food, shelter, and other assistance to the Aro caravans and in turn were supported both economically and politically by the Aro.⁴⁹ It was through alliance with the Aro that many

⁴⁷ Interview of 27 June 1974. See also Mathews to Secretary, Southern Provinces, [1927] (RH MSS Afr. s. 783, box 3).

⁴⁸ Interview with I.A. Ohakwe of Amuda-Isuochi, Okigwi Division (born about 1904), in Ike, "History of Isuochi," 140.

⁴⁹ Ekejiuba, "Aro System of Trade," 18-19.

individuals, often with little initial social standing in their own villages, established local power for themselves and for the dynasties that they founded.⁵⁰ The ultimate phase of this process was selection by the Aro of suitable slaves from among those awaiting export, who were then brought to Arochukwu, trained, and finally returned to their village of origin to act as local Aro agents.⁵¹

Yet to suggest that the resulting political network may be called a "state," as Stevenson has done, is to ignore certain major characteristics of the Aro.⁵² Although they were advantageously placed to control the trade routes, the Aro remained in essence a village group with as much internal factionalism and rivalry as any other village group in Southeastern Nigeria. Their economic success did not produce unity among them and in fact probably had the contrary effect, as the Aro clans competed for control of the various trading spheres. The historical record, both oral and written, is full of evidence of the conflicts caused by this competition, which led in at least

⁵⁰ See for example the case of Obonna of Olokoro in E.R. Chadwick, "An Intelligence Report on the Olokoro Clan in the Bende Division of the Owerri Province," 1935 (NAI CSO 26/4/30829). See also Meek, Law and Authority, 133-4.

⁵¹ This was the origin of the powerful lineage founded by Ihime in Ndizuogu; see R.O. Igwegbe, The Original History of Arondizuogu from 1635-1960 (Aba, 1962), 10-13. See also W.J. Ambrose, "Ogu Escort Final Report," [June 1913] (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁵² R.F. Stevenson, Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa (New York, 1968), 208-10.

one case to heavy fighting in Arochukwu itself.⁵³ It was not unusual for a particular Aro clan, with control of a significant trading region, to be more closely allied with another trade-professional group, such as Awka or Opobo, than with their fellow Aro clans, and to use that alliance to wrest control of new routes from the other clans.

Furthermore, the Aro were not in a position of uncontested dominance in any of their fields of activity. In a substantial part of Igboland, for example, the Igwe-ka-ala oracle at Umunoha was at least the equal of Ibinukpabi in influence, and there was an active competition between them and their agents.⁵⁴ To the south and southwest of Arochukwu, the Aro faced the powerful trading opposition of the coastal polities, such as Calabar, Bonny, and Opobo, which competed for the alliance of the Igbo and Ibibio villages in this area, assisted by the network of creeks that reduced the effectiveness of the mainly land-bound Aro. To the west they competed with the Awka and Nkwerre, although in this area a measure of cooperation among the various trading groups was often achieved.⁵⁵

⁵³The battle in Arochukwu was between Amankwu and Amanagwu, sometime in the late nineteenth century; see Igwegbe, History of Arondizuogu, 25-6. On conflicts among the Aro clans, see James to Gallwey, 29 August 1901 (NAI Calprof 9/1/1); Leonard, "Journey to Bende," 193, 205; Casement to MacDonald, 10 April 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63); Ekejiuba, "Aro System of Trade," 26; Ike, "History of Isuochi," 142.

⁵⁴Basden, Niger Ibos, 91; Meek, Law and Authority, 238-42; Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 309; W.G. Ambrose to Secretary, Eastern Province, 10 October 1910, and enclosures (NAE Calprof 13/3/25).

⁵⁵Jones, "Who are the Aro?", 100-103; A.G. Leonard, letter in West African Mail, IV, 163 (11 May 1906), 154-5; Egerton to

Finally, the Aro failed to fulfill one of the main requirements of statehood: the possession of a significant monopoly of force. The Aro made no attempt to concentrate all firearms in their own hands, and they did not establish any kind of standing army. Their mercenary allies, such as the Ohaffia, were in no way subject to Aro compulsion, and in fact saw themselves as protectors and patrons of the Aro.⁵⁶ Even along their own trade routes the Aro encountered the persistent attempts of villages to reestablish a greater degree of local control of commerce. The Anang in particular occasionally blocked the paths and compelled the Aro to agree to their terms for toll payment, location of markets, and so forth.⁵⁷ The Aro were often successful in reestablishing their dominance through employment of mercenary forces, but these forces were occasionally decisively defeated, and the Aro were thus forced to come to terms with the victorious village. Defeats of the Aro mercenaries are recorded, for example, at Uli (Ihiala Division) in 1902, near Mbiabong (Itu Division) in 1901, and at Ibeku (Umuahia Division) and Umu Obom (Nkwerre

C.O., 22 June 1908, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/62/24796); Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entries of 27 November and 11 December 1901 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1); Mathews, "Discussion of Aro Origins."

⁵⁶P.O. Nsugbe, "The Social Organization of an Ibo People: The Ohaffia," B.Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1967, 17-18; O.K. Oji, "A Study of Migrations and Warfare in Pre-Colonial Ohafia," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974, 24.

⁵⁷Casement to MacDonald, 10 April 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63); Notation by Casement on a map of the Opobo and Cross Rivers, 1894 (PRO FO 925/622); Wordsworth to Moor, 24 November 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 8 December 1902 (PRO CO 520/16/265).

Division) in the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Through the use of defensive measures of this kind, a number of peoples, such as the Ezza clan and the village of Achina, were able to discourage the Aro from establishing a local colony.⁵⁹

The Aro did not create a state, and it is evident from their own lack of unity and their failure to monopolize firearms that it was not their intention to develop a unified, hierarchical political structure. The rise and development of the Aro trading and judicial system thus raises an issue that has motivated considerable historical and anthropological research in South-eastern Nigeria: why, despite apparent economic and political incentives to centralization, did the area remain fragmented? Most commentators have tended to stress environmental factors, such as the prevalence of heavy forest and the arrangement of rivers, as crucial to this fragmentation.⁶⁰ But Afigbo has effectively refuted these theories, mainly by demonstrating that similar environmental conditions in other areas of West Africa did not prevent the formation of unified states.⁶¹

⁵⁸L.C. Woodman, "History of the Original Cause of the Palaver between Ihiara Country and Uri Country," [1903] (NAI Calprof 10/3/6); Probyn to C.O., 6 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/26747); J.A. Pratt, A Brief Historical Sketch of Opobo (London, [1910]), 60; C.J. Mayne, "Intelligence Report on the Village of Ndizuogu."

⁵⁹A.L.de C. Stretton, report of 8 April 1914: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 31 July 1914 (PRO CO 583/16/28141); W.G. Ambrose, "Okigwi Escort, Final Report," 12 April 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

⁶⁰See for example Green, Igbo Village Affairs, 10-11.

⁶¹A.E. Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in South-eastern Nigeria, 1891-1929 (London, 1972), 8-14.

It may be suggested, however, that one physical feature of the area, operating in combination with a number of historical factors, has had an influence in preventing centralization. Southeastern Nigeria is shaped roughly like a funnel, with a broad stretch of relatively fertile land extending down to the ocean between the Niger and Cross Rivers. Into this funnel over the past two thousand years came wave after wave of peoples fleeing the increasing dessication of the Sahara. Competition for land and water was intense, and expansion to the west was limited after the fourteenth century by the powerful Kingdom of Benin. The oral traditions of the area are rich in evidence of continual conflict over resources and of small-scale movement of clans and villages. It is likely that this competitive and unstable environment militated against the rise of an established central power.

Furthermore, as we have seen, Southeastern Nigeria has been the scene of extensive commercial interchange. Products came from many different sources and followed several routes, enabling a number of local groups to develop power bases while preventing any single group from monopolizing power. Accelerating trade led to increased wealth and competition for trade routes, as well as to population growth through both natural means and the acquisition of slaves. Population growth in turn increased competition for resources, as villages reached critical size and their component elements sought relief of grievances through fission and migration.

The impact of these conditions of environmental and commercial

competition on local politics was profound, as we shall see in the next chapter. Groups such as the Aro, Awka, Nri, Umunoha, and Opobo functioned as mutually competitive outside power sources that were (and are) a regular feature of village life in Southeastern Nigeria. From the viewpoint of the individual village, the goal was the management and exploitation of these power sources in local factional disputes in order to gain material advantages while maintaining autonomy. It is my contention that the British were similarly incorporated into Southeastern Nigeria. As they penetrated inland they were generally dealt with as yet another outside power source to be managed, conciliated, and deflected. To understand the relationship of the individual Igbo and Ibibio village to such outside power sources as the Aro, Awka, and Umunoha, and to perceive the ways in which they were both incorporated and resisted, is to begin to understand the patterns of cooperation with and opposition to the British.

CHAPTER II

LEADERSHIP, WARFARE, AND VILLAGE SOVEREIGNTY

In recent years a debate of substantial proportions has developed regarding the nature of traditional village government in Southeastern Nigeria. One group of scholars, led by Anene and Afigbo, describes the local political arrangements as essentially a gerontocracy with pronounced democratic features. Authority, according to this view, was in the hands of the oldest men of each lineage in the village, who were compelled by custom to respect the opinions of the rest of the men in their lineages, meeting in mass assemblies. The adherents of this viewpoint tend to describe pre-colonial Southeastern Nigeria as basically stable and harmonious, bound together by reverence for the lineage and its ancestors. The British advent naturally upset this traditional order by introducing a vast number of economic and social changes, thus undermining the subtle balance of forces that sustained the village polities.¹

The opposing school of thought, represented especially by Ottenberg, Stevenson, and Jones, maintains that local power was in the hands of an "oligarchy of the wealthy," who manipulated village politics to fulfill their own ends. The main characteristics

¹J.C. Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate (Cambridge, 1966), 12-14; A.E. Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929 (London, 1972), 20-7.

of the political process, according to this view, were distribution of patronage, maintenance of armed bands of retainers, and arbitrary use of force. Confronted with this allegedly chaotic environment, the British colonial administration reduced the level of violence by monopolizing force in its own hands and democratized the social and political processes by instituting representative governmental and judicial procedures.²

It would be reasonable to assume that one or the other of these arguments is correct. Paradoxically, however, they are both equally correct and equally incorrect. The ideal of gerontocratic legitimacy and the reality of wealth and power were both essential to the social and political process, even though never reconciled. There is no question that throughout Southeastern Nigeria certain individuals built up great wealth and large followings regardless of their age or lineage standing. C.K. Meek, gathering oral data in the 1930s, reconstructed the general pattern by which such an individual arose:

By rendering services to all he placed all under an obligation. By being able to purchase firearms and powder he was not only able to protect himself and his own kindred, but he could offer protection to other kindreds and thus place them in the position of dependants. With him rested the decision whether the group should go to war or not, for he alone could provide the means of carrying on war successfully. Thus he obtained control over the younger age-grades, which readily placed themselves at his service for any purpose. By rendering financial aid to all he was constantly adding to

²S. Ottenberg, Leadership and Authority in an African Society: The Afikpo Village-Group (Seattle, 1971), 26-30; R.F. Stevenson, Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa (New York, 1968), 200-201; G.I. Jones, "Councils among the Central Ibo," in Councils in Action, ed. Audrey Richards and Adam Kuper (Cambridge, 1971), 63-79.

the number of his free-born followers, and by demanding a major portion of captives taken in war (as compensation for his expenditure on arms) he was constantly adding to the number of his slaves.³

This was the case with one Eze of Mgbowo in Awgu Division:

As a travelling doctor and local agent of the Aro oracle he had amassed considerable wealth and an intimate knowledge of the world. He acquired a title of the highest order and became a recognized arbiter in disputes, not merely in his own community but in neighbouring communities as well. Thus, if a man of Mboo [Mgbowo] had been seized by a man of Awgu on account of a debt, Eze would send a request to some rich, influential personage at Awgu that the captured debtor should not be sold into slavery, pending a settlement of the debt. Eze would then call on the members of the debtor's family to pay the debt through himself and so secure the debtor's release.⁴

And in another village of Awgu Division, Owelle, three men--all of them owners of large numbers of slaves--came to control village affairs:

With the assistance of his bodyguard of slaves [each] was in a position to enforce his will and to provide safe conduct to members of his own village who wished to visit other villages, and to members of other villages who wished to visit his. He was the acknowledged representative of the village in all important external relations. . . . Public meetings of importance were commonly held at the house of this rich personage, who summoned the elders by beating a drum of special pattern. . . . Comparatively young men might, therefore, exercise greater influence in the community than many of the elders.⁵

Such powerful individuals were of course controversial, and one's attitude toward them depended upon whether or not one was in a position to receive their patronage. In the factionalized

³C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe (London, 1937), 111.

⁴Ibid., 134.

⁵Ibid., 136, 138.

political environment of Southeastern Nigeria the various village groupings tended to unify around their own particular wealthy leader and to denigrate the others in the vicinity. Thus Njemanze, a prominent leader of Owerri until the 1920s, was revered as a great benefactor by his followers and condemned as a tyrant by his opponents.⁶

Competition, sometimes quite violent, among the numerous factions within each village was an ever-present reality. Yet There also existed a pervasive ideal of village unity and equality under the elders of the lineage. Whether wealthy or not, the oldest members of the village were looked upon as advisors in legislation and as a court of appeal. They were required to preside over ritual and judicial proceedings. But in all their activities they were subject to the weight of public opinion that could be brought against them by a wealthy and powerful younger man who was displeased with their conduct. Everywhere, however, the village elders were able to survive generations of such strong men, mainly because they served as a useful counterbalance preventing the concentration of too much power in any one leader or faction. For this reason, it may be most accurate to consider the ideal of gerontocracy as an instrumental ideology--a useful standard for appeal by a temporarily disadvantaged individual or faction. But as an ideology it could be ignored or discarded when not needed.

⁶ Compare S. Leith-Ross, African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria (London, 1939), 192-4, and Meek, Law and Authority, 112.

This was the case with the variety of sanctions in the Southeastern Nigerian village: religious, ancestral, legal, etc. They were kept alive, whatever the current economic realities, by the losing faction of the moment, which tried to regain lost ground by appeal to standards couched in universal language. In effect, the various factions of the village maintained a number of competing ideologies so as to safeguard their own flexibility and freedom of action. Any temporary imbalance usually led to the weaker faction's calling upon whatever intangible forces were available, such as reverence for elders and ancestors, religious sanctions, sorcery, or other local traditions, until such time as it could rebuild its strength.

Disadvantaged factions also had a number of other recourses. The most important of these, especially for the purposes of the present study, was the tendency to seek mutual alliances not only among themselves but also with whatever outside power source might be available. Faced with unfavorable public opinion, individuals frequently asked a powerful person in a neighboring village to mediate on their behalf, or they visited a distant oracle to seek advice or judgments favorable to them. If these failed to provide support, further mediators or oracles were consulted.⁷ Travelers and other strangers usually received a cordial welcome and often a gift of land to farm, largely because their presence created new possibilities for alliance and enabled disadvantaged

⁷L.T. Chubb, Ibo Land Tenure, 2nd ed. (Ibadan, 1961), 7-8; V.C. Uchendu, The Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria (New York, 1965), 42-3; Meek, Law and Authority, 238.

factions to strengthen their ranks. Above all, the various factions in local disputes sought support, including military assistance, from the powerful trade-professional groups discussed in the last chapter, such as the Aro and Nkwerre.

In this process of appeal for outside support is manifested one of the main mechanisms of social, technological, and cultural change in Southeastern Nigeria. From time to time, often because of an influx of wealth due to new trade opportunities, a rising faction began to challenge the elements that had previously controlled the village. In order for this faction to formalize and express its aims, it usually imported a symbolic framework, such as a secret society, a title society, a ritual, or some other traditional form, from a neighboring village or from a powerful trade-professional group. Around the new framework, functioning virtually as an ideology, gathered all disaffected and disadvantaged elements in the village. This new alliance was often able to surpass the older elements and establish its own preeminence in village politics. This was the case, according to local oral tradition, with the Okonko society of southern and eastern Igboland. As the tradition describes,

The Okonkor is the leading secret Society among the people of these parts. It originated from Arochuku. It was an innocent play organized by a few members just to amuse themselves; the inviting sounds of the drums they used in their play, the curious sounds produced in the Okonkor private chamber from what they call cloth, the funny dances, soon brought the elders and notable men who are curious to know how and by what these sounds are produced, to join the new play. In short as many were desirous to join, and as many important men and elders join the club, they soon make it to gain supremacy over other clubs. . . . Every member is sworn not to disclose the secrets of the Society excepting at the formation of a Branch Society in some other countries for the purpose of money making. In

this way it spread among the countries but the Aro people being cunning use the greatest care to introduce it to a certain limit. The Okonkor of the Coast towns was not introduced by the Aros but by the offenders of Okonkor laws and who were sold away as slaves to the Coast towns by the Aros. Chiefs and elders of every town soon invited the Okonkor and make it the channel by which they rule the affairs of the country.⁸

Whether or not the attribution of Okonko to the Aro is correct, the basic pattern is clear: relations of power were altered through the importation of a new symbolic framework to give expression to changing social and economic realities.

Seldom, however, was the victory of the rising faction complete. Before it could gain total predominance, a counterbalancing pressure was created by the many other elements in the village whose status or power was thus threatened. They usually created new alliances among themselves and gathered around a competing symbolic framework, either previously present in the village or imported specifically for this purpose. It is for this reason that most Southeastern Nigerian villages contain many title and secret societies--some vital and growing, some apparently moribund.⁹ The more societies available within a village, the greater the opportunity for autonomy and flexibility. Partridge, for example, writing in 1905, recorded that the men of Ogurude had two "clubs," one of which had been imported from Akunakuna. When the young men grew tired of the elders' demand that they join one or the other

⁸Memorandum by A.O. Ockiya of the Delta Pastorate Mission, Aba, [1920] (NAE Abadist 1/12/54).

⁹See for example A.J. Fox (ed.), Uzuakoli: A Short History (London, 1964), 57-64; and E.H.F. Gorges, "Intelligence Report on the Ubium Clan," [1935] (NAI CSO 26/4/31351).

of these clubs, they imported yet another from Akunakuna to be their own and thus defied the elders.¹⁰ This may be simply a manifestation of the perennial conflict of generations in Southeastern Nigeria, or, since it occurred in the late nineteenth century, it is possible that the younger men were also giving voice to the new wealth and power made available to them by the increasing trade opportunities associated with the growing European presence.

As a result of this process, there was considerable ambiguity as to the motivation for social and technological change. The outside power source that had provided the new symbolic framework naturally gained a certain amount of influence in the village and from its own point of view appeared to be directing the social process. But from the viewpoint of the village itself, a new internal faction had come to power using outside help. As soon as the outside power source had been used in village politics, the process began of limiting its influence, of preventing it from taking an overwhelming voice in village affairs, usually by soliciting the assistance of other competing outside power sources to act as a counterbalance. It was due to this receptiveness to outside alliance that many of the trade-professional groups were able to build their own spheres of influence.

The essence of this aspect of the social process in Southeastern Nigeria was tentativeness, opportunism, and instrumentalism. No decision or judgment could ever be considered final or absolute. Even in the realms of culture and technology the environment was

¹⁰ Charles Partridge, Cross River Natives (London, 1905), 211.

remarkably open, as various systems of belief and action competed with each other in the village context. As Ottenberg has observed regarding the Afikpo Igbo:

The periods of change have been associated with external forces that have gained dominance in the area. Through time these changes have produced in the Afikpo a tradition of laissez faire toward cultural variations, and a sense that there has been a positive value derived from the ceremonies and shrines brought to the village-group by specific groupings. . . . In fact, Afikpo life is a complex amalgam of various traditions and cultures.¹¹

Rather than a hierarchy of authority, with final judgment resting on some unimpeachable terminus, Southeastern Nigerians depended--whatever their gerontocratic ideology may have claimed--upon the management of competing and equivalent forces in order to maintain autonomy and balance and to prevent any outside power source from gaining preponderance. The British, with their legalistic, hierarchical conceptions of colonial government, sought to concentrate authority and force in their own hands, and most of the resulting resistance, both violent and nonviolent, must be evaluated in light of opposition to this concentration. Southeastern Nigerians had no intrinsic dislike for outside power sources; they had coexisted with them for centuries and had learned to manipulate them. What they opposed was the claim of any particular power source to hold all of the power.

The management of village politics and of the outside power sources involved in them was not necessarily a peaceful matter. In the absence of a monopoly of force, powerful men in each village

¹¹ Ottenberg, Leadership and Authority, 23.

gathered around themselves bands of slaves and other retainers and competed with other powerful men for political influence as well as for control of roads, rivers, and markets. No one hesitated to call in outside power sources, such as the Aro with their Abam mercenary forces, to assist him. The judicial process, lacking a central authority other than the various competitive oracles, was characterized by frequent seizure of persons and property, resulting in a certain amount of vendetta, particularly over financial and marital issues.¹²

Yet it would be misleading to accept the generalization of Ofonagoro that "intermittent warfare became, in terms of an extended period of time, a persistent feature of life," or the similar judgment of Ottenberg that warfare was a "persistent phenomenon."¹³ The social process, as we learn more about it, appears to have been relatively orderly, with numerous checks to power and with pressures militating against warfare. The major trade-professional groups, such as the Aro and Awka, for example, had a crucial stake in the maintenance of peace and often used their influence to end hostilities between villages, as described in the previous chapter. Similarly, the powerful individuals who dominated village politics, while often involved in causing war, were equally concerned about the orderly and peaceful progress of trade, upon which most of them

¹²Meek, Law and Authority, 209-19.

¹³W.I. Ofonagoro, "The Opening up of Southern Nigeria to British Trade: Economic and Social History, 1881-1916," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1972, 83; S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, XIV, 3 (Autumn 1958), 296.

had based their fortunes. As Jones has noted, "War was the last thing that a natural ruler wanted in the central Ibo area. It interrupted or destroyed the lucrative connections with neighboring big men."¹⁴ Furthermore, certain structural elements of Igbo and Ibibio society, and in particular strict rules of exogamy requiring exchange of brides between village-groups, tended to ameliorate local hostilities.

Even when local conflicts did lead to violence, they were often limited by extensive and complex rules, especially when they occurred within the confines of a single village group and were thus between people who claimed descent from a common ancestor. Customarily, for example, the use of guns or even of matchets was prohibited, and the battle was little more than a mass skirmish between youths of the competing factions using rocks and sticks. Further, fighting was limited to certain days of the week, and the various factions were required to keep the numbers of their warriors below a predetermined maximum. At the end of such a battle, the competing factions or villages assembled and assessed their losses, and the side that had lost more warriors or property was compensated (usually in the form of brides or slaves) by the more fortunate side. In this way, a functional balance was re-established for future relations.¹⁵

¹⁴ Jones, "Councils among the Central Ibo," 65. See also D. Forde, "Justice and Judgment among the Southern Ibo under Colonial Rule," in African Law: Adaptation and Development, ed. H. and L. Kuper (Berkeley, 1965), 82-5.

¹⁵ Meek, Law and Authority, 242-4; M.M. Green, Igbo Village Affairs (London, 1947), 64-6; Forde, "Justice and Judgment," 86.

Thus, despite the perpetual imminence of conflict and occasional outbursts of violence, the general atmosphere was one of peaceful interchange and communication. Many of the first European explorers to visit the various regions of Southeastern Nigeria attested to this fact. Harry Johnston reported in 1888 that the Afikpo Igbo "are so busy with trade and the tilling of their fields, that they have neither time nor inclination to fight."¹⁶ A.B. Harcourt, a British political officer, found the people of Ngwa Division equally pacific in 1896: "They all seem inclined to be peaceable, and by no means a fighting people."¹⁷ A.G. Leonard, passing from Ngwa Division into Umuahia Division in 1896, noted that "the further we go the more timid and peaceful [the people] become."¹⁸ John Harford, a British trader who lived in Eket Division for several years at the end of the nineteenth century, wrote that the local political arrangements were quite effective in maintaining peace and that the people were "happy and contented and prosperous" long before the advent of the British administration.¹⁹ And Major W.C.G. Heneker reported that Umuahia Division was "prosperous . . . , peaceful and well-cultivated" in 1902.²⁰

¹⁶ H. Johnston, "A Report on the British Protectorate of the Oil Rivers (Niger Delta)," 1 December 1888 (PRO FO 84/1882).

¹⁷ A.B. Harcourt, "Report on the Aquetta Expedition," 9 April 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/37).

¹⁸ Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," 201.

¹⁹ J. Harford, letter to the editor, 11 April 1901, in West Africa, II, 18 (20 April 1901), 510.

²⁰ Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332).

It was largely as a result of this generally peaceful environment that most areas of Southeastern Nigeria were already densely populated by the nineteenth century. Virtually every explorer or officer to visit a region for the first time commented on the extent of cultivation and the size of the population. Central and southern Igboland were reported to be "densely populated," northern Igboland "thickly" inhabited, Ibibioland "very thickly populated," and the Niger and Cross River valleys "densely peopled."²¹ The same conditions that permitted population to expand so markedly also facilitated extensive middle and long distance trade. Johnston found considerable numbers of Igala and Efik traders in Ukwa Division in 1887, and Hausa elephant hunters from Lokoja in northern Nigeria traveled with safety as far as Bonny and the Cross River.²² The entire region was filled with periodic fairs and markets attended regularly by thousands of men and women.²³ The first maps drawn by Europeans

²¹Egerton to C.O., 7 May 1904 (PRO CO 520/24/19274); Moorhouse to Egerton, 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24796); F.E.K. Fortescue, report of 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340); Fr. Leon Lejeune, article in Illustrated Catholic Missions, XV, 178 (February 1901), 154; MacDonald to F.O., 26 November 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/27). See also Casement to MacDonald, 10 April 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63); A.G. Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society, XIV, 4-6 (April-June 1898), 191, 201; A.A. Whitehouse, "Report on a journey to the upper Kwo Ibo and thence overland to Itu on the Cross River," extracts, [1897]: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 20 May 1897 (PRO FO 2/122/56); Egerton to C.O., 15 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24006).

²²Johnston to F.O., 1 August 1887 (PRO FO 84/1828/12); MacDonald to F.O., 12 January 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/1); Moor to F.O., 11 September 1895 (PRO FO 2/84/38).

²³Harcourt, "Report on the Aquetta Expedition," 9 April 1896:

revealed an extensive commercial network based on hundreds of marketplaces.²⁴ As one British officer commented with regard to Okigwi Division: "Note the frequency of markets . . . named after the day of the Ibo four day week on which they are held; it would be difficult to find space for any more."²⁵

Yet scholars such as Jeffreys go too far in asserting that war was nothing but "a friendly but exciting display of human force employed to break up the monotony of the dry season."²⁶ The sparse records available to us from the precolonial period indicate that wars could be very bloody indeed. British Consul E.H. Hewett personally investigated and verified reports that in 1888 the people of Okrika (Okrika Division) had killed forty-one men of Eteo (Tai/Elemé Division) and enslaved ten others in a single battle.²⁷ In a raid on the market at Itu (Itu Division) in February 1895, the hostile neighboring villages killed fifteen people and wounded over thirty others, as observed by a British

enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/37); Mrs. T.J. Dennis, "A Week's Itineration in the Ibo Country," Church Missionary Intelligencer, L (n.s. XXIV), 9 (September 1899), 781; H. Bedwell, "Annual Report on the Eastern Province for the Year 1906," 27 April 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 22 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/28311); D.E. Price to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 26 July 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/4).

²⁴ See for example the 1902 map of central Umuahia Division enclosed in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332).

²⁵ W.G. Ambrose, map of 10 August 1911 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

²⁶ M.D.W. Jeffreys, "Ibo Warfare," Man, LVI (June 1956), 79. See also Green, Igbo Village Affairs, 150; A.E. Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition of 1901-1902," Odu, n.s. 7 (April 1972), 18n.

²⁷ Hewett to F.O., 6 October 1888 (PRO FO 84/1881/31).

officer.²⁸ It was not unusual for the Ntrigom of Abakaliki Division to take as many as twenty-five heads in a single conflict.²⁹ And as late as 1914, the Ezza people of Ezzikwo Division devastated thirty square miles of Ntezi country to the north, killing or wounding over eight hundred Ntezi, and losing thirty-nine killed and fifty-nine wounded themselves.³⁰

An incident recorded in 1905 involving the neighboring Ibibio villages of Mbioko and Nung Ukam illustrates the process by which an apparently trivial event could escalate into bloodshed. The villagers of Mbioko, while burning foliage in preparation for planting, accidentally burned some vacant land belonging to Nung Ukam. In retaliation, Nung Ukam forcibly confiscated a goat owned by an Mbioko man. A group of Mbioko men then went to Nung Ukam and seized two children, and as they were leaving, one of the men was killed by a Nung Ukam assailant. Both villages proceeded to prepare for war, and only the intervention of the newly established British administration prevented further bloodshed.³¹

In an environment as volatile as this, it was customary for villages to be at least partially prepared for war at all times. When Mrs. T.J. Dennis, an Anglican missionary, passed through Awka

²⁸ A.G. Griffith to MacDonald, 1 March 1895 (NAI Calprof 6/1/2).

²⁹ Partridge, Cross River Natives, 231.

³⁰ Lugard to C.O., 31 July 1914 (PRO CO 583/16/28141).

³¹ Thorburn to C.O., 30 August 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/33870).

in 1899, she observed the following conditions:

Each house stood in a compound surrounded by a high mud wall. There were small loop holes in the walls at equal distances, through which a gun could be fired in the event of an enemy attacking the town. In each compound also there was generally at least one high tree with a platform in its branches, from which a good lookout could be obtained. We noticed also two large, square watch-towers, three times the height of ordinary houses.³²

As A.G. Leonard noted while traveling through Ngwa Division in 1896,

[N]ot a man apparently moved a step without carrying a naked sword in one hand and a rifle at full cock in the other. Even the boys--some of them not higher than an ordinary man's knee--walked about armed with bows, and pointed arrows made out of reeds.³³

Intervillage wars became especially destructive when they reached the stage of hiring mercenaries, such as the Abam or Abiriba, by negotiation with the Aro or with other trade-professional groups. The mercenaries ignored whatever restraints had been placed on the level of warfare by the villages and engaged in indiscriminate killing and looting. Furthermore, their tactics of mass attacks with matchets disoriented the village defenders, who were accustomed to more individualized combat at specifically defined times and places.³⁴

The escalation of a local feud into a major conflict, as well as the tendency to seek outside alliance and mercenary assistance

³²Dennis, "Itineration in the Ibo Country," 780.

³³Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," 191.

³⁴Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 301-2; G.T. Basden, Niger Ibos (London, 1938), 384-5.

at every stage of the conflict, is best illustrated by detailed reference to two examples, both stemming from the period just before the establishment of the British administration in South-eastern Nigeria. The first conflict arose in the heavily populated area of modern Ihiala and Mgbidi Divisions.³⁵ Here, throughout the nineteenth century the large village-group of Uli had been growing at the expense of neighboring village-groups, especially Ihiala. Each planting season, the Uli encroached further into the territories of surrounding groups, fighting battles where necessary, blocking access to water sources, and seizing control of the lucrative trade routes to Oguta and Onitsha. But the growth of Uli was not uniform, and some of its own constituent villages were also hard pressed by their faster growing compatriots. One such disadvantaged Uli village was Amwoka, which was forced to move its location twice in a short period by more powerful Uli villages, among them Mgbidi. Even after Amwoka moved away from Mgbidi territory, Mgbidi continued to harass Amwoka by pressing demands for the repayment of debts and by seizing and enslaving several Amwoka men. Finally, following an Mgbidi ambush that killed an Amwoka leader, the Amwoka made an alliance with a fellow Uli village, Ozara, and waged a successful war against Mgbidi in

³⁵The main sources for the following narrative are E.J. Scott, "Report on the Munakor Hinterland," 27 February 1903 (NAI Calprof 10/3/6); L.C. Woodman, "Original Cause of the War between Amwoka and Umbidi," [1903] (NAI Calprof 10/3/6); L.C. Woodman, "History of the Original Cause of the Palaver between Ihiaara Country and Uri Country," [1903] (NAI Calprof 10/3/6).

about 1898.

The Mgbidi, momentarily disadvantaged, then sought an ally who could help them to retaliate against Amwoka. They eventually found support outside of Uli among the Ihiala village group, which probably perceived this alliance as a means of weakening the more powerful Uli village group by encouraging factionalism within it. Ozara, impressed by the Mgbidi-Ihiala partnership, broke its alliance with Amwoka and also offered assistance to Mgbidi. But in the ensuing war, the Amwoka, with the support of a number of other Uli villages, defeated the Ihiala, killing or capturing forty-six men, and then drove the Mgbidi and Ozara off their land.

The Ihiala now began the process of seeking powerful allies against Uli, and finally chose to hire a force of three thousand Abam through an Aro agent. In mid-1902 this Abam force confronted the combined strength of the Uli village group (minus, of course, Mgbidi and Ozara, which had fled to Ihiala for protection). Though both sides suffered heavily, the war was inconclusive, and the Ihiala were left at a disadvantage when the Abam returned home. Once again the Ihiala looked for some way to restore the balance in their favor, and this time they fell upon the newest of the outside power sources in the area, the British. Thus, factional politics between two Uli villages had led to a gradual intensification of conflict and the introduction of a series of powerful outside allies. When we return to this narrative in a later chapter, we shall see how the British were incorporated

into the factional struggle between Uli and Ihiala as the Abam had been, and how they misperceived their role in that struggle.

The second example to be considered occurred in the equally heavily populated area of modern Ngwa and Ukwu Divisions. Here, throughout the nineteenth century the growing European demand for palm oil had led to a rapid increase in trading opportunities as well as an intensification of conflict over control of the trade routes. At a variety of depots on the Imo River, such as Akwete and Nkwoala, palm oil was collected by the trade-professional groups of the interior and sold to the middlemen of the coastal city-states, who took it down river to exchange for European manufactured goods at the coast.³⁶ By the middle of the nineteenth century, the control of the inland trade was largely in the hands of the Aro, acting in cooperation with the various villages along each route, while the middleman trade had been monopolized by Bonny following a period of intense competition with Degema. But the issue of the control of the trade was never fully decided; the Aro maintained a constant competition with Nkwere traders for the inland routes, and the Bonny men were challenged on all sides for control of the lucrative coastal trade. Finally, in 1869 a civil war in Bonny led to the secession of a large part of that town and their establishment of a rival port twenty-five miles to the east at Opobo. Within a few months this new city-state, led by an Igbo ex-slave named Jaja, had seized control of

³⁶ See K.C. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885 (Oxford, 1956), 26-51.

the Imo River and its depots from Bonny.³⁷

The competition among the various trading powers for control of the commerce of the Imo River had repercussions throughout the Imo valley. In Ngwa and Ukwu Divisions local factional struggles, whatever their initial cause, were expressed in terms of outside alliance; factions were identified as pro-Aro or pro-Nkwere, as pro-Bonny or pro-Opobo. The rapid rise of Opobo to ascendancy on the Imo meant that large numbers of disadvantaged local factions sought the alliance of Opobo traders against opposing pro-Bonny factions, a process that further accelerated the rise of Opobo. The breaking of the Bonny monopoly enabled traders from Akwete, Ohambele, and Obohia to ally with Opobo and establish their own trading stations on the middle Imo. But in 1887 the British responded to Bonny pleas and deported Jaja of Opobo, claiming that his control of the Imo was monopolistic and was damaging the British firms that had been trading through Bonny. With active British support the Bonny men once again took over the Imo and its ports and forced the Opobo men to withdraw. Everywhere in the Imo valley former Bonny allies again rose to prominence, and pro-Opobo villages such as Akwete and Ohambele were compelled to withdraw their own trading enterprises.³⁸ Though the Akwete people successfully repulsed an assault by Bonny and British forces in June 1891,

³⁷ Ibid., 182-90.

³⁸ Johnston to F.O., 15 February 1888 (PRO FO 84/1881/10); Hewett to F.O., 11 April 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/12); Hewett to F.O., 28 June 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/22); H.L. Gallwey, "Annual Report on the Eastern Division for the Year 1901-1902," 20 May 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

by 1892 they were fully in the Bonny sphere and were assisting the Bonny men in capturing the trade of inland Ukwa and Ngwa Divisions.³⁹ In February 1896 the British opened a sub-station at Akwete and began to send small exploratory expeditions northward.

To the north of Akwete trade competition followed a similar pattern. Those villages that wished to avoid the growing Bonny-Akwete hold on trade, such as Ohambeke and Obohia, sought Aro support, boycotted the routes to Akwete, and explored alternative outlets to the coast. Those villages that, for one reason or other, found the Aro trade predominance oppressive and that wished to resist control of the trade routes by Ohambeke, Obohia, and their supporters, sought other outside power sources to ally with. In particular, the Ngwa village of Obegu was especially receptive to the rise of Akwete as a trading power and looked to the Nkwerre as a counterpoise to the Aro. The leading trader of Obegu, Ananaba, had, through a series of misfortunes, become heavily indebted to the Aro, and the Aro had used this position of strength to take increasing control of the Obegu market.⁴⁰ Thus, when the Akwete men first introduced a representative of their new ally, the British, to Ananaba in June 1895, he quickly signed a treaty placing himself under the protection of the British and assured them that he was

³⁹ MacDonald to Anderson, 8 August 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111); K. Campbell, "Report on the Bonny District for the six months ending June 1892," 5 July 1892: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 12 January 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/1).

⁴⁰ The main sources for the late nineteenth century history of Obegu are the oral traditions gathered by Afigbo and Nwaguru. Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition," 18-19; J.E.N. Nwaguru, Aba and British Rule (Enugu, 1973), 46-58.

the "King" of all of Ngwa.⁴¹ By October of the same year the British officer responsible for the lower Imo River was using Obegu as his traveling headquarters.⁴² In March 1896 two British officers led fifty African troops from Akwete to Obegu, "paraded" them through the Obegu market in the presence of many Aro traders, and then used Ananaba's compound as their bivouac for several weeks. They reported that Ananaba was "extremely friendly" and "loyal" and had offered to build a rest house for itinerant British officers.⁴³ At their recommendation, Ananaba was given permission to proceed with the project and was granted an unprecedented annual subsidy of £20.⁴⁴

With his new allies, the Akwete and the British, behind him, Ananaba became a force to contend with in southern Ngwa Division, and he was not slow in pressing his advantage. He began to defy the Aro demands that he repay his debts, and on at least one occasion he refused the customary obligation of handing over an admitted murderer to the neighboring village of Ihie for punishment.⁴⁵ Like the Akwete men, he exploited his alliance with the British to advance his own trading ventures. As noted above, villages such as Ohambebe and Obohia, and later Ihie and Ogwe, resisted the Akwete-Obegu alliance, boycotted the trade routes that led

⁴¹Digan to MacDonald, 7 June 1895 (NAI Calprof 6/1/2).

⁴²Tanner to Moor, 3 November 1895 (NAI Calprof 8/2).

⁴³A.B. Harcourt, "Report on the Aquetta Expedition," 9 April 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/37).

⁴⁴Moor to F.O., 29 June 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/53).

⁴⁵Nwaguru, Aba and British Rule, 54-5.

to Obegu, and sought other coastal allies to trade with. Whenever possible, Akwete and Obegu retaliated against these tactics by convincing the British to send troops against the opposing villages, accusing them of slave dealing, human sacrifice, and whatever other charges would incite British intervention.⁴⁶ Thus, in April 1896 the British were persuaded to send a force of 120 European-trained troops and 200 coastal allies against Obohia, and in September 1898 a force of coastal warriors, joined by Akwete and Obegu men, was sent against Ihie and its ally Amaro. In each case Obegu was used as the British headquarters, and surrendering villages were required to appear before the British officers in the hut that Ananaba had built for them in his own compound.⁴⁷

For the time being, the general effectiveness of British arms in the service of Obegu put a check on the ambitions of Ihie and its allied villages. The Aro, though aware that the Akwete-Obegu inroads on their trading sphere might eventually threaten their position, were also cautious. But by 1899 the British appeared to be weakening, and there was growing doubt as to their ability to enforce their own demands or to support their allies, as we shall see in the next chapter. Nevertheless both Akwete and Obegu continued to assert their local influence at an increasing rate, further aggravating both the Ihie and the Aro. In particular, Akwete sought to undermine the powerful trading partnership of

⁴⁶ MacDonald to F.O., 6 December 1894 (PRO FO 2/64/47); Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/38).

⁴⁷ Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/38); Gallwey to F.O., 11 October 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/163).

the Aro brothers, Okorie and Nwosu Torti. Both of these men had lived in and around Akwete and Obegu for years and had managed a major part of the trade between Ngwa Division and the huge fair at Bende. In about 1899, the Okonko society of Akwete decreed that Okorie Torti trade solely through Akwete agents and fined him the equivalent of £100 when he refused.⁴⁸ One oral tradition records that he was also physically assaulted in Obegu for failing to display due respect for Ananaba.⁴⁹ Shortly thereafter a number of Aro traders, while trying to collect debts owed to them, were attacked, looted, and driven out of Obegu.⁵⁰ The Obegu also increasingly refused to recognize customary obligations to the Aro, such as the requirement that they refund the bride wealth of an Obegu woman who had divorced her Aro husband.⁵¹

Meanwhile the British, who by this time were completely identified with Obegu and Akwete, continued to apply pressure on surrounding villages and on the Aro to accept the trade and political arrangements desired by Obegu. In August 1900 Commissioner F.S. James visited Ogwe, a major ally of Ihie, assembled a large

⁴⁸ Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition," 18.

⁴⁹ Interview with J. Imo of Amaekpu Ohafia (born about 1875), in O.K. Oji, "A Study of Migrations and Warfare in Pre-Colonial Ohafia," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974, 101.

⁵⁰ Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition," 19.

⁵¹ Interview with A. Ogbureke (born about 1875), in U.O.A. Esse, "A Pre-Colonial History of Igbere," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974, 73.

crowd, and publicly ridiculed the Aro and their Ibinukpabi oracle.⁵²

In October 1901 Commissioner H.M. Douglas ordered the Ogwe market closed, expelled the Aro resident there, and threatened any village that tried to trade in Ogwe. When Ihie refused to observe this order, Douglas went there and on November 10 held a meeting. As Douglas described the event:

At Ehehia [Ihie] I called a meeting & their excuse for going to Ogwe market was that other towns were going so they thought they might as well. I fined the town 2000 m[anilla]s [about £25] for breaking the Gov't's order & on hearing this there was instant uproar & they said they would not pay it & that they demanded 400 m[anilla]s from the Gov't for not keeping them advised that the market was still closed. I thereupon told them I doubled the fine for their insolence & that if 4000 m[anilla]s were not brought into Akwete by the end of the month I would double it again & thereupon left the town.⁵³

Douglas then proceeded to Obegu and paid Ananaba his semi-annual subsidy.

The combination of Obegu, Akwete, and British pressure produced a natural alliance between the Aro and the neighboring villages whose commercial independence and control of trade routes were threatened, such as Ihie and Ogwe. The large numbers of Aro who had been expelled from Ogwe by Douglas assembled five miles from Obegu and prepared for war. The Torti brothers had already sent word several months earlier to their compatriots in Arochukwu, and a large force of Abam warriors had been assembled. In the early morning hours of 21 November 1901 the Aro and Abam, supported by their Ihie and Ogwe allies, fell on Obegu and burned

⁵²Gallwey to C.O., 27 August 1900 (PRO CO 520/2/32022).

⁵³Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entry for 10 November 1901 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1).

most of the village to the ground.⁵⁴ Exact figures are not obtainable, but well over 250 Obegu people were killed.⁵⁵ When Douglas visited the scene of the attack two weeks later, he found that

Obegu is wrecked all compounds being burnt & the rest house levelled to the ground, several remains of bodies were met with & there must have been numbers of them in the bush as for 1/4 mile on both sides of Obegu & in the town the stench was awful. I tried to go into King Ananaba's compound but was immediately confronted by headless & decomposing bodies, so fled.⁵⁶

Thus, as in the case of the Uli-Ihiala war, conflicts over local political dominance and control of the trade routes led to a widening ring of alliances, with a succession of outside allies called in to support the claims of temporarily disadvantaged factions. When the stakes were high enough, such conflicts could

⁵⁴The main documentary sources for the attack on Obegu are Moor to C.O., 1 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/45588); James to Gallwey, 29 August 1901 (NAI Calprof 9/1/1); Moor to C.O., 18 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18725); and the charges and counter-charges recorded in the trials held after the Obegu attack, enclosed in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689), and Moor to C.O., 16 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/14481).

⁵⁵While oral traditions recorded in Obegu place the casualty figure at one thousand, this is probably an exaggeration (See Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition," 18n). Ananaba himself claimed that five hundred had been killed; see Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entry for 8 December 1901 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1). But the Abam who took part in the raid claimed to have taken 267 heads; see Moor to C.O., 18 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18725). The Reuters correspondent who visited Obegu after the attack counted 230 bodies (Morning Post, 3 January 1902). Among the dead were reported to be fifty of Ananaba's Nkwerre allies; see B. Faunce, Minutes of a Special Tribunal, enclosed in Moor to C.O., 16 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/14481).

⁵⁶Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entry for 3 December 1901 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1).

be quite destructive, as we have seen in both examples. Yet, as suggested earlier, there remained considerable ambiguity in the Obegu instance as to who controlled events in that area. Although from Ananaba's point of view, the British were occasional outside allies assisting his commercial ventures, the British tended to see themselves as the prime movers of the economic and political process. Much the same ambiguity undoubtedly existed between the Ihie-Ogwe and their Aro allies. Of course, such ambiguity could be advantageous; at the hearings following the attack on Obegu, both the Ogwe and the Aro denied any responsibility and fully blamed each other.⁵⁷ In essence both sides in alliances such as these had objects to fulfill, and they manipulated each other to achieve them. The alliance lasted as long as each was useful to the other, and seldom was either side clearly in control. It is my contention that the character of the British involvement in the local politics of Southeastern Nigeria throughout the colonial period was not qualitatively different from this traditional pattern.

Before turning to the rise of British influence, it is necessary to deal briefly with the question of sovereignty in Southeastern Nigeria. It has often been claimed that wars in this area never involved the confiscation of land.⁵⁸ The historical data prove that this is incorrect as a generalization, however,

⁵⁷Enclosures in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689), and in Moor to C.O., 16 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/14481).

⁵⁸See for example Meek, Law and Authority, 242.

especially in the volatile districts of Abakaliki and Ezzikwo Divisions.⁵⁹ Yet for the most part control of land was not at issue, and this fact illustrates a key feature of pre-colonial warfare. In land resided the primary sovereignty and autonomy of the Igbo and Ibibio village. The ultimate defeat was to be forced to move from one's land, and there was little recourse from so final a penalty. Therefore most villages were willing to fight fiercely--and to the last person--to defend their right to continue to occupy their land. As a result most wars were forced to come to an end before this extreme conclusion, since resistance was so impassioned that it became too costly for an aggressor to persist. Instead more limited goals were espoused by the invader: the capture of a certain amount of goods and persons or the seizure of a marketplace and the roads leading to it.

The main result of most wars was a rearrangement of local political alignments and alliances. There was little that could be called victory or defeat--phenomena, again, associated with the possession of the land--but rather temporary predominance followed by the introduction of new and counterbalancing power sources, usually from outside the village group. In the intervals between wars, the dominant faction enjoyed the spoils of the previous war, such as control of roads and market places. Yet it had to respect

⁵⁹See for example N.C. Duncan, "Geographical Notes," 3 June 1908 (NAE Calprof 13/1/13); Boyle to C.O., 9 July 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/34/35896); and Partridge, Cross River Natives, 319.

the fundamental right of the defeated faction to continue to maintain itself on the land, for this right was what the defeated faction had won in battle: the right to coexist, albeit unequally. But in the unstable atmosphere of these intervals, the defeated faction constantly tested the new power arrangements in a variety of ways, and the dominant faction was required to defend and reaffirm its position, usually through the judicious application of force. Thus there was a sense of constant testing of current power arrangements with the help of outside power sources.

It was into this ongoing struggle for local predominance and control of the trade routes that the British came, and they were absorbed into it as other outside power sources before them had been. They were invited by momentarily disadvantaged factions to intervene in local politics by providing armed troops and military leadership. This they did repeatedly, under the impression that they were bringing liberation to progressive, oppressed elements of the population. In fact, they soon found themselves involved in the next stage of the process: the requirement that an ascending faction and its outside allies constantly reaffirm their position by force.

CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH OF BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA, 1885-1901

Since the sixteenth century Europeans of many nations had been involved in the trade of the Nigerian coast. This involvement was entirely economic, and by the eighteenth century it was largely British. But it was not until the early nineteenth century and the unilateral decision of 1807 to abolish the trans-Atlantic slave trade that the British Government took any interest at all in the area. Henceforth a succession of consuls, stationed first on the island of Fernando Po and then in Calabar, served as political agents on the scene and coordinated the anti-slavery policing activities of the British navy. But the resulting "consular jurisdiction" was in fact limited to the personal influence that one individual could exert with only sporadic support from London and was in any case restricted to a few coastal enclaves, such as Bonny and Calabar, where Europeans had been settled and had engaged in trade and missionary activities for some time. In general the consuls devoted their energies to the regulation of commercial matters, resolving, as best they could, disputes between European traders and coastal rulers in Courts of Equity created specifically for this purpose.¹

¹K.O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885 (Oxford, 1956), passim.

So long as British trade predominance remained unchallenged, such arrangements were satisfactory. The Foreign Office and the Admiralty were content with an occasional display of force by a gunboat visit to the coast or up the Niger River to sustain British enterprise. But then in the late 1870s diplomatic pressures, economic priorities, and growing European nationalism led to an intensification of interest in Africa, and particularly in the Niger, which was seen as a main entryway to the vast interior regions of the Sudan. In 1879 French traders, with their political motives only thinly veiled, began to operate on the Niger, heretofore an exclusive British sphere. While British trading companies, led by George Goldie, sought to counter this French threat, German interests began to press from the east. In 1884 the German adventurer Nachtigal signed a series of treaties with the chiefs of the Rio del Rey in the Cameroons, hoisted the imperial flag, and effectively closed Britain out from this lucrative commercial area. Finally spurred to action, the British Government authorized Consul Hewett to negotiate similar treaties with the leaders of the coastal communities of Southeastern Nigeria. Armed with these treaties, British representatives at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 were able to secure undisputed rights over the entire area of this study, provided that free navigation of the Niger River was maintained.²

Thus, though intense international competition persisted

²J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London, 1960), 35-47.

into the 1890s in such areas as the upper Niger and Nile, by 1885 the British were free from further European pressure in Southeastern Nigeria. Even "effective occupation," mandated by the Berlin Conference as the prerequisite for political control, was not at issue. The fact is that Southeastern Nigeria, with its dense population and hot, humid climate, was not particularly attractive to either traders or military adventurers. The former preferred to stay at the coast and trade through African middlemen as they had for centuries, while the latter found the open plains of the western Sudan more congenial to their exploits. So even though British involvement in the area had formally increased, there was little incentive either to penetrate the interior or to improve the existing consular jurisdiction. As Vice Consul Harry Johnston declared on 5 June 1885, the date of the British declaration of the "Niger Districts Protectorate" over the area of this study, "So long as we keep other European nations out, we need not be in a hurry to go in."³

It is for this reason that the Foreign Office consumed ten years in establishing its administration of the area and, during this period, engaged in little exploratory activity in the interior. Faced by a Parliament and Exchequer reluctant to commit funds to expensive, unprofitable imperial adventures--even though Southeastern Nigeria was potentially very profitable--the Foreign Office generally followed the line of least resistance and adopted measures calculated to avoid unfavorable attention. In 1886

³Quoted in Dike, Trade and Politics, 218.

Goldie's National African Company was chartered as the Royal Niger Company and given virtual autonomy as well as commercial monopoly on both banks of the Niger. The remainder of the Niger Districts Protectorate (later renamed the Oil Rivers Protectorate and then the Niger Coast Protectorate) was left in the hands of a consul resident in Calabar, who was to appoint consular agents from the local trading community to assist him.⁴ Until a self-supporting administration could be established, the consul was to continue the policies of the preceding decades: cautious exploration of the fringes of the region and protection of British trading interests through occasional use of naval gunboats. That force was an essential part of these policies had already been recognized by the Foreign Office. As W.H. Wylde, Superintendent of the Consular and Slave Trade Section, had written in 1879 with regard to the Niger,

I have no hesitation in stating that this River never would have been thrown open to British trade if it had not been for the Expeditions we have from time to time sent up the Niger to protect our traders and to prove to the natives that we have the means of punishing them should their conduct render it necessary for us to do so.⁵

E.H. Hewett, the Consul from 1885 to 1891, and the men who acted in his absence, Harry Johnston and George Annesley, pursued these goals with varying degrees of zeal. All three were committed to the expansion of British trade and thus sought to bypass the existing coastal middlemen and open trade directly with the

⁴Flint, Sir George Goldie, 48-81; J.C. Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906 (Cambridge, 1966), 61-74.

⁵Minute by Wylde, 21 January 1879 (initialed by Salisbury), on Hopkins to F.O., 18 November 1878 (PRO FO 84/1508/40).

interior, as well as to intervene in any local conflict that interrupted the orderly flow of commerce. It was this commitment that led to the forcible deportation in 1887 of Jaja of Opobo, who had successfully monopolized the trade of the Imo River basin and had undercut British commercial inroads by skillful economic and diplomatic measures.⁶ As Hewett reported following Jaja's deportation, to the satisfaction of the Foreign Office,

I have been paying so much attention to the affairs of this river [Imo], and to the conciliation of the natives up country, for the reason that I am extremely anxious to see the opening of the markets and the safe and firm establishment there of European factories effected without any serious dispute taking place--friction there is sure to be--between the parties interested. If this is accomplished here--the first river from which the Europeans have made an inroad on the native monopoly--it will have a good effect on the natives of other rivers when the Whitemen follow the example that those of this river have set them.

It is with much satisfaction I report that trade at the European factories up country is progressing most favorably.⁷

If a local dispute threatened to damage British trading interests, the consul visited the affected area, if necessary with gunboat support, and imposed a settlement. But because he had no land-based forces at his disposal, such action was limited to the few settlements that were located near the main rivers, such as Okrika and Akunakuna.⁸ He used the same gunboat backing to help him conclude treaties with the major river villages--treaties that guaranteed free access to trade routes by British

⁶ Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 73-92.

⁷ Hewett to F.O., 28 June 1889, and minutes (PRO 84/1941/22).

⁸ Hewett to F.O., 6 October 1888 (PRO FO 84/1881/31); Annesley to F.O., 27 February 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/13).

traders, tolerance of Christian missionaries, legal immunity for British subjects, and that bound the treaty villages to submit to the consular agents disputes "which cannot be settled amicably" and to "assist" and "act upon their advice" in all matters regarding trade, government, and the administration of justice.⁹

The consul also established "Governing Councils" on each of the major rivers, consisting of white traders, missionaries, and "native chiefs." These were meant to be a temporary expedient until a regular British administration could be established, and were patterned on the old Courts of Equity:

[A]s I could only devote a few weeks in each year to each portion of my district [wrote Johnston], I found it necessary to make some arrangement to meet the want of local Government in the more important rivers. The native chiefs had lost all power for good, and even were they capable of Governing their own district, they could not be allowed to have jurisdiction over British subjects. . . . I could not permit the Protectorate to relapse into lawlessness and thereby occasion strife, bloodshed, stoppage of trade and the excuse for the intervention of France or Germany.¹⁰

But with the severely limited resources at his disposal, and with the reluctance of the Admiralty to risk the health of its sailors in operations on the coast, the consul was largely powerless to enforce his decisions and those of the Governing Councils. Johnston complained that his only resources were "your peaceful white umbrella, and your cheerful smile of placid amiability," and reported to the Foreign Office that

⁹Text of a typical treaty enclosed in Annesley to F.O., 27 February 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/13); a partial text is included in Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 333-4.

¹⁰Johnston to F.O., 16 March 1888 (PRO FO 84/1881/12).

Wherever I went up the Cross River the chiefs were ready and even anxious to make Treaties placing themselves under Her Majesty's Protection, but . . . in the case of their infringing any of the clauses of these arrangements, I was not sure that it would be convenient under existing circumstances for the Government to coerce them into keeping their engagements.¹¹

Yet the consul was increasingly aware of the "immense power of England which [he] represented" and impatient to have the force behind him to implement his decisions. In Annesley's words,

What is urgently needed here is not the Bible, but the sword. Once enough Steam Launches patrol the Rivers and Creeks, no more atrocities will be committed. Europeans were not civilized in a day, and it will take centuries to civilize these natives.¹²

The Royal Niger Company had come to a similar conclusion at the time of the granting of its charter in 1886. To patrol its Niger River territory, it created a constabulary force that by 1889 consisted of 415 African troops led by five British officers, equipped with five machine guns and twenty-one cannons and mortars.¹³ This force, like all other aspects of the Company's operations, was financed by heavy tariffs on traffic and trade on the Niger. But the soldiers, many of whom had previously served in the Gold Coast Constabulary, were mostly "badly drilled and ill-disciplined" and tended to dissipate their effectiveness in the search for loot.¹⁴

¹¹H.H. Johnston, "The Niger Delta," Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, n.s. X, 12 (December 1888), 752; Johnston to F.O., 9 February 1888 (PRO FO 84/1881/6).

¹²Hewett to F.O., 28 June 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/22); Annesley to F.O., 29 October 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/38).

¹³A.F. Mockler-Ferryman, "Military Notes on the Countries of West Africa visited by Major MacDonald, July to November 1889," June 1890: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 18 August 1890 (PRO FO 84/2019).

¹⁴Ibid.; W.T. Black to C.O., 16 January 1901 (PRO CO 520/11/2081).

Consequently, the first inland expeditions by the Company, in the Delta regions to the west of the area of the present study, resulted in disorganized retreats with a number of African troops and British officers killed.¹⁵ When it turned its attention to the heavily populated eastern bank of the Niger in 1890, it was only slightly more successful. Confronted with a "state of guerrilla warfare" around Obosi that had halted trade, the Company dispatched 168 troops accompanied by nearly 100 warriors from allied villages to attack the area. It required two weeks of sporadic combat, including "sharp skirmishing" on February 7 in which one soldier was killed and six wounded, to obtain the submission of Obosi. Similar operations were carried out in the Oguta area in 1890 and 1891. In September of 1891 the Company's constabulary sustained forty-three casualties in four hours of "heavy firing" at Ebocha.¹⁶ Although the Ebocha operations were considered a success, it is apparent that the heavy losses suffered there led the Company to reconsider its military policies. While many patrols were henceforth sent into the western Delta and into northern Nigeria, the area of the present study was not again invaded for three years.

Unlike the limited sphere under the control of the Royal Niger Company, the administration of that part of the Protectorate under direct Foreign Office consular jurisdiction had still not been established by 1890. Consequently no provision had yet been

¹⁵"Punitive Expeditions of the Royal Niger Constabulary, 1886 to 1889," [1900] (typescript, Nigerian Military Museum, Zaria).

¹⁶Ibid.

made for the collection of customs duties to finance the creation of a land-based force. But the need for such a force was becoming crucial if British trading interests were to be advanced. As the Senior Naval Officer on the coast observed, matters had "got beyond the 'Consul and gun-boat' stage. Already the traders, in steam-boats and canoes, have penetrated beyond where they can expect support from the Navy, and, of course, they will go further."¹⁷

This situation led Acting Consul Annesley, the most aggressive of the consular officers of this period, to take action toward the creation of an armed force without prior Foreign Office approval. In 1889 the African traders of Calabar complained to him that the villages on the west bank of the Cross River above Itu, led by a chief named Andemeno, had begun to attack and plunder their trading canoes. Such occurrences on the Cross were not unusual. The Calabar traders were notorious for price gouging and for reneging on debts, and many times during the previous century they had been attacked by the villages along the river. In 1846, for example, Umon challenged their power and won a protracted war against them.¹⁸ Now, in 1889, the villages above Itu took matters into their own hands and sought to make alliances with Umon and Asang (on the Enyong River) to counter Calabar activities.

The Calabar traders, seeking support for their position, found an unusually willing listener in Annesley, who had been

¹⁷Quoted in Annesley to Calabar missionaries, 5 March 1890: enclosure in Annesley to F.O., 7 March 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/14).

¹⁸H. Goldie to Annesley, 27 February 1890: enclosure in Annesley to F.O., 7 March 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/14).

accorded a less than courteous reception when he had tried to visit Andemeno in February 1890.¹⁹ Although the local Presbyterian missionaries, who knew the Calabar traders well, warned him that he was being used by the traders and that "A protectorate in their minds means that, while they are free to do what they please, they are to be protected from the consequences of their actions," Annesley agreed to lead a force of three hundred armed war canoes against Andemeno.²⁰ In order to assuage missionary fears that the Calabar men would indiscriminately attack women and children, Annesley raised "a small police force," armed with shotguns and partially uniformed, to be paid for out of fines levied in the normal proceedings of the Calabar Governing Council.²¹ Despite the irregularity of this action and Annesley's failure to seek prior approval, the Foreign Office later fully sanctioned Annesley's creation of a police force.²² It also praised his handling of the Calabar-Andemeno conflict, which was settled by force on March 18 in Calabar's favor. As one official commented, with Lord Salisbury's approval,

[T]he Enyong robber chief [Andemeno] was obstinate, and evidently deserved the lesson he received. He has made it for a long time his practice to levy toll on the traders passing up and down the Calabar River, and thus has virtually barred it. The palm oil season is about to begin, & the matter looked serious for British trade. . . . [Annesley's]

¹⁹Annesley to F.O., 27 February 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/13).

²⁰R.M. Beedie to Annesley, 3 March 1890: enclosure in Annesley to F.O., 7 March 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/14).

²¹Annesley to F.O., 7 March 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/15).

²²F.O. to Annesley, 6 June 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/16).

report shows the need of some more effective government than that of a British Consul and a gunboat.²³

During the following year, Annesley continued to use his small force to intervene in local politics and trade, building on the Foreign Office's approval of his policies. In mid-1891, for example, he led an unsuccessful attack on Akwete in the service of the Bonny traders who were trying to wrest the trade of that area from Opobo.²⁴ But it was not until late 1891, when numerous complaints from the coast led to a formal investigation, that the exact nature of the police activities came to light. The Foreign Office learned that Annesley had "acted in a most unjust, harsh, & unwarrantable manner, burning down and sacking the houses of the people," and that the police "had committed numerous acts of lawlessness and pillage since Consul Annesley's departure, assaulting the Natives, beating them, breaking into their houses, interfering with their women, all of which they did saying that they were 'Consul's men' and could not be touched."²⁵ A mass of evidence was gathered that demonstrated that Annesley had stood by as his troops plundered and raped.²⁶ It was thus clear that the Protectorate's initial experiment with land-based forces had been an embarrassing mistake, and the first act of Annesley's successor

²³Minute by C.B. Robertson (initialed by Salisbury) on Annesley to F.O., 22 March 1890 (PRO FO 84/2020/16).

²⁴See above, 69-70. See also MacDonald to Anderson, 8 August 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111); and MacDonald to F.O., 17 October 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111/19).

²⁵MacDonald to Anderson, 8 August 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111).

²⁶MacDonald to F.O., 6 October 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111/12).

was to imprison four of the police and discharge the rest.²⁷

The events from 1885 to 1891 had made it apparent to South-eastern Nigerians, especially those near the coast and the rivers, that the British were intensifying their activities and were now willing to use force in a more systematic way to achieve their ends. Yet it is unlikely that they perceived any difference between the informal trading sphere and the protectorate status that had replaced it in 1885. The main goals of the British remained manifestly economic, and the incursions of British-trained troops and their allies were always in support of commercial interests. This is especially true of the Niger district, where the Royal Niger Company inextricably combined the functions of trade and administration.²⁸ When the constabulary troops were not attacking inland towns, they were occupied with packing and carrying items of trade for the Company's commercial ventures.²⁹ And the Company engaged in an extensive military campaign designed explicitly to prevent the traders of Nembe-Brass, to the west of the area of the present study, from entering the Niger district to trade and thus disrupting the Company's monopoly.³⁰

²⁷ MacDonald to Anderson, 8 August 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111).

²⁸ Flint, Sir George Goldie, 88-111.

²⁹ A.F. Mockler-Ferryman, "Military Notes on the Countries of West Africa visited by Major MacDonald, July to November 1889," June 1890: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 18 August 1890 (PRO FO 84/2019).

³⁰ Moor to F.O., 21 May 1897 (PRO FO 2/122/57); Flint, Sir George Goldie, 187-215; Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 163-77; E.J. Alagoa, The Small Brave City-State: A History of Nembe-Brass in the Niger Delta (Madison, 1964).

In short, it appeared to Southeastern Nigerians that the British were beginning to consolidate their forces in order to expand their trading sphere, which had previously been limited to the coast. Yet such an expansion was not unprecedented in the history of the area. As demonstrated in Chapter I, Southeastern Nigeria had been deeply affected by the rise and interaction of a series of trade-professional groups. Contrary to the common notion that Europeans were unknown and mysterious to inland peoples, a considerable amount of accurate information about them was available in the interior.³¹ This was disseminated mainly by the relatively large numbers of inland men who had journeyed to the coast, either for private commercial ventures or as apprentices of the coastal traders.³² In the 1890s British officers found that knowledge of the deportation of Jaja of Opobo was widespread throughout the interior and that the people were correspondingly distrustful of British intentions.³³

Like the expanding trade-professional groups before them, the British were used in local factional struggles as a support for disadvantaged elements in the population who were casting about for an outside ally. But for the time being the British were not a very powerful ally except near the banks of the large rivers. Villages sufficiently inland to be safe from gunboat assault

³¹See Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 220.

³²Dike, Trade and Politics, 42; Hewett to F.O., 28 June 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/22); "An Ibo Autobiography," Nigerian Field, VII, 4 (October 1938), 158-70.

³³Moor to F.O., 14 June 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/50).

could easily ignore the arguments of the consul that they alter their trading patterns. Consul Hewett, attempting to reopen a road near Ohambele in 1889, found that the leaders of that village refused to pay any attention to him; as he reported, they left his presence "very abruptly and with much loud talking."³⁴ In such circumstances most inland villages were cautious about seeking alliances with the British, since it was still unclear whether they could provide promised support at any great distance from the rivers.³⁵

By 1889 the Foreign Office had concluded that the administrative arrangements of the Protectorate were inadequate. The Royal Niger Company had drawn considerable public criticism for its monopolistic practices, and the consular jurisdiction of the rest of the Protectorate had reached the limits of its effectiveness. To investigate this problem and specifically to consider whether the Royal Niger Company's mandate should be extended to cover the entire Protectorate, the Foreign Office commissioned Major Claude MacDonald to visit the coast and make recommendations. The course of MacDonald's mission has been dealt with extensively elsewhere, and the details need not detain us here.³⁶ In essence, MacDonald found that the Royal Niger Company was ineffective and

³⁴Hewett to F.O., 28 June 1889 (PRO FO 84/1941/22).

³⁵Casement to MacDonald, 4 July 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 13 September 1894 (PRO FO 2/64/40); Tanner to Moor, 3 November 1895 (NAI Calprof 8/2)

³⁶Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 110-34; Flint, Sir George Goldie, 129-55.

distrusted all along the coast and should, at best, be limited to its previous sphere of control. He proposed that the area of consular jurisdiction begin to progress toward the status of crown colony, with a fully articulated administrative and legal structure.

The Foreign Office, though it would have preferred the relatively effortless expedient of extension of the Royal Niger Company's mandate, accepted MacDonald's recommendations and appointed MacDonald himself "Commissioner and Consul General" to implement them. He was instructed to "consolidate" and "strengthen" the Protectorate and to continue the efforts of previous British consuls to deal with problems that affected trade, while establishing and financing an administration. He was to prevent conflicts in the interior and to coerce local leaders into accepting British policies, yet he was strongly cautioned to avoid "discontent."³⁷ Moreover, he was required by the terms of the Brussels Act of 1890 to establish fortified posts in the interior in order to combat the slave trade at its source.

The financing of the new administration was the easiest of the tasks. The foreign trade of Southeastern Nigeria was already large and was continuing to grow. By placing an agent at the mouth of each of the larger rivers, the British could collect enough in import and export duties to support a fairly large administration from the outset. In 1891-92, the first year of customs collection, the total combined value of imports and exports exceeded £1,500,000, with an assessed duty of

³⁷Foreign Office to MacDonald, 18 April 1891 (PRO FO 84/2110/2).

£84,000.³⁸ But income of this kind depended entirely upon trade, and the trade of the area was prone to extreme fluctuations due both to boycotts by African middlemen in protest of poor trade terms offered by Europeans and to conflicts in the interior over control of the trade routes. If MacDonald was to finance his administration successfully, he had to assume some measure of control over the flow of trade. The new administration, moreover, was a growing organism, and every year brought new requirements for the funds to pay for personnel and equipment. Thus it was not enough for trade to be stabilized; it must also be made to expand.

Given these requirements, it was inevitable that MacDonald's attention would be focused, like the consuls before him, on trade, and that he and his assistants would become increasingly involved in the politics of the interior.³⁹ But the nature of that involvement--whether it employed the generally peaceful means of the diplomat or the coercive methods of the soldier--depended largely on MacDonald's own character. And by and large MacDonald preferred to interpret his commission as a diplomatic one. He was evidently a man of high ideals, committed to the spread of European culture. He believed that the development of "legitimate

³⁸T.A. Wall, "Annual Report on the Trade of the Oil Rivers Protectorate," 1 August 1892: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 7 December 1892 (PRO FO 84/2194). It should be noted that while most of this income came from the area under study, a considerable portion was collected to the west, in the area of the modern Midwest State of Nigeria.

³⁹See for example H.L. Gallwey, "Report on the Benin District . . . for the year ending 31st July 1892": enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 12 January 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/1).

trade" in tropical products and manufactured goods was the only effective alternative to the trade in slaves.⁴⁰ He preferred to avoid the use of force and instead favored unarmed exploration of the interior in the hope of winning over village leaders by persuasion. During his tenure of office, from 1891 to 1896, he dispatched numerous individual Europeans to the various inland areas to initiate peaceful contacts. In 1892, for example, he sent Vice Consul Campbell to Ikwerre Division, and in 1894 he ordered Survey Officer Casement to make several journeys into Oron, Opobo, Eket, Itu, Akamkpa, and Obubra Divisions.⁴¹ He himself met frequently with local leaders on the larger rivers, a procedure he had adopted in 1889 during his investigation of the future of the Protectorate administration.⁴² When he first arrived in the Protectorate, he confronted the issue of the hostility of Akwete--due to Annesley's abortive attack there--by personally going to Akwete and convincing its leaders to sign a treaty without the use of force.⁴³ He agreed with the view of a subordinate that the best approach to the Aro was a peaceful one, and that persistent goodwill would win their cooperation.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ MacDonald to F.O., 21 May 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111).

⁴¹ MacDonald to F.O., 15 March 1892 (PRO FO 84/2194/18); MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63); MacDonald to F.O., 13 September 1894 (PRO FO 2/64/40).

⁴² Flint, Sir George Goldie, 129-30; MacDonald to F.O., 15 March 1892 (PRO FO 84/2194/18).

⁴³ MacDonald to F.O., 17 October 1891 (PRO FO 84/2111/9); MacDonald to F.O., 12 January 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/1).

⁴⁴ MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894, and enclosures (PRO FO 2/63).

But given the economic and political realities of Southeastern Nigeria, MacDonald's policy of peaceful exploration and diplomatic initiatives could only be minimally effective from the British point of view. They were demanding that the inland villages relinquish a major element of their autonomy as well as a key source of wealth: the control of trade routes and of the trade that flowed over them. Southeastern Nigerian village leaders were by necessity monopolistic and protectionist in commercial matters, and they did not wish to lose their right to apply force to achieve the trade and political arrangements beneficial to them. We have seen that these attitudes had been challenged repeatedly by expanding trade-professional groups before the coming of the British, but such challenges had always been backed by a varying amount of force. The experience of the individual British officers sent inland by MacDonald demonstrated that, while they were usually treated cordially and invited to mediate in local disputes, they had little effect in opening the interior to the kind of trade arrangements favored by the British.

MacDonald was not unaware of the ultimate need for force behind his office, but he was reluctant to admit that it had to be used openly in the service of trade. Instead he chose to justify force as unavoidable in face of what he described as the "barbarism" of the interior. In his annual report for 1893-94, he wrote that

When the present Administration was started, it was seen that a force of men must be raised and maintained to keep order amongst the numberless wild tribes by whom the Niger Coast Protectorate is peopled, and to carry into effect the

orders of the Vice-Consuls and their representatives in their endeavours to do away with the many crimes and horrors, such as cannibalism, human sacrifice, murder of twins, judgment by ordeal, which existed and still exist in the Protectorate.⁴⁵

Nevertheless the soldiers at his disposal were used only once while he was personally present on the coast. In 1893, he took one hundred troops up the Cross River and destroyed Okurike in order to obtain the surrender of a fugitive. Apart from this instance, small detachments of troops were occasionally assigned to accompany officers investigating local disturbances, but they were not used in combat.⁴⁶ But the eventual need for force was increasingly evident to MacDonald. Even if his policy of peaceful exploration had been more successful, he had very few officers willing to implement it. Peacefully inclined officers, he knew, were branded by their fellow officers as "pro-native" and "the Black Man's Friend," and most of his administrative staff preferred either the adventure of military expeditions or the security of paperwork at their river stations.⁴⁷

It is therefore significant that the first official MacDonald appointed, and the first to arrive on the coast under his new regime, was Ralph Moor. Having served for ten years as a District Inspector in the Royal Irish Constabulary, Moor was well suited

⁴⁵ MacDonald, "Report on the Administration of the Niger Coast Protectorate," 16 August 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63).

⁴⁶ MacDonald to F.O., 12 October 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/23); MacDonald to F.O., 6 December 1894 (PRO FO 2/64/47); MacDonald to F.O., 25 July 1895 (PRO FO 2/84/32A).

⁴⁷ A.C. Douglas ["Nemo"], Niger Memories (Exeter, [1927]), 19.

for the task assigned to him: the creation of the military arm of the new Protectorate. By mid-1892 Moor had built a force of 152 Hausa and Yoruba troops led by himself and another British officer. By the end of that year, a total of 300 troops and five officers had been assembled, armed with seven machine guns and a six-pounder cannon. He had also appointed twenty-six Court Messengers to enforce the orders of the consuls and their assistants.⁴⁸

By this time MacDonald had recognized qualities in Moor that he considered useful in his administration, and in July 1892 he transferred him to the political service as a Vice Consul. By September 1892 Moor had been promoted over the heads of his fellow vice consuls to serve as Acting Consul General during MacDonald's nine month leave in Great Britain. This meteoric rise casts some doubt on the peacefulness of MacDonald's policies, for Moor was much more inclined to the use of force than he. It is possible that he permitted Moor to bear the responsibility for hard military decisions while he himself maintained a publicly acceptable posture of diplomatic patience. In any case, it was during MacDonald's absences from the coast that Moor began to alter the more peaceful tone of the initial administration.

The first employment of the new military force occurred during Moor's initial tenure as Acting Consul General when in December 1892 he dispatched fifty troops to stand guard at a trial at Okrika. They were not used in active combat at this time, but it

⁴⁸ Moor to MacDonald, 9 August 1892: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 8 December 1892 (PRO FO 84/2194); MacDonald, "Memorandum respecting affairs at Okrika," 30 November 1892 (PRO FO 84/2194).

was necessary to reinforce them with a landing party of British sailors to prevent their being overwhelmed by the hostile populace.⁴⁹ During his second tenure he presided over the attack on Ebrohimi, to the west of the area of the present study, and ordered the deportation of the Itsekiri trader, Nana.⁵⁰ During his third and final tenure as Acting Consul General he intervened with a force of 120 men in a trade dispute between Afikpo and Ediba in August 1895, citing Consul Annesley's 1890 attack on Andemeno as his model. He then went on to shell Obubra because its leaders refused to meet with him.⁵¹

By the time that Moor succeeded MacDonald as Commissioner and Consul General, in February 1896, he had decisively changed the policies of the administration. He had less respect than MacDonald for the people and customs of Southeastern Nigeria and saw himself as a great peacemaker in an otherwise chaotic environment. He believed that he was bringing "perfect safety and security both to life and property" to an area in which previously "no man ever went one mile from his village for any purpose whatever without carrying arms and the principal features of the community were distrust, lawlessness, rapine, and slavery."⁵² After his attack on Ediba and Obubra in 1895, he declared that

⁴⁹Moor to F.O., 5 January 1893 (PRO FO 2/51/1).

⁵⁰See O. Ikime, "Nigeria-Ebrohimi," in West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation, ed. Michael Crowder (London, 1971), 205-32.

⁵¹Moor to F.O., 11 September 1895 (PRO FO 2/84/38).

⁵²Moor to F.O., 6 May 1897 (PRO FO 2/121/49).

Peace and security to life have since reigned in a district where there were continual outrages and petty lawlessness taking place, and the village opposite the town of Ediba, called Itigidi, in which the inhabitants were formerly the most miserable and dirty natives I have ever seen, are now clean and thriving people, and a village, the filthiness of which words cannot paint, is now well constructed and cleanly.⁵³

We need not believe this hyperbole to see that Moor considered force necessary and beneficial in Southeastern Nigeria. There were now far fewer peaceful, individual expeditions dispatched to the interior. Instead Moor turned increasingly to deliberate, forceful extension of existing coastal and river outposts. He did not desire or seek a relationship of equality with the leaders of inland villages. Rather, he wished to dominate them. He believed that traditional methods of government and justice were characterized by "war and bloodshed" at the hands of the secret and titled societies: "The members were all the chiefs and men of substance in the country and a certain amount of justice was no doubt actually dispensed but a person not being a member of the Society had no chance of success in any action against a member."⁵⁴ In order to end this oppression of "the poor and weak" by "the rich and powerful," he declared that "One of the first objects kept in view when relations are opened with a new tribe is to organize for them a system of internal Administration which guarantees justice and consideration to the complaints and troubles of all." He therefore instructed his officers to form "Native Councils," consisting of local notables, in the various regions of the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Moor to F.O., 3 March 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/8562).

interior. The Councils were to employ British legal procedure to settle disputes, with the advice of touring British officers.⁵⁵

Even more than MacDonald, Moor considered his main objective to be the extension of British commercial interests. The Foreign Office had been unambiguous in its directions to him on this matter; above all, he was instructed, "attention should now be paid to the further development of trade with the interior."⁵⁶ As before, he attempted to cover his basically economic motives with humanitarian rhetoric, especially in reports and documents meant for public distribution.⁵⁷ But, like most other British officers, Moor realized that his career depended less upon maintaining peace in the Protectorate than upon producing a comfortable profit each year.⁵⁸ The Foreign and Colonial Offices encouraged this outlook by giving scant notice to most reports submitted from the field, but then devoting weeks of scrutiny and criticism to the annual budget proposals and financial returns. And Moor gave ample reason for satisfaction; by 1896 the administration's revenues

⁵⁵Moor to F.O., 14 June 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/50); Moor to F.O., 6 May 1897 (PRO FO 2/121/49).

⁵⁶F.O. to Moor, 5 March 1896 (PRO FO 2/99/19).

⁵⁷Compare, for example, the public report of the Central Division Expedition of 1899 in the "Annual Report of the Niger Coast Protectorate, 1898-99" (enclosure in Moor to C.O., 1 October 1899 [PRO CO 444/2/31216]) with the confidential reports dealing with the same subject in Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/14389). See also A.G. Leonard [Nne Oku], "Southern Nigeria: Its Present Evolution and its Future Prospects," West African Mail, III, 131 (29 September 1905), 628.

⁵⁸Leonard, "Southern Nigeria," West African Mail, III, 138 (17 November 1905), 803.

had doubled over the 1891 figures and by 1901 had again more than doubled, eliciting a personal compliment to Moor from Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary.⁵⁹ To sustain this rate of growth, in Moor's view, it was imperative that the inland producers and traders be deprived of their power to regulate trade in their own areas. As he explained in 1896, with full Foreign Office approval,

Throughout the Protectorate there is a belt of natives, neither producers nor bona fide middlemen who in the past have lived by this piracy and toll system and have blocked the way to the interior. This matter is now receiving my particular attention and those who cannot be persuaded to become honest workers must be removed and scattered.⁶⁰

A "reliable and stable trade" could only be ensured through political and military domination.⁶¹

The first area in which Moor applied this policy in a thoroughgoing way was southern Ngwa and Ukwa Divisions. Here, as we have seen, an intense trade competition had developed between the Akwete-Obegu alliance and the Ogwe-Ihie confederation.⁶² The latter grouping looked to the Aro for outside support, while the former sought to involve the British on their side. Vice Consul Digan, the first British officer to visit Obegu, in June 1895, thus received a cordial welcome and found his audience, led

⁵⁹Moor to F.O., 10 December 1897 (PRO FO 2/123/159); Moor, "Memorandum Concerning the Aro Expedition": enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/20798); Minute by Chamberlain on Moor to C.O., 5 March 1901 (PRO CO 520/7/11616).

⁶⁰Moor to F.O., 14 June 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/50).

⁶¹Moor to C.O., 24 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/20798).

⁶²See above, 59-62.

by Ananaba, receptive to his order that

the oil road was open and that either party breaking the peace would be responsible to the government; and that--as fighting amongst the Queen's Children was not allowed--they must now look on the war as being at an end, and not temporarily stopped as it was before.⁶³

The traders of Obegu and their allies naturally saw this "open road" policy as an opportunity to encroach upon the Ogwe-Ihie domination of the trade routes. The second British visit, by Vice Consul Tanner in October 1895, was equally well received:

The Chief [Ananaba] was most pleased to see me, and informed me that he hoped the Government, now it had got so far, would build a house in his town, that he would do all he could to keep things quiet, and if any trouble arose, he would put it in the hands of the Consul.⁶⁴

Encouraged by the existence of such an apparently progressive chief, Moor dispatched a survey party of fifty troops, led by Vice Consul Harcourt and Captain Koe, in February 1896. They were instructed to avoid conflict with inland villages in order to prevent disruption of trade, but they were given permission to seize and deport the leaders of "troublesome villages."⁶⁵ By dispatching this expedition, Moor was playing into Ananaba's hands. The "troublesome villages" referred to were his trade competitors, and removing their leaders was equivalent to supporting Ananaba's commercial ambitions. Since any dispute to be settled would be heard at Obegu in or near Ananaba's own compound, it was hardly seen as an impartial judicial process, but rather as forced mediation in Obegu's

⁶³Digan to MacDonald, 7 June 1895 (NAI Calprof 6/1/2).

⁶⁴Tanner to Moor, 3 November 1895 (NAI Calprof 8/2)

⁶⁵Moor, "Memorandum for Officers Proceeding to Aquettah Opobo for Survey etc., 24 February 1896 (NAI Calprof 8/2).

favor under the guns of fifty mercenaries. The issues involved were thus not settled and would naturally be reopened as soon as the British troops retired to the coast.

As expected, Harcourt and Koe found Ananaba "extremely friendly" and allowed themselves and their troops to be housed by him. From their headquarters in Obegu they made short journeys into surrounding areas, surveying and offering treaties of protection to the various villages. But they found most leaders cautious; they were willing to cooperate only if the British could ensure them support against their rivals, and at this time British military might was an undetermined factor. Still, Harcourt and Koe succeeded in negotiating four treaties, even though they were refused guides everywhere. They focused much of their attention on the Obegu market, where "thousands" of traders, including many Aro, gathered every four days.

Through the interpreter [wrote Harcourt] I was able to speak to some of them, and told them the white man was coming to their country to make friends with them, and that they must tell their people on their return. They seemed frightened at first, and asked the interpreter if I was the same as themselves. I also explained to them the reasons of our coming, and pointed out to them that the cloth they wore and various articles they possessed all came from the white man's country, and that they could not do without them (white men). . . .

The first time we were at Obegu the troops were paraded through the market, and created a strong impression.⁶⁶

In his final report to Moor, Harcourt suggested paying the "loyal" Ananaba an annual subsidy and recommended a punitive expedition against Obohia and Ohuru, two villages that had refused to meet with the British and had insisted on retaining control of their own trade routes.⁶⁷

Moor then dispatched 120 troops, armed with a machine gun and a

⁶⁶ A.B. Harcourt, "Report on the Aquetta Expedition," 9 April 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/37).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

cannon, to attack Obohia. In his memorandum to the officers, Moor wrote that

The object of the expedition is to punish the towns of Obohia, Ohurru, Ozuogo, and their allies (if any) for their action in stopping the trade routes, levying tolls on traders, and seizing boys and produce, generally acting as highway robbers. They have refused all overtures on part of the Government, and declined to obey any orders. Lately it seems they have assumed a threatening and offensive attitude which renders it imperative that they be effectively removed from the locality and scattered. The punishment is to be carried out in as severe a manner as possible that others may be deterred from a like course, and the services of friendly allies, in cutting off all roads of retreat, should be utilized as much as possible. . . . The expedition should be confined strictly to carrying out the punishment and settling matters arising therefrom, and nothing should be undertaken which is likely to interfere with the general peace of the district, or to cause a stoppage of trade. This is most important.⁶⁸

He also ordered that Ananaba be paid a £20 annual subsidy "with some ceremony."

Vice Consul H.L. Gallwey, Moor's principal deputy and leader of the punitive expedition, then proceeded to Opobo and Bonny and secured their armed assistance in blocking the escape routes out of Obohia. On 16 April 1896 he led his force in an attack on that village. Although the Obohia people had constructed a stockade and trench to defend themselves, they abandoned them at the last moment, apparently because the swiftness of the British action had left them unprepared. Their resistance thus took the form of four hours of sniping and harassment while the British troops and their local allies burned half the village and gathered "loot . . . consisting chiefly of cloth, goats, fowls, and manillas [local

⁶⁸Moor, "Memorandum of Instructions for the Obohia, Ohurru, and Ozuogo Expedition in Opobo District," [1896]: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/38).

currency]." In the attack the Obohia and their allies were clearly outnumbered, and on the day following the attack submitted their surrender to Gallwey. He ordered them to pay a moderate fine, which they were compelled to raise by indebting themselves to their erstwhile enemy, Akwete.⁶⁹ The British display of force encouraged disadvantaged elements in Obohia to come forward and sign a treaty with the officers, and henceforth that village assisted British trade ambitions. When Gallwey toured the area two months later, he was greeted with deference everywhere.

The attitude of the natives up in the country passed through [he wrote] is very satisfactory. The punishment inflicted on Obohia has done a wonderful amount of good. All roads are open, and no complaints were made to me of people being seized.⁷⁰

Yet this temporary local predominance failed to produce what the British were really after, free access to the markets all the way up to the fair at Bende. Although two British officers reached Bende in December 1896, the Aro refused to loosen their control of inland trade, and the villages along the trade routes insisted on maintaining control of the paths.⁷¹ By 1898 even the limited British influence in southern Ngwa and Ukwa Divisions was being challenged. The traders of Ihie, increasingly resentful of Akwete and Obegu pretensions of

⁶⁹H.L. Gallwey, "Report on the Punitive Expedition to Obohia," 25 April 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/38).

⁷⁰Gallwey to Moor, 22 June 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 29 June 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/53).

⁷¹See A.G. Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society, XIV, 4-6 (April-June 1898), 190-207.

controlling the trade of the area, began to close them out of their roads and markets. Ananaba appealed for British help, and three officers were sent to lead a force of coastal men against Ihie, encountering significant resistance in the final mile of their approach to the village. Akwete and Obegu men, among others, were dispatched without supervision to destroy Amaro, an Ihie ally.⁷² Once again, the hostile villages surrendered, but it was only a matter of time until they again tested the Obegu-British alliance, as we saw in Chapter II.⁷³

In his strategy to extend British trade hegemony inland, Moor was limited by a number of factors inherent in his situation. Customs duties were still relatively small, and his financial resources were accordingly limited. He was able to afford only a small staff, and they were generally still confined to activities on the larger waterways. By 1898 Moor had assembled an administration consisting of only eighty-four British officers to manage all aspects of governmental and military operations, and fully one-fourth of these were unavailable at any given time because of leaves and invaliding.⁷⁴ He complained frequently that it was this shortage of staff that prevented the initiation of more peaceful exploration.⁷⁵ Moreover, the troops at his disposal, numbering 400 in 1898, were slow to reach an acceptable standard

⁷²Gallwey to F.O., 11 October 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/163).

⁷³See above, 63-66.

⁷⁴Moor to F.O., 14 January 1898 (PRO FO 2/178/6).

⁷⁵See for example Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/14389).

of discipline and training, and he hesitated to commit them to engagements in which victory was not assured.

Above all, once he was in a position of power Moor discovered that there were officers under him who were even more committed to the use of force than he, and he had to put a tight rein on their activities. Not only was he constrained by repeated Foreign Office demands that he avoid discontent and disorder in the Protectorate, but he also realized that too much force would disrupt trade and undermine his campaign to increase customs revenues. Most of his officers, however, came from military backgrounds, and they tended to deprecate the instructions of the Foreign Office with regard to caution in the use of troops.⁷⁶ As a result much of Moor's Consulship was devoted to restraining their martial activities, usually by placing strict geographical and temporal limits on the scope of punitive expeditions.⁷⁷ Those officers who were not militarily inclined usually preferred the secure atmosphere of their own offices to the challenge of touring unmapped countryside.⁷⁸

The few men who were willing to tour often left much to be desired and were generally adventurous soldiers of fortune with

⁷⁶ See for example Gallwey to Milne, 12 August 1898 (NAI Calprof 6/2); and Douglas, Niger Memories, 40-65.

⁷⁷ See for example Moor, "Memorandum of Instructions with regard to Patrol . . . in the Afikpo Territory," 29 November 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 1 December 1902 (PRO CO 520/16/53031); Moor to James, 14 April 1902 (NAI Calprof 9/2/2); Moor to C.O., 24 November 1901, with enclosures and minutes (PRO CO 520/10/44565).

⁷⁸ See for example G.C. Digan, "Report on the Bonny District for the year ending 31st March 1896" (NAI Calprof 8/2).

little perspective on the meaning of British involvement in the interior. A striking--and not at all atypical--example of such an individual was Arthur Glyn Leonard, who worked for the Protectorate administration from 1894 to 1901. Before coming to Southeastern Nigeria he had served as an officer in the police force of the British South Africa Company, and he brought with him many of the racial attitudes current in South Africa. After an expedition in Ibibioland, he described the people as "savage" and "unapproachable," due to their "frivolity" and the "intensely fierce excitability of their temperments." They were, he said,

full of the dark ways of deception and treachery, crooked minded and naturally perverse in their disposition, distrustful of their own kith and kin. . . . To approach the "Ibibio" through the soft and suasive language of diplomacy or by diplomatic rules of policy--or even to attempt to--is futile. . . . [I]t is necessary first of all to bring them to subjection and to do this a strong and determined policy is imperative--in a few words, the iron hand shorn however of silken glove.⁷⁹

Leonard, who considered himself something of a social philosopher, denigrated Moor's caution toward the use of force and advocated more independence of action for the individual British officer. As he told a news correspondent in 1900,

Where we are handicapped is by our miserable system of centralisation. Let the Government spend more money in out-stations, put good men into those stations, and give them power and trust them. De-centralisation is our only hope. At present all is centralised at the Colonial Office, and again at the head-quarters of the Colony itself. We ought to be allowed when necessary to take a punitive expedition into the bush. No one likes doing it, but until you conquer these people you cannot possibly rule them.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Leonard, report of 6 April 1899: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/14389).

⁸⁰Interview in West Africa, I, 4 (August 1900), 120-1.

What Leonard did with the considerable independence given to him is a matter of record. For example, once while touring near his station he intervened in a conflict between two groups of angry people, both of which then began to display hostility toward him. His response was to lash out with the "shillelagh" he always carried, until the people moved away to a respectful distance. As he explained later,

Trained in the Eastern school, experience had taught me that vacillation and retreat were fatal, even when outnumbered, in the presence of Orientals and Africans. So in a crisis such as this, there was no alternative but a bold front and the offense. . . . Knowing . . . that it was a question of supremacy with the people before me, I did not for a moment hesitate to shew them by my action that the spirits at my back were supreamer than theirs. . . . Only one thought dominated me, and that thought was to shew them that I had no fear of them. More than this, that I had the greatest contempt for the storm which had been so deftly raised, which it was my intention to reduce to a positive calm.⁸¹

Eventually this personal approach to Africans became an embarrassment to the administration. After a series of complaints by European missionaries and African leaders, an investigation was carried out that revealed that Leonard regularly beat his African staff, and in one case had killed a man from a local village who was working as a carrier for him. He was also in the habit of confiscating livestock and tobacco from villages he passed through. And, apparently most damaging in Moor's view, he maintained two African concubines who accompanied him on his military and political expeditions. In 1901 he was compelled

⁸¹ A.G. Leonard [L.G.A.], "Pictures and Problems of West African Life: A Record of Personal Experience," West African Mail, IV, 167 (8 June 1906), 250-2.

to resign his commission in disgrace.⁸²

But even if Moor's staff had been large enough and committed enough to implement his commercial policies, he would still have been impeded by the willingness of Southeastern Nigerians to defend themselves and their control of the roads by force of arms. The farther the British military expeditions penetrated inland, the more intense the resistance became. And at this stage in the development of the Protectorate's armed forces, the interior villages were very nearly an equal match for the British troops. The latter, accustomed to the open terrain near the river banks and dependent upon covering fire provided by gunboats, were at a disadvantage on the narrow, heavily foliated paths linking the inland villages. The African villagers, familiar with the paths and the terrain, could set devastating ambushes on the long columns of soldiers and carriers. The only British response was to fire a periodic "clearing volley" into the foliage on either side of the path in order to dislodge potential ambushers.⁸³

But the defenders had learned that by flattening themselves on the ground or in trenches they could avoid injury and still carry out their attack. The impact of these tactics was described by one of the first commanders of the Southern Nigerian forces, A.F. Montanaro:

[T]hough the bush is as thick as a mat close to the path, due to the constant clearing of the path, which tends to make the bush grow thicker, a few yards inside the fringe the matted condition of the bush diminishes considerably. This enables

⁸² Moor to C.O., 18 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/14497).

⁸³ See Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/14389); and W.C.G. Heneker, Bush Warfare (London, 1907), 1-5.

the enemy to carry out his sniping tactics with impunity, as he can creep up to within a yard or two of the path, fire his gun, and be off through the thinner portion of the forest before the part of the column which has been attacked can recover from its confusion. There is nothing so nerve-destroying or so harassing to a column as this sniping. Every man goes along the road feeling that at any moment he is being laid for at a range of a couple of yards, and this is enough to unnerve the bravest.⁸⁴

The defenders were, however, at more of a disadvantage in the stockades that they built to protect their villages. Here, the British cannons and machine guns could be effective in dispersing them. Nevertheless the relative balance of military capabilities at this time meant that most expeditions ended indecisively, with the British forced to withdraw to their coastal enclaves.

As we have seen, the Royal Niger Company had pulled back from the area of this study in 1891 after its unfortunate experiences at Obosi and Ebocha.⁸⁵ When it returned in 1894 it was to attack the village of Nkoza, which had blocked its trading ambitions in Anambra Division. Here it encountered determined opposition and was unable to defeat the Nkoza forces:

The enemy offered a most stubborn resistance from their first of three lines of strongly constructed defenses, and it was not until they had been shelled for some time that they fell back upon their second line. There they made a slight stand and then retired to their third line. After being driven from this they further retired to one of the villages in the neighbourhood, where they made a final stand behind their compound walls. Eventually they were driven from this position into the bush, from which they continued to harass the troops, but as it was now

⁸⁴ A.F. Montanaro, Hints for a Bush Campaign (London, 1901), 39-41. See also A.G. Leonard, report of 6 April 1899: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/14389).

⁸⁵ See above, 76-7.

getting late in the day they were not further followed up.⁸⁶

Although the Company's forces returned three days later and burned the deserted village, the Nkoza defenders considered themselves unbeaten. Their resistance, combined with the heavy losses suffered by the British (five dead, thirty-nine wounded, and fifteen missing) led the Company to reconsider its policy along the central Niger and to cease its attempts at penetrating the area under study. Henceforth no further patrols of any kind were dispatched, and, in the words of a missionary stationed at Onitsha, "the Royal Niger Company was never able to make its influence felt far from the river."⁸⁷

In the area under the jurisdiction of Moor and the Foreign Office similar experiences brought the movement inland to a halt. The three main military expeditions undertaken between 1897 and 1901 were at best stalemates that weakened British prestige in the interior. The first of these incursions was the Cross River Expedition of 1898. In the area of the upper Cross River a confederation of villages near the east bank, led by Ekuri, Igbo, Asigo, and Adun, had sought since 1895 to dominate the commerce of the river and to force such inland villages as Nko, Ugep, and Isaba to trade through them. The village of Igbo had also used its position of power to seize land traditionally claimed by Isaba, and in late 1897 the Ekuri alliance had carried

⁸⁶"Punitive Expeditions of the Royal Niger Constabulary, 1886 to 1899," [1900] (typescript, Nigerian Military Museum, Zaria).

⁸⁷T.J. Dennis, letter printed in the Church Missionary Intelligencer, LI (n.s. XXV), 7 (July 1900), 524-5.

out a series of raids on Nko and Ugep. Several personal visits by Moor and his assistants at the request of the inland villages had failed to break the monopoly of the Ekuri alliance, and the European traders of Calabar began to complain to Moor that the alliance was compelling them to accept unfavorable trade terms.⁸⁸ In January 1898 Moor sent 140 troops and four officers to intimidate Ekuri into submission, but the officers "grossly mismanaged" the operation and withdrew precipitously from Ekuri, losing one soldier killed and eighteen wounded.⁸⁹

A week later Moor personally joined the force with forty-five more troops, and the column proceeded to Ekuri. Finding the village deserted, they destroyed it in cooperation with their Calabar and Akunakuna allies, but then the Ekuri attacked in force and harassed the column as it retreated toward Oferekpe and the river. The British commander of troops acknowledged that he had lost four more men killed and fifteen wounded in this rout, and conceded that "The Ekuris, being all hunters of big game, know how to use their guns, and are evidently a brave tribe; they showed a great knowledge of bush tactics."⁹⁰ Though later official reports described the expedition as a victory, officers on the scene

⁸⁸Moor to F.O., 13 November 1897 (PRO FO 2/123/140); Moor to F.O., 17 May 1898 (PRO FO 2/179).

⁸⁹Milne to Moor, 21 January 1898: enclosure in Gallwey to F.O., 9 February 1898 (PRO FO 2/178/26); Moor to C.O., 23 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/29861).

⁹⁰Gallwey to F.O., 9 February 1898, and enclosures (PRO FO 2/178/26).

found that the Ekuri refused to deal with them and that the village of Igbo still retained the Isaba land.⁹¹

The second main military incursion of this period, the Central Division Expedition of 1898, was intended to deal with a similar problem. The village of Umukoroshe, under its chief, Wagu, had seized increasing control of the trade routes behind Okrika and had refused to allow the Okrika men to trade directly with the producing areas. The Okrika traders appealed to the British to assist them, and Moor dispatched 135 troops to attack Umukoroshe. But upon approaching the village the column was ambushed: "[T]he enemy had constructed a very clever system of rifle pits and shelter trenches from which they had been more or less perfectly safe from our fire." As a result, the column was, in Moor's words, "practically repulsed," with two troops killed and twelve wounded, including the British officer in charge. The force retired to Okrika and only returned to Umukoroshe when it had assembled 600 Okrika men to assist it in the attack. Even then the battle was hard-fought, with one more soldier killed and twelve wounded, as well as ten Okrika casualties. The destructiveness of this raid --"the houses all being razed to the ground and the palm and plantain trees cut down"--led the leaders of Umukoroshe to appease the British by expelling Wagu, but once again the doubtful performance of the British forces left their military capabilities in question.⁹²

⁹¹Gallwey to F.O., 1 September 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/151); Roupell to Moor, 20 May 1899 (NAE Calprof 8/2/5).

⁹²Fosbery to Moor, 25 April 1898 (NAE Calprof 8/2/5); Gallwey

The third main incursion of this period, the Central Division Expedition of 1899, was meant to "benefit trade generally" and to impose British power on the Kwa Ibo River valley, a rich agricultural area "with profit to the grower" whose people had proven especially resistant to the white advance.⁹³ The column, consisting of 172 troops and 420 carriers, with a machine gun and a cannon, proceeded eastward from Opobo, encountering resistance from the villages that controlled the trade of the area and generally welcomed by the villages that were less influential in local economics and politics. The column then moved up the east bank of the Kwa Ibo from Eket to Utu Etim Ekpo and entered the area of strong Aro influence. Resistance became increasingly more sustained, and the column, reduced by casualties and sickness, was unable to effect a decisive confrontation in any of the numerous villages where it was attacked. The Anang and Ika villagers adopted mobile tactics and harassed the retreating column. In the words of the political officer in charge, "being expert bushmen, and naturally having an intimate knowledge of the surroundings, when they get an opportunity which invariably takes place during a retirement they ambush themselves so close to some beaten track as to frequently make certain of one or more victims." As a result, three troops were killed and five wounded, and the casualties among the long

to F.O., 21 July 1898 (PRO FO 2/179/116); Gallwey to F.O., 2 June 1898 (PRO FO 2/179/93); Moor to C.O., 23 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/29861).

⁹³"Annual Report of the Niger Coast Protectorate, 1897-98": enclosure in Gallwey to F.O., 1 September 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/151); Gallwey to F.O., 19 December 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/185).

lines of carriers were "the very worst I have ever been in contact with."⁹⁴ For the next three years, the entire area was virtually closed to the British, and the undefeated Ika villages, especially Ikot Adaka and Ikot Inyang, advertised their superiority to British arms. The one British ally in the area, Odo Nto of Ikot Iwang, was reduced to total isolation, despite his repeated pleas for assistance.⁹⁵

It might be expected that this series of alarming reverses caused reverberations in the Foreign Office. In the event, however, London maintained only a superficial watch on the military activities of its representatives in the field and, as before, concerned itself entirely with criticising the annual budgets submitted by Moor and his assistants. The Royal Niger Company was--fortunately, in the Foreign Office view--beyond its control, and the adventures of ambitious officers in obscure villages in the rest of the Protectorate were more likely to be an embarrassment than otherwise. Sir Charles Hill, the most scrupulous clerk in the African Section of the Foreign Office at the time, paused occasionally to ponder the significance of military operations in Southeastern Nigeria, but he was inconsistent in his reaction to reports submitted from the field. In 1895 he minuted that "It is unfortunate that most of the expeditions are marked by 'shelling and burning,'" and in the following year warned that "The great thing is that our men

⁹⁴Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899, and enclosures (PRO CO 444/1/14389).

⁹⁵Ibid.; Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689); Gallwey, "Annual Report on the Eastern Division for the Year 1901-1902," 20 May 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

should keep their heads and not burst into 'punitive expeditions' on every pretext."⁹⁶ Nevertheless he approved of expeditions carried out without prior Foreign Office approval and gradually came over to Moor's use of military patrols as "almost the only [policy] possible if we are to advance inland and so get a healthy base in the interior."⁹⁷

It was only the gross mismanagement of the Cross River Expedition of 1898 that brought Hill to comment unfavorably on the use of military force, but he was overruled by his superiors.⁹⁸ By 1899 he had ceased any negative comment whatever, and merely noted his approval of such politically and tactically questionable expeditions as the attack on Ihie in 1898, in which pro-British villages were armed and allowed to destroy their trade competitors with little or no supervision.⁹⁹ In essence, the Foreign Office did not care about the specific tactics of its representatives in the field so long as the budget balanced and there were no unfavorable notices in the press. The flow of trade was the overriding concern, and the daily administration of the Empire of little importance in the case of Southeastern Nigeria. In the words of

⁹⁶Hill, minutes on MacDonald to F.O., 26 October 1895 (PRO FO 2/85), and on Moor to F.O., 14 June 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/50).

⁹⁷Hill, minutes on Gallwey to F.O., 24 September 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/80), and on Gallwey to F.O., 2 June 1898 (PRO FO 2/179/93).

⁹⁸Minutes on Gallwey to F.O., 9 February 1898 (PRO FO 2/178/26).

⁹⁹Hill, minutes on Gallwey to F.O., 19 December 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/185), and on Gallwey to F.O., 11 October 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/163).

one Foreign Office official, "Trade is our sole object in West Africa."¹⁰⁰

The military reverses of 1898 and 1899 occurred at the very moment that British ambitions everywhere on the coast were being curtailed because of the demand for manpower in South Africa to fight the war against the Boers and in the Gold Coast to invade Ashanti. By 1900 the Colonial Office had labeled the staffing situation in Southeastern Nigeria, where six white officers were available to lead 800 African troops, as "positively dangerous."¹⁰¹ This shortage of manpower forced Moor to curtail his military activities even further, creating the impression throughout the interior that the British administration was faltering in its ability to enforce its demands with arms. The result was a momentary rollback of British influence and the creation of a vacuum of power such as had occurred occasionally in the area when a strong trade-professional group had, for one reason or other, lost the will or ability to defend its sphere of activities. Into this vacuum surged the many independent villages of Southeastern Nigeria, as well as the main competing trade-professional group, the Aro.

As noted above, the British were in general perceived as the newest in a long series of trade-professional groups that had sought to control the lucrative trade of Southeastern Nigeria. They were thus in direct competition with the Aro and other similar

¹⁰⁰Minute by F. Bertie, 25 March 1898 (PRO FO 2/178).

¹⁰¹Minute by Strachey, 24 August 1900, on Gallwey to C.O., 19 July 1900 (PRO CO 520/2/27049). See also minutes on Gallwey to C.O., 24 September 1900 (PRO CO 520/3/31129).

groups. They sought to turn trade along paths profitable to them, to sell their own manufactures, to impose the use of their own currency, to control firearms and the use of force, and to win popularity for their legal system to the detriment of others such as the Aro oracle. The people of the inland villages watched this conflict between the British and the other trade-professional groups, manipulated the resulting antagonisms to provide support in local factional struggles, and took advantage of the conflict to reassert their local autonomy and control of trade routes against all trading groups, Aro and British included.

Since the early 1890s the British had been aware of the obstacles to their advance posed by the Aro. For several years both MacDonald and Moor attempted to negotiate an agreement with them that would permit the British to expand their trading activities into the interior. In 1892 Moor met with several Aro near the Cross River, but they refused to assemble a representative meeting for him to address.¹⁰² In 1894 Roger Casement received a cautious but friendly reception from one of the Aro villages near Ekpemiong in Itu Division, which in fact attempted to draw him into a local Aro factional struggle.¹⁰³ In early 1896 British officers met with individual Aro in Ngwa and Akamkpa Divisions and made initial arrangements for a British visit to Bende, the main Aro

¹⁰²Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

¹⁰³Casement to MacDonald, 10 April 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63).

fair.¹⁰⁴ But when two officers finally entered Bende in December 1896, they aroused the hostility of the large Aro community by seeking to sign a treaty with the Bende faction that was opposed to the Aro. Thus when the officers assembled a meeting of several thousand Aro and Bende people, "From the very commencement the Aro people showed by their looks, gestures, and generally-offensive attitude they adopted that they resented our appearance and were determined to oppose us in every way."¹⁰⁵ And when they informed the meeting that their goal was to break the Aro "monopoly" and open the road to all traders, as well as to reduce the prices charged by the Aro for their wares, they were met with hostility and threats.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless in August 1897 the Aro assembled a representative meeting at Moor's request at Itu, but Moor failed to appear, having been called away on business elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ A smallpox outbreak prevented another meeting later in the same year, and when Gallwey went to Itu in March 1898 for yet another meeting, Aro attendance was poor.¹⁰⁸ By this time it was becoming clear that attempts at peaceful negotiation were half-hearted on both sides. The British

¹⁰⁴Harcourt, report of 9 April 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 6 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/101/37); Roupell, report of 1 April 1896: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 5 May 1896 (PRO FO 2/100/36).

¹⁰⁵A.G. Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," 203.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 203-6.

¹⁰⁷Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

¹⁰⁸Ibid.; "Annual Report of the Niger Coast Protectorate, 1897-98": enclosure in Gallwey to F.O., 1 September 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/151); Gallwey, report of 1 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18725).

knew that their economic plans struck at the heart of Aro wealth and power and that only military action would achieve desired results.¹⁰⁹ And contrary to some scholarly opinion, the Aro were not ignorant of the nature of the British threat.¹¹⁰ The damage to their trading activities had already been considerable: the 1894 prohibition on importation of rifles and percussion-cap guns had deprived them of one of their most valuable and exclusive trade items, and the fringes of their trading sphere were gradually being eroded by the British-supported coastal traders.¹¹¹ Moreover the judicial preeminence of their oracle had come under sustained attack by the British. Whenever possible, touring British officers condemned the oracle as a fraud and encouraged petitioners to return home and demand the refund of fees paid to the Aro agents.¹¹² When 136 Ijaw and Igbo petitioners fled Arochukwu in 1899, the British helped to pay for their return home and encouraged them to denounce the Aro among their people and to spread the word that the British intended to destroy the oracle. The impact of this propaganda on Aro prestige near the Niger, according to local observers, was considerable.¹¹³ By mid-1899 it was generally

¹⁰⁹Moor to Antrobus, 14 June 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/17740).

¹¹⁰See Anene, Southern Nigeria, 228-31; and A.E. Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition of 1901-1902," Odu, n.s. 7 (April 1972), 8.

¹¹¹Probyn to C.O., 6 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/26747); Moor, "Memorandum Concerning the Aro Expedition," 24 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/20798).

¹¹²See Gallwey to C.O., 27 August 1900 (PRO CO 520/2/32022).

¹¹³Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400); West African Mail, V, 123 (26 April 1907), 108-9.

known among the Aro that the British had begun to prepare an expedition against them, and throughout the southern part of the area under study, villages assumed a neutral posture in anticipation of the outcome.¹¹⁴

Intensified British pressure, combined with the apparent weakness of British arms after 1897, led the Aro to initiate a diplomatic and military counteroffensive in mid-1899. On 28 June, shortly after the abortive Central Division Expedition, the Aro assembled a meeting at Ikot Osukpong because of rumors that the Ika and Anang were considering surrender to the British. The Aro warned them that they would eventually be victorious and that failure to reaffirm their alliance with the Aro would bring retaliation.¹¹⁵ The Ika, who had strong economic and marital ties with the Aro and who had depended on Aro support to maintain a position of strength against their Anang neighbors, agreed to resist the British. But the Anang to the southeast along the road between Azumini and Inen were anxious to find a counterbalance to the power of the Ika-Aro alliance and so decided to open relations with the British and to seek trade contacts with the Bonny and Opobo men. As a result, by late 1899 a British officer had

¹¹⁴ Roupell to Moor, 5 August 1899: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 August 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/25443); E.M. Murray, "Quarterly Report on Opobo District for Quarter ended 30th June 1899," extract: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

¹¹⁵ E.M. Murray, "Quarterly Report on the Opobo District for Quarter ended 30th June 1899," extract: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

traveled safely along that road without making use of his small military escort.¹¹⁶ The Aro did not decrease their pressure, however: "on all occasions when escorts march on the road from Azumini to Inen to the north of which the territories of the Aro tribe open up they are flanked on the north by a party of armed Aros watching their movements."¹¹⁷ From time to time over the following year, the road was closed to British officers as the Anang villages wavered in face of Aro pressure.¹¹⁸ Finally, in June 1901 the Aro attacked the sixteen villages that had cooperated with the British, destroying eleven and exhibiting the heads of their leaders in the market places.¹¹⁹

Similar counteroffensives were mounted by the Aro and their allies in other areas. We have already examined the rise of the Ogwe-Aro alliance in Ukwu and Ngwa Divisions and the resulting destruction in November 1901 of the pro-British village of Obegu.¹²⁰ Equally significant was the formation of an alliance between the Aro and the Ibiaku of Uyo Division. Here, Calabar traders had,

¹¹⁶H.H. Marshall, "Intelligence Report on Ika," [1932] (NAI CSO 26/3/27689); Moor to C.O., 24 January 1900 (PRO CO 520/1/5793); Palmer to Acting Divisional Commissioner, Eastern Division, 23 June 1901 (NAI Calprof 10/3/2).

¹¹⁷Moor to C.O., 24 January 1900 (PRO CO 520/1/5793).

¹¹⁸Douglas to Whitehouse, 14 December 1900 (NAI Calprof 10/3/1); Gardiner to Acting Travelling Commissioner, Eastern Division, 6 February 1901 (NAI Calprof 10/3/2).

¹¹⁹Palmer to Acting Divisional Commissioner, Eastern Division, 23 June 1901 (NAI Calprof 10/3/2).

¹²⁰See above, 59-66.

with British support, gradually extended their operations up to the Ikpa River, undercutting the position of such inland villages as Ibiaku and Uyo and also restricting the Aro commercial sphere. In 1901 Ibiaku and the Offot villages of Uyo, Oku, Aka, Ewet and Anua, with Aro support, attacked the Calabar trading stations on the middle Ikpa and drove the Calabar men downriver. The allied villages were at the point of invading the large Calabar market at Nwaniba in November 1901 when skillful British negotiation, combined with liberal distribution of guns and ammunition to pro-British villages, caused them to pull back.¹²¹ Similarly, to the west in Itu Division the villagers of Mbiabong, seeking an outside ally to pose against the Aro, had invited Opobo men to trade personally in their area and had attempted to shut the Aro out of their markets. In April and May of 1901 the Aro carried out a series of attacks on Mbiabong, reportedly killing 150 people and enslaving over forty more.¹²²

Comparable reverses were experienced by the British and their coastal allies in Ikwerre, Etinan, Oron, Obubra, and Ikom Divisions. Yet these events arose out of local conditions and were based on previous relations with the British; they did not result from significant Aro involvement, despite the tendency of scholars such as Afigbo to see the Aro as the prime movers behind all local

¹²¹Moor to C.O., 1 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/45588); Winn Sampson to Moor, 27 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 14 January 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/6903).

¹²²Probyn to C.O., 6 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/26747).

resurgence at this time.¹²³ In Ikwerre Division, for example, there had been tension between local pro- and anti-British factions since the first British officer entered the area in 1892. The coastal traders from Degema had developed a profitable and exclusive trading sphere there and propagandized extensively against the British.¹²⁴ Those villages that had built their local power on alliance with Degema, such as Elele and Agwa, opposed the British advance, while those that had been disadvantaged by the ascendancy of Degema, such as Iba and Alimini, welcomed the British presence. With the rollback of British influence after 1897, the pro-British villages were increasingly isolated, and in late 1899 an Iba faction opposed to the British expelled the main British ally there, Okocha, and destroyed all his property. He fled to the stronghold of the last remaining British supporter, Diko, a Hausa elephant hunter resident in Alimini.¹²⁵ Although A.G. Leonard attributed these events to Aro instigation, Moor admitted that the Aro were only peripherally involved.¹²⁶

In Obubra and Ikom Divisions beginning in 1898 the British

¹²³ See Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition," 3-6.

¹²⁴ See Campbell to MacDonald, 22 February 1892: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 15 March 1892 (PRO FO 84/2194/18).

¹²⁵ Bartwell to Leonard, 15 January 1900 (NAI Calprof 9/3/1); Simpson Gray to Moor, 12 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 14 January 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/6903).

¹²⁶ Leonard, "Quarterly Report on New Calabar District for the Quarter ended 30th June 1899," extract: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400); Moor, "Memorandum of Instructions with Regard to the Aro Expedition," 12 November 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 November 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/44565).

were hard pressed to retain their control of the trade of the Cross River. From the east the Adun and Igbo peoples continued the resistance they had begun in the mid-1890s in cooperation with Ekuri.¹²⁷ And from the north and west the Ikwo, Izi, and Ezza peoples sustained their centuries-long drive to take control of both banks of the Cross. In 1898 they raided Ogurude and by 1900 had crossed the river to attack Akunakuna settlements. Moor was inclined to see Aro inspiration for the disorder in this area, but could provide no clear evidence. In order to end the intervillage fighting and to reestablish British control of the river until such time as a military expedition could be sent to the area, he stationed over 300 troops at Ediba, Okuni, and Ogurude, led by the few officers who were then available.¹²⁸

Finally, in mid-1899 the villages along the Eket-Oron road, which had for some time been open to the British, began to refuse free travel to them and to their Eket and Opobo allies. In June 1899 several Ubium villages looted and destroyed an Opobo trading station, evidently under the impression that the British no longer had the strength to support their allies.¹²⁹ This attitude of

¹²⁷See above, 104-106. See also Roupell to Moor, 5 August 1899: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 August 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/25443).

¹²⁸Gallwey to F.O., 10 October 1898 (PRO FO 2/180/162); Moor to C.O., 24 August 1899, and enclosures (PRO CO 444/2/25443); Moor to C.O., 23 March 1900, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/1/11979); Gallwey to C.O., 8 May 1900 (PRO CO 520/2/18145).

¹²⁹Moor, "Memorandum of Instructions for the Obium Expedition," 11 January 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 28 February 1901 (PRO CO 520/7/11611).

defiance was made clear to Gallwey when he went to Eket to investigate:

I find these Ibibios very difficult to deal with. A spirit of unrest seems to prevail generally. The practice of calling chiefs to meetings & then seizing them, & of calling in guns to mark & then destroying them, has resulted in general distrust of the government & its policy. . . . I am endeavouring all I know to bring the Obiums to a meeting. They refuse all overtures unless I bring them their guns! These guns don't exist & so their demand is absurd. . . . This Obium palaver being so long unsettled is apt to make the doubtful friendlies join the Obiums & defy the government.¹³⁰

It was not until a military expedition could be dispatched to the area in January 1901 that the road was again reopened to the British and to their Eket and Opobo allies.¹³¹

Meanwhile, further to the east along the same road, the villages of Ikono and Akai Nyo, resentful of the pretensions of such pro-British villages as Afaha Osu, assembled an alliance of nearby peoples and refused to permit British officers to travel the road or to interfere in disputes. In June 1901 a British officer accompanied by a small armed force attempted to chastize the opposing villages by seizing four of their leaders and sending them to Calabar. But when they returned to their villages a few months later they merely continued their agitation against the British.¹³² Only the dispatch of a large military expedition, with heavy fighting at Ikono and Akai Nyo, succeeded in reopening

¹³⁰Gallwey to Moor, 19 January 1900 (NAI Calprof 9/1/1).

¹³¹Moor to C.O., 28 February 1901, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/7/11611).

¹³²F.S. James, report of 3 September 1901: enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 3 October 1901 (PRO CO 520/9/37777).

the road.¹³³ Once again officers on the scene attempted to attribute the local hostility to the Aro, but the final reports conceded that, at most, there was only an indirect influence due to rumors of Aro activities further to the north.¹³⁴

But whether or not the Aro were behind the widespread anti-British resurgence, Moor concluded that the most effective way to bring the entire southern half of the Protectorate to heel was to mount a major expedition against the Aro homeland. In essence, his motivation was economic. It was not a matter of introducing legitimate commerce as a substitute for the slave trade, even though current humanitarian opinion was willing to justify a great deal of military activity on that ground. Rather, he sought to ensure British control of the commercial patterns of the interior that were then largely in the hands of the Aro. As he explained to his superiors in London, "Until the work [that is, the defeat of the Aro] is done it will be impossible to rely on any stability in the trade or to estimate accurately the Revenues derivable from the territories of Southern Nigeria."¹³⁵ In short, the success of the Protectorate and Moor's future as an administrator could not remain dependent upon the voluntary cooperation of the Aro.

¹³³ Montanaro to C.O., 16 September 1901, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/9/35840); Probyn to C.O., 15 October 1901, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/9/39460); Probyn to C.O., 3 October 1901, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/9/37777).

¹³⁴ Venour to Probyn, 2 October 1901: enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 3 October 1901 (PRO CO 520/9/37777); Probyn to C.O., 6 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/26747).

¹³⁵ Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

But these considerations would have been unacceptable in themselves to the British public, even during this, the high tide of Victorian imperialism. Moor knew that he had to create a broad humanitarian justification for his projected attack on the Aro, and by 1899 he was taking every opportunity to indict them as fetish priests who exploited the gullibility of inland peoples to procure thousands of slaves through the use of their oracle.¹³⁶ He suppressed the numerous references in early documents to the widespread Aro involvement in legitimate commerce and by 1901 was describing them almost exclusively as slave raiders and traders.¹³⁷ Above all Moor sought to depict them as the prime movers of all resistance to the British in Southeastern Nigeria, acting entirely in defense of their slave trading interests. They were, he wrote, "the predominating influence and dominating power of the entire Ibo [Igbo] race," and they deviously used the inland peoples as "cats-paws" to achieve their own ends.¹³⁸

As we have seen however, the Aro were not a monolithic power and were as factionalized as any other village group in Southeastern Nigeria.¹³⁹ They competed among themselves as much as against

¹³⁶See for example Moor, "Memorandum of Instructions with Regard to the Aro Expedition," 12 November 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 November 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/44565).

¹³⁷See Moor to C.O., 7 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/12/25807); and Gallwey, report of 1 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18725).

¹³⁸Moor, "Memorandum Concerning the Aro Expedition," 24 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/20798).

¹³⁹See above, 35-6.

other trading powers, including the British. While they provided military support for factions that sought to oppose the British and their allies, such opposition was based mainly on local issues that were only partially connected with trade matters, as we have seen in this chapter. The Aro were involved in these conflicts in much the same way as the British were: as an outside power source available to help one faction against another. From 1897 to 1901 the Aro power appeared to be greater than that of the British, and there was a consequent ascendance throughout the area of those factions and villages that had chosen to ally with the Aro. Above all, the Aro were not mainly slave raiders and traders, but had taken the lead, for sound financial reasons, in the conversion to trade in palm products and imported manufactured goods. They were, like the British themselves, aggressive and innovative businessmen with a broad range of economic concerns.¹⁴⁰ They knew that the British intended to curtail their commercial freedom and power, and they were determined to fight to protect their interests.

By 1898 Moor had decided that peaceful contacts with the Aro were fruitless and that a military expedition was inevitable. Following Gallwey's unsuccessful meeting with them at Itu in March of that year, he wrote, "No further active measures . . . were taken for it was clearly demonstrated that peaceful means could have no result whatever."¹⁴¹ But it was not until the following year that

¹⁴⁰ See above, 31-3.

¹⁴¹ Moor, "Memorandum Concerning the Aro Expedition," 24 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/20798).

he actually proposed an expedition, because he knew that in April 1899 the Protectorate would be transferred from the Foreign Office, which had always been cautious about major military operations, to the Colonial Office, which at that time was headed by the arch-imperialist, Joseph Chamberlain. It was Chamberlain, Moor knew, who had declared to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1897 that "You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force."¹⁴² Accordingly, in June 1899 Moor announced his intention to launch an expedition and in September submitted general plans to the Colonial Office. He evidently expected speedy approval, since the proposed beginning date of the expedition was December of the same year.¹⁴³

In the event, however, the Colonial Office and Chamberlain himself were reticent, mainly because they were preoccupied with the growing crisis in South Africa. The clerks in the West Africa Department scrutinized Moor's reports for signs of progress in relations with the Aro, noting that trade was increasing despite their alleged obstructionism, and that efforts by individual British officers to curtail the influence of the Aro oracle were often successful. W.H. Mercer, the Principal Clerk, minuted that

There is evidently no critical situation at present, and matters seem to be improving. . . . It is generally possible to make up

¹⁴²Quoted in Anene, Southern Nigeria, 217.

¹⁴³Moor to Antrobus, 14 June 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/17740); Moor to C.O., 24 August 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/25443); Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

a plausible case for an expedition under cir[cumstance]s of this kind, but the kind of ingenuity which is wanted is that which discovers means of avoiding expensive expeditions and of mounting commercial intercourse by other methods.

R.L. Antrobus, Assistant Under Secretary of State, added that

Sir R. Moor has not made out a case which would justify the Secr. of State in sanctioning an expedition on the scale proposed. . . . [I]n case of a reverse there would be difficulty in getting any assistance from the Army or Navy. . . . There is no doubt a good deal to be said for Sir R. Moor's view that it would be better to go to the heart of the matter at once and break up the power of the Aros, if they are, as he says, the dominant factor in the question of opening up the country generally: but this is not the time for doing it.

And Chamberlain himself concluded that

The people on the spot might know best, but they are . . . too much in a hurry. I am not clear that this tribe may not be brought gradually under control without war & the fact that their influence has been diminished of late years points in this direction.¹⁴⁴

The delay caused by the Colonial Office scrutiny forced Moor to withdraw his proposal for the expedition, since it would have begun so late that it would have extended into the season of heavy rains and would have disrupted the most active trading period of the year. He was also critically short of officers to lead his 1010 troops and had learned from Lugard that the six hundred Northern Nigerian soldiers he had requested to assist in the expedition could not be made available. And he found himself preoccupied with the complex negotiations required for the transfer of the Royal Niger Company's territories to the Protectorate administration at the time of the revocation of the Company's

¹⁴⁴ See marginal comments and minutes on Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/27400).

charter in January 1900.¹⁴⁵

Nevertheless, in anticipation that Moor would continue to urge an expedition against the Aro, Chamberlain took a crucial step, and one that illuminates the decision-making process in the Colonial Office. He addressed an inquiry to Sir George Goldie, the adventurer who had created the Royal Niger Company, asking him to comment on the need for military action against the Aro. Goldie replied in emphatic terms:

I do not believe that anything but force can effectually destroy or even weaken the influence of the Long Ju Ju [Ibinukpabi oracle] over its present large sphere of influence. . . . If the Royal Niger Company had had a free hand, they would have made the overthrow of this power their first aim on receiving the Charter in 1886.¹⁴⁶

For Chamberlain, Goldie's statement was decisive. He minuted in December 1899 that "I think Sir G. Goldie's opinion being entirely in agreement with Sir R. Moor's justifies us in assenting to this expedition."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵Moor to C.O., 24 January 1900 (PRO CO 520/1/5793).

¹⁴⁶Goldie to C.O., 17 November 1899 (PRO CO 444/4/31980).

¹⁴⁷Minute by Chamberlain, 7 December 1899, on Goldie to C.O., 17 November 1899 (PRO CO 444/4/31980). See also minutes on Moor to C.O., 23 March 1900 (PRO CO 520/1/11979). Chamberlain apparently held Goldie in the highest esteem, commenting that "he knows more of the people and the country than any of us." (Minute by Chamberlain on Moor to C.O., 9 September 1899 [PRO CO 444/2/27400].) And Goldie was fully aware of his influence; as he wrote to Lugard in 1897, "Once in Africa you are master of the situation and you may be assured of my fullest, heartiest, most persistent support and that of the independent press. No Minister--who cares only for popularity--can resist this. Do what you think right, giving of course in your dispatches your reasons, and no one shall throw you over. . . . Do not quarrel with the present mainspring of English politics [Chamberlain]. He is a good fellow, though too easily led. Lead him." (Goldie to Lugard, 16 December 1897 [RH MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 57].)

But the continuing acute shortage of officers because of the South African and Ashanti Wars prevented the expedition from taking place the following year as well.¹⁴⁸ It was only in 1901, when the Colonial Office had resolved its difficulties elsewhere in Africa, that sufficient men could be released to lead the expedition. Moor's general plan for the operations was approved in July of that year. Although his anticipated expenditure of £35,000 was considered expensive, Assistant Under Secretary Antrobus noted that it would be more than compensated for by the increase in revenues when the Protectorate administration fully controlled the trade of the interior.¹⁴⁹

The Aro Expedition was to raise a mass of issues and problems that no one, least of all Moor, had anticipated. The British public had accepted uncritically his creation of the Aro evil genius. In fact, as we have seen, the area had been unsettled and politically in flux for over ten years, with neither the Aro nor the British in a position of uncontested dominance. In the resulting vacuum of power, villages everywhere in the interior were reasserting local autonomy, calling upon Aro or British support as suited to their immediate needs. Thus, though the battle of Arochukwu was stiffly contested, it was only the beginning of resistance to the British invasion. Aro capitulation

¹⁴⁸ Gallwey to C.O., 5 July 1900, and minutes (PRO CO 520/2/25290); Gallwey to C.O., 19 July 1900, and minutes (PRO CO 520/2/27049); Gallwey to C.O., 3 August 1900, and minutes (PRO CO 520/2/28599).

¹⁴⁹ Moor to C.O., 25 June 1901, and minutes (PRO CO 520/8/24954); C.O. to Probyn, 31 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/24954).

in no way led to the surrender of any other part of Southeastern Nigeria. In fact, the most intense fighting of the Expedition occurred not at Arochukwu itself but in the areas of the strongest local resurgence in the previous four years--in Uyo, Abak, Ngwa, and Ikwerre Divisions. The British were confronted as the Aro and other trade-professional groups had been before them: as leaders of mercenaries acting in support of upstart local factions or villages that sought to seize control of roads and markets. Each village evaluated its own position and its own stretch of road and responded accordingly--usually in strength.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARO EXPEDITION AND PATTERNS OF RESISTANCE, 1901-2

In November 1901 four military columns, consisting of more than 1600 troops, 1800 carriers, and 74 British officers, assembled at Oguta, Akwete, Itu, and Unwana. They were armed with the most modern weapons available to the British army, including six cannons and seven machine guns. To supplement the Southern Nigerian forces under Sir Ralph Moor for these operations a contingent of 375 Northern Nigerian troops had been lent by Lugard, and 300 more were contributed by the Colony of Lagos. The general goal was the "settling of the country occupied by the Aro tribes," and the initial objective was the capture of Arochukwu by the combined forces attacking from the north and south.¹ Following the attainment of this objective, the columns were to split up again and march through Uyo, Abak, Ngwa, and Ikwerre Divisions to compel the anti-British villages in those areas to surrender and give up their guns. In his instructions to the officers in command, Moor directed that, while "the objects are to be obtained with as little bloodshed as possible, at the same time the natives must be made to fully understand that the Government is their master and is determined to establish in and control

¹Moor to C.O., 25 June 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/24950); Moor to C.O., 24 November 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/44565).

their country."²

It has been claimed that in the ensuing Aro Expedition the Southeastern Nigerians fought bravely but ignorantly, for they had little notion of the extent of British military power. To some degree this is true, but it must be remembered that the experience of the preceding four years, 1898 to 1901, tended to demonstrate that the British were indeed weakening and could not manage the few expeditions that they did undertake. Unknown to the Igbo and Ibibio peoples, however, several crucial events had changed the balance of power in the area under study. In the first place, the Colonial Office had approved a massive expedition, with the result that the British now commanded a far larger force than had ever been assembled in the area. Moreover, these troops were more thoroughly trained than the previous forces; fire discipline was better as were the capabilities of the officers in command.

Above all, the British forces were bringing with them a number of lessons about tropical warfare learned in campaigns on the West African coast in the preceding years. Most importantly, they had learned the uselessness of the "clearing volley"--the tactic of regularly firing blind broadsides into the dense foliage on either side of the narrow forest paths to clear out potential ambushers. Instead they adopted "flanking tactics." Small groups of scouts were assigned to march parallel to the column several yards into the foliage on either flank. The object was to

²Moor, "Memorandum of Instructions with Regard to the Aro Expedition," 12 November 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 November 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/44565).

dislodge well in advance any African who was poised to ambush the column.³ This system was first used in Southeastern Nigeria during the Oron District Expedition of 1901, and its success in saving lives and conserving ammunition was significant.⁴ Furthermore the British began to rely on their own African troops for tactics appropriate to the environment. As one military officer noted, the most useful approach was to

Adopt the tactics of the enemy, train the soldiers to stalk and creep through the bush, and hide behind trees. The savages fear the soldier who can go into the bush after them; they know that once off the path, the soldier has the advantage. He can shoot quicker and straighter.⁵

These tactics undermined the most effective defenses of the African villagers and also exposed their main weakness: they were unable to use their antiquated, muzzle-loading guns with any effectiveness more than a few yards away from their target. The British now had a decisive advantage over the Southeastern Nigerian defenders and rendered the tactics of those defenders--developed during centuries of warfare against such mercenary groups as the Abam--useless.

The Abam, who were the Aro's main source of warriors to hire out to villages seeking military assistance, had employed a unique shock strategy to overrun their opponents. Ignoring the guns of the people, which in the heat of battle were often discharged

³A.F. Montanaro, Hints for a Bush Campaign (London, 1901), 41; W.C.G. Heneker, Bush Warfare (London, 1907), 6-14; A. Haywood and F.A.S. Clarke, The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force (Aldershot, 1964), 498.

⁴Montanaro to Probyn, 16 September 1901: enclosure in Montanaro to C.O., 16 September 1901 (PRO CO 520/9/35840).

⁵Heneker, Bush Warfare, 14-15.

without aiming, they engaged in mass running attacks using only short swords (matchets), depending on the shock value of their onrush to disorient the defenders.⁶ In face of these tactics the villagers had developed a four-stage defensive technique that was marginally effective against the Abam and that they continued to use against the British forces for the next twenty years. In the first stage, groups of men with guns were placed at strategic spots along the approach paths to the village and near water sources, concealed in a system of protective trenches linked by communications ditches. Throughout the areas covered by the Aro Expedition, the British found "newly made shelter pits on each side of and parallel to the road . . . at frequent intervals. These pits were from three to four feet deep and the heads of the enemy were protected by logs."⁷ As the Abam--or British--approached, the defenders discharged their inaccurate guns at short range and thus inflicted some casualties. Against these tactics, as we have seen, the British had no effective reply until 1901. To disorient the attackers further, the villagers also dug

pits about fifteen feet deep, four feet across the top, and tapering down to eighteen inches at the bottom, with a sharpened stake six feet long set in the middle. These man-traps were located in a convenient spot in a path, generally where two paths converged, and covered over with branches and earth, the surface being most wonderfully camouflaged to resemble

⁶ See G.T. Basden, Niger Ibos (London, 1938), 384-5; S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, XIV, 3 (Autumn 1958), 301; R.O. Igwegbe, The Original History of Arondizuogo, from 1635-1960 (Aba, 1962), 89-90.

⁷ Montanaro to Moor, 8 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 10 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/413).

the ground.⁸

All around these deep pits, the defenders

dug holes about 2 feet deep and 2 feet in diameter in the bottom of which they placed planks with dozens of sharp points sticking upwards. The tops of these holes were also concealed and were generally to be found on the compound roads and in front of yam stacks.⁹

Whenever the attacking column paused to rest, the villagers attacked its defensive perimeter, either by individual sniping or in larger coordinated groups.

The second stage of the defense was the construction of a large stockade or a deep trench at the entrance to the village from which the assembled warriors could fire on the approaching column. So long as the attackers restricted themselves to the paths, such fortifications were effective, since in frontal assaults they could be a formidable obstacle.¹⁰ But by 1901 the British had learned to send out flanking parties to bypass the stockade or trench and disorient the defenders by attacking them from behind. They also adopted rushing tactics, not unlike those of the Abam, using bayonets instead of matchets.¹¹ Furthermore, the effectiveness

⁸G. Adams, "Resurrection of the Long Juju" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375[3]). See also Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332); and Mair to Commanding Officer, 1 March 1911: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 6 May 1911 (PRO CO 520/103/17812).

⁹Crawford to Provincial Commissioner, Calabar, 14 April 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/2). See also Morrissey to Moor, 7 November 1902, and Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosures in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332).

¹⁰See Montanaro to Moor, 8 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 10 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/413); and Heneker, Bush Warfare, 46.

¹¹Heneker, Bush Warfare, 19-20; Montanaro, Hints for a Bush

of the fortifications depended upon the villagers' correctly assessing which entry path would be used by the enemy, since fortifying all of the paths was usually impossible.¹²

If the main fortifications were breached, the villagers fell back on the third stage of their defense. They retired as though defeated and permitted the invaders to enter their market place. Once the enemy had assembled in the clearing, the villagers attacked at close quarters, using the weapons and tactics of the Abam themselves--matchets and short spears in a shock assault.¹³ Nsugbe has noted that the villages of Ohafia Division appear to be constructed with this stage of the defense in mind. All paths radiate outward from the market place and are lined solidly with huts:

This means that once one finds oneself in the path one becomes effectively trapped, retreat being possible only by continuing in the direction of the ogo [central square] or by returning towards the bush. It can therefore be imagined that should the need to defend a village primary arise, all that would need to be done would be to block the two ends of the path as one would a bridge.¹⁴

Campaign, 43-4; Montanaro to Moor, 5 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 17 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18724); Trenchard to Montanaro, 15 April 1904: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 7 May 1904 (PRO CO 520/24/19274).

¹²See Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332).

¹³See Gabbett, report of 18 March 1899: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 14 May 1899 (PRO CO 444/1/14389); Montanaro to Moor, 27 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689); Trenchard to Montanaro, 4 March 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 17 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24007).

¹⁴P.O. Nsugbe, "The Social Organization of an Ibo People: The Ohaffia," B. Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1967, 74.

The villagers also fortified their water sources to prevent the attacking column from replenishing its supply.¹⁵ While these tactics were of considerable effectiveness against the Abam, however, they were useless in face of British machine guns and cannons fired at point blank range.

If defeated in the battle for their market place, the villagers retired and initiated the fourth defensive stage, which the British termed the period of "passive resistance." The surviving warriors fled to the concealed encampments that had been constructed among the village farmlands to lodge the women and children during the battle. Here they lived on the supplies of food and water that they had previously gathered and awaited the departure of the enemy force, fighting off any attacker who stumbled upon the encampment.¹⁶ Once again, this tactic was suitable when dealing with the Abam, since they usually departed after looting the deserted village and taking a few captives. But the British were more persistent; their instructions required that they assemble all the male villagers and receive their formal submission and their agreement to a list of demands, including the surrender of their guns.

Although the four-stage defensive strategy outlined above had thus been effective against attacks by mercenary groups such as the Abam, it failed to meet the British challenge. Above all, there

¹⁵ See Montanaro to Moor, 1 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/8789).

¹⁶ See G. Adams, "Resurrection of the Long Juju" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [3]); and C.E. Vickery, "A West African Expedition," United Service Magazine, n.s. XXXIII, 933 (August 1906), 556.

was no way that the villagers could overcome the overwhelming British superiority in firepower. While guns had been in use in the interior for nearly two hundred years prior to the British invasion, they were evidently employed very little in warfare. Until quite late in the nineteenth century the only firearm generally available was the long-barreled, muzzle-loading musket known as the Dane gun. It was capable of propelling a quite potent slug of scrap iron over some distance, but its accuracy was so poor that it could only be considered effective up to about forty yards.¹⁷ Moreover the charge of powder required was so large that it had to be fired from the hip or at arms' length. This made aiming almost impossible, and also caused the shot to go high, which was a double disadvantage since it meant that the defenders usually sought positions below their enemy and were thus exposed to the full force of British cannons and machine guns.¹⁸ Even when rifles became available to them, they continued to use them in this way.¹⁹

The only stage of the defense in which Dane guns could be of any use was the first one, when villagers concealed themselves close to the road and attempted to ambush the attacking column. Otherwise they were mainly used because they made an impressive

¹⁷Vickery, "West African Expedition," 555; W.E. Rudkin, "In British West Africa," United Service Magazine, n.s. XXXV, 944 (July 1907), 434.

¹⁸Montanaro, Hints for a Bush Campaign, 47-8.

¹⁹Sewell to Commanding Officer, 24 July 1909; enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 8 October 1909 (PRO CO 520/82/35417).

noise and flash, which could help to disorient an enemy. West of the Niger River, the people had learned to use their guns more effectively during centuries of warfare against the Kingdom of Benin, and east of the Cross River the villagers had to be able to shoot well to protect their farms from the still abundant wildlife.²⁰ But between the Niger and the Cross, despite the large numbers of guns in evidence, the main form of mass warfare, as we have seen, was hand-to-hand combat with matchets. It would appear that the real significance of guns in the area under study was that they were a visible and portable means of accumulating wealth, the value of a Dane gun being very nearly £1 in 1900.²¹ Thus Southeastern Nigerians were badly outgunned and usually suffered heavy losses, particularly during the third stage of the defense, the mass attack in the market square, where large numbers were cut down by the well aimed rifles of the British-trained troops and by machine gun fire.

A classic example of the four-stage defensive strategy, and of its ineffectiveness against British firepower, was the biggest single battle of the Aro Expedition, at Arochukwu itself. As part of the overall plan of the Expedition, column four, with 480 troops based at Itu, was to carry out diversionary activities to the south of Arochukwu in preparation for the main attack. On 28 November 1901

²⁰ See Hogg to Montanaro, 14 March 1904: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 7 May 1904 (PRO CO 520/24/19277); Rudkin, "In British West Africa," 435-6; and Lugard to C.O., 22 December 1913 (PRO CO 520/128/1438).

²¹ Vickery, "West African Expedition," 555.

a gunboat with eighty troops was sent up the Enyong River to the mouth of Esu Itu Creek, from which it bombarded the village of Esu Itu for forty-five minutes. The commanding officer reported that "I was informed later by a prisoner who was captured that our shells had actually fallen in Esu-Itu itself, had broken up a slave market, and dispersed the enemy in all directions."²² The prisoner also informed him that the main Aro fortifications were three miles to the north, at Ndi Okoroji.²³ A small detachment was landed to investigate conditions in Esu Itu, but it withdrew quickly upon exchanging a few shots with some Aro riflemen.

The following day 250 troops were encamped at the mouth of Esu Itu Creek, and on 30 November "a large body" of Aro men gathered on the opposite shore and fired into the camp. The British replied with cannon and machine gun fire and dispersed them.²⁴ For the next two days reconnaissance parties probed the east bank of the creek without making contact with the Aro. On 7 December, following further shelling, Esu Itu was occupied by 150 troops. Shortly thereafter, the officer in charge wrote,

[T]he scouts reported the enemy to be advancing in some force. At 10.40 a.m. firing was opened from the right flank, the enemy being in considerable numbers, yelling and blowing war-horns. The scouts held them in check while a section of 'G' Company was thrown out on each side and getting round the enemy's

²² Montanaro to Moor, 28 November 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 1 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/45588).

²³ Report of 6 December 1901 in the Morning Post, 3 January 1902.

²⁴ Ibid.; Montanaro to Moor, 4 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 10 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/413); Heneker, Bush Warfare, 134.

flank forced him to retire. They were in good numbers and full of fight and required careful working to drive them back without loss. The scouts worked most admirably and we drove them steadily back for about half a mile when they made a most determined stand in the dry bed of a water-course.²⁵

A further hour of fighting was required to disperse the Aro. They were firing badly, however, and the British suffered only one casualty. The British column then withdrew to its camp at the mouth of the creek.

On the morning of 8 December a force of 140 troops with two cannons and a machine gun set out to attack the reported Aro concentration at Ndi Okoroji. The Aro had anticipated their actions, however, and had prepared an ambush halfway to the objective. But because of the inadequacy of their guns, the ambush had been assembled in a ravine below the level of the path, and the British were able to disperse them easily with cannon fire. The cannons were then used to scatter another group of Aro along the line of march. The rest of the approach to the Aro fortifications before Ndi Okoroji was unopposed.²⁶

The second stage of the defense of Arochukwu had been carefully prepared by the Aro leaders. On the two main paths from Esu Itu to Ndi Okoroji, they had constructed elaborate systems of trenches with extended fields of fire. As the British commanding officer described them,

²⁵Montanaro to Moor, 10 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 13 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/2520). See also report of 12 December 1901 in the Morning Post, 21 January 1902.

²⁶Ibid.

The trenches were over a quarter of a mile long with flanks thrown back; they were five feet deep and absolutely impervious to any fire we could bring against them. In addition to the trenches the enemy had constructed a small redoubt on our left flank and well advanced, the whole with good lines of retreat and all covered with bushes, so that until our troops reached the trenches nothing could be seen. These trenches could not have been better constructed had they been made by Europeans.²⁷

But once again the Aro were unable to take advantage of their superior position and numbers because of their inability to use their weapons effectively. The British advance was only temporarily halted, as described by one of the officers in charge:

For about half a mile before the trenches were encountered the country was fairly open, being covered with tufts of grass a few feet high, and stunted bushes. On entering this open country the leading company had reinforced the scouts, and advanced in extended order, followed by the leading maxims [machine guns] and a 75 millimetre gun, ready for action. The flankers were well thrown out. The advance was continued in this formation. When the extended company arrived at a point about 300 yards from where the path and the enemy's trench met . . . , an exceedingly heavy fire was opened by the enemy. They were well armed, and the Snider bullets began to hum over the heads of the troops, sounding like a swarm of bees. The puffs of smoke of the guns appeared along such a regular line in the bush that trenches and a prepared position were suggested at once. This being so, a halt was made, and, with the object of occupying his attention, the guns opened a heavy fire, directed at the white puffs immediately in front. Parties were then sent right and left to outflank the trenches. The left hand party found none, but seriously interfered with one line of retreat which the enemy had prepared for himself. The right hand party was taken in flank while advancing, and had to turn right hand and charge the enfilading trench, which it did with great dash; then working on, it successively took the remaining trenches, and got on to the enemy's other line of retreat. The guns in the centre then ceased fire, and the trenches in front were taken by assault, thus co-operating with the flanking parties. The enemy fled headlong, and suffered severely. Prisoners afterwards reported that these trenches were manned by 2,500 Aros, and 5,000 more were in the town half a mile off, with swords and matchets, ready to aid in cutting up the column

²⁷ Ibid.

as soon as it had been thrown into confusion. The section and finish of these trenches were admirable, and their well-planned position made it difficult to believe that they were not the work of some highly trained men. It can be seen that this position would not have been taken if the troops had remained on the path and been content to fire volleys at the smoke of the enemy's guns.²⁸

Following this reverse, the Aro fell back on Arochukwu, three miles further to the north, and prepared the third stage of their defense.

When the British column, now numbering over 600 officers and men, marched the six miles from Esu Itu to Arochukwu on 24 December, it passed through a deserted countryside and met no opposition. As it approached the first large clearing in Arochukwu it was met by six Aro leaders who had decided to throw in their lot with the British, but they warned the officers that the other Aro factions intended to resist them.²⁹ As soon as the column entered the first clearing and assembled the troops and carriers, it was attacked in force. As one officer described,

On our arrival at Aro-Chuku--on the very day fixed--the advanced guard occupied the front face of the town, the main body the sides, and the rear guard the remaining portion of the town, which was burnt. No sooner had we made our dispositions than the enemy advanced and attacked us from the north. From within an hour of our occupation the Aros have never left us quiet either by day or night, for when they have not advanced against us in sufficient numbers to make it necessary to send troops out to drive them off, they have persistently sniped the camp, and, unfortunately, with some effect.³⁰

On the afternoon of 24 December the British raised their flag

²⁸Heneker, Bush Warfare, 8-9.

²⁹Reuters report of 26 December 1901, in The Times of 20 January 1902.

³⁰Ibid.

over Arochukwu amid continued fighting. The officer in command reported that

The attack continued till night fell, and at one time was of so determined a character that I was obliged to open fire with two Millimetre guns. At 11 p.m. again the enemy crept to within a few yards of the Eastern line of Sentries. . . . The effect of this was to stampede the carriers, and for a few minutes things began to look a bit ugly.³¹

But the troops maintained discipline and the perimeter was reestablished. Scattered attacks and sniping continued throughout the night, however, and in the afternoon of the following day, wrote the commanding officer,

The enemy's fire became so annoying, the whole camp being peppered by snider bullets, that I decided to make a forward movement. . . . The enemy has shown himself to be a most persistent and dogged foe, and I am anxiously awaiting the arrival of Lt. Col. Festing's column, as I had no idea that savages could make such a stand, and my line of communication requires careful guarding.³²

Over the following two days the British constructed a defensive fortress with eight foot walls 400 yards in circumference. They chose a flat piece of land slightly elevated above the surrounding villages and therefore ideal for observing Aro movements. Nevertheless the Aro attacks continued, including a bombardment of the British position with an old cannon in their possession.³³

For the next two days intermittent fighting went on around the British fortification, and attacking parties were dispatched

³¹Montanaro to Moor, 25 December 1901: enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 27 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/2539).

³²Ibid.

³³Heneker, Bush Warfare, 131; report of 7 January 1902 in the Morning Post of 5 February 1902.

to assault various Aro settlements, such as Oror on 27 December.³⁴ It was not until 28 December, with the arrival of nearly 1,000 troops from the north, that the third stage of Aro resistance was broken. Numerous Aro factions surrendered at this time, while others retired to their hidden encampments and began the final stage of their defense. Until 13 January 1902 it was necessary for the British to send out small parties of troops to find and capture the many encampments in the area, and they encountered "considerable resistance" in doing so.³⁵ On 31 December they discovered the site of the Ibinukpabi oracle and dynamited it.³⁶

Given the intensity and duration of the battle for Arochukwu, it is remarkable that so many scholars have totally overlooked it in discussions of early twentieth century Nigerian history. G.I. Jones has written that the Aro "failed to offer any resistance to the expedition," and has found agreement from A.E. Afigbo, who declares that Arochukwu was overrun in one day with little opposition.³⁷ T.N. Tamuno has concluded that "The troops took the capital and destroyed the Long Juju with little resistance," while J.C. Anene, normally a most astute commentator on Nigerian history, has written that the Aro "put no army in the field" and

³⁴ Reuters report of 10 January 1902 in the Morning Post of 11 January 1902.

³⁵ Moor to C.O., 17 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18724).

³⁶ Reuters report of 7 January 1902 in West Africa, III, 61 (15 February 1902), 167.

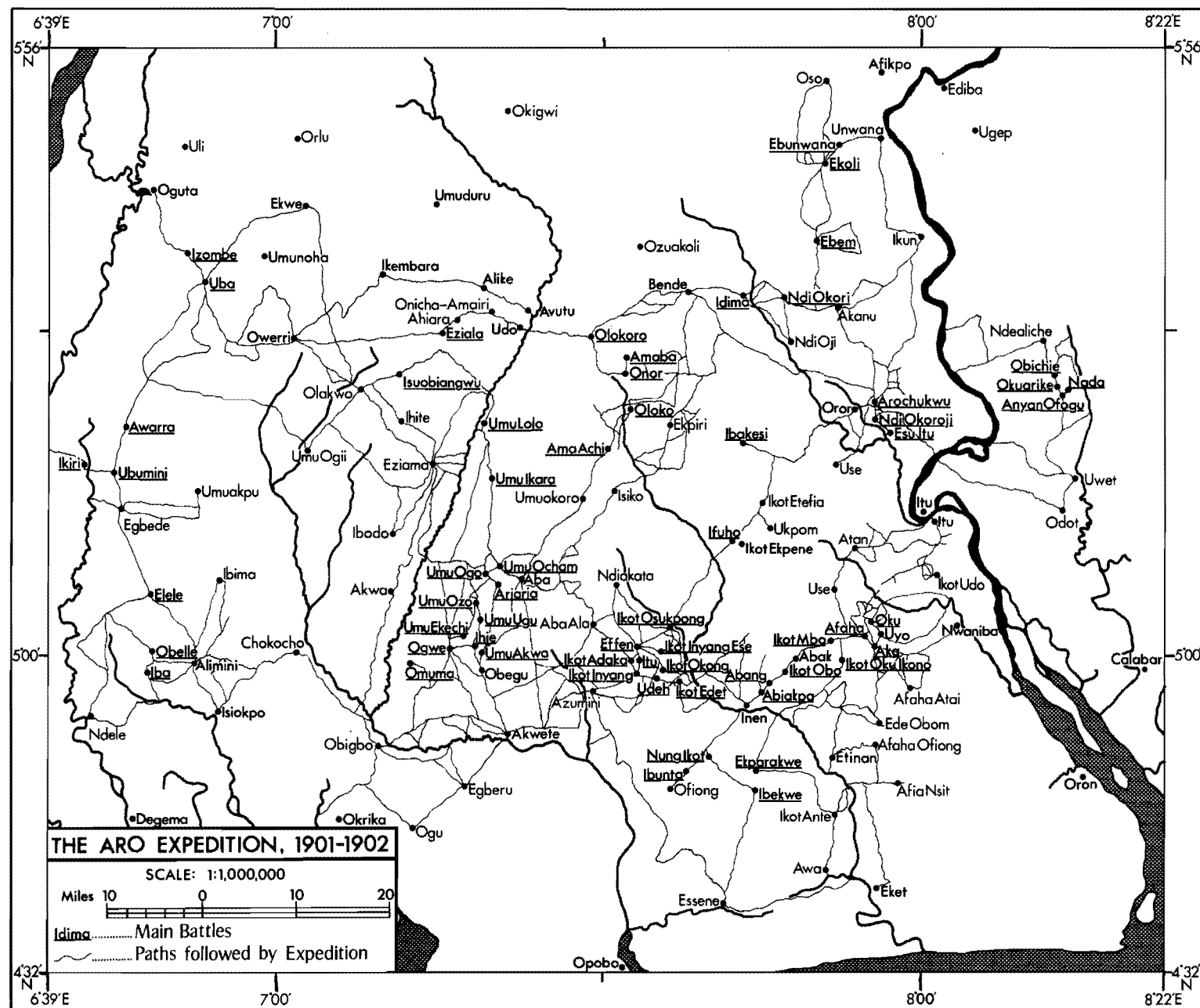
³⁷ G.I. Jones, "Who are the Aro?", Nigerian Field, VIII, 3 (July 1939), 100; A.E. Afigbo, "The Aro Expedition of 1901-1902," Odu, n.s. 7 (April 1972), 20.

that Arochukwu was entered "without opposition."³⁸ The above discussion has demonstrated, however, that the Aro defense was prolonged and intense, and that its four stages were carried out with foresight and planning.

But the battle of Arochukwu was only the first episode of the Aro Expedition. From mid-January until April 1902 the British columns marched and countermarched throughout the southern interior, attacking recalcitrant villages and confiscating guns (see map, page 144). The reaction they encountered was mixed and depended upon the pre-existing political and economic conditions of the various areas. Some villages that had no issue with the British were nonetheless afraid that they were being attacked by indiscriminate marauders in the tradition of the Abam. In some ways this was a correct impression. The African troops and the many carriers and other hangers-on who accompanied them in the British columns could not possibly be supervised by the small numbers of officers in command, and they often engaged in looting and other atrocities.³⁹ Furthermore since the British columns were usually accompanied by large groups of warriors from neighboring villages, and since these

³⁸T.N. Tamuno, The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914 (London, 1972), 38; J.C. Anene, "The Protectorate Government of Southern Nigeria and the Aros, 1900-1902," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, I, 1 (December 1956), 24; J.C. Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906 (Cambridge, 1966), 231. Anene's only evidence in support of his conclusion is taken from A.C. Douglas (Niger Memories [Exeter, 1927]); but Douglas is a highly questionable source and was not, in any case, at the battle of Arochukwu.

³⁹See W.T. Black to C.O., 16 January 1901 (PRO CO 520/11/2081); and Moor to Divisional Commissioner, Cross River Division, 2 September 1902 (NAI Calprof 9/2/3).



"friendlies" were often the traditional enemies of the village being approached, it was natural to assume that the British troops were simply mercenaries hired to assist in ongoing local disputes. In the words of an elder of Abak Division,

Before the British there were inter-clan or inter-village wars. And so the coming of the British offered the opportunity to retaliate on the next village that we had fought with, by siding with the British. That village had killed many inhabitants of this village, so it was an opportunity to retaliate. So the thing continued from one village to the other.⁴⁰

It was not unusual, therefore, for the people to desert their villages as the columns approached. Since the officers had been instructed to consider as hostile any abandoned village, this meant that many villages were looted and burned for little more than expressing their fear and uncertainty of the advancing British.⁴¹ The general atmosphere of panic was described by a Catholic missionary at Onitsha in 1902:

The whole population is in movement; there is a general exodus of the Achallas, Ntedjis, Nris, Nandos, Iguemes, Owerris etc. towards the river [Niger]. . . . The cannon has thundered a few miles from their towns; rifle shots have rung out from dawn to dusk. Everybody has panicked, and everybody has taken refuge in our missions at Aguleri and Nsube. There are 10,000 men at this moment at Aguleri and about half of that number at Nsube.⁴²

Other villages, which the British assumed to be friendly because they did not flee, were in fact biding their time because for the

⁴⁰ Interview of 25 June 1974 at Ikot Osong. The elder prefers to remain anonymous.

⁴¹ Moor, "Orders for O.C. Columns, Aro Field Force": enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 November 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/44565).

⁴² Quoted in F.K. Ekechi, Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914 (London, 1972), 124.

moment the British force was too large to confront.⁴³

But in most areas, as we saw in the previous chapter, the unstable atmosphere of the preceding ten years had permitted alliances of villages to assert their local power, often by calling on the Aro for assistance. The villages that opposed their rise had looked to the British for support, although from 1898 to 1901 the British had been considerably less than effective in assisting their allies. It was in these areas that the British met well organized and prolonged resistance, based on the political and economic struggles of the previous decade.

In Uyo Division, where an alliance of Offot villages had combined with the people of Ibiaku and the Aro to expel the Calabar traders who were encroaching on their markets, significant resistance was encountered in mid-January 1902.⁴⁴ A British column consisting of 300 officers and men set out from Nwaniba on 16 January and proceeded slowly westward, collecting guns from the sullen but peaceful villagers. On 21 January the column entered Offot territory and was unsuccessfully attacked near Oku by the combined forces of Oku, Aka, and Afaha, under the leadership of the powerful Offot Ekpo men's society. The following night another heavy attack was made on the British camp at Aka and had to be driven off with cannon and machine gun fire. Finally on 23 January the British outflanked a major fortification at Afaha marketplace, and the defenders retired to their encampments,

⁴³ See Heneker, Bush Warfare, 165.

⁴⁴ See above, 115-16.

some of which the British were able to discover before matters elsewhere forced them to move on. In the time available, reported the officer in command, "Good roads were made, and booms which had been placed by the natives across the Ikpa Creek for the purposes of levying toll from traders were removed, and good bridges made in their stead."⁴⁵ The British had, in effect, paved the way by force for the return of their allies, the Calabar traders.

Further to the west, in Abak Division, similar issues caused intense resistance to the British advance. The Ika people, as we saw in the last chapter, had strong economic and social links with the Aro and had used Aro support to establish themselves in a position of power in relation to their Anang neighbors. Their dominance had been reaffirmed, again with Aro support, between 1899 and 1901.⁴⁶ The British found that

Ever since the Igas [Ika] repulsed Major Leonard [that is, the Central Division Expedition] in 1899 they assumed a most truculent attitude and absolutely refused to have anything to do with the Government. This disaffection spread to the other Kwas [Anang] who took every opportunity of calling up the reverse suffered in 1899.⁴⁷

It was clear that only a substantial display of force would bring the area into the British sphere. On 27 January 1902 a column of over 280 officers and troops entered Ika country near Ikot

⁴⁵ Montanaro to Moor, 12 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 19 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/10514); interview with E.W. Amankpa, local historian of Obot Item, Uyo Division, 26 June 1974.

⁴⁶ See above, 114-15.

⁴⁷ Gallwey, "Annual Report on the Eastern Division for the Year 1901-1902," 20 May 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

Osukpong under heavy fire, which they answered with cannon shells, destroying that village. On the following day the battle moved to Ikot Inyang Ese, where "a running fire was kept up by the enemy moving parallel to the column."⁴⁸ But the defenders were firing poorly, and the only British losses for the two days of fighting were two officers severely wounded. One week later another small column of troops was attacked in the marketplace of Itu, but a bayonet charge dislodged the defenders.⁴⁹

On 8 February 250 officers and men entered Ika country from the direction of Inen and upon leaving Ikot Edet were attacked in force and

from this town to the village of Ikot N'Yang [the column] was fighting all the way. The enemy attacked at close quarters, concealing themselves behind the thick bush lining the various market-places and pouring in a heavy fire as the troops came into the open.⁵⁰

In this action the British sustained nine casualties. But it was not until 12 February that they invaded the area in full force to secure the submission of all the Ika people. On that date a column of over 300 officers and men with two machine guns and a cannon attacked Ikot Adaka, one of the main centers of Ika resistance. On entering the village they found

⁴⁸ Montanaro to Moor, 1 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/8789).

⁴⁹ Montanaro to Moor, 8 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 15 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/10512); Montanaro to Moor, 28 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689).

⁵⁰ Montanaro to Moor, 12 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 19 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/10514).

the market-place outside the town strongly held by the enemy. The Scouts were deployed and ordered to turn the enemy's left flank. After firing two volleys the Scouts charged but were brought to a standstill by a terrific fire from the enemy from behind concealed entrenchments and were obliged to take cover.⁵¹

After regrouping, the British force charged the Ika defenders and drove them to Ikot Okong, where they made a stand in the market square. Shrapnel fire from the cannon again dislodged them, and they fled back toward Ikot Adaka.

The troops then proceeded in the direction of Ikorodaka [Ikot Adaka], the enemy offering a stubborn resistance from elaborate well-concealed trenches and loop-holed buildings. It took the column 2½ hours to go through Ikorodaka, fighting all the way. The column then turned in the direction of the camp near Ikotnyang passing through Udeh where the enemy fought in the same persistent and obstinate manner and had repeatedly to be turned out of pits with the bayonet. The first part of the fight took place in a heavy fog which added much to Major Heneker's difficulties and but for the high shooting of the enemy the column would have suffered many casualties. Our loss was 2 killed, 12 wounded.⁵²

Three days later the force decisively defeated the remnants of the Ika defenders at Effen. By 26 February all segments of the Ika population had submitted to the British officers and handed over nearly 2000 guns. In summarizing this operation, the commanding officer noted that

While at Azumini Major Heneker called a meeting of the chiefs of the country. At this meeting were several Opobo and Bonny traders who were pleased to think that the country was being disarmed. Major Heneker urged upon all the chiefs to return to their towns and start their markets. The traders reported that trade was flourishing and that they were looking forward to a good season.⁵³

⁵¹Montanaro to Moor, 28 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689).

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

As in Uyo Division, then, the British had overthrown the previous trade patterns under the control of the Ika and their Aro supporters and had imposed a trading system dominated by their coastal allies.

In the area of Abak, which had been opposed to both Aro and British impositions for the preceding ten years, the British also encountered heavy resistance.⁵⁴ On 22 January a force of 300 officers and men was unsuccessfully attacked in the marketplace of Ikot Mbo. "There was much shouting and tom-tomming proceeding from a large war camp about 1,000 yards south of our camp but a few shells were dropped into it which had the effect of dispersing the natives." The following morning a detachment was sent out to find water, but "Immediately afterwards the north face of the camp was attacked by numbers of the enemy who advanced within a few yards of our M/m gun. A round of 'case' [cannon shell] was fired into them," and they retreated. On 24 January a group of 120 troops on patrol was attacked at Ikot Oku Ikono and required six hours of fighting at close quarters to disengage itself, "the enemy keeping a hot fire on the troops in the village, especially from the right flank."⁵⁵ Although this part of the Abak area surrendered at this time, it was necessary for the British to attack the section around Abiakpa and Abang on 8 February to bring the entire area

⁵⁴ See Casement to MacDonald, 10 April 1894: enclosure in MacDonald to F.O., 19 August 1894 (PRO FO 2/63); and notation by Casement on an 1894 map (PRO FO 925/622).

⁵⁵ Montanaro to Moor, 1 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/8789).

to submission.⁵⁶ Once again the British officers noted with satisfaction that their coastal trading allies were now able to enter this area, formerly closed to them.⁵⁷

To the southwest of Abak the British confronted another Anang area that had been resistant to both British and Aro penetration. To some extent trade in this area was dominated by an Ibekwe leader named Akparanga, who dealt with both Aro and Opobo traders but who generally refused to allow them to make direct contact with each other.⁵⁸ On 28 January 1902 a column of 120 troops marching through the area was attacked at Ibunta: "Hard fighting ensued for about 2½ hours, the enemy being driven out of the bush into open yam fields where they continued the fight." Two days later the column moved on the Ibekwe, Akparanga's village, and though it fought battles at Nung Ikot and Ibekwe was unable to capture Akparanga.⁵⁹ When another British column passed through the same area a month later, it was attacked at Ekparakwe and forced to retreat toward the Kwa Ibo River.⁶⁰ Although the official dispatches declared the area completely pacified, Akparanga was

⁵⁶ Montanaro to Moor, 22 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 28 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12313).

⁵⁷ Gallwey, "Annual Report on the Eastern Division for the Year 1901-1902," 20 May 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

⁵⁸ See Acting District Commissioner, Opobo District, "Quarterly Report on Opobo District for Quarter Ending 30th September 1900" (NAI Calprof 10/3/1).

⁵⁹ Montanaro to Moor, 8 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 15 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/10512).

⁶⁰ Montanaro to Moor, 28 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689).

still largely in control of the trade routes and refused to allow the Opobo men to pass through them.

Equally resistant to the British was the large area further to the west encompassed by modern Ngwa Division. Here, as we have seen, the villages of Akwete and Obegu had attempted to build their alliance with the British into local political and economic domination, resulting in increasing opposition by such villages as Ogwe and Ihie, with Aro support. The ensuing local crisis came to a head a few days before the beginning of the Aro Expedition, when a combined force of Ogwe, Ihie, Aro, and Abam devastated Obegu and expelled the local pro-British leader, Ananaba.⁶¹ Because one of the British columns had to pass through Ngwa Division on its way to the staging point for the assault on Arochukwu, this was the first area to be attacked during the Aro Expedition. On 1 December the column initially stationed at Akwete moved northward toward Owerri, and on the following day assaulted large concentrations at Ogwe and Umu Akwa. The approach to Ogwe was lined with shelter trenches, and the British column drew "a continuous fire, which at least was demoralizing, for about five miles."⁶² At the entrance to the village it rushed and overwhelmed a "strong stockade," and then destroyed the villagers' assembly house amid sniping. On 3 December the column proceeded to Ihie:

A running fight was kept up from start to finish, the enemy retiring on Ehehia [Ihie] as the column advanced. . . . After

⁶¹See above, 59-66, 93-98.

⁶²Montanaro to Moor, 8 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 10 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/413).

occupying the town and clearing the bush for the space of 100 yards outside the outpost lines, the enemy returned and commenced sniping from rifle pits located in outlying compounds, and it was therefore frequently necessary to send out parties to drive back the snipers and destroy the compounds.⁶³

On 4 December similar battles occurred at Umu Ugu and Umu Ekechi, villages that had joined with the retreating Ogwe, Ihie, and Aro defenders to resist the British advance.⁶⁴ The column then moved onward to join with the rest of the British forces, having sustained twenty-four casualties in three days of fighting.

For the next two months conditions remained unstable in the area; the British were occupied elsewhere, and the Ogwe and Ihie had reason to believe they had stalemated the British forces. They returned to their villages and began to rebuild houses and fortifications and threatened those villages that had assisted the British. The officer stationed at Akwete encouraged the pro-British villages to ally with each other and issued them ammunition to protect themselves. He also assisted the Nkwerre men in their conflict with the Aro.⁶⁵ In early February the British forces returned in strength to subdue the area. They proceeded to Ihie and Ogwe, finding them partially rebuilt but deserted.⁶⁶ After destroying these villages they moved northward in pursuit of their inhabitants. On 7 February a major

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Montanaro to Moor, 19 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 28 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/2534).

⁶⁵Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entries from 27 November 1901 to 27 January 1902 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1).

⁶⁶Ibid., entry for 4 February 1902.

battle was fought at Umu Ogo:

The road was trenched throughout, and the enemy disputed every inch of the way, clearing from trench to trench and firing at long ranges--from 150 to 200 yards. [Umu Ogo] was destroyed and a camp cleared, and the enemy continued sniping till dusk.⁶⁷

During the following two weeks the British column pursued the defenders, fighting four more major battles amid intermittent sniping. Still the Ihie and Ogwe refused to surrender and fled from village to village. It was not until early March that sustained British harassment compelled the defenders to leave their encampments and submit. On 1 March the British officiated at the public execution of the leaders of the attack on Obegu.⁶⁸ But resistance arising out of the Obegu incident did not end for several more weeks, as there were still large settlements of Aro allies around the Torti village of Oloko in Umuahia Division that had participated in the assault on Obegu. The British had already dealt in January with Oloko itself and with the Abam town of Idima, which had been the source of the mercenaries used in the Obegu attack. Fighting in both of these villages was heavy, the British sustaining twenty-five casualties.⁶⁹ In March 1902 the British returned to

⁶⁷ Montanaro to Moor, 10 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 19 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/10514).

⁶⁸ Montanaro to Moor, 21 March 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/16427).

⁶⁹ Montanaro to Moor, 12 January 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 16 January 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/6913); Montanaro to Moor, 15 January 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 February 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/8788); Montanaro to Moor, 20 January 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 January 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/6933).

Umuahia Division and defeated the Aro allies of Ama Achi, Onor, Amaba, and Olokoru (Old Umuahia area) in pitched battles.⁷⁰ After two further encounters in Ngwa Division, at Umu Ikara and Umu Lolo, resistance was finally broken.⁷¹ As in the other areas attacked by the Aro Expedition, it was essentially the coastal allies of the British who benefited by being able to enter markets formerly closed to them by inland middlemen.⁷²

In Ikwerre Division, where an alliance of local villages had isolated and attacked the pro-British factions of Alimini and Iba with the assistance of Degema traders, the British also met heavy resistance.⁷³ After receiving the welcome of the ousted factions, the British set out northward from Isiokpo on 7 February 1902. The column, consisting of 240 officers and men, marched through the area drawing continuous sniping, but it was not until 12 February that it was decisively confronted. On that date battles were fought at Elele and Obelle, the latter being so intense that the British were compelled to form square to drive off the defenders. But the submission of the anti-British villages was not obtained until four further battles had been fought, at Iba, Ubumini, Ikiri, and Awarra (Ogba/Egbema Division). Total

⁷⁰Montanaro to Moor, 21 March 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/16427).

⁷¹Montanaro to Moor, 26 March 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/16427).

⁷²Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entry for 12 March 1902 (NAE Abadist.12/1/1).

⁷³See above, 117.

British casualties for these operations were nine wounded.⁷⁴

In addition to the main areas of heavy resistance outlined above, there were several other instances of opposition to the Aro Expedition. In Akamkpa Division, a group of villages closely allied with the Aro offered considerable resistance in battles at Anyan Ofogu, Nada, Okuarike, and Obichie in early January 1902.⁷⁵ The passage of British troops in their assault on Arochukwu from the north was impeded in Afikpo and Ohafia Divisions by opposition at Ekoli, Ebunwana, Ebem, and Ndi Okori.⁷⁶ And the British forces encountered scattered opposition to their march along the road between Oguta and Bende via Owerri, where, according to one officer, "Everywhere the troops were received with scowls, and in one or two places the natives were threatening."⁷⁷ Active hostilities occurred at Izombe, Uba, Isuobiangwu, and Eziala. At Uba "the natives were insolent and very threatening and had to be dispersed with M/m and maxim fire which did great execution." At Eziala "the people tried to stop the column and demanded toll. Colonel Festing opened fire with case shot, maxim, and sectional volleys and after

⁷⁴ Montanaro to Moor, 27 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689); Montanaro to Moor, 26 March 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/16427).

⁷⁵ Montanaro to Moor, 18 January 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 24 January 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/6933).

⁷⁶ Montanaro to Moor, 10 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 13 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/2520); Montanaro to Moor, 19 December 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 28 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/10/2534); Reuters Agency to C.O., 28 December 1901 (PRO CO 520/11/45837).

⁷⁷ Heneker, Bush Warfare, 165.

driving off the natives destroyed the town."⁷⁸

While many of the areas attacked by the Aro Expedition could now be considered "pacified" and firmly within the British sphere, most regions were only superficially dealt with. Thus although many villages had been destroyed, and over one thousand Southeastern Nigerians killed, the succeeding four years were devoted to expeditions and patrols to complete the work supposedly fulfilled by the Aro Expedition.⁷⁹ In general terms the resistance that the British had encountered and would continue to encounter was the result of local factional politics. Early allies of the British, such as Ananaba of Obegu, Okocha of Iba, and Nwakpuda of Old Umuahia, helped to guide the British columns in attacks on factional leaders opposed to them in their bid for local power. Consequently they were perceived as "loyal" by the British and continued to receive recognition and support.

Like the Aro, the British and their coastal trading allies imported new sources of wealth and a variety of new cultural forms eagerly adopted by disadvantaged factions in the interior that sought a counterbalance to preexisting economic and political alliances. And, like the Aro, the British wished to establish themselves permanently in the areas they had invaded, in order to reap the profits of the economic and judicial processes of those areas. But from the viewpoint of Southeastern Nigerians

⁷⁸ Montanaro to Moor, 26 March 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/16427).

⁷⁹ On the question of African casualties resulting from British military action, see Appendix B.

the British had only begun to prove the effectiveness of their military force, and it would require years of repeated application of that force to establish their dominance completely. Moreover in face of the skillful, experienced management of external power sources by the inland villagers, the British would find it difficult to create the kind of efficient, impartial administration that they desired. They were viewed in the same light as previous outside power sources, such as the Nkwerre, Awka, and Aro, and were manipulated in local politics as their predecessors had been.

CHAPTER V

MYTHS AND REALITIES

OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION, 1900-1919:

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

The British administrative ideal in Southeastern Nigeria was the creation of a governmental system that was efficient, impersonal, impartial, hierarchical, and absolute. The chief goals of the system were to dispense justice without regard for the status or wealth of the litigants and to provide an orderly and peaceful method for settling disputes. As we have seen, it was the view of the British officers in Southeastern Nigeria that the traditional political and legal processes in the area were characterized by disorder, violence, and superstition, resulting in the oppression of poor, unsophisticated inland villagers either by local strongmen or by such itinerant trade-professional groups as the Awka and Aro.¹ Given this view, the British regarded it as essential to restructure local government. While power might remain in the same hands as it had for years in local affairs, the method of employing that power had to be altered so that the good of the community, rather than personal gain, became the criterion.² Above all, particular individuals and their followings could no longer be permitted to

¹See above, 91, 121.

²Governor Walter Egerton, address to the West African Trade Association, 5 October 1905, in West African Mail, III, 133 (13 October 1905), 682.

take the law into their own hands and apply force to recalcitrant opponents.

The administrative system that evolved in the early twentieth century was based primarily on the District Commissioner (called District Officer after 1914) and his assistants. After each military expedition the area dealt with was divided into districts, headquarters established in each, and an officer designated as overseer. He was to tour his district, make himself known to the inhabitants, and identify and acknowledge the leaders of the people. These leaders were then entitled Warrant Chiefs and were assembled periodically to adjudicate local disputes under the supervision of the District Commissioner, who was to ensure the fairness of decisions as determined both by local tradition and by British legal procedure. The resulting Native Courts could levy fines and impose short prison sentences, but they were given no independent force to implement their judgments. All local disputes requiring coercion for their settlement were referred to the District Commissioner, who employed his contingent of troops and police to support the judgments of the Native Courts in his district. Moreover, all serious crimes, such as homicide, were referred directly to the District Commissioner, who heard and settled them in his own court, which was officially a local branch of the Supreme Court of Southern Nigeria.³

But the British administration had been born in competition

³See J.C. Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906 (Cambridge, 1966), 250-71; A.E. Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929 (London, 1972), 37-117.

and violence, and the patterns of resistance to that violence largely predetermined which leaders the British would recognize in establishing the Native Courts and therefore undermined from the start whatever impartiality the system might have achieved. Villages that assisted and cooperated with the British advance were "progressive" and "loyal," while those that resisted were "backward" and "truculent" and were ill-suited to provide personnel for the Native Courts. At best, the latter were to be represented by some dissident individual or faction who had abstained from the village's resistance. What the British were looking for was the type of man described by one officer in 1902:

The fullest confidence can be reposed in his integrity, he is loyal to the back bone, and ready at any moment to place himself and his people at the service of the Government. His admiration of the whiteman is unbounded and he thinks he can never do enough for the comfort of officers visiting his town.⁴

But the men who were willing to assist and cooperate with the British to this extent were seldom representative of an entire village or clan. Usually they were the leaders of a significant minority that had been dominated by its neighbors and that was attempting to establish an alliance with an outside power source, such as the British, in order to increase its local political and economic power in relation to the dominant faction.

We have already observed the rise of Ananaba of Obegu from the position of an indebted local trader to ally of the British, with power to call in troops to assist him in his trading expansion.

⁴Fosbery to Moor, 8 June 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 25 June 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/29606).

By 1902 he had become a warrant chief and controlled an area considerably larger than his own quarter of Obegu.⁵ And in the conflict between Uli and Ihiala, the background of which was discussed in Chapter II, the British intervened in support of the weaker side, Ihiala, which had appealed to them for protection.⁶ The British interpreted this ongoing local conflict between two essentially equivalent factions as an instance of a backward and warlike village group (Uli) "terrorizing" a more peaceful and progressive neighbor (Ihiala). They deposed the powerful Uli leader, Izolobi, in favor of the leader of a dissident faction who had assisted them in their attack.⁷ From the local viewpoint, the elements in Uli and Ihiala that had been disadvantaged by the rise of Izolobi and his allies had finally found an outside supporter--the British--capable of restoring them to a position of dominance.

Similar circumstances in Umuahia Division resulted in a comparable British involvement in local politics. During the nineteenth century the trade of the area had been dominated by a group of Olokoro and Ohuhu villages located along the main Aro trade route extending westward from Bende. The most prominent of these villages was Old Umuahia, where there was a large market known especially for its active slave and arms trading. In Old

⁵See above, 63-6, 93-8.

⁶See above, 57-59.

⁷Woodman to Probyn, [1903]: enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 29 July 1903 (PRO CO 520/19/31561).

Umuahia, as in villages like Umunwanwa along the same route, prosperous individuals built their trade alliance with the Aro into local political power and also attempted to dominate the part of the route that passed through the Ibeku clan to the northeast. This group of villages was opposed by a much larger alliance led by Umu Ajata. It consisted of the many villages that had lost economic and political power because of the dominance of the Aro route by Old Umuahia, including the Ibeku clan. Umu Ajata itself had a large market that it operated in competition with Old Umuahia. The conflict between these two powerful alliances determined most political arrangements, even at a very local level. Within each village competing factions sought support from one or the other alliance, and the temporary predominance of a particular faction in a village brought that village into the sphere of its supporting alliance. And even within Old Umuahia itself, despite the overriding issue of the conflict with Umu Ajata, competing traders attempted to use their alliance with the various Aro factions to gain predominance over each other. By the late nineteenth century the leading trader was Nwogu, but he was opposed in local affairs by other Old Umuahia traders such as Nwakupda. When the British first entered Umuahia Division in 1896 it was Nwakupda who assisted and guided them, mainly in the hope of improving his position in relation to Nwogu and the other traders. Yet Nwogu did not oppose the British mission, even though it might mean increased influence for his local rival, Nwakupda, probably because he saw that the British presence could ultimately be useful

to all of Old Umuahia in its competition with the Umu Ajata bloc.

Umu Ajata observed this new threat to its position and attempted to organize an attack on the 1896 mission, but it was unsuccessful. During the succeeding five years anti-British feeling in the area grew, since the Old Umuahia traders as well as their Aro supporters continually threatened to invite their new British allies to attack the Umu Ajata bloc. When the large British columns of the Aro Expedition passed through the area several times in late 1901 and early 1902, they were guided by Aro men and by such local traders as Nwakupda of Old Umuahia and Nwosuocha of Umunwanwa. Although there was some resistance to the British in Olokoro in March 1902, probably led by Umu Ajata, the size of the columns and their associated carriers and allies discouraged further opposition. In May 1902, at the end of the Aro Expedition, Umu Ajata blockaded its roads and refused to deal with British officers or their messengers, and a small detachment of troops was sent there to seize and imprison four Umu Ajata leaders. Shortly thereafter an Abana woman was raped by a British soldier, and when the soldier was stabbed in retaliation by a man from her compound, the British sent two hundred Ibeku allies to attack Abana.

These incidents created considerable hostility toward the British and finally enabled the Umu Ajata to organize widespread popular resistance. By August 1902, Wakiri, a powerful religious leader of the Olokoro clan, had assembled a meeting of Olokoro villages and secured their cooperation. He also formed a pact with a large part of the Ibeku clan through their religious leader, Eziri-Iji of Umu Aroko. The road from Abana to Umu Aroko was

entrenched, and on September 11 a British convoy of thirty troops with two officers was forced to flee to Bende, losing a messenger killed in Umu Aroko and four men wounded. A hastily assembled retaliatory column of 130 troops was repulsed two weeks later. It was not until late October 1902 that the British could field sufficient forces to overwhelm the resistance. The resulting Ibeku-Olokoro Expedition was opposed in thirteen major battles throughout the area, and a large proportion of the Ibeku and Olokoro villages were destroyed. Once again the column was guided and assisted by Aro men and their agents, Nwakupda of Old Umuahia and Nwosuocha of Umunwanwa, whose local influence had been eclipsed in the preceding months by the resurgence of the Umu Ajata bloc. At the end of the Expedition full surrender was received from the Ibeku and Olokoro people, and Wakiri and Eziri-Iji were publicly hanged. Nwakupda and Nwosuocha were accorded the highest praise as loyal British supporters and were made warrant chiefs. Even Nwogu, the pro-Aro trader who had been discovered selling arms to Umu Ajata, was given a warrant to sit on the Native Court, largely because his Aro supporters and his fellow Old Umuahia traders interceded for him. Once again the British considered that they had recognized loyal, progressive elements and had suppressed backward, truculent opposition. In fact, as the above narrative demonstrates, they had given power to a small group of leaders of one preexisting faction in the area and had reaffirmed the Old Umuahia-Aro control of the trade route to the detriment of the Umu Ajata faction.⁸

⁸The main sources for the foregoing discussion of Umuahia

The British were also drawn into local politics over the question of land rights, and the resulting alliances largely determined patterns of resistance to the British administration. This was especially true in Ezzikwo Division, where the large Ezza and Ikwo clans had been expanding dynamically at the expense of their neighbors, repeatedly seizing tracts of land in intermittent wars. The first British officer to visit Ezzikwo Division, in 1904, was greeted enthusiastically by the people of Enyigba-Amagu, who had already built thirteen huts for him and his military escort. Their cordiality, he discovered, was due to their urgent need for protection from the Ezza, who were encroaching on their western boundary. For their part, the Ezza perceived the British as a new outside force that planned to assist their neighbors in stopping their land expansion. They sent the British officer a hostile message, as he reported:

The Ezzas are rulers here, we do not wish to see the whiteman and will settle our own palavers. If I was afraid to come to them, they would come and attack me here; they intended to drive the Amargos [Enyigba-Amagu] still further back as they wanted their land; if the whiteman interfered they would drive them out too. The Ezzas were ruled by no one, they sent me this parable: There is heaven above, and the earth below, and in between are the Ezza.⁹

Division are E.R. Chadwick, "An Intelligence Report on the Olokoro Clan in the Bende Division of Owerri Province," 1935 (NAI CSO 26/4/30829); U.A.C. Amajo, "Old Umuahia under British Rule (1901-1931)," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974; A.I. Atulomah, "The Establishment of British Rule in Umuopara (1901-1929)," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973; Moor to C.O., 13 October 1902, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/15/46500); Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/13/6332).

⁹W.A. Crawford-Cockburn, "Report on Survey of Routes to Lead Mines in Amargo-Ezza Country and Attitude of Neighbouring Tribes," [November 1904] (NAE CSE 1/5/1).

Because the British, mainly for economic reasons, were committed to ending inter-clan warfare, they invariably came to the aid of those villages threatened by the expanding Ezza and Ikwo and supported elements in those clans who were willing to moderate their demands for new land. Several patrols were sent to the area between 1905 and 1919 to reestablish villages that had been evicted from their land and to reinstate cooperative warrant chiefs among the Ezza and Ikwo. Thus the single issue of land rights determined patterns of British alliance and political involvement and led the Ezza and Ikwo to oppose the British, while the neighboring villages of Abba, Ntezi, Onicha, and Oshiri welcomed them.¹⁰ Throughout the area under study there was a tendency for the weaker of two villages involved in a land dispute to solicit and welcome British intervention.

From the British viewpoint they were bringing order to a chaotic environment and imposing rational and impartial solutions to the relief of the more progressive elements of the population. They were also taking the lead in directing a social process that the local people were helpless to manage for themselves.¹¹ But from the viewpoint of Southeastern Nigerians the British were, like the Aro, yet another outside power source to be manipulated in local politics by relatively equivalent factions. For example,

¹⁰See Lugard to C.O., 11 August 1913, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/127/28021); Lugard to C.O., 31 July 1914, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/16/28141); Boyle to C.O., 9 July 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/34/35896); Boyle to C.O., 19 October 1916, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/49/54001).

¹¹See above, 7.

to the British officers involved, the "opening up" of Nkwerre Division was a routine matter requiring several patrols with occasional resistance, followed by the establishment of Native Courts staffed by loyal villagers. But to the people of Akokwa the timely British arrival was due to the clever diplomacy of one of their prominent men, Ukachukwu.¹² During the first years of the twentieth century Akokwa had engaged in intermittent warfare with the neighboring village of Obodo over access to the nearby river. When neither side was able to secure a clear victory, both began to search for outside power sources to augment their positions. Akokwa, at the suggestion of Ukachukwu, took up a village-wide collection to enable him to visit the British station at Bende to petition for assistance in the war. There is no evidence that he ever went to Bende nor that the ensuing Uruala Patrol of 1907 had any connection with him. But the fact that he was later made a warrant chief indicates that he established at least some cooperative connection with the officers leading the column. In any case, the patrol passed Akokwa by and destroyed their enemy, Obodo, and then permitted the Akokwa people to loot the deserted village. Full credit was given to Ukachukwu for his skill in directing the British. As one elder recalled,

Ukachukwu was the most famous ruler of Akokwa. I saw him and in my early childhood I was his bag carrier. He led the Akokwa-Obodo war. He was the Akokwa ruler who went to Bende to invite the Europeans to this area. That was during our war with Obodo. The Europeans came and helped him to conquer Obodo. That was about two years after they destroyed

¹²See C.B.N. Okoli, "Akokwa from the Earliest Times to 1917," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973.

the wonderful juju of Arochukwu. In these parts today the saying is that Ukachukwu introduced the Europeans to these parts. . . . It was Ukachukwu who introduced Ezeanyika of Urualla and his fellow rulers of Mbanasa to the Europeans. Akokwa was the only town in Mbanasa not conquered by the whiteman. Other neighbouring towns like Uga, Ndizuogu suffered terribly from the white men's guns. Through Ukachukwu's wisdom and early contact with the Europeans we never suffered any conquest from the white man.¹³

The faction leaders who rose to predominance in this way usually had the full and continuing support of their new allies, the British, and often used that support to extort goods and services from their erstwhile enemies. Many became wealthy in a short time, like the warrant chief who between 1904 and 1907 rose from a position of minor importance in his village to being the "wealthiest and most powerful" man in his entire Division.¹⁴ Nwosuocha of Umunwanwa, who, as we have seen, came to predominance in Umuahia Division after the British expedition there in 1902, used his position to confiscate money and provisions from surrounding villages.¹⁵ And Okocha of Iba, the pro-British trader who had been expelled from his village in 1899 and then reinstated by the Aro Expedition in 1902, cultivated his local reputation as a British ally by assuring villages in Ikwerre Division that for a moderate consideration he could prevent the troops from attacking them.¹⁶ Warrant chiefs were often cautious enough to realize that

¹³Interview with Mbagwu Ogbete of Akokwa (born about 1892), in *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁴Thorburn to C.O., 7 December 1908, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/68/47209).

¹⁵See Atulomah, "British Rule in Umuopara," 24, 31.

¹⁶See above, 117. See also L.C. Woodman, "Report on a tour through Nsokpo, Agwa, Aboa and Elele Districts during July and August 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/4).

such tactics would eventually create sufficient local disturbances to discredit them in British eyes and thus moderated their demands, but in many cases they took advantage of British ignorance of local conditions and became virtual tyrants over large areas.

Many British officers were in fact aware of the factional character of the leaders they had recognized, despite the illusions of some of their superiors in Nigeria and in London regarding the impartiality of the warrant chiefs. They knew that by absorbing hostility toward themselves in factional conflict they could avoid unified resistance to the British administration. As one officer wrote, "The fable of the 'bundle of rods' may aptly be applied to these natives: taken as a whole, they can unite and present a formidable front, but taken separately they become pliable and as ready to harm each other as any natives I have ever had dealings with."¹⁷ The British officers preferred to work through a congenial, pro-European strongman rather than assess popular sentiment because they knew that most of the demands the administration made were very unpopular, especially voluntary labor for construction work and head portage as well as surrender of firearms. In justification of their policy they explained that "in earlier days when labour was demanded in very large numbers there is no doubt that pressure was employed, and [the warrant chiefs] continued in the same way under much more difficult circumstances owing to the intense dislike the people have now got for this work."¹⁸ Thus they were

¹⁷Fosbery to Locke, 5 May 1901: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 28 May 1901 (PRO CO 520/8/21479). See also Falk to Bedwell, 16 December 1913 (NAE CSE 18/4/6).

¹⁸Davidson to Bedwell, 10 October 1916 (NAE Calprof 4/5/34).

willing to condone considerable local coercion by the warrant chiefs in order to ensure the fulfillment of their demands. In 1913 the officer stationed at Okigwi admitted that

As a matter of fact the majority of chiefs not only in Okigwi but in every other district are frequently guilty of acts for which they can be criminally prosecuted, many of these, usually bribery and corruption, and slave dealing, come to my knowledge; but unless a complaint is made which does not happen very frequently, or unless the chief in question fails to perform his obligations to the Government, I do not prosecute inquiry; if I did I should have no chiefs at all in the district. The abler the chief and the greater his authority the more certain it is that he is liable to criminal prosecution for some act or other, so that Political officers are obliged to rely upon the more able chiefs whom they know to be rascals, to the exclusion of their less able but more innocent confreres.¹⁹

Only occasionally were warrant chiefs prosecuted and removed from office, and even less after 1912 when Sir Frederick Lugard became Governor of Nigeria and enunciated a policy of thoroughgoing support for British-appointed chiefs.²⁰

In fact the British had little alternative to this policy, given the social and political realities of Southeastern Nigeria. As we saw in Chapter II, leadership in the village was normally competitive and fluid, with a variety of power locuses maintained for the sake of flexibility and autonomy. Even though each village contained elders who could lay claim to certain traditional perquisites, such as first sharing at feasts or control of local shrines, they seldom held continuous, exclusive power. Instead they were convenient, respected spokesmen for the expression of grievances by individuals and factions who found themselves disadvantaged by

¹⁹ Ambrose to Bedwell, 25 July 1913 (NAE Calprof 13/6/47).

²⁰ See for example Lugard to C.O., 21 June 1916 (PRO CO 583/47/32851).

current power arrangements. But their traditional legitimacy was less effective when it came to initiating and coordinating village activities. If they attempted to assert themselves in such matters they became factional leaders like any other local strongmen. The British, like the Aro before them, found that the only way to insert themselves into the local political process was to recognize and support men of wealth and power, whatever their traditional status. These men, who were invariably leaders of factions in search of outside alliance to enhance their local position, then acted as their agents in all matters affecting administration.

In this way, the Southeastern Nigerian environment dictated to the British the form that their administration would take. They assumed the role of factional ally because it was the only one possible. But in giving support to their agents they became deeply enmeshed in local politics and thus surrendered their ideal of impartiality. Any decision made in the Native Courts was likely to be biased in favor of the faction or village that had succeeded in allying itself with the British. Instead of transcending the continuing land disputes and factional vendettas that they encountered in Southeastern Nigeria, the British were incorporated into them as a new outside power source.

As in the past, the ascendance of factions supported by a new outside power source gradually produced counterbalancing pressure by the local leaders, lineages, and villages that faced the prospect of the decline of their own influence. The unpopularity

of the British demands, as well as the extortionate conduct of some of their agents, ensured that most elements of the population except for the lineages and retainers of the warrant chiefs themselves came to resent them and sought ways to counter their power. But the development of alternatives to the British regime was more difficult than it had been with previous outside power sources. They controlled unprecedented military and technological resources and had succeeded as no other trade-professional group in monopolizing force in their own hands.

Nevertheless, local factions disadvantaged by the British presence continued to seek whatever alternative support was available. As in the past, they looked to their traditional lineage heads as a rallying point in face of the warrant chiefs. Building on the tacit unity built in this way, they searched for outside power sources to counterbalance the British. They looked to the Aro, who, though defeated at their capital in 1901, continued to maintain large local settlements, especially in the northern half of the area under study, and who could still provide considerable amounts of advice, arms, and financial support. A typical example was that of Amawzari in Mbano Division. Here, in 1911, resentment against Warrant Chief Iwuoha led the people to refuse his demands and to turn to the Aro settled in nearby compounds. The Aro counseled them to evacuate their foodstuffs and other property and assisted them in fortifying the approaches to the village. For several months, until a patrol could be mounted against Amawzari, the anti-British forces controlled the area and conducted their own

judicial and administrative proceedings.²¹

In addition to the Aro, other trade-professional groups, such as the Awka and Umunoha, continued their widespread activities in the service of their trade and their oracular deities and sometimes provided an ideological focus for resistance to the British. Similarly, local oracles were used by the leaders of resistance to ensure the cohesion and secrecy of their organizations. For example, when a large part of Nkwerre Division expelled its warrant chiefs and refused to cooperate with British officers in 1910, unity was achieved through oaths to the Ogbunorie oracle at Ezemogha. Even after a punitive patrol had destroyed the oracle in 1911, the British found it impossible to obtain information about its operation and leadership.²²

But it was not only traditional competitive power sources that provided a focus for the resurgence of factions opposed to the pro-British elements. Occasionally Christian revival movements served this purpose, as in the case of the "Akwete Prophet," Gabriel Braid, whose denunciations of the British administration encouraged widespread unrest in Mbaise Division in 1916.²³ Equally significant was the effect of rumors spread by German traders in Southeastern Nigeria at the outset of the European War of 1914-1918. They

²¹W.G. Ambrose, report [July 1911] (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

²²See H.R.H. Crawford, "Obonorie Ju-Ju," 14 April 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/2).

²³See P.A. Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria (London, 1926), I, 275; Assistant District Officer, Owerri, to Maxwell, 19 February 1916 (NAE Rivprof 8/4/91).

claimed that the British would soon be defeated and would have to relinquish some of their territory in Africa to Germany.²⁴ These rumors were seized upon by disadvantaged factions throughout the area under study, especially since major troop movements eastward in 1914 for the campaign against the Germans in the Cameroons made it appear that the British were indeed leaving. Factional leaders over large areas of Southeastern Nigeria declared to the British officers that henceforth they were allies of Germany and would no longer respect the warrant chiefs or the British administration.²⁵ As we shall see in Chapter VII, many of these areas maintained virtual independence from 1914 to 1918, as the British were unable to muster sufficient troops to reestablish their predominance until the termination of the European War.

Nevertheless, British military power ultimately overwhelmed any such attempts at cultivation of outside power sources. Far more effective in local terms was the use by dissident faction leaders of the same technique employed against the Aro before the coming of the British: the exploitation of divisions among the British themselves so as to profit by the resulting dissention and competition. The British presence was not nearly so unified and monolithic as London assumed. Traders, missionaries, and

²⁴See Lugard to C.O., 28 October 1914 (PRO CO 583/19/45245); Lugard to C.O., 18 November 1914, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/20/48783); Lugard to C.O., 27 February 1915 (PRO CO 583/31/14272); Boyle to C.O., 4 November 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/38/55086).

²⁵See for example Maxwell to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 31 August and 7 September 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/8); M.E. Howard, report of 18 October 1915 (NAE Calprof 4/4/16).

administrative officials sometimes operated at cross-purposes and thus provided excellent opportunities for competing factions. If an individual or group could not obtain satisfaction from the Native Courts or from the British officer in charge of their area, they often approached resident traders or missionaries to intercede for them at higher levels of the administration.²⁶ Missionaries were in an especially favorable position to fulfill this request, since they frequently assisted the administration in obtaining information about the villages where they worked and even served as clerks of local courts established by the British.²⁷ The most famous of these missionaries, Mary Slessor, often intervened on behalf of her area. In 1910, for example, she wrote an angry letter to a District Commissioner conveying the resentment of the people of Akpap in Calabar Division at his violation of their sacred grove. Though the Commissioner denied the charge and criticized Slessor for her "pathetic belief in the veracity of Natives who approached her," his superiors henceforth took the matter out of his hands and ordered that he refer all correspondence directly to them.²⁸ The presence of a number of Christian sects seeking new sites for missions and schools also provided opportunities

²⁶See G.T. Basden, Niger Ibos (London, 1938), 127; "A Day in the Life of a Trading Agent in West Africa," West African Mail, IV, 170 (29 June 1906), 317.

²⁷See A.C. Douglas, "Quarterly Report on the Qua Ibo Sub-District for the Quarter Ended 30th September 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/4); N.C. Duncan, "Monthly Report on Abak," 1 December 1909 (NAE CSE 3/1/24).

²⁸Slessor to Falk, 1 September 1910, and attached correspondence (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [1]).

to counterbalance the power of the warrant chiefs. When Chief Ohiri of Amakohia (Mbaitoli/Ikeduru Division) became increasingly oppressive in 1914, ordering labor for his personal gain and confiscating property in the name of the British administration, an opposing quarter of that village petitioned the Catholic mission in the area to send them a teacher. As they said, "The reason we took a teacher was because we have small boys whom we want to know 'book.' . . . We thought that if we got a teacher the Chief would be afraid and would not trouble us again." That is, if they had their own literate representative to write petitions on their behalf, they would have a more effective voice in the district headquarters. For his part, Ohiri sought to discredit the opposing faction at district headquarters and also petitioned the nearby Protestant mission to send one of their teachers to the village.²⁹

By far the most useful cleavage to be exploited in the British administration was that between the political and judicial branches. A strict distinction between the two had been established at the time of the foundation of the Protectorate by Sir Claude MacDonald, who believed that political officers seldom possessed sufficient legal knowledge to serve as judges and that the existence of a Supreme Court, with full right of appeal and of legal counsel, was the best safeguard against abuse of power by officers or by their appointed African representatives.³⁰ The experience of the

²⁹See J.C. Maxwell, report of September 1915, and attachments (NAE Abadist 1/28/6).

³⁰See J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London, 1960), 149.

first two decades of British administration tended to substantiate this view, as numerous arrests and initial convictions made by local officers were overturned by the Supreme Court, especially regarding the ubiquitous charge of slave dealing. When, for example, the British first entered Ozuakoli market, in 1902, they arrested fifty-one traders there on charges of dealing in slaves. Upon review, the Supreme Court released all but two of them.³¹ The effect of decisions such as this was to make officers cautious about the correctness of charges they made and also to lead them to avoid litigation in the Supreme Court whenever possible.³²

But the Supreme Court of Southern Nigeria was an open forum, and the justices encouraged both appeal of lower decisions and active participation by lawyers. By the early 1900s much of the area under study was being solicited by lawyers from Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Lagos, who brought to the attention of inland peoples the legal flaws in criminal and civil judgments made against them by political officers. And they offered their services as petition writers and legal representatives to obtain the reversal of those judgments in the Supreme Court. The result was to make the people of the interior acutely aware of the divided authority of the British administration and to encourage factions

³¹Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332); A.B. Harcourt, "Annual Report, Cross River Division, 1902/3": enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 25 June 1903 (PRO CO 520/19/28373).

³²See E.A. Speed, memorandum of 11 February 1914: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 11 February 1914 (PRO CO 583/10/8606); G. Adams, "Miner and Executioner" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [1]); F. Hives, Justice in the Jungle (London, 1932), 142-51.

opposed to local pro-British allies to seek support and redress in the Supreme Court.³³

In January 1910 matters came to a head when the Supreme Court enunciated its landmark decision in the case of Inyang of Akunakuna. Inyang, a warrant chief in the Akunakuna Native Court, had obstructed a British patrol in late 1909, largely because he wished to prevent the British from discovering that the hostility of the area to be attacked was due to his own extortionate conduct. The political officer attached to the patrol fined Akunakuna £500 and all their guns, and when the fine was not immediately paid, he had Inyang seized and imprisoned. Inyang promptly hired Sigismund Macaulay, a Calabar lawyer, to present his case to the Supreme Court, and in a few days he was free on a writ of habeas corpus, the Court declaring that the political charges brought by the British officer were contrary to the principles of British justice.³⁴ As a result of this decision, military operations over a substantial part of Southeastern Nigeria were curtailed for nearly two years until special legislation limiting the powers of the Supreme Court could be drafted and approved by the Colonial Office.³⁵

³³See Egerton to C.O., 19 February 1910, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/91/7492); Egerton to C.O., 5 April 1910 (PRO CO 520/92/12223); Falk to Bedwell, 16 December 1913 (NAE CSE 18/4/6).

³⁴Egerton to C.O., 30 November 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/83/41697); Egerton to C.O., 14 February 1910, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/91/6901); Egerton to C.O., 15 February 1910, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/91/7491); Egerton to C.O., 5 April 1910 (PRO CO 520/92/12223).

³⁵See Egerton to C.O., 5 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/16253); Petition drafted by Sigismund Macaulay on behalf of eight Arochukwu chiefs, 17 August 1909, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Calprof 13/2/22); Minute by J.M.M. Dunlop, 3 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/2).

The Governor, Sir Walter Egerton, complained that "Naked savages are now, through the agency of lawyers, bringing cases before the Supreme Court," and that villagers throughout South-eastern Nigeria refused to accept the judgments of their District Commissioners, insisting that those judgments were not valid until reviewed by the Supreme Court.³⁶ In late 1911 Egerton succeeded in convincing the Colonial Office to abolish the writ of habeas corpus in districts specified by administrative fiat and to remove cases involving land disputes from Supreme Court jurisdiction.³⁷ Nevertheless, the Supreme Court often ignored this legislation and insisted on the power to review politically-motivated penalties. Lawyers continued to be approached by disadvantaged factions to represent their positions.³⁸ Only in 1914, when Sir Frederick Lugard introduced sweeping changes in the administration of Nigeria, were lawyers and the Supreme Court rigorously excluded from the legal process at the local level.³⁹ Yet after only a short period of relative passivity the Supreme Court again began to assert its opposition to the actions of the political branch

³⁶ Egerton to C.O., 5 April 1910 (PRO CO 520/92/12223); Egerton to C.O., 6 June 1910 (PRO CO 520/94/19423); Ross to Lieutenant Governor, Southern Provinces, 23 March 1914: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 25 March 1914 (PRO CO 583/12/13499).

³⁷ Egerton to C.O., 5 April 1910 (PRO CO 520/92/12223); Egerton to C.O., 17 May 1911 (PRO CO 520/103/18570); Minute by Risley, 28 October 1911, on Boyle to C.O., 14 August 1911 (PRO CO 520/105/29037).

³⁸ See for example W.G. Ambrose, memorandum, [May 1913], and Ambrose to Bedwell, 2 September 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

³⁹ Lugard to C.O., 21 May 1913, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/124/18260).

by granting reviews on any available technicality.⁴⁰ Lawyers, sensitive to this ongoing cleavage in the British presence, once again solicited complaints and advised inland villagers of their rights.⁴¹ Thus, despite repeated efforts by the political branch to establish its absolute authority in the interior, the legal branch continued to be a virtual alternative power source for local factions disadvantaged by the rise of pro-British elements. The vast number of petitions by such factions in this period preserved in the Nigerian National Archives reveals how extensively this power source was exploited.

Divisions of this kind in the British administration thus provided extensive opportunities for factions opposed to the warrant chiefs and other British allies to organize and express themselves. But to focus in this way on the formal structure of the administration and on the activities of the British officers is to overlook the far more pervasive opportunities offered by the day-to-day operations of the African staff in the British service. From the outset the number of British officers actually present in South-eastern Nigeria was very small, and the continuous functioning of the many aspects of administration depended upon a small army of clerks, messengers, and other locally recruited and educated

⁴⁰F.P. Lynch, "The Supreme Court and its Relation to Native Policy," [1929]: enclosure in Lynch to C.O., 29 May 1929 (PRO CO 583/166/579); Flood to Brundrit, 13 February 1930: attachment to Brundrit to Flood, 6 February 1930 (PRO CO 583/168/665/1).

⁴¹See Boyle to C.O., 19 October 1916, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/49/54001); Lugard to C.O., 11 June 1917, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/58/35993); and Boyle to C.O., 13 June 1919, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/75/40083).

staff. In 1907 the ratio of Europeans to Africans in the South-eastern Nigerian administration, exclusive of military elements, exceeded one to five, and by 1919 it was about one to ten.⁴² The small numbers of Europeans, combined with their frequent sicknesses and leaves, resulted in virtual autonomy for the African staff in most areas, and especially in the Native Courts.⁴³

The clerks hired to manage the paperwork of the Native Courts were deeply involved in local politics and often used their offices to make large amounts of money through bribery and graft.⁴⁴ Disadvantaged factions could therefore seek the favor of the local Native Court clerk and in this way neutralize the power of the warrant chiefs in the area, who were to some extent vulnerable to the clerk because of the latter's intimate contact with the British officer responsible for his court. Police and messengers attached to each court played a similar role, being in a position to suppress or distort evidence in favor of the highest bidder.⁴⁵ They were also able to muster their own force against any leader or faction who refused to cooperate with them. As one officer observed in

⁴²See F.S. James, "Annual Report, Central Province, 1906," 6 March 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 15 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/27692); Boyle to C.O., 15 April 1919, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/74/28909); Clifford to C.O., 15 November 1920 (PRO CO 583/93/61960); Clifford to C.O., 6 February 1922, and minutes (PRO CO 583/108/10729).

⁴³See James to Thorburn, 26 September 1905: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 7 October 1905 (PRO CO 520/32/38260); Anene, Southern Nigeria in Transition, 266.

⁴⁴See Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs, 109-11, 180-90.

⁴⁵See *Ibid.*, 280-85.

1904,

Police and Court Messengers are themselves the primary cause in most instances of the mal-treatment they have received on more than one occasion at the hand of the natives for the following reasons, they will not carry out their instructions and report themselves to the Head-Chief of the town and state their business. In the case of arrest they will not call upon the Head-Chief to produce the person mentioned in the warrant but instead they, as a rule, visit the house of the person wanted and seize him or her as the case may be.

As no one in the town can read or write this naturally causes friction.

Further they demand women and interfere with plays etc. During my journeys through the country constant, I must say incessant, complaints are brought to me of the way Police and Court Messengers behave in a town when on Government service.

They appear to imagine that because they wear a uniform they are paramount in the town they are sent to.⁴⁶

And it was not only the official representatives of the Native Courts who dispensed influence in local politics. Virtually any African who could claim some connection with a British officer, whether as orderly, interpreter, cook, or personal servant, provided an alternative channel of action for disadvantaged factions.⁴⁷ An example of such an individual was the District Interpreter at Okigwi in 1909 and 1910, named Manilla. He regularly accepted large bribes to conceal evidence regarding local complaints and to influence the officer in charge of Okigwi. In 1910 the people of one quarter of Ishiagu (Afikpo Division) poisoned their warrant chief and then paid Manilla £15 to place the blame on the village of Acha (Okigwi Division). In the same year, a quarter of Eziam

⁴⁶ A.G.B. Harcourt, "Annual Report on the Cross River Division for the Year Ended 31st March 1904": enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 April 1904 (PRO CO 520/24/17373).

⁴⁷ See C. Partridge, Cross River Natives (London, 1905), 14, 258; Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 95-6; Hives, Momo and I (London, 1934).

(Okigwi Division) paid him £15 to conceal a murder that they had committed. Normally such transactions never came to the attention of the British. It was only when the staff member failed to fulfill his part of the bargain, as in the case of Manilla, that the village that had paid the bribe created sufficient disturbance to result in an investigation.⁴⁸

Channels of communication of this kind were not limited only to the Africans regularly employed by the administration. The British presence in Southeastern Nigeria was a complex phenomenon expressed in many different ways. We have seen numerous examples in the preceding chapters of British alliance with certain African groups, and especially with the coastal traders of Calabar, Bonny, and Opobo, to achieve their aims in the interior. These traders, and after 1901 the Aro as well, were called upon to advise and guide the British political officers and military patrols.⁴⁹ From the British viewpoint they were progressive and cooperative allies, but in fact they were also deeply involved in the factional politics of the interior and provided information to the British officers that was far from impartial. They often undertook to have their own inland allies appointed warrant chiefs, as we saw in the case of Umuahia Division, and they sold protection from British attack to villages along the line of march.⁵⁰ In effect,

⁴⁸W.G. Ambrose, report of 7 August 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

⁴⁹See Wordsworth to Moor, 24 November 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 8 December 1902 (PRO CO 520/16/265); Johnson to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 15 January 1907 (NAE Calprof 15/1/2); Fosbery to Egerton, 15 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 3 July 1909 (PRO CO 520/80/24532).

⁵⁰See above, 162-5. See also Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 168-70.

the British reaffirmed preexisting power arrangements and left the brokerage of their influence in the hands of the factional leaders of the coast and interior. They often employed these leaders as "Native Political Agents," as in the case of Coco Bassey of Calabar. Bassey, a prosperous trader with commercial involvements throughout the Cross River valley, maintained a small force of armed retainers with which, at British request, he occasionally invaded inland areas to reopen blockaded trade routes.⁵¹ Despite his well-known tendency to extort bribes from the interior villages and to enslave debtors, he was given full British support, mainly because he was effective in keeping the trade routes open at minimal expense and disorder.⁵² Shortly after his death in 1898, a British officer eulogized: "The late Chief Coco Bassey during his lifetime kept these troublesome tribes in order with a wisdom and tact unusual in an African-- to appreciate the work he did one need only glance at the terrible state of disorganisation consequent on his death."⁵³ Whenever possible, and particularly in the southern part of the area under study, the British worked through agents like Coco Bassey and left to their discretion the use of force and factional alliance

⁵¹See for example Coco Bassey to Griffith, 25 February 1895, and Griffith to MacDonald, 10 April 1895 (NAI Calprof 6/1/2).

⁵²See Slessor to Griffith, 19 November 1896 (NAI Calprof 6/1/3); and memorandum by Phillips, 23 November 1896 (NAI Calprof 8/1).

⁵³Roupell to Moor, 20 May 1899 (NAE Calprof 8/2/5).

to fulfill their commissions.⁵⁴

Because there were so many different avenues of approach to the British, and because so much of their relationship with the villages of the interior was determined by preexisting factionalism, they were not perceived as monolithic. Dealing with them, like dealing with the Aro, meant assessing, confronting, and manipulating a variety of agents who claimed some connection or influence with the new outside power source. It also meant using those agents against one another and against one's enemies to achieve immediate goals. Above all, it meant that no decision emanating from any level of the British administration was considered absolute or final by the inland villagers. Defeated or disadvantaged factions were not annihilated and did not disappear. They reorganized themselves and sought opportunities to rebuild their position either by cultivating an opposing outside power source or by earning the favor of some segment of the British administration. The British were thus caught up in the traditional atmosphere of testing of powerful trade-professional groups.⁵⁵ They were called upon repeatedly to demonstrate their will and ability to support their chosen faction in each area.

If a disadvantaged faction had reason to believe that it had found sufficient new outside backing to defy the local pro-British ally and that, moreover, the British were wavering in

⁵⁴See for example Thorburn to C.O., 26 February 1909 (PRO CO 520/77/9500); M.D.W. Jeffreys, record of inquiry of 29 April 1919: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 13 June 1919 (PRO CO 583/75/40083).

⁵⁵See above, 68-9.

their determination to support that ally, it initiated a series of actions calculated to test its conclusions. At very least it refused to fulfill the orders of the reigning warrant chief and treated his messengers with hostility. If the warrant chief then succeeded in convincing the District Commissioner to send a police detachment to force his opponents to comply with his demands, they usually resisted that detachment and sent their own representatives to the District Commissioner or to a local petition writer or lawyer to intercede on their behalf. In certain extreme cases, especially when they believed that the British had lost the will to fight, they blockaded the roads, destroyed administrative buildings, and attacked the warrant chief and his supporters. If the resistance reached this stage, the leading factions attempted to draw as many other disaffected elements into alliance with them as possible.

Even if the other elements remained cautious and refused to ally actively with the resisting factions, they watched developments closely and until such time as the British responded in force assumed an uncooperative posture toward their own warrant chiefs. As long, therefore, as the British were willing to implement their administration by force of arms, violent resistance was kept to a minimum. But there were two major periods between 1901 and 1919 when the British were either unwilling or unable to dispatch troops in support of their local allies, with the result that extensive areas were closed to them, in some cases for several years.

In 1906, after five years of active Tory support of military

expeditions in Southeastern Nigeria, the newly elected Liberal Government of Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith enunciated a policy of "peaceful penetration," to the applause of humanitarians throughout Great Britain.⁵⁶ Henceforth only major expeditions to open new territory were sanctioned, and then only after careful Colonial Office scrutiny. Military support for the routine activities of political officers was to be kept to a minimum, and even on major expeditions all efforts were to be made to avoid violent confrontation. The effect of this policy was to cause an immediate halt to aggressive support of warrant chiefs and a tendency to avoid entering areas that displayed signs of hostility.⁵⁷ Large sections of Southeastern Nigeria were not visited again by Europeans until 1910, when the British Government finally reversed its policy on military activity in face of distressing reports from officers in the field, as we shall see in Chapter VII. To some extent, this reversal permitted the British to reestablish themselves and their allies, but the growing tension between legal and political branches of the administration impeded full military activity until 1912.

In 1914 another series of events led to an apparent decline in British determination to support their inland allies. At the beginning of that year, the Governor of the newly amalgamated colony of Nigeria, Sir Frederick Lugard, introduced a number of

⁵⁶See African Mail, I, 28 (17 April 1908), 274.

⁵⁷See for example Egerton to C.O., 12 April 1907, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/44/15825); and minutes on Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24798).

administrative innovations designed to strengthen the position of the warrant chiefs. He increased the powers of the Native Courts, reduced the role of District Officers to advisor rather than president of those Courts, and consolidated the Southeastern Nigerian area into several new administrative provinces.⁵⁸ Paradoxically, these innovations instead produced the impression that the central government in Lagos had lost confidence in its local officers and was withdrawing some of their responsibilities.⁵⁹ As we shall see in Chapter VII, several areas became hostile toward the warrant chiefs and challenged the British to defend them. Shortly thereafter, the outbreak of the European War of 1914-1918, with the widespread rumors of a British defeat as well as the departure of troops to the Cameroons front, led many other areas to defy the British.⁶⁰ Not until 1915 was the administration able to begin reestablishing itself, a process requiring two years of major patrols.

One of the main areas of resistance to the British from 1908 to 1919, and a key example of many of the processes outlined above, was the region of modern Awgu Division. It is located on the high,

⁵⁸See Lugard to C.O., 9 May 1913, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/3/16460); Lugard to C.O., 21 May 1913, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/124/18260).

⁵⁹See Wilson to Commandant, 18 November 1914: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 13 January 1915 (PRO CO 583/30/4960); Sinclair to Maxwell, 25 January 1915 (NAE Umprof 4/1/1); Clifford to C.O., 28 October 1919 (PRO CO 583/78/66560); Clifford to C.O., 31 October 1919 (PRO CO 583/78/66565).

⁶⁰See above, 174-5.

broken ridge of land between Okigwi and Nsukka and on the open plain extending to the east. Through it passed one of the heavily traveled Aro trade routes from Bende to the Benue valley, and on its eastern flank was another Aro route, from Uburu to Nkalagu and northwards. For two centuries Aro caravans had traveled through the area, bringing the slaves, horses, and leatherwork of northern and central Nigeria to exchange for the manufactures, especially textiles and weapons, available from European traders on the coast.⁶¹ The Aro also infiltrated and eventually came to dominate the market at Uburu, one of the few inland areas where salt could be obtained. By the late eighteenth century at the latest Uburu had been transformed into a major fair where all types of merchandise, including slaves, were traded actively by the Aro, Awka, and Hausa traders.⁶²

Because the routes northward from Okigwi and Uburu passed through Awgu Division, the Aro gradually cultivated numerous social and economic connections in the various villages along the route and developed a corresponding political influence. The efficient progress of trade necessitated that the villages they dealt with be controlled by leaders congenial to their presence. Hence they supported factional heads in each village who were willing to serve as their local representatives, whatever their traditional status. In some cases they even established as their

⁶¹See above, 14-17.

⁶²A.W. Bedell, report of 31 December 1904 (NAE CSE 1/5/1); Moorhouse to Egerton, 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24796).

agents locally born slaves who were returned to their villages after a period of indoctrination in Arochukwu. Often powerful dynasties were built up by these agents, who were able to draw on their economic and political connections with the Aro to expand their wealth and power.⁶³ But here as elsewhere in Southeastern Nigeria the Aro presence was not unified and coordinated. The various Aro families competed against each other for control of the villages. This Aro factionalism enabled disadvantaged elements in each village to develop counterbalancing support against the local Aro agent by seeking alliance with competing Aro factions.⁶⁴

Thus, as we have seen elsewhere in Southeastern Nigeria, local factionalism expressed itself in terms of outside alliance. Virtually every village was divided into two and sometimes three mutually competitive factions, which constantly sought to increase their own power against the others. Not only did they seek support from the Aro traders who passed through the area, but they also attempted to ally with factions in nearby villages. Often, in fact, two factions in neighboring communities were more closely allied and cooperative with each other than with the opposing factions in their own villages.⁶⁵ In the nineteenth

⁶³See W.G. Ambrose, "Ogu Escort Final Report," [June 1913] (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); and C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe (London, 1937), 130-38.

⁶⁴Ambrose to Bedwell, 2 September 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁶⁵See Moorhouse to Egerton, 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24796).

century, for example, powerful factions in Nenwe and Mgbowo had allied in order to dominate their opposing co-villagers and also gave support to disadvantaged factions in Awgu, Maku, and Uduma, causing the dominant factions of those villages to be hostile to Nenwe and Mgbowo.⁶⁶ This intense factionalism was exacerbated by the proximity of Uburu market, where war captives could easily be sold as slaves to the Aro.⁶⁷

When the British first arrived in Awgu Division, during the Northern Hinterland Expedition of 1908, they were quickly drawn into the factional politics of the area. The Ihie quarter of Ishiagu, one of the most junior of the seven quarters of that village, assisted the column and therefore received a warrant for its leader to represent all of Ishiagu.⁶⁸ And in Nenwe the faction made up of Abada and Amaoji quarters won British support against the opposing faction of Amudu and Ihueze quarters and succeeded in having its leader, Okoro Eleke, recognized as warrant chief for the whole village.

But the Northern Hinterland Expedition passed very quickly through Awgu Division. Its officers had been cautioned that the new policy of "peaceful penetration" necessitated that they avoid violent confrontation and instead leave the foundation of

⁶⁶H.S. Burrough, report of 30 June 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/21); Burrough to Fosbery, 4 September 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/21).

⁶⁷Mytton to Secretary, Central Province, 24 July 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 27 November 1909 (PRO CO 520/83/41150).

⁶⁸H. Waddington, "Intelligence Report on Ishiago," [1933] (NAI CSO 26/3/28384).

British rule to the political officers stationed in the area at their departure.⁶⁹ Violent resistance was encountered only at Awgu and Ihe, and Nkerifi was destroyed for failing to cooperate with the column.⁷⁰ A few roads were built with conscripted village labor, and then the troops moved on.⁷¹ The two political officers responsible for the area, one quartered at Okigwi and the other at Udi, made initial visits with small police escorts to the various villages, but they were refused food, shelter, and cooperation except by the immediate followings of the warrant chiefs, who complained to them that their "subjects" were unruly and required punishment.⁷² Factions opposed to the warrant chiefs refused to recognize summonses to the Native Courts and chased the court messengers away. The new roads were quickly overgrown, and British traffic between Okigwi and Udi was diverted eastwards to avoid the hostile area.⁷³

Because Awgu Division was midway between the two political stations, there was some disagreement between the two officers as to who was actually responsible for a large number of villages,

⁶⁹ See Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24781).

⁷⁰ Moorhouse to Egerton, 8 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24781).

⁷¹ Moorhouse to Egerton, 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24796).

⁷² H.S. Burrough, report of 30 June 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/21); Burrough to Fosbery, 4 September 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/21); W.G. Ambrose, report of February 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁷³ Mytton to Secretary, Central Province, 24 July 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 27 November 1909 (PRO CO 520/83/41150); W.G. Ambrose, memorandum of 3 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

such as Uduma, which was not visited by a European until 1913 because neither officer accepted responsibility for it.⁷⁴ After the initial visits mentioned above, the officers withdrew from the area and requested strong military patrols and escorts to enable them to force their orders on the people. But because military support was now rarely granted, and when granted was strictly limited in scope and duration, they ceased to tour the area at all. Their withdrawal gave free rein to the African staff employed at the Okigwi station, who, with the sole exception of the jail keeper, accepted bribes and peddled influence at every opportunity, as in the case of the interpreter, Manilla.⁷⁵

In general, the distance of the British political stations, along with the continued commercial activity of the Aro in the area, meant that in practical terms the Aro were a more vital and available presence than the British. Factions continued to seek their alliance, particularly against the lineages led by the warrant chiefs. As in Umuahia Division, the Aro took advantage of the superficial British presence to depict themselves as controlling the British and extorted money from villages on the threat of invasion by a British patrol.⁷⁶ Whenever possible, they secured the recognition of their own agents as warrant chiefs,

⁷⁴W.G. Ambrose, report of 25 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁷⁵See above, 183-4. W.G. Ambrose, comments on Bedwell to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 19 January 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

⁷⁶See above, 162-5. See also Moorhouse to Egerton, 30 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24796).

and they also quickly learned to use the Supreme Court to support them in slave-dealing and land ownership cases against the charges of the political branch.⁷⁷

Throughout 1908 and 1909 the factions that had allied with the British appealed to them for assistance in local disputes. For example, the village of Mgbowo sent repeated requests to the District Commissioner at Okigwi for help in its ongoing conflict with Maku. When he was unable to help them, they dispatched a delegation to Calabar, seat of the provincial headquarters, to seek assistance from higher authority.⁷⁸ Similarly, Lokpanta requested British assistance in its continuing land dispute with Awgu. Efforts to secure the cooperation of Awgu in settling the dispute revealed that the warrant chief there was powerless, and that nearly all of Awgu was opposed to the British presence. In late 1909 the political officers were finally able to obtain military support, and the villages of Maku and Nkerifi were attacked and destroyed, followed by sections of Awgu, Nenwe, Mpu, and Ugwueme in 1910 and 1911.⁷⁹ But the withdrawal of the troops following these operations led to an immediate resurgence of opposition to the British allies, with the encouragement of the Aro residing throughout the area.⁸⁰ Awgu, for example,

⁷⁷Ambrose to Bedwell, 2 September 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁷⁸Burrough to Fosbery, 4 September 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/21).

⁷⁹See Burrough to Secretary, Eastern Province, 12 October 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/21); Egerton to C.O., 27 November 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/83/41150); G. Adams, "Resurrection of the Long Juju" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [3]).

⁸⁰Cotgrave, handing-over notes of August 1912 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

retaliated against Lokpanta with a raid that killed two women of the warrant chief's compound.⁸¹

Once again the political officers expressed their dissatisfaction with the military support they were receiving, but the Provincial Commissioner staunchly followed his orders to seek "peaceful penetration" and curtailed the use of patrols in the area for nearly sixteen months.⁸² Further to the south, however, the Owerri-Bende-Okigwi Patrol of 1911 invaded Uburu and its market and expelled the Aro who lived and traded there. They fled northward into Awgu Division and added their voices to the agitation against the British.⁸³ By early 1913 the situation in the village of Awgu had reached critical proportions. The British officers had failed to visit the area for nearly a year, and there was increasing doubt regarding their determination to support their allies, despite the patrol that had been mounted against the opposing quarters in mid-1910.⁸⁴ Those quarters refused to reveal the identity of the murderers of the two Lokpanta women, and in January 1913 all of Awgu was engulfed in a civil war between pro- and anti-British factions, the latter seeking support in the form of money and arms from Aro residing

⁸¹W.G. Ambrose, report of February 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁸²Bedwell to Boyle, 19 January 1912 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); W.G. Ambrose, comments on Bedwell to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 19 January 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

⁸³W.G. Ambrose, memorandum of 6 February 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); Ambrose, "Okigwi Escort, Final Report," 12 April 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

⁸⁴Minute by A.G. Boyle, 25 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

in Awgu and Uduma.⁸⁵ Responding to the emergency, provincial headquarters finally approved a patrol, which attacked the opposing faction in March 1913 and reinstated the warrant chief and his supporters.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, similar circumstances further to the east in Nenwe had also produced a critical situation. Warrant Chief Okoro Eleke, at the head of his faction made up of Abada and Amaoji quarters, had succeeded twice, in 1910 and in 1911, in convincing the British to send armed support against the opposing faction of Nenwe, consisting of Amudo and Ihueze quarters. In 1913 these opposing quarters allied with Uduma, and Uduma led a delegation to Awka to swear unity on the supposedly abolished Agbala oracle. They acted at the suggestion of an Awka man named Ifediora, who assured them that he was immune to the British because his brother was a clerk at the Awka headquarters.⁸⁷ But Okoro Eleke was able to convince the British to send support, and in April 1913 Uduma was attacked and the opposing quarters of Nenwe subdued.

But again the withdrawal of the British forces from the area in mid-1913 led to a resurgence of the anti-British factions. The people of Uduma attacked a British roadmaking party and refused to meet with the political officer at Okigwi barely one

⁸⁵ Ambrose to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 28 February 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); Ambrose, report of 3 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁸⁶ W.G. Ambrose, report of 3 April 1913, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

⁸⁷ W.G. Ambrose, report of 25 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13).

month after the departure of the patrol.⁸⁸ By early 1914 most of Awgu Division had isolated the pro-British factions and had refused to cooperate with British officers, especially in their demand for volunteer labor to build the railway through the area. The District Officer at Okigwi summarized the general situation by saying that Awgu Division, despite the activities of the previous six years, was "practically unopened."⁸⁹

Then, in October 1914, during the first days of the European War, the entire Division went over to resistance, as did substantial parts of southern Udi and Nkanu Divisions to the north. Warrant chiefs of many villages, including Okoro Eleke of Nenwe, were expelled and forced to go into hiding, and several were killed. A number of pro-British traders were attacked, and Native Court summonses were ignored nearly everywhere.⁹⁰ Initial investigations revealed that the news of the European War had spread quickly throughout the area and had encouraged anti-British factions to take the initiative. The leader of the opposing faction in Ishiagu, according to a local British officer, "called the people together and told them that the Government had left the country, that their soldiers had been killed by the Germans and that they should arm themselves and drive away any messenger or police who

⁸⁸Lugard to C.O., 7 August 1913 (PRO CO 583/4/28130).

⁸⁹Hargrove to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 16 April 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

⁹⁰Lugard to C.O., 20 October 1914 (PRO CO 583/19/43995); Lugard to C.O., 29 April 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/32/23453); Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 28 September 1914, and associated correspondence (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

should come to them."⁹¹ The situation became so urgent, especially in southern Udi and Nkanu Divisions, that troops desperately needed for the fighting at the Cameroons front were sent to the Udi area instead. Of particular importance from the viewpoint of the administration was the completion of the railway through Udi so that the large deposits of coal recently discovered to the north of that area could be extracted for the war effort. While resistance continued, rail construction was at a standstill.

Patrols operating in the Udi and Nenwe areas succeeded by January 1915 in reinstating the warrant chiefs and other British allies and in restarting rail construction.⁹² But similar disturbances in other areas of Southeastern Nigeria required the withdrawal of the patrols before Awgu Division could be thoroughly subdued. In April 1915 warrant chiefs throughout the area, including Okoro Eleke of Nenwe, were again expelled.⁹³ Because of the demands of the Cameroons campaign, troops could be spared to deal only with Nenwe, which was close to the proposed rail line. Even though a perfunctory surrender meeting was held at Awgu, the rest of the Division was left to the political officers at Udi and Okigwi, who as before toured the area very little and made repeated but

⁹¹Hargrove to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 19 September 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/7. See also Boyle to C.O., 4 November 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/38/55086)).

⁹²Lugard to C.O., 29 April 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/32/23453); Lugard to C.O., 15 February 1917, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/56/13903).

⁹³Firth to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 16 April 1915, and associated correspondence (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

unsuccessful requests for military escorts. They also found that their attempts to deal with the causes of the persistent resistance of the area were thwarted by their superiors. The District Officer at Okigwi, for example, conducted an investigation of the conduct of Warrant Chief Okoro Eleke of Nenwe, who had been expelled twice by opposing quarters of his village. But when he reported to Lagos that Okoro had brought these attacks on himself by his extortionate behavior and should be removed from office, the Lieutenant Governor, on orders from Governor Lugard, directed him to reinstate Okoro and to ignore his conduct. His justification was that

The methods asserted by strong chiefs to assert their authority previous to our appearance were in every probability looting, burning the houses of those who did not obey them if they did not go so far as to matchet them. We cannot expect therefore an immediate alteration in their manners and unless his actions were too heinous to be capable of being overlooked, I should deprecate being too severe on him.⁹⁴

It was Lugard's view that stronger rather than weaker British agents were needed, whatever tactics they chose to fulfill the British demands.

Thus, shortly after the reinstallation of Okoro Eleke, he was again expelled by opposing quarters, and a force of one hundred troops had to be dispatched in August 1915 to reinstate him and to ensure the safe progress of the rail line.⁹⁵ Despite repeated

⁹⁴ Secretary, Southern Provinces, to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 28 October 1915 (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

⁹⁵ Firth to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 31 August 1915, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 3/1/7); Boyle to C.O., 7 November 1916, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/49/58210).

requests from the local political officers that Okoro be limited in power, he received full support from Governor Lugard. But Okoro's position remained unstable, and in June 1917 he was again expelled from Nenwe as part of a wave of similar expulsions of warrant chiefs throughout Awgu Division. When the District Officer at Okigwi went to Nenwe, he was told by the hostile quarters

that they had no intention of coming to see me, or having anything whatever to do with the English in future, as they were waiting for the Germans, who had promised to come to rule them soon, and that the Germans had driven out the English and the only English that were left were the few kept in Africa and who were hiding from the Germans, and stealing from them (the Lengwis [Nenwe]) in order to live, that the English were collecting carriers at Oburu [Uburu] etc., to give to the Germans, and that the Germans had taken the Railway line, and that the English were sending coal to the Germans as they had ordered them to do.⁹⁶

The anti-British forces had sought advice and assistance from the large numbers of Aro and Awka men in the area and had threatened pro-British factions by saying that the Germans would come and kill them at the end of the War. A British police patrol succeeded in July 1917 in reinstating Okoro, amid heavy resistance at Nenwe and from hostile elements of Mgbowo and Uduma. Similar actions were carried out in the same year against Maku and Achi.⁹⁷

But these were merely temporary expedients to maintain the safety of the rail line. It was clear that Awgu Division had to be invaded once and for all by a force strong enough to establish

⁹⁶Hives to Resident, Owerri Province, 25 June 1917 (NAE CSE 21/6/4).

⁹⁷Lugard to C.O., 17 November 1917, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/61/62014); Lugard to C.O., 8 June 1918, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/66/34970); Boyle to C.O., 14 December 1918, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/68/2539).

the British presence there.⁹⁸ The need for such action was underscored in December 1917 when the anti-British forces of Nenwe attacked and killed Okoro Eleke in the Nenwe marketplace. In April 1918 a force of 180 troops initiated what was to be the second largest military operation in Southeastern Nigeria between 1900 and 1919, in terms of expenditure of ammunition. Heavy resistance was encountered at Ugbo, Maku, Enwen, and Achi, but the patrol failed to arrest the murderers of Okoro before it was forced to withdraw by a major influenza epidemic in November 1918.⁹⁹ Shortly thereafter anti-British factions again refused to cooperate with the political officers and expelled their warrant chiefs. Disturbances of this sort were reported at Nenwe, Ndeaboh, Mgbowo, Mpu, Awgu, Lokpanta, Ugwueme, Enwen, Maku, and Achi. The Nenwe also threatened to sabotage the rail line during the anticipated visit of the Lieutenant Governor to the area.¹⁰⁰ In January 1919 yet another patrol was dispatched to Awgu Division, meeting resistance at Nenwe and destroying parts of Ugwueme and Mpu.¹⁰¹ But it was not until a new administrative station was established in Awgu later that year, with its own detachment of troops readily available to

⁹⁸Minute by Moorhouse, 26 August 1917 (NAE CSE 21/6/4).

⁹⁹Boyle to C.O., 23 March 1919, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/74/23395).

¹⁰⁰Clifford to C.O., 26 August 1919, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/77/55481); Resident, Owerri Province, to Resident, Calabar Province, 11 February 1919 (NAE Calprof 4/8/15).

¹⁰¹Clifford to C.O., 26 August 1919, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/77/55481).

the officer in charge, that the British presence was finally stabilized.¹⁰²

The example of Awgu Division reveals the ambiguity of terms such as "conquest" and "rule" in Southeastern Nigeria. The sporadic application of force and the extraction of promises from reluctant villagers were ineffectual in producing the kind of governmental framework that the British desired, particularly when there were alternative power sources available in the area. Factions disadvantaged by the ascendance of the warrant chiefs waited until the British officers and their patrols had left, and then sought advice and support in evading their exactions, either from locally-resident trade-professional groups, such as the Aro, or from among the disparate elements of the British administration itself. So long as the British were willing to apply force in a constant manner to implement their demands and those of their allies, disadvantaged factions were restrained in their tendency to test the new power arrangements. But when, as in Awgu Division, the British presence was only an intermittent phenomenon, the constant testing of that presence was inevitable. At most, the British had succeeded in establishing themselves in the same way that the Aro and other preceding trade-professional groups had: as relatively immune traders and professional practitioners with occasional access to mercenaries to assist their local allies. This was not "conquest," and Southeastern Nigerians readily pointed out to British officers that they, unlike the Hausa of northern Nigeria,

¹⁰²Roberts to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 24 January 1919: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 23 March 1919 (PRO CO 583/74/23395).

had never been conquered.¹⁰³ True sovereignty continued to reside in the land, and any rumor that the British intended to confiscate land resulted in immediate hostility. As one Azumini leader put it in 1914, "We agree to help Government do work but we do not agree to let Government take our land."¹⁰⁴

By 1915, the new Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, had become aware of the failure of the British to establish themselves in Southeastern Nigeria. In August of that year he ordered that

for the future it should be definitely stated in the Terms of Surrender offered to the inhabitants of areas it has been found necessary to make the objects of punitive expeditions and patrols that the whole of the area occupied by the recalcitrant people shall be considered as being placed under the control of the Government as conquered territory.¹⁰⁵

Henceforth all villages dealt with by military or police patrol were compelled to sign a document declaring that "We the undersigned, being the Principal Chiefs and Headmen of _____, having taken up arms against the Government of Nigeria and now being desirous of surrendering, do hereby acknowledge that all territory belonging to the people of _____ is now conquered territory."¹⁰⁶ District Officers were authorized to threaten

¹⁰³ See A.E. Afigbo, "The Masses and Nationalism: Some Observations on the Nigerian Example," *Ikorok*, I, 2 (November 1971), 59.

¹⁰⁴ Statement by Nkabu of Azumini, quoted in Maxwell to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 31 August 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/8).

¹⁰⁵ Moorhouse to Provincial Commissioner, Calabar, 15 August 1915 (NAE Calprof 4/4/17).

¹⁰⁶ See form enclosed in Boyle to C.O., 7 November 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/58210).

land confiscation in the case of particularly recalcitrant villages.¹⁰⁷ But Lugard and his staff knew that such measures were largely ineffective formalities. The only definite means, in their view, of establishing the conquered status of Southeastern Nigeria was to impose a form of tribute or direct taxation on all villages, as had already been done in northern and then western Nigeria.¹⁰⁸ As Tropical Service Cadets at Oxford University were instructed in the 1920s, direct taxation was

less important, from a financial point of view, but from an administrative aspect it is a very potent implement. Its most important aspect in the eye of the average native is that to pay tax is to admit the overlordship of the person to whom it is paid. . . . Such payment therefore is regarded by the payer not merely as a contribution to the exchequer but as an incontrovertible proof of submission to the authority of the payee. It is not merely "tax" but it is also "tribute". Its successful collection is therefore not only a proof of authority but a most useful means of asserting and augmenting that authority. Where it is absent the people have that much more excuse for attempting to flout the government. Thus the first time of imposing a direct tax will be a time of possible resistance by force, but once it is successfully imposed, a great step forward has been made in the firm foundation of administration, and in the political education of the people.¹⁰⁹

But the Colonial Office repeatedly refused Lugard's request that direct taxation be imposed, as we shall see in Chapter VIII, largely because it was certain to arouse widespread and possibly disastrous resistance. Until 1928, when taxation for the area

¹⁰⁷ See Hargrove to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 3 February 1916, and minute by Lugard, 18 February 1916 (NAE CSE 21/4/1).

¹⁰⁸ Minutes by Boyle and Lugard, 27 August 1917 (NAE CSE 21/6/4); Lugard to C.O., 8 June 1918 (PRO CO 583/66/34970).

¹⁰⁹ H.H. Mathews, address to Tropical Service Cadets, Oxford University, 29 October 1926 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 783 [3]).

was finally approved, the administration had to content itself with marginal British presence as reinforced by military and police patrols.

CHAPTER VI

MYTHS AND REALITIES

OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION, 1900-1919:

CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

If the British had failed to achieve a complete political and military conquest, even less had they conquered in the cultural realm, despite their pretensions in this area. Although they perceived themselves as humanitarian agents of the spread of rationality over superstition, the impact of their actions was very different. In particular, they were mistaken in the belief that the legal procedures employed in the Native and District Courts were clear, straightforward, and impartial. British rules of evidence and legal procedure, when transplanted into the Southeastern Nigerian environment, were as arcane as the methods that had been used by the traditional trade-professional groups in the exploitation of their oracles. The intricacies of legal reasoning and precedent, especially in cases of protracted disagreement between the political and judicial branches of the administration, inevitably required the employment of one or more lawyers, who, like the Aro or Awka agents, were able to guide their clients through the elaborate ritual of adjudication. In the courtroom, the British found it necessary to adopt a number of traditional or pseudo-traditional devices in an attempt to ensure honesty. For example, in the Bende District Court, presided over

by the District Commissioner himself, all non-Christian witnesses were compelled to swear on "a bundle of bones, sticks, and feathers," saying "If I don't talk true may this juju kill me and all my family."¹

The penalties imposed by the courts were not significantly different from those used before the establishment of the British presence. Despite their efforts to end seizure of persons and confiscation of property as means of enforcing legal decisions, the British themselves soon adopted these techniques as the most efficient in the Southeastern Nigerian environment. Whenever touring officers found that the people of a particular village had refused to fulfill British demands for labor, they confiscated a certain amount of food or property until the work was done.² The imprisonment of convicted criminals exactly paralleled the enslavement of unsuccessful petitioners to the traditional oracles, and there is substantial evidence that prisoners were considered to be British slaves, as were those slaves who had fled their owners to seek the protection of the British. The District Commissioner at Bende in the early twentieth century, for example, had ended a dispute over the parentage of a young freed slave by declaring him a ward of the Court, renaming him Solomon, and sending him to Calabar for mission education. The District Commissioner

¹F. Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice in Nigeria (London, 1930), 166.

²Crawford Cockburn to Moor, 18 March 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/2); R.K. Granville, "Political Report on Bendi District for quarter ending 30th June 1902," 28 June 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/3); N.A.P.G. MacKenzie, "Intelligence Report on the Obowo and Ihite Clans of the Okigwi Division," [1933] (NAI CSO 26/3/29945).

reported that

Years afterwards, when grown into a strapping youth, Solomon revisited the scenes of his childhood and dutifully paid his respects to me. Then and only then it was that I heard how my action had been construed by the people of his District, who had firmly believed that I had used my authority to acquire the boy, and had then sold him as a slave.³

This impression was reinforced by the tendency of the British to use prisoners on administrative and even personal projects. In 1917, for example, the Church Missionary Society grounds at Awka were being maintained by fifty prisoners on loan from the local jail. District officers frequently assigned prisoners to carry the loads of touring officials and to work for local British firms.⁴ As though to emphasize the similarity to slave labor, the prison officials annually calculated the value in money of the work performed by prisoners.⁵ After the abolition of domestic slavery in 1907, a police patrol without British supervision visited Atani (Ogbaru Division) and seized sixty children who had recently been purchased as slaves. Although six of the children were returned to their northern Nigerian villages, the remainder were given to the police and to other Onitsha notables as domestic servants, on the sole condition that they be given mission educations. The slave owners of Atani were given no compensation

³Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 185.

⁴R.A. Roberts to his wife, 13 July 1917 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1348); G.F. Sharp to Arthur Sharp, 10 March 1917 (RH MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 281 [1]); C. Partridge, Cross River Natives (London, 1905), 43.

⁵See H. Bedwell, "Annual Report on the Eastern Province for the Year 1906," 27 April 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 22 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/28311); W. Fosbery, "Annual Report for the Eastern Province for the Year 1909," 18 February 1910: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 13 March 1910 (PRO CO 520/92/11081).

whatever, and they could only conclude that the British and their agents had stolen their slaves for their own use. The argument that civilization required that all slaves be freed was lost on them, and for good reason.⁶

In terms of day to day operation, the introduction of the Native Courts did not substantially alter the competitive, arbitral character of justice at the local level. Disputes continued to be heard in the homes of local notables, including the warrant chiefs themselves, in exchange for suitable fees, and most cases were settled in traditional ways long before reaching the Native Courts.⁷ The British, instead of unifying the judicial process into one hierarchical system, as was their intention, filled the same function as earlier trade-professional groups: they were outside mediators in the limited number of cases that could not be solved within the village. They were useful to Southeastern Nigerians because they had no lineage connections and therefore no overwhelming bias, and because they were a relatively new element with little previous involvement or preconceived ideas about particular disputes. They were also relatively naive regarding the social dynamics of the village. In cases involving considerable ambiguity of precedent, both sides in the dispute were willing to take the risk that their rhetoric would be successful in swaying the District Commissioner.⁸

⁶African Mail, I, 39 (3 July 1908), 382. See also F. Hives, Justice in the Jungle (London, 1932), 83-4.

⁷See M.M. Green, Igbo Village Affairs (London, 1947), 104-6.

⁸E.M. Falk, "Notes on the Customs and Superstitions etc. of

The British were perceived, then, as the newest in a long series of outside arbitrators who sought to concentrate in their own hands an increasing amount of the profits to be made from this lucrative profession. Their destruction of the Aro oracle and of other traditional judicial agencies elsewhere was not viewed as the triumph of reason over superstition but rather as the forcible overthrow of competitors in the field of adjudication. The British officers continually stressed the superiority of their own "juju" to traditional "jujus" and advocated the use of their ntugbu (literally, oracle), the Native Courts.⁹ The oracular centers and their agents responded by applying harsh penalties to individuals who sought to take cases to the Native Courts. In 1910, for example, an Onitsha man who took a complaint to the District Commissioner at Onitsha was attacked by the agents of the clandestinely operating Ibinukpabi oracle at Arochukwu, who confiscated all his possessions and sold thirteen of his family members into slavery. Only when he made the journey to Arochukwu and promised not to consult the British again were his possessions restored.¹⁰ As can be seen from the date of this example, British efforts to suppress competitors to their own legal system were far from effective in the early years of the colonial administration.

the population of Aba Division," 24 December 1920 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [1]), section 1(p); Partridge, Cross River Natives, 190-91.

⁹Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 26; R.F.G. Adams, A Modern Ibo Grammar (London, 1932), 126n.

¹⁰Police testimony attached to Chamley to Harcourt, 26 January 1911 (NAE Calprof 13/2/22).

Even the manifest achievements of British technology failed to win them the admiration and subservience that they expected. In the eyes of Southeastern Nigerians, the source of British technological success was a quasi-supernatural power that the people summarized as "book"--a collection of secret knowledge and skills bound up with literacy. Just as Aro success was attributed to the power of their oracular deity, British achievements were the result of their possession of "book." But "book" was not seen as a sign of the inherent superiority of European culture--despite British pretensions on this matter--but rather as an implement that could be available to anyone who had the good fortune, aggressiveness, and wealth to acquire it. It was considered to be learnable and transferable, as was demonstrated by the heavy demand for schools and mission stations throughout Southeastern Nigeria. Harry Johnston observed in 1888 that "there is something very remarkable in the way in which these negroes spring to the contact of civilisation, and hasten to avail themselves of every facility for acquiring knowledge which our missionaries and merchants place in their way."¹¹ European techniques, such as smallpox vaccination, were eagerly learned and emulated, and traditional doctors sought to apprentice their sons to European physicians to learn their skills.¹² But no special credit accrued thereby

¹¹H.H. Johnston, "The Niger Delta," Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, n.s. X, 12 (December 1888), 755.

¹²See Moor to F.O., 13 November 1897 (PRO FO 2/123/140);

to the British; rather than arousing admiration and reverence, their technology evoked ambition and competitiveness. As a later governor of Nigeria bitterly reflected, the Igbo and Ibibio villager accorded British innovations only

the most grudging and reluctant tribute of wonder or admiration. . . . He accepts them, as he accepts the men who have invented and constructed them, as things which differ from himself and from his own ways and works in kind rather than in degree; and it is questionable whether any question of comparative superiority or inferiority ever presents itself to his self-complacent imagination.¹³

All aspects of European culture became the objects of emulation, and this was not limited to the polite discourse of the classroom. Southeastern Nigerians were adept at copying the methods of the British administration as a means of resisting the influence and demands of that administration. From the earliest days of the twentieth century, the British had to deal with numerous complaints of "blackmailers," who wore several items of European clothing, adopted a few of the trappings of literacy, and posed as British agents to extort money and services from inland villagers. They knew that the British military activities had produced in the villagers "a respect amounting to fear of any person in European clothing, . . . and to annoy [them] in any way might have disastrous consequences to the

"Annual Report of the Niger Coast Protectorate, 1898-99": enclosure in Moor to C.O., 1 October 1899 (PRO CO 444/2/31216); Partridge, Cross River Natives, 22; N.W. Thomas, report of 3 August 1911: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 23 August 1911 (PRO CO 520/105/29037).

¹³Sir Hugh Clifford, "Murder and Magic," Blackwood's Magazine, CCXIII, 1292 (June 1923), 826.

unfortunate villager concerned."¹⁴ One political officer described the results of this fear:

A sharp-witted scoundrel from the Coast (Sierra Leone to Calabar) can easily pass himself off on bush natives as representing the Government if he possesses a few odds and ends of uniform--for instance, a policeman's tattered breeches or a soldier's red fez and a pair of khaki puttees. Attired in these, he settles in some remote bush town and acquires a little fortune by blackmailing the easily-gulled villagers. These rascals naturally get the Government into bad repute, and are one of the worst thorns in the side of the Political Officer.¹⁵

A common means of extorting money was to claim that for a fee one could prevent an approaching British officer or patrol from visiting a village.¹⁶ But far more elaborate ruses were also devised. Local traditions among the Aro of Ndizuogu (Nkwerre Division) recall that in the early years of the British administration, bands of up to five hundred men were organized, led by the lightest-complected among them, and dressed in as many items of European clothing as could be found. "After the above arrangements, the propagandists were sent out to different towns on political campaign, to announce the coming of the false British soldiers." Then the band

¹⁴E.M. Falk, "Notes on the Customs and Superstitions etc. of the population of Aba Division," 24 December 1920 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [1]), section 1(g).

¹⁵Partridge, Cross River Natives, 158-9. See also H. Bedwell, "Annual Report on the Eastern Province for the Year 1906," 27 April 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 22 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/28311).

¹⁶Partridge, Cross River Natives, 73; Tribunal records of 11 March 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 4 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/16421).

marched into the villages and conducted themselves as they had learned by observing actual British patrols. If the villagers refused to produce the demanded food and money, the "soldiers" looted and destroyed the village.¹⁷ Several instances were also recorded in which individuals established fraudulent Native Courts for the purposes of extortion. One such individual was described by a political officer:

He had been making quite a lot by issuing false summonses upon people and fining them heavily after going through a sort of farcical form of trial in which his creatures played the part of witnesses against the summoned ones. He was got up to represent a District Commissioner, giving out that he was opening a new District for the Government. He had his own police, court messengers and prison warders; all sufficiently like the real thing to deceive the ignorant population with whom he had to deal. He managed to do a lot of damage to the prestige of the Government before he was caught, since he varied his methods and increased his profits by a system of blackmail.¹⁸

In 1914 it was discovered that the Aro in Arochukwu were issuing their own arrest warrants under the authority of the British administration, and that these warrants were being dutifully executed by the British police without any reference to the District Officer at Arochukwu.¹⁹

The most extensive fraudulent Native Court system was that established by Opobo traders in the area of Abak Division between 1902 and 1909. In the late nineteenth century, with the support

¹⁷R.O. Igwegbe, The Original History of Arondizuogu, from 1635-1960 (Aba, 1962), 99.

¹⁸Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 143.

¹⁹Maxwell to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 14 April 1914 (NAE Calprof 5/4/297).

of British influence, the Opobo men had pushed up the Kwa Ibo River and had taken over most of the trade, formerly in the hands of Aro, Bonny, and Ibeno traders.²⁰ Their predominance was firmly established by the Aro Expedition, which subdued their commercial opposition and abolished the right of each village to control its own part of the paths. But the coverage of the Aro Expedition was superficial, and the political officers stationed at Opobo and Uyo tended to leave the management of the largely unvisited central Kwa Ibo to certain Opobo traders who were designated Native Political Agents.²¹ But with or without the knowledge of those Agents large numbers of Opobo men infiltrated the area and carried on an extensive trade in slaves and smuggled munitions, as well as in palm products.²² While posing as agents and representatives of the administration, they also offered their advice and support as alternative power sources against the exactions of the warrant chiefs and Native Court clerks of the area, who operated virtually without the supervision of British officers. The clerk of the Inen Native Court, for example, took

²⁰Whitehouse to Moor, 15 August 1895 (NAI Calprof 6/1/2); Whitehouse, "Report on a journey to the upper Kwo Ibo and from thence overland to Itu on the Cross River," extracts: enclosure in Moor to F.O., 20 May 1897 (PRO FO 2/122/56); District Commissioner, Opobo, telegram of 9 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

²¹Fosbery to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 7 September 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 8 October 1909 (PRO CO 520/82/35416).

²²N.C. Duncan, "First (July) Report on Anang," 31 July 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340); W. Fosbery, report of 30 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

such liberties with his office that several attempts were made on his life, and he was finally expelled by the people of Inen when he had a man killed who had successfully brought charges against him in the Uyo District Court.²³

By 1906 the activities of this and other clerks and British agents had led the people of the Abak area as well as a large district stretching to the southwest across the Kwa Ibo as far as Ikot Ibritam to deny passage to British convoys and to refuse all Native Court summonses. A British officer sent to investigate the condition of the area in 1908 reported that "It is fairly safe to travel through the country, with care, only going to towns where the chiefs come as an escort and take one on from town to town. But it is impossible to exercise any authority, or to effect any arrests."²⁴ This insecure atmosphere caused British officers to avoid the Abak area after 1905. The District Commissioner at Uyo made only one visit a year to Inen, and he took a wide detour through Etinan to do so. While there, he stayed in the house of an Opobo trader, Waribu Cookey, because it was safer than to stay in the official resthouse.²⁵ But because of the policy of "peaceful penetration" established by the Colonial Office in 1906, the political officers could not obtain the military support they considered essential and so avoided any activity in the area. When a patrol was finally

²³W. Fosbery, report of 30 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

²⁴F.E.K. Fortescue, minute of 27 March 1908 (NAE Calprof 44/1/1).

²⁵Duncan to Fosbery [June 1909]: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

sent in 1908, it was so limited in scope and duration that it had little effect at all in establishing British influence.²⁶

In the preceding five years the Opobo traders living in the area had taken advantage of the British reticence to establish their own money-making legal system modeled on the Native Courts. They constructed a court building to the southwest of Inen and issued summonses and arrest warrants, charging between £1 and £200 for this service. Court documents were delivered by messengers and police uniformed similarly to their British counterparts, and local disputes were settled by traveling Opobo men who used armed force to implement their judgments.²⁷ A branch of the court was operated in Inen by Waribu Cookey, the same man in whose house the District Commissioner of Uyo had stayed while visiting that village.²⁸ The officers at both Opobo and Uyo were ignorant of the existence of this fraudulent court. One of the most trusted agents of the District Commissioner at Opobo was a man named Datimini, who, it was later discovered, had been a main operator of the Opobo judicial system.²⁹ The British political station at Opobo was so filled with agents of the Opobo system that it

²⁶ Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

²⁷ Duncan to Fosbery, 19 and 27 May 1909: enclosures in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340); statement by Chief Udo Udo Afa of 26 June 1909, and attached correspondence (NAE Calprof 13/2/9).

²⁸ N.C. Duncan, "First (July) Report on Anang," 31 July 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

²⁹ Duncan to Fosbery, 27 May 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

was necessary to keep the plans for the patrol finally sent to the area secret from the District Commissioner there, lest he reveal them to anyone.³⁰

In May 1909 the patrol visited the area to the northeast of Ikot Ibritam, encountering scattered resistance and constant sniping, and then in June it met sustained opposition in Abak and the surrounding countryside.³¹ Everywhere Opobo traders were implicated in the resistance, as villagers had gone to them for arms and other assistance in opposing the British.³² After the departure of the patrol the British received the submission of the entire area and opened a new political station in Abak to prevent a recurrence of the events of the previous years. But even then the officer in charge knew the limits of his influence; as he wrote in July 1909, "I am careful only to issue summonses to towns likely to accept them."³³

It is examples such as Abak and Awgu Divisions that reveal the historical and environmental constraints on British influence. Only constant application of military force could be effective in preventing disaffected factions from testing their strength by appeal to alternative power sources. The patterns of factional

³⁰ Fosbery to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 2 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

³¹ Egerton to C.O., 8 October 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/82/35417).

³² Duncan to Fosbery, [June 1909]: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

³³ N.C. Duncan, "First (July) Report on Anang," 31 July 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

struggle throughout Southeastern Nigeria determined the ways in which the British became involved in local politics and undermined the impartiality and absoluteness of the British administrative ideal. Apart from these historical and environmental elements, there were other significant factors that impeded the British ideal. In general they had adopted an image of themselves as colonial rulers that did not represent their actual conduct and attitudes in the field. Although they described themselves as humanitarian civilizers, their daily behavior was more indicative of adventurism and imperiousness.

As we have seen, there were never large numbers of British in Nigeria. A European officer, trader, or missionary was seldom seen off the main roads, and usually the only British ever to visit small villages were military officers at the head of patrols. Thus, individual personality traits--the antithesis of the British administrative ideal--played a vital role in determining the character of the British presence. Many officers were deeply affected by the possession of so much influence and power in such isolated circumstances, and they came to regard themselves in inflated terms. They regularly referred to themselves as the "big father" of the people, and noted that "a native does not sit in the presence of a white man, let alone the D[istrict] C[ommissioner] in his official capacity, without permission."³⁴ They saw their relationship to the people over whom they had charge as one of

³⁴Partridge, Cross River Natives, 4, 16; F. Hives, Momo and I (London, 1934) 201.

unquestioning superiority.

Most officers, whatever their personal motivation or attitudes, exploited their own personal qualities and developed a unique approach to presenting themselves to Southeastern Nigerians. They made use of such inventions as the gramophone, magic lantern, and compressed soda water to win the initial attention of villagers.³⁵ Some adopted what they considered to be a tactic traditional in the environment and declared themselves to be "juju men" (magicians and traditional doctors) of considerable fame and power. The most notable example of such an officer was Frank Hives, who served at political stations throughout Southeastern Nigeria from 1905 to 1926. He took every opportunity to threaten and cajole villagers by saying that he was backed by a powerful personal "juju" that ensured him success, and he allowed his official and personal staff to line their pockets on the reputation of his "juju."³⁶ He also used his skills as a sleight-of-hand artist to impress villagers, and on one occasion he employed his ventriloquial abilities to create an oracular shrine through which he was able to obtain information on the attitudes and plans of

³⁵See D. Heath, "African Secret Societies" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1342 [1]); W.E.B. Copland-Crawford, "Nigeria," Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society, XXXI (1915), 5; H.H. Dobinson, Letters of Henry Hughes Dobinson (London, 1899), 123; A.G. Leonard, "Notes of a Journey to Bende," Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society, XIV, 4-6 (April-June 1898), 194-5; Niger and Yoruba Notes, I, 1 (July 1894), 6.

³⁶Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 17, 26, 41, 76-8; Hives, Momo and I, 134, 179.

hostile villagers.³⁷

Like most officers, Hives was given a nickname by which he was known everywhere. He was called "Ogbajiaka" (hairy arms), and he encouraged awareness of this name by using it to introduce himself to villages he visited for the first time. He also notified villages of his impending arrival by sending them a clipping of his hair in an envelope.³⁸ Other officers were given equally characteristic names, such as "the Duke," "the Major," "Nwobilelu" (sky-dweller), and "Otikpongwuru" (destroyer), and they used them to enhance their own reputations.³⁹ To the present day in Southeastern Nigeria the early officers of the administration are remembered by these names, as are their reputations, and the stories that are told about them take on an almost mythical character. Some are described indifferently or with distaste, but others stand out as central figures of the period. Hives, for example, is remembered virtually everywhere in the area under study, and many actions are attributed to him that occurred well before his arrival in Southeastern Nigeria.⁴⁰ When old men

³⁷Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 147-63; Hives, Momo and I, 105-16.

³⁸Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 41; A.I. Atulomah, "The Establishment of British Rule in Umuopara (1901-1929)," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973, 85.

³⁹Hives, Momo and I, 136; C.J. Mayne, "Intelligence Report on the Abam, Abiriba, Umuhu and Nkporo," [1932] (NAI CSO 26/3/28939); Atulomah, "British Rule in Umuopara," 17; F.E. Ezenduka, "Achina Town from the Earliest Times to the Coming of the British," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973, 94.

⁴⁰See for example U.A.C. Amajo, "Old Umuahia under British

recall him today, it is with pleasure but also with awe. When I asked Chief James Onwunali of Obowo (Etiti Division) about Hives, he replied with open admiration:

I know him well. He was a very strong District Officer, Ogbajiaka. If you speak English, he speaks Igbo. He used to say, "If you humbug me, I'll humbug you!" . . . The man had very hairy arms. And he was strong. He could break this stick [indicating a small tree] with his hand. And during the time he was officer of soldiers, he could make arrests with his own hands.⁴¹

The administration unwittingly encouraged this virtual cult of personality by the role it created for the individual District Commissioner. The instructions given to officers proceeding up the Cross River in 1902 are indicative:

In dealing with the natives of this country, the Political Officer, whether Divisional Commissioner or District Commissioner must always remember that his position is that of the friend of the people with whom he is dealing; he must advise them and warn them that unless they take his advice the only alternative is to report to the Government that the people in question will not listen to him, will not carry out the wishes of the Government which he, the Political Officer, has conveyed to them. That he himself has no palaver with the people but that by experience he knows what may happen, and that it is entirely for their own good and not for purposes of threatening them that he is trying to induce the people to listen to his advice.

In this way he becomes as it were a buffer between the native who will not listen and the Government who acts, and even in the event of punishment being inflicted he himself retains the confidence of the people, who will look to him again for the advice which they were so foolish as to despise before.⁴²

The individual officer thus became a personal diplomat--the great

Rule (1901-1931)," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974, 30, 87.

⁴¹Interview at Ikenanzizi-Obowo, 2 July 1974.

⁴²James to Morrissey, 26 April 1902 (NAI Calprof 9/4). See also Partridge, Cross River Natives, 302.

protector of the people against the wrath of the administration. As a result, the personalities of the various officers played a dominant part in determining the character of the British presence as well as the way in which that presence would be viewed by Southeastern Nigerians.

And the personalities of most officers suited them poorly for the humanitarian role they were supposed to fulfill. The majority of both the military and the political staff were men of military backgrounds and attitudes.⁴³ Many had had experience in the Boer War, and they saw Southeastern Nigeria as an arena for adventure, for the "sport of battle," and for earning bonuses and decorations in an otherwise peaceful era in European history.⁴⁴ The officers who were attracted to service in Nigeria had little experience in the subtleties of anthropology or of judicial reasoning. In their view the Igbo people were "without morals, deceitful and treacherous," and the Ibibio were "not very far removed from the animal creation."⁴⁵ Whatever the administrative circulars claimed, their relations with inland people were based

⁴³See for example Egerton to C.O., 16 January 1908, and minutes (PRO CO 520/58/1775); West Africa, II, 50 (30 November 1901), 1391.

⁴⁴See I.F. Nicolson, The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960: Men, Methods, and Myths (Oxford, 1969), 41; "Notes for Tyros-- those just coming out to Nigeria," Journal of the Nigeria Regiment, I, 1 (July 1925), 5.

⁴⁵C.E. Vickery, "A West African Expedition," United Service Magazine, n.s. XXXIII, 933 (August 1906), 522; H.L. Gallwey, "Political Report in Connection with the Aro Field Force Operations," 1 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18725).

on the swift assumptions and clear hierarchy of the barracks and the military tribunal.⁴⁶ Because of these attitudes the decisions reached by military tribunals during expeditions were often overturned upon review by higher authority. For example, the leaders of the attack on Obegu in 1901 were imprisoned by a military tribunal but then later freed by order of the Colonial Office--an order that came too late to save the six leaders who had been executed by the same tribunal.⁴⁷ When evidence in an inquiry was not forthcoming, officers applied "a little force which is usually done in such cases."⁴⁸ Beatings were also inflicted on the hapless representatives of villages that failed to meet the officers' demands.⁴⁹

The military officers tended to look upon patrols and expeditions as pleasing adventures, especially since the poor weapons and marksmanship of the inland peoples removed most potential danger. They often incited as much active opposition to their patrols as possible, believing that only decisive military confrontation would achieve their aims. In the words of a leading military officer of the period,

[S]hould the nation avoid a stand-up fight, and resort to guerilla warfare, the power of the invading force must be shown by advancing into the most inaccessible and sacred juju parts of the country,

⁴⁶See A.C. Douglas ["Nemo"], Niger Memories (Exeter, [1927]), 118.

⁴⁷See Moor to C.O., 15 February 1902, and minutes (PRO CO 520/13/10510); Moor to C.O., 16 March 1902, and minutes (PRO CO 520/13/14481).

⁴⁸E.C. Margesson to Officer in Command, Southern Nigeria Regiment, 25 September 1905: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 7 October 1905 (PRO CO 520/32/38259); E. Rudkin, "Diary of Operations, Owa Expedition, 30th July-4th August, 1906," 4 August 1906: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 12 September 1906 (PRO CO 520/37/36585).

⁴⁹See Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entries from 4 to 9 February 1902 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1).

eating up the food supplies and raiding rapidly to all points of the compass. . . . No leniency or half measures are of any use until the savage has felt the power of force. Leniency is treated as a sign of weakness, and half measures as an undecided and wavering policy. . . . Savages will not open their country to trade, and give up their human sacrifices and slave dealing, at the sight of a patrol, however large and impressive it may be. They must be beaten in fair fight before their country can be regarded as safe for life and property.⁵⁰

Patrols were judged by the casualties they inflicted. As one police officer wrote, "From what I have observed it is obvious that the whole lesson administered by the Patrol lies in the number of casualties the enemy suffers in the course of hostilities, after which the infliction of the customary punitive conditions is of little consideration."⁵¹ The military officers naturally resented attempts to compel them to adopt a policy of "peaceful penetration," and they searched for opportunities to initiate military action.⁵²

It was attitudes such as these that led Sir Ralph Moor to restrain his military officers in the conduct of patrols and to maintain a clear distinction between the military and political branches of the administration.⁵³ But after his retirement in 1903 this distinction became increasingly blurred, especially as

⁵⁰W.C.G. Heneker, Bush Warfare (London, 1907), 162-4.

⁵¹Cavendish to Inspector General of Police, 12 August 1915: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 4 November 1915 (PRO CO 583/38/55086).

⁵²See G. Adams, "By Force of Argument" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [4]); Helen Falk, diary entry of 8 December 1929 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [1]).

⁵³See above, 99.

his successor as High Commissioner, Sir Walter Egerton, struggled to deal with staff shortages. Patrols were no longer always accompanied by political officers to deal with villages following military operations, and military officers were often used to replace political officers absent on leave.⁵⁴ Military officers were given increased authority in the conduct of patrols and were given the option of retaining control of the area for as long as they considered necessary before transferring control to the political branch.⁵⁵ Reports of expeditions and patrols submitted to the Colonial Office became perfunctory in the extreme, a condition that persisted until 1913, when the new Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, instituted stricter and more detailed scrutiny of military operations.⁵⁶

An example of the young military officers who came into their own in these circumstances was Gerald Adams, whose memoirs are preserved at Rhodes House, Oxford.⁵⁷ Adams served in Southeastern Nigeria from 1904 to 1916, after having been commissioned in South Africa during the Boer War. Shortly after the establishment of a

⁵⁴ See Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/18/6331); Egerton to C.O., 8 October 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/82/35419); Fosbery to Egerton, 27 December 1907: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 6 January 1908 (PRO CO 520/58/2681); Boyle to C.O., 10 December 1918 (PRO CO 583/68/59945).

⁵⁵ See W. Egerton, "Memorandum for guidance of Political Officers accompanying Patrols," [1904]: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 October 1904 (PRO CO 520/26/37051).

⁵⁶ See Egerton to C.O., 13 June 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/24005); Lugard to C.O., 20 June 1913 (PRO CO 520/125/20950); Lugard to C.O., 10 December 1913 (PRO CO 520/126/25218).

⁵⁷ Gerald Adams, "Five Nigerian Tales" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375).

British station at Udi in February 1908, Adams was made Acting District Commissioner because of the lack of political officers to fill that position. He admitted that he was poorly qualified for the work:

My . . . duties as Acting D[istrict] C[ommissioner] included dealing with dozens of civil and criminal cases, and among them were three of (alleged) murder. The country being under the Supreme Court Laws of Southern Nigeria, . . . all such cases had to go to the Assizes held at intervals, at some fairly large and central place, in this instance Onitsha. My knowledge of legal matters was naturally confined to Military Law, which, as far as taking evidence was concerned, was not so very different from Civil Law; but owing to there being so many different languages in use in the districts, evidence had to be taken down through the medium of various interpreters, which made cases infinitely more difficult.⁵⁸

To make his work easier, he imprisoned both accused and witnesses for several months, until the cases could be reviewed at the Onitsha assizes. But of the three murder cases referred to, only one conviction was confirmed, to Adams's frustration: "I suppose, in my taking of the summary of evidence, I had omitted to cross a t or dot an i, and they had got off on a point of law."⁵⁹

Adams favored quick solutions to problems, usually involving the application of force, and he resented any restraints placed on the extent of his military operations.⁶⁰ He used the troops under his command to ensure that villages supplied required forced labor and that the labor was done in a rapid and efficient

⁵⁸ Adams, "Miner and Executioner" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [1]).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See Adams, "Resurrection of the Long Juju" and "By Force of Argument" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [3] and [4]).

manner.⁶¹ He was happiest when he was at considerable distance from headquarters and free from supervision by the political branch. In 1910, during the Ogu [Awgu] Escort, he was left in command of operations by the early departure of the District Commissioner, and this enabled him to apply his own brand of discipline to the Awgu people--by killing one of their leaders and displaying his severed head to them.⁶² And in May 1908 while leading a column of troops from Abakaliki to Ogoja he dealt with a recurring problem--the recruitment of carriers--in characteristic fashion:

On any of these expeditions carriers are a most important consideration as you cannot get anywhere without them, and if any men selected by the chiefs for this work displayed reluctance or unwillingness, strong measures had to be taken at once, not only to uphold the authority of the chiefs but for the sake of other expeditions. . . .

I waited with as much patience as I could command for perhaps an hour, and at last twenty men were brought and I ordered my native sergeant major to get the loads put on their heads. One great big fellow looked very sulky and showed unmistakeable signs of giving trouble, and I told two of my men to get hold of him. They attempted to do so, but they were in full marching order and carrying their rifles, and the instant they tried to grab him he hit out and sent them both flying like ninepins. The next second he was bolting for the bush. The interpreters shouted an order for him to stop, but he took no notice, and in a flash I realised that he must not be allowed to get away. Though he was by now fully fifty yards off and going hard, I managed to drop him with a lucky shot from my revolver.

It would have been fatal to let him escape, to tell his friends and tribesmen that white men with soldiers had tried to take him as a carrier, but that he had been too much for them, and had not only run away but had knocked down several armed men first! The story would have grown in the telling, and had it got about in the countryside it would have been a poor lookout . . . for any other European who chanced to

⁶¹ Adams, "Miner and Executioner" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [1]).

⁶² Adams, "Resurrection of the Long Juju" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [3]).

come along with a small escort or no escort at all. . . .
 In such emergencies you must think and act quickly--you
 can't sit down and hold a convention about it.⁶³

Even given the generally permissive attitude toward violence in the British administration, Adams would have faced severe discipline and probably dismissal for so extreme an act. Not surprisingly, then, his official report of the incident was far from explicit; all he wrote to his superiors was that "During the night about twenty of my carriers bolted and it was with the greatest difficulty I could get fresh carriers to replace them, the consequence was although ready to start at 5 a.m. I could not get off till 10 a.m."⁶⁴

Under officers like Adams, patrols tended to become self-sustaining, self-fulfilling exercises, with little reference to the broader policy considerations on which they were supposedly based. There was little room for hesitation, misunderstanding, or reevaluation of initial political assessments. For example, when a typical patrol was subjected to detailed scrutiny in 1914 as a result of Governor Lugard's stricter policy toward military operations, it was discovered that the actual circumstances were far different from those officially reported by the officer in charge. He filed a description of operations that read as most of those of the period: while escorting a land and road survey party with a small column of soldiers and police through Ezzagu

⁶³ Adams, "By Force of Argument" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [4]).

⁶⁴ Adams to Officer in Command, Southern Nigeria Regiment, 9 May 1908 (NAE Calprof 14/3/253).

(Abakaliki Division) in April 1914 he found the village deserted. This he interpreted as a sign of hostility, since he had sent messages announcing his arrival and requesting food and shelter to be prepared. A group of soldiers sent to find water was shot at by a single sniper, whom they killed. Since the villagers refused to bring food for the troops and carriers, the officer had six hundred yams confiscated and some cattle slaughtered. He then proceeded to the next village on the survey route, leaving a few police to secure the submission of the village. These police confiscated twenty-three cattle without authorization, and were ordered to return them when they reported to the officer.

The commission of inquiry appointed to investigate these operations pieced together a very different description of events, however. The area around Ezzagu was in considerable turmoil because of recent fighting between the Ezza and Ntezi, and the Ezzagu were afraid that they were to be punished for their participation in that fighting. The District Officer at Abakaliki had assured them that this was not so, but as the survey party approached their village he was not available to reassure them. They also heard that the party had destroyed part of a neighboring village, and that the destruction had been carried out by the large group of guides and carriers from Udi and Nkanu Divisions accompanying the column, who were traditional enemies of the Ezzagu. The messages that were sent to them by the survey party--probably through the same Udi and Nkanu guides--were never delivered. There was also considerable suspicion of the survey operations in the

area because of a rumor that they were preliminary to British seizure of village lands.

Thus, at the approach of the survey party the Ezzagu fled their homes and hid in their farmlands. They considered their suspicions confirmed when they heard the column shooting their rifles in the village square (the slaughtering of the cattle) and when a villager was killed by the water party. He had not, they claimed, provoked them in any way. Nevertheless, one Ezzagu leader, Ukuru, went to the village square to meet the British officer and to try to prevent the destruction of the village. When he entered the square, he was seized and bound by the police, who threatened him and said they would release him only if he brought them food and gin without the officer's knowledge. Soon thereafter the officer went on to the next village on the survey route, and the police left in Ezzagu looted and destroyed a number of houses, stole £33 worth of local currency, and carried away twenty-three cattle. They disposed of their loot through the Udi and Nkanu carriers, and neglected to return the cattle to Ezzagu when ordered to do so.⁶⁵

It should be noted that this operation did not lead to significant violent opposition and therefore does not appear in the statistical summary of resistance in Appendix A. It is, in fact, typical of the hundreds of patrols and military escorts that did not involve major violence. These "shows of force," as the

⁶⁵ Lugard to C.O., 25 October 1914, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/19/45290). For similar examples, see A.E. Afigbo, The Warrent Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1991-1929 (London, 1972), 306-7, 313-14.

British called them, were an endless phenomenon in the first twenty years of the colonial period in Southeastern Nigeria, and those that did result in major resistance constituted only a small fraction of the total. The British presence was built solidly on the use of force, as one political officer described in 1914:

On the escort entering the town and the townspeople running to bush certain of them are caught and brought before me. They are instructed to inform the chiefs that I am not going to wait in the town but am going on to the next town to be visited, that I propose to burn some houses as the people refuse to see me, and that unless they come to see me, make submission, and carry out my orders, handing over the persons required, and giving security for their good behavior, I shall return in about a week, and burn a few more houses, and continue to return and do so until they come in.⁶⁶

The essence of the British patrol or escort, whether it met with violent resistance or not, was the systematic destruction of houses, food, and livestock. The Omoakpo Patrol of 1917, for example, destroyed eight compounds, thirty-five cows, sixteen goats, six yam barns, 2,550 palm trees, and 4,500 plantain trees in Oguta Division.⁶⁷ In another instance, so many yams were confiscated from one uncooperative area that there was danger of "a partial famine."⁶⁸ Even when actual destruction was not great, the harassment of the British forces disrupted the food producing activities of the people. Following the Owerri-Bende-Okigwi Patrol of 1911, the political officer at Owerri noted that one large area was "in a bad way for food owing to having neglected

⁶⁶Hargrove to Maxwell, 25 May 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

⁶⁷E. Osborne, reports of 9 April and 3 June, 1917: enclosures in Lugard to C.O., 21 July 1917 (PRO CO 583/58/43039).

⁶⁸Lugard to C.O., 20 June 1913 (PRO CO 520/125/20950).

the farms and missed palm oil crops."⁶⁹ And just as Adams and the officer at Ezzagu suppressed important details of their operations in order to protect themselves, many patrols went even further in their destructive activities than the official reports described.⁷⁰

Even political officers without military backgrounds began to conduct themselves in the same way as the military officers. They too were affected by the possession of so much power in such isolated circumstances. For many, personal and official prestige began to outweigh justice and impartiality, especially given the continuing pressure that they produce favorable trade returns from their districts.⁷¹ The best example of this process, and a most crucial one, was Harold M. Douglas, the first District Commissioner of Owerri, from 1902 to 1906. It is evident that he was a man of unpleasant disposition to begin with, as was indicated by the nickname given to him in Owerri Division, "Black Douglas," and by the negative impression of him conveyed in local oral traditions and by the comments of his fellow officers.⁷²

Despite negative reports of Douglas's effectiveness at his first station, Benin, he was transferred in 1901 to one of the

⁶⁹Binny to Fosbery, 31 July 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

⁷⁰See A. Boyle, Trenchard (London, 1962), 88; Hives, Momo and I, 130-40.

⁷¹See Syer to Whitehouse, 24 October 1904: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 7 December 1904 (PRO CO 520/26/43762); F.S. James, memorandum, [November 1907]: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 29 November 1907 (PRO CO 520/50/44370).

⁷²See Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 176.

most important areas of British presence at that time, Ukwa and Ngwa Divisions. Here, as we have seen, he exacerbated factional tensions by his overbearing conduct and may well have contributed the final impetus that set off the attack on Obegu in November 1901.⁷³ His treatment of local villagers, even friendly ones, was harsh in the extreme, as can be seen from his announcement in 1901 that "Any failing on the part of an able bodied man to do his share of the work would be met with instant flogging. Any Chief failing to do his work would be liable to flogging or some other public disgrace."⁷⁴

Shortly after the conclusion of the Aro Expedition he was installed as the first District Commissioner of the new station at Owerri and was given responsibility for most of modern Owerri, Mbaise, Mbaitoli/Ikeduru, Oguta, Ogba/Egbema, Ikwerre, and Etche Divisions. These were all areas of considerable hostility to the British for the next fifteen years, and it is evident that much of this hostility was directly attributable to Douglas's conduct. In Isuobiangwu, for example, he is remembered as the first European ever to visit the area. One elder recalled that

He [Douglas] was armed with a gun with which he even shot dead one Mr. Ochi at Ekeisu because he refused to give him

⁷³ See above, 64-5. See also Gallwey to Acting Divisional Commissioner, Western Division, 22 October 1900 (NAI Calprof 10/3/1).

⁷⁴ Officers' Diary, Akwete District, 1901-2: entry for 21 November 1901 (NAE Abadist 12/1/1).

water for his horse. The coming of the European was not welcomed by the people especially after the death of Ochi. People ran into the bush and refused to come out. They were hunted after and those caught were taken away. [Douglas] later appointed some of our people to come to Owerri and take orders about taxation. Colonial government was imposed and not accepted. Houses were burnt, homes ravaged and people in hiding were appealed to show themselves and negotiate.⁷⁵

After four years of his administration of Owerri District, he was roundly criticized by Bishop Tugwell:

[Y]our system of administration appears to be well nigh unbearable. The people complained bitterly of your harsh treatment of them, whilst those who accompanied me do not cease to speak in the strongest terms of your overbearing manner towards them. They say they have never received such treatment at the hands of a British officer.

Further today I have had an interview with Mr. Onyeabo, the Catechist who accompanied me and acted as my interpreter, and have asked him why he did not deliver my letter to you in person. He tells me that you treated him so roughly in the street that he could not deliver the letter in person, and he did not therefore bring the boys who desired to come with him. He tells me he saw you beating and kicking a man in the open market and that you threatened to treat him in the same way, and that you further threatened to arrest him, and that without due cause.⁷⁶

Between mid-1902 and late 1905 the area under his jurisdiction was the scene of six major patrols, three of them occasioned by personal attacks on Douglas himself. In June 1902 while passing through Umu Alum (Ngor clan) he was refused guides and assistance, and in retaliation he seized food and livestock and housed his troops in the compound of the leader of the hostility toward him.

⁷⁵ Interview with Amadi Akulonu of Umuopara-Obiangwu (born about 1870), in V.C. Ekeocha, "The Precolonial History of Obiangwu," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974, 51.

⁷⁶ Tugwell to Douglas, 18 December 1905, quoted in S.N. Nwabara, "Ibo Land: A Study in British Penetration and the Problem of Administration, 1860-1930," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1965, 143.

That night he and his escort were attacked by armed men and barely escaped, losing two men killed and four wounded. Douglas retreated to Owerri and returned immediately with a force of ninety troops, accompanied by six hundred Owerri men, the traditional enemies of the Ngor clan, to assist in the looting and destruction. After a week of hostilities the area surrendered and hostages were taken to Owerri.⁷⁷ Later in the same year, when Douglas discovered that the people of Obima had not maintained their roads, he had a village leader publicly beaten and taken prisoner. When he and his escort tried to leave the village, they were attacked, and a villager was fatally wounded. Douglas managed to escape the hostility of the Obima people only by threats and by offering to pay for the funeral of the slain man.⁷⁸ On this occasion Douglas's superior took note of his conduct and reported to Moor that "I cannot help thinking Mr. Douglas acted in an arbitrary manner in seizing and thrashing a native for such a slight reason, and still more, in taking him along, as if a prisoner--even for a short distance."⁷⁹ As a result Moor issued a reprimand to Douglas:

I am of opinion that Mr. Douglas' action in the matter was certainly injudicious & undoubtedly gave rise to the incident. You will please communicate my views to Mr. Douglas & instruct him to be more careful in the methods he adopts in dealing with the natives. The seizing & flogging of the men was a

⁷⁷Moor to C.O., 13 August 1902, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/15/37400); Gallwey to Moor, 11 July 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

⁷⁸Douglas, minute paper of 17 September 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/4).

⁷⁹Winn Sampson to Moor, 22 September 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/4).

most arbitrary act & one not likely to gain the confidence of the natives or to induce them to carry out the wishes of the Govt. Such action must be avoided in future.⁸⁰

In 1903 it was discovered that a large area around Eziam, on one of the most heavily traveled routes between Aba and Owerri, had become hostile to the British and had refused in particular to deal with Douglas.⁸¹ It was not until early 1904 that the area could be invaded by a patrol, and even then Douglas continued to experience difficulty around Eziam, particularly in obtaining cooperation for his ambitious road-building plans.⁸² Similar circumstances on the road between Owerri and Bende, initially opened to British travel by the Aro Expedition, led to the closing of that road to all but strong military escorts by late 1903.⁸³ For over a year large parts of Owerri and Mbaise Divisions refused to cooperate with Douglas and expelled his messengers. In late 1904 and early 1905 the area was invaded by the Onitsha Hinterland Patrol with over three hundred officers and troops, and "shots were exchanged almost every day."⁸⁴ But shortly after the patrol

⁸⁰Moor to Winn Sampson, 14 October 1902 (NAI Calprof 9/2/4).

⁸¹W. Fosbery, "Memorandum of Instructions for the Ibibio Patrol and subsequent Patrols to Owerri District and Eket Sub-District," 30 December 1903 (PRO CO 520/24/4364).

⁸²Egerton to C.O., 7 May 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/24/19274); Egerton to C.O., 17 January 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/29/4339).

⁸³W. Fosbery, "Memorandum of Instructions for the Ibibio Patrol and subsequent Patrols to Owerri District and Eket Sub-District," 30 December 1903 (PRO CO 520/24/4364).

⁸⁴Moorhouse to Montanaro, 20 April 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 13 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24005).

withdrew, large sections of Mbaise Division, under the leadership of Ahiara, again refused to deal with Douglas and sent him messages threatening him if he ever dared return. For the next year all traffic had to be directed southward to avoid the hostile area.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, in Etche Division to the south, Douglas was threatened and expelled from Umuatoro when he tried to uncover the location of the Amadioha oracle in June 1904.⁸⁶ In November and December of that year Etche Division was invaded by a patrol of over two hundred officers and men, resistance being encountered at Olakwo and Umuatoro, and Douglas was reestablished in a position of authority.⁸⁷ Then, in January 1905 the area of the Ngor clan again refused to cooperate with Douglas, killed a prominent warrant chief, and closed its roads to British passage. In April and May Douglas accompanied a patrol of ninety officers and men there, encountering sustained resistance at Norie, Ovororo, and Oboro, and destroying thirty-nine villages.⁸⁸ When the reports of this operation were filed, The High Commissioner, Walter Egerton, criticized Douglas strongly, noting that the patrol

⁸⁵ H.M. Douglas, "Report on the Owerri District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1905," extract: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 31 August 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/33916).

⁸⁶ H.M. Douglas, "Report on the Etche Country," 2 July 1904: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 16 July 1904 (PRO CO 520/25/27757).

⁸⁷ Egerton to C.O., 15 June 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/24006).

⁸⁸ H.M. Douglas, "Report on work done by the Noria-Ovororo Patrol, April 21st 1905-May 5th 1905," 20 May 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 21 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24469).

had been carried further than I contemplated. . . . I wished all the country--Etche & Ekpaffia--recently dealt with to be frequently visited by the District & Assistant District Commissioners. They should be accompanied by the escort necessary for their safety but not by a "patrol" contemplating offensive operations in the country. Mr Douglas has done much good work but he must understand that offensive operations are limited to the dry season and require previous authority. If he will not understand this he must be removed to some settled portion of the Protectorate.⁸⁹

Yet, as Egerton noted, Douglas's aggressiveness could be excused for the moment by the "wonderfully good work" he had done building roads and rest houses, and he was retained at his Owerri station.⁹⁰

Then, in November 1905 a British doctor lost his way while traveling from Owerri to Calabar and was killed by the people of Mbaise Division, who were under the impression that they had finally captured "Black Douglas."⁹¹ The Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition, with over five hundred officers and men, which was at that time operating to the north of Mbaise Division, was diverted southward to deal with the hostile area and encountered some of the most sustained, intense resistance ever met by the British.⁹² Shortly thereafter Douglas, who had clearly become more of a liability than an asset, was transferred to a more "settled portion of the Protectorate," Onitsha. Yet even under these established circumstances he had difficulty restraining himself. In 1915 he became the subject of "severe censure" for his inability to control

⁸⁹Minute by Egerton, 5 June 1905 (NAE CSE 1/5/15).

⁹⁰Egerton to C.O., 16 July 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/27874).

⁹¹Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 191-4.

⁹²See Trenchard to Thorburn, 22 December 1905: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 5 January 1906 (PRO CO 520/35/3847).

his temper and for physically assaulting several of his African subordinates.⁹³

While the conduct of H.M. Douglas was extreme, it was by no means exceptional. Under similar circumstances--in particular, oppressively heavy demands for road construction and repair--an officer named O.S. Crewe-Read was killed in 1906 by the people of Owa, to the west of the area of the present study.⁹⁴ And in Ahoada and Ikwerre Divisions, a young political officer named W.G. Syer, described by one fellow officer as "a bully and tyrant," was virtually personally responsible for a bloody rising in 1904.⁹⁵ While serving as Assistant District Commissioner at Degema he had aggressively supported the trading ambitions of the Degema traders on the Sombreiro River to the extent of permitting his police to assault any inland villager who refused to comply with their extortionate trade terms.⁹⁶ In April 1904 he personally led six police in a raid on a village near Ahoada that had refused to cooperate with the Degema traders, destroying several compounds and confiscating guns and livestock. His sole motive, he explained later, was that he was "exceedingly anxious that the Ekpoffian

⁹³Lugard to C.O., 29 January 1915 (PRO CO 583/30/7903).

⁹⁴See Egerton to C.O., 7 October 1906, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/37/40212); Egerton to C.O., 28 October 1906, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/37/41316); Egerton to C.O., 3 November 1906 (PRO CO 520/37/43112); Egerton to C.O., 29 December 1906 (PRO CO 520/38/2149).

⁹⁵E.M. Falk, diary entry for October 1907 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [2]).

⁹⁶African Association to Egerton, 17 November 1904: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 25 February 1905 (PRO CO 520/29/8517).

country [Ekpeya clan, around Ahoada] should prove an asset in the trading market," yet he was sufficiently aware of the questionableness of his actions to avoid reporting them to his superiors.⁹⁷

Following this raid, the area of Ahoada and western Ikwerre Divisions separated into two camps, one in favor of the British and their Degema allies, led by Ahoada, and one opposed, led by Oduaha and Ogbo. In October 1904 Syer was assigned to open a new district with its headquarters at Ahoada, but within two days he had been driven out, and eleven Degema traders had been killed and looted by the anti-British villages.⁹⁸ It required three weeks of operations by a patrol of 250 officers and men, in which an estimated 200 African defenders were killed, to reestablish Syer at Ahoada.⁹⁹

In general, the superior officers of men such as Douglas, Crewe-Read, and Syer ignored their aggressive conduct, although an occasional reprimand was issued. This atmosphere of indifference permitted political officers considerable latitude in conducting their assignments. But just as aggressive and

⁹⁷Egerton to C.O., 7 December 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/26/43762).

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Egerton to C.O., 7 December 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/26/43763); Egerton to C.O., 15 June 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/24006). On the estimation of African casualties due to British military action, see Appendix B of the present study.

tactless officers were often personally responsible for violent resistance to the British, so more pacific men could considerably ease relations between Europeans and Africans. It was reported that in 1904 a British column was able to pass through a notoriously hostile village without opposition because it was accompanied by a doctor who had earlier cured a village leader of cataract.¹⁰⁰ Christopher Wordsworth, who served in the Protectorate from 1900 to 1907, was strongly opposed to most military action, as he wrote in 1902: "The soldiers are taking guns from these people all the time. It makes them very wild & then the poor civilian has to go in & calm them down after the soldiers have cleared out."¹⁰¹ He preferred peaceful, unarmed contact with Southeastern Nigerians, and it was this attitude that enabled him to travel through allegedly hostile areas without difficulty, as in 1900 when he passed through Ibibioland:

It was very interesting work, opening up a mail road through country that had only once been crossed before by white men. It was supposed to be unfriendly, but as we were unarmed and had no soldiers we got through easily, and the people now look upon us as their best friends.¹⁰²

On another occasion, while stationed at Ahoada, he was called upon to tour a reportedly uncooperative area in Ogba/Egbema

¹⁰⁰Copland-Crawford, "Nigeria," 11-12.

¹⁰¹Christopher Wordsworth to Ruth Wordsworth, 6 February 1902 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1373).

¹⁰²Christopher Wordsworth to Geoffrey Young, 13 December 1900 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1373).

Division:

A considerable tribe in the north of this district have been troublesome for the last 3 years & very seldom visited, & it was a question whether they would come into line without force, but I spent last week among them & I don't think they will give much more trouble. Their neighbours had been misrepresenting the Government to them & them to us, and they were not really so black as they were painted. I loathe punitive expeditions & am very glad this one has been avoided. But it was rather anxious work as they were reported to have threatened to kill any white man going there.¹⁰³

Similar views were held by one of the best known political officers, Frank Hives, who served throughout Southeastern Nigeria from 1905 to 1926. Initially assigned to the station at Bende, he distinguished himself by his willingness to enter unexplored territory in order to make contact with the people and avoid military action.¹⁰⁴ After two years of work there, he was praised for his "constant travelling and living in continual touch with the natives."¹⁰⁵ In 1908 he was chosen to open the administrative station at Ogoja without the use of troops, in line with the current policy of "peaceful penetration." Through a combination of good will and bluff he was able to achieve this object, although he asked for and received a contingent of sixty troops "not for any expeditionary purposes, but to show the natives that I have force

¹⁰³ Christopher Wordsworth to Geoffrey Young, 27 August 1905 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1373).

¹⁰⁴ See Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 147-63; Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 152-3.

¹⁰⁵ H. Bedwell, "Annual Report on the Eastern Province for the Year 1906," 27 April 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 22 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/28311).

to back my arguments up with to stop tribal fighting."¹⁰⁶ In 1909 he was reassigned to the Bende station, where he pursued his private war against local oracles and other shrines, often without prior approval from his superiors.¹⁰⁷ He preferred to deal with such oracles and with uncooperative villages personally, employing at most only his small police force, reporting that in general the area was in "a very orderly state" and that "unless absolutely necessary, I do not want soldiers to visit this part of the District."¹⁰⁸ He recognized that most opposition to the British was based on local factional issues, and thus unlike most officers he avoided depending upon "loyal" allies for information and assistance, since they were usually the traditional enemies of the uncooperative area and therefore unlikely to be reliable.¹⁰⁹ He maintained good relations with most factions in his assigned area by building a local reputation as a powerful doctor and magician in his own right, and he is remembered today, as we have seen, in positive, almost mythical terms.¹¹⁰ The data reveal, in

¹⁰⁶F. Hives, "Interim Report on Ibi District," 27 March 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 27 April 1908 (PRO CO 520/60/17364). See also Hives, "Report on Ibi District for Month ending 31st May, 1908" (NAE CSE 10/1/1); Hives, report of 1 June 1908 (NAE Calprof 13/1/13); Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 205-43; G. Adams, "By Force of Argument" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [4]).

¹⁰⁷See Egerton to C.O., 28 August 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/80/30916); Hives to Copland-Crawford, 30 April 1909, and attached correspondence (NAE Calprof 13/2/7); Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 21-61, 103-44; Hives, Momo and I, 155-73.

¹⁰⁸Hives to Copland-Crawford, 30 April 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/7).

¹⁰⁹See Hives, Momo and I, 59.

¹¹⁰See above, 222-3.

fact, that there was very little violent opposition to the British in areas he was responsible for.

Hives's success in maintaining peace at Bende led to his selection in 1911 to investigate the persistent disorder in Mbaise, Mbano, and Etiti Divisions. After four months of patrol work in that area, he reported that the problem was directly attributable to the local officers, who had depended on military force--which had not been forthcoming after 1906--and had therefore ceased to tour the area at all. He warned that "if this part of the country is left unvisited for any length of time after the departure of the Patrol, further trouble is likely to occur."¹¹¹ Following several years of duty at Obudu (to the northeast of the area of the present study) he was named a First Class District Officer by accelerated promotion. His superiors commented that he was "a very capable and reliable officer, shows great tact and patience in dealing with the natives whose respect and confidence he enjoys. . . . He has a wonderful experience of the world generally which he makes good use of, and he manages natives excellently."¹¹² In mid-1916 he was assigned to the Okigwi station, where, as we have seen, Awgu Division among others continued to oppose the British presence. Here he had less success than elsewhere but was given a rare personal compliment by Governor Lugard for the risks that he took in attempting to establish peaceful contacts with uncooperative areas.¹¹³ In 1920

¹¹¹ Hives to Moorhouse, 30 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

¹¹² Minutes on Lugard to C.O., 29 January 1915 (PRO CO 583/30/7872).

¹¹³ Lugard to C.O., 8 June 1918 (PRO CO 583/66/34970).

he was again awarded an accelerated promotion, and in 1926 he retired as a First Class Resident, the highest position open to field officers.

The examples of Douglas, Syer, and Hives reveal the crucial dependence of British colonial policy on the personalities chosen to implement it at the local level. Although I have not conducted a thorough survey of all the officers assigned to Southeastern Nigeria in this period, it is my impression that a few were of the caliber of Hives, that many were like Douglas and Syer, but that most were cautious time-servers who preferred paperwork to involvement in the communities to which they were assigned. But continuing the pattern set by the Foreign Office in the nineteenth century, the Colonial Office remained largely indifferent to such individual factors, so long as the annual budget balanced and no adverse stories reached the newspapers. Faced with requests for military expeditions and new political stations, officials approved with such comments as "The addition proposed is large, but it is true that we have found that in S[outhern] Nigeria the extension of control results in increased revenue."¹¹⁴ By 1907 the Colonial Office had come to regard expeditions as undesirable but unavoidable. As one clerk minuted,

It is difficult to stop once we have started. The natives on the fringe of the new area controlled expect to be protected against their neighbours outside the pale. If they are not protected, or if their neighbours are not required to submit to the same conditions of law and order, they are unable to

¹¹⁴Minute by C. Strachey, 10 February 1904, on Probyn to C.O., 30 November 1903 (PRO CO 520/21/45834).

believe that the halt in the advance is due to anything but fear or weakness. When they once come to believe that, a large portion of the work already done is spoiled.¹¹⁵

When expeditions led to excessive violence, the Colonial Office accused the officers in the field of exaggerating their reports.¹¹⁶ Occasionally a word of protest was raised, especially at the time of changes of governments in London. In 1906, Winston Churchill, the new Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, commented that

These warlike operations are so much accepted as a matter of course in the dry season, that one would imagine only ordinary autumn manoeuvres were in question. It is clear that the scope & character of British activities in Nigeria require to be more definitely confined & the whole situation & policy to be brought under review. Our responsibilities in this region are already serious, indefinite & ever-expanding, and a heavy burden continues to be thrown on British finances thereby. I should like to know the policy in pursuit of which this vast "pacification" work is to be pursued, and what relation its cost bears to the other needs of the colony, and to the claims of the more settled districts.¹¹⁷

But Churchill's zeal was immediately dampened by an aide who noted that the operations in question had already been approved months earlier.

It is clear that the Colonial Office felt increasingly helpless and ignorant in face of the demands of its men in the field. Critical comments were passed back and forth on minute papers and never transmitted to Nigeria. After the murder of O.S. Crewe-Read in 1906, a clerk commented, with Churchill's approval, that

¹¹⁵Minute by F.G.A. Butler, 9 August 1908, on Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24798).

¹¹⁶See minutes on Probyn to C.O., 21 August 1903 (PRO CO 520/20/34980).

¹¹⁷Minute by Churchill, 30 January 1906, on Thorburn to C.O., 9 December 1905 (PRO CO 520/32/353).

the murderer was justified in his act:

Anyone who has imagination enough to turn himself round and look at this incident from the appropriate historical point of view (that of the Maccabees or of the Lays of Ancient Rome or of the Saxon defense of England) will recognise that this man acted in a manner which could not but appear not only legitimate, but heroic and noble to his countrymen. . . . Of course we hang him for it--but we do not get any further by doing that in the face of what every native that knows the facts will think about them.¹¹⁸

When Governor Egerton criticized District Commissioner E.M. Falk in 1910 for his "rashness and want of tact" in handling a local disturbance, the Under Secretary of State commented cynically that "had Mr. Falk been successful he would no doubt have been complimented on a cool and plucky act. His failure is his condemnation."¹¹⁹ And in 1913, when Secretary of State Harcourt reacted to heavy African casualties resulting from a patrol by asking "Why do they use maxims here rather than rifles?", an aide responded lamely that "It is probably used for the moral effect, and may prove economical of life in the end." Harcourt countered that "I doubt if this is its object!", but he did not pursue his criticism.¹²⁰

During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, then, the Colonial Office essentially continued the policy initiated by Chamberlain, as described by one of his associates in 1907:

[I]t was the settled policy of the Colonial Office that you

¹¹⁸Minutes by Olivier and Churchill on Egerton to C.O., 7 October 1906 (PRO CO 520/37/40212).

¹¹⁹Minute by Sir J. Anderson on Egerton to C.O., 30 November 1910 (PRO CO 520/96/38806).

¹²⁰Minutes by Harcourt and Anderson on Lugard to C.O., 7 July 1913 (PRO CO 520/126/25218).

ought never, except under very exceptional circumstances, to interfere with the decision and policy of the man whom you have sent out to administer, and in return we at the Colonial Office only asked for one thing, and that was that we should be kept fully and completely informed of what the man on the spot intended to do and what he advised us to do. So long as we were kept absolutely informed of what was about to be done, the occasions on which the Colonial Office interfered were of the rarest.¹²¹

Reports of excessive use of force or even of personal violence were generally ignored, as in the case of charges brought against a political officer in 1913; the Colonial Office commented that

[T]he temptation to punish a native servant on the spot [by beating] is perhaps too great often to be resisted by English men in the bush; and, however illegal, is probably the solution which causes the least inconvenience to everyone concerned--including the culprit. But it is hardly a practice which the Government can or should encourage.¹²²

The only offenses that brought censure or punishment were persistent indebtedness, intemperance, promiscuity, or impertinence. For example, despite numerous reports to the Colonial Office regarding the violence of H.M. Douglas's methods, he was permitted to rise in the political service to one of its highest posts, Resident, and was only discharged when he wrote a mildly provocative letter to the Secretary of State complaining about the wages and working conditions of colonial officers.¹²³

Finally, the bureaucratic structure established by the British in Southeastern Nigeria, far from being well organized and efficient,

¹²¹ Lord Onslow, address of 8 March 1907, Journal of the African Society, VI (1906-7), 303-5.

¹²² Minutes by Harding and Harcourt on Lugard to C.O., 16 February 1913 (PRO CO 520/122/9052).

¹²³ See Boyle to C.O., 24 January 1919, and enclosures and minutes (PRO CO 583/73/10265).

was often lethargic, obfuscating, and obstructionist. Frequent leaves and transfers led to marked inexperience and inconsistency in local administration.¹²⁴ Officers were put in the field with little or no training, as in the case of Frank Hives, who was Acting District Commissioner at Bende within one month of arriving on the coast, having been given no introduction or instruction whatever.¹²⁵ Officers at some distance from headquarters had virtual independence and failed to report many details of their activities. Most were reluctant to leave their stations if any risk or discomfort was likely.¹²⁶ As one officer remembered,

The continual shortage of staff, and the ever increasing office work piled upon the Administrative Officer, made it inevitable that the outlying Districts received only the very minimum of attention, and an overworked District Officer was only too pleased if prompt payment of taxes and an apparent absence of crime made a visit not an urgent necessity¹²⁷ but a desirable thing to be done "one day when there is time."

Areas of questionable loyalty were seldom visited without substantial military force, and border areas between administrative districts were often neglected because neither officer cared to undertake responsibility for them.¹²⁸ As a result, many officers were

¹²⁴See Nicolson, Administration of Nigeria, 224; West African Mail, V, 224 (12 July 1907), 361-2.

¹²⁵Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 3-9; Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 12.

¹²⁶See Hives to Moorhouse, 30 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1); and W.G. Ambrose, comments on Bedwell to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 19 January 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

¹²⁷D. Heath, "African Secret Societies" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1342 [1]).

¹²⁸See W. G. Ambrose, report of 25 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 158.

ignorant of the political realities of their districts, as in the case of Abak Division, where an extensive fraudulent court was operated by Opobo men from 1902 to 1909 virtually before the eyes of the British officers at Uyo and Opobo.¹²⁹ The maps made during the first thirty years of the Protectorate administration were found to be notoriously inaccurate, as officers failed to tour and instead depended on the descriptions and estimates of African traders. In the words of a survey officer writing in 1927,

Talking of maps, the country is full of them. They are maps to look at, nothing else. The ordinance maps are wrong. You see nobody will sweat blood if he can help it, in short go into the bush, with the result that map makers have gone along woods or tracks & the rest, towns & all they have filled in by asking questions of the natives. . . . And who is going to bother if the map is wrong or right, it is a map.¹³⁰

In the following year, a political officer investigating the area immediately to the west of the present study noted that

[T]he incompleteness and inaccuracy of the maps in the Province and particularly of the Warri Division show that the Administrative officers cannot have known their Divisions or their people really well. Even villages on the main roads are not marked. Travelling has been far too much confined to a procession from Court to Court, and many villages lying off the beaten track have not been visited for years.¹³¹

Local officers tended to dissipate much of their energy in mutual jealousy and competitiveness, as, for example, the military and political branches pressed their claims of superiority over

¹²⁹See above, 215-19.

¹³⁰Gordon Parker, letter of 18 November 1927 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1450).

¹³¹W.E. Hunt, report of 10 January 1928: quoted in Baddeley to C.O., 13 March 1928 (PRO CO 583/158/183/1).

each other.¹³² In 1902 it was found that such competition had halted the development of the Arochukwu station.¹³³ And in 1907 thirty-three pages of acrimonious charges were passed between the political and medical officers at Ikot Ekpene over the failure of the former to provide the latter with a police guard for a lunatic.¹³⁴ Officers were inattentive to details and in some cases made major errors of legal and political interpretation. In 1906, for example, it had been ruled that forced labor could not be assessed in interior areas under the provisions of the House Rule Ordinance, which had been intended to pertain only to coastal areas.¹³⁵ Yet for the next ten years the Ordinance was used by political officers to extract labor from inland villages.¹³⁶ Individual officers and the administrative system itself had short memories. In 1911, a Provincial Commissioner asked for a full report on the Okonko men's society, saying he had not heard of it before, even though he had personally abolished Okonko in Obio Division twelve years

¹³²See for example Boyle, Trenchard, 78-9; Douglas, Niger Memories, 90; Hives, Ju-Ju and Justice, 125; Heneker, Bush Warfare, 196; Mair to Officer in Command, Calabar, 31 March 1907, and minutes (NAE CSE 8/2/51).

¹³³F.S. James, "Report on a tour of Cross River Division, April and May 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

¹³⁴Correspondence between C. Partridge and P.H. MacDonald, 1907 (NAE CSE 8/2/32).

¹³⁵W. Egerton, memorandum of 7 October 1906: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 7 October 1906 (PRO CO 520/37/40211).

¹³⁶See Egerton to C.O., 19 October 1911, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/107/35962); W.G. Ambrose, report of 18 April 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); Lugard to C.O., 24 May 1913 (PRO CO 520/124/18834).

earlier.¹³⁷ And H.L. Gallwey's warning that the Akunakuna men should not be permitted to accompany patrols because of their persistent looting and other atrocities was forgotten by 1909, when they again followed a British column, with similar results.¹³⁸ Long delays characterized many aspects of the administrative process, and files were frequently misplaced both in London and in Nigeria, as in the case of Sir Ralph Moor's final report on the Aro Expedition, which was lost in the Colonial Office for three years.¹³⁹

Perhaps most important, there existed among field officers a persistent resentment of the directives issued from colonial headquarters making demands upon them that they found it difficult to fulfill with their limited resources.¹⁴⁰ Yet any criticisms or suggestions to the contrary, even respectful ones, were treated with scant attention.¹⁴¹ The result of this attitude was that local officers maintained a cautious silence about administrative policy for fear of jeopardizing their own careers. As one officer

¹³⁷Gallwey to F.O., 2 June 1898 (PRO FO 2/179/93); Fosbery to Hives, 15 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

¹³⁸Gallwey to F.O., 9 February 1898 (PRO FO 2/178/26); Egerton to C.O., 30 November 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/83/41697); Egerton to C.O., 14 February 1910, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/91/6901).

¹³⁹West African Mail, I, 3 (17 April 1903), 77; Journal of the Nigeria Regiment, VI, 2 (January 1936), 73-9; Moor to C.O., 24 April 1902, and enclosures and minutes (PRO CO 520/14/20798).

¹⁴⁰See Douglas, Niger Memories, 111.

¹⁴¹See Ambrose to Bedwell, 25 July 1913, and minute by Bedwell, 28 August 1913 (NAE Calprof 13/6/47).

noted, "Officers (including myself) have been afraid of incurring the charge of 'criticising the policy of the Government' and of want of 'loyalty.'"¹⁴² In an atmosphere like this, it is not surprising that the local administration lost most of its adaptability and became conservative and inflexible. But given the historical and environmental realities of Southeastern Nigeria, inflexibility was the most dangerous pitfall into which the British could have stumbled. Although they held a near monopoly of physical force, their ability to control the political and social process was very nearly nullified by their own biases and internal conflicts.

¹⁴²F. Lynch, "Remarks on the Administration of the Native Courts in the Ibo Country," October 1919 (NAE Abadist 1/28/8).

CHAPTER VII

INVASION AND RESISTANCE, 1902-1919

The first two decades of the twentieth century were filled with armed conflict between the British and the Southeastern Nigerians. This was not, however, the sustained warfare of large armies in confrontation over long, static front lines. It was rather a succession of localized hostilities throughout the entire region, with strong British patrols in constant movement to check them. As soon as one recalcitrant area was brought into line with the British administration, another rose to take its place. From the British point of view, these were "little wars." The great disparity in the military technologies of the antagonists meant that British losses were only moderate. Yet these conflicts were not small or insignificant from the viewpoint of the Nigerians, who lost at least ten thousand killed over the twenty year period.¹ Violent opposition to the British was invariably a destructive course to take, yet village after village rose in opposition to the administration's demands.

It is not suggested here that a coordinated, region-wide plan of resistance existed, but rather that a common determination among the dominant factions throughout Southeastern Nigeria to limit British influence in local politics led to repeated,

¹On the calculation of African casualties due to British military action, see Appendix B of the present study.

localized violence. While resistance was not coordinated, however, the whole region closely observed the progress of current conflicts in order to assess British strength and determination. Ultimately, all violent opposition was suppressed, but the British were not unaffected by the stubborn endurance of the Southeastern Nigerians. The British Government was deeply concerned about the international image of the empire and thus directly rewarded Nigerian initiatives by moderating administrative demands. It is my contention that Southeastern Nigerians realized from an early date that they could influence British policy through sporadic violence. I shall return to this subject in the next chapter, but first it is necessary to outline the history of the twenty years of violent conflict between the British and the Southeastern Nigerians.

The Aro Expedition (1901-2) marked the end of individual, unarmed exploration of the interior for nearly five years. Henceforth all new territory was first entered by British military officers at the head of strong patrols, in line with the Colonial Office view of 1903 that "it would be useless to enter the country unless prepared to establish permanent control."² The military viewpoint came into its own under Walter Egerton, Moor's successor as High Commissioner and later Governor (1904-1912). He increased the authority of military officers in relation to the political branch and ordered that a decisive confrontation was to be achieved

² Minute by Antrobus, 30 September 1903, on Probyn to C.O., 25 August 1903 (PRO CO 520/20/34983).

in each village visited. He advised his staff to avoid "undue leniency," which, he felt, was "apt to be misconstrued by the natives and regarded as weakness."³ Egerton, who was given the task of unifying the administrations of Southern Nigeria and Lagos, made his headquarters at Lagos and was thus located at considerable distance from the area of the present study. His treatment of reports from the field was sometimes superficial, and on at least one occasion he was heavily criticised in the Colonial Office for confusing names and dates in his dispatches.⁴

At the heart of Egerton's administrative policy was a dedication to road making.⁵ Consequently, according to a contemporary observer, he created the impression "in the minds of Divisional and District Commissioners . . . that the official whose district can shew the greatest number of miles of road in the quickest possible time, is the official who will find greater favour in the eyes of his chief."⁶ In pursuit of this goal officers were permitted and even encouraged to require as much forced labor from inland villagers as possible.⁷ If physical violence was

³See Egerton, "Memorandum for guidance of Political Officers accompanying Patrols," [1904]: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 October 1904 (PRO CO 520/26/37051); Egerton to C.O., 8 October 1909, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/82/35419).

⁴See minute on Egerton to C.O., 10 February 1908 (PRO CO 520/58/7415).

⁵See for example A. Boyle, Trenchard (London, 1962), 80.

⁶West African Mail, IV, 161 (27 April 1906), 98.

⁷Egerton to C.O., 17 March 1910, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/92/11280).

necessary to achieve well maintained roads, Egerton was willing to defend it to a considerable degree.⁸ It was, in fact, the oppressive demands of political officers for road labor that often led to resistance to the British.

Despite Sir Ralph Moor's optimistic predictions that the Aro Expedition had thoroughly pacified the southern half of the Protectorate, it was soon discovered that most areas refused to cooperate with the newly installed political officers at Owerri, Aba, Bende, and Arochukwu. Hostility toward the British was particularly evident in Ikot Ekpene and Itu Divisions, where an officer reported that the people "exhibited a thinly veiled insolence, and I have little faith in them. . . . At one [village] . . . they were openly unfriendly, shouting at me to leave their town as they did not want to see any white man."⁹ Central Oron and Etinan Divisions, the home of the Ubium and Nsit clans, were admitted to be virtual "terra incognita," impassable to British officers.¹⁰ Much of Abak and Opobo Divisions, especially the parts south of the Kwa Ibo River still controlled by the trader Akparanga, refused to permit free transit to the British or their coastal allies. In Moor's words,

⁸Egerton, memorandum of 3 November 1906: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 3 November 1906 (PRO CO 520/37/43112).

⁹Morrissey to Moor, 1 August 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/4). See also Moor to C.O., 22 August 1902 (PRO CO 520/15/41428); and Morrissey to Egerton, 22 April 1904: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 6 May 1904 (PRO CO 520/24/19269).

¹⁰A.C. Douglas, "Quarterly Report on the Qua Ibo Sub-District for the Quarter Ended 30th September 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/4); Watt to Divisional Commissioner, Eastern Division, 1 April 1903 (NAI Calprof 10/3/6).

The area was visited during the [Aro] Expedition but appears not to have been fully dealt with and the Chief [Akparanga] has since shewn considerable hostility to the Government and interfered with the settlement of the country around him, seizing on the roads and preventing the establishment of Native Courts. He is not only unfriendly to the Government but a nuisance to all his neighbours, a land pirate and general disturber of peace."¹¹

Considerable hostility was also displayed toward the British in Ohafia and southern Afikpo Divisions, despite the extensive touring of these areas by the columns of the Aro Expedition. The Divisional Commissioner reported that along the Unwana-Bende road "Court Messengers are really not safe in the country yet and I have warned all officers to be most careful in their use of them."¹² The village group of Afikpo, formerly cordial to British officers, in mid-1902 became uncooperative, refused to deal with British agents, and attacked the pro-British village of Anofia.¹³ Even around Arochukwu itself, officers were refused information and provisions. "The people round here," wrote one officer, "are quiet and give no active trouble, but they are passively hostile and bitter, and always attempt to obstruct so far as they think they safely can. It is a pity they were never really beaten, as the still consider they are entirely their own masters & owe

¹¹Moor to C.O., 22 August 1902 (PRO CO 520/15/41428). See also Moor to C.O., 24 October 1902, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/15/48116); and Egerton to C.O., 11 October 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/26/37051).

¹²F.S. James, "Report on a tour of Cross River Division, April and May 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/3). See also Morrissey to Moor, 1 August 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/4).

¹³Morrissey to Moor, 27 December 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/5).

allegiance to no-one."¹⁴ Above all, the entire area of the road between Bende and Owerri, passing through modern Umuahia, Mbaise, and Owerri Divisions, was rendered impassable to British columns by the opposition of the villages along the road. Between Bende and the Imo River, as we have seen, an alliance of Ibeku and Olokoró villages led by Umu Ajata attacked a British convoy in September 1902 and closed the road for two months.¹⁵ To the west of the Imo, the continuing resistance to the demands of H.M. Douglas at Owerri rendered the main road to Owerri unsafe for all but strong military columns.¹⁶ And between Owerri and Oguta the hostility of the people of Uli forced British traffic to avoid the main road and use a southern detour.¹⁷

Because of the widespread lack of cooperation with the British, noted one observer, "The Aro expedition is all being done over again without blare of trumpets," since "the first venture was not such a success as it appeared."¹⁸ From 1902 to 1905, most of the areas first invaded by the Aro Expedition were revisited by military patrols, in some cases several times, and often with more violence than during the initial Expedition. From December

¹⁴E. Simpson, "Report on the Arochuku District for the Quarter Ending June 30th 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

¹⁵See above, 164-5.

¹⁶H.M. Douglas, "Report on the Owerri District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1905," extract: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 31 August 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/33916).

¹⁷Winn Sampson to Moor, 10 December 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/5).

¹⁸West African Mail, I, 1 (3 April 1903), 11.

1901 to April 1905 over 100,000 rifles and percussion-cap guns were confiscated, and an estimated 5,000 Southeastern Nigerians were killed.¹⁹ Resistance in each case normally took the form of hindrance of routine British passage on the main roads, which was answered by a military patrol. Many of these patrols were met with armed resistance, as can be seen from the statistical summary in Appendix A of the present study, but it should be remembered that these represent only a minority of the patrols put into the field. Most met no violent resistance, yet caused considerable destruction through looting and burning of houses and foodstuffs. In general, throughout this period "shows of force" were a regular phenomenon; the political process rested squarely on the military process.

The areas of heaviest resistance and most extensive destruction from 1902 to 1905 were Umuahia Division in the area of the Ibeku and Olokoru clans, Mbaitoli/Ikeduru Division around Umunoha, Ihiala and Mgbidi Divisions in the area of Uli village group, Owerri and Mbaise Divisions between Owerri and the Imo River, and the entire region occupied by the Ibibio and Anang peoples. The first of these areas, Umuahia Division, has already been examined in detail and it will be necessary here only to summarize the conduct of military operations to suppress resistance.²⁰ As we have seen, the pro-British faction led by Old Umuahia had been increasingly

¹⁹See Egerton to C.O., 3 May 1905 (PRO CO 520/30/18291). On the estimation of African casualties due to British military action, see Appendix B of the present study.

²⁰See above, 162-5.

isolated by the anti-British elements under the leadership of Umu Ajata, and on 11 September 1902 a British convoy of thirty troops with two officers was forced to flee the area, losing a messenger killed and four other men wounded.²¹ Two weeks later a column of 135 officers and men was assembled at Bende, but as it entered the area of the Ibeku clan it was heavily attacked in four villages and was forced to retreat after only two days in the field, due to the heavy casualties it sustained (three killed and seven wounded).²²

It was not until one month after this defeat that the British were able to gather sufficient forces to reenter the area. On 26 October 1902 a column of 275 officers and men, with a cannon and two machine guns, entered Olokoro from the southeast. The main fortifications of the Olokoro and Ibeku people were met on that date at Oko. As the column approached it was fired upon from a stockade on a hill, and flankers were put out to surround the defenders. But as they proceeded, they were fired upon "from a very strong and carefully concealed set of trenches," before which "was a mass of needle pointed stakes." The defenders were firing high, however, and the trenches had been constructed too far back from the crest of the hill to be effective. A bayonet charge turned the Ibeku and Olokoro flank and forced them to

²¹Morrissey to Moor, 27 September 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/4).

²²Morrissey to Moor, 1 October 1902, and Campbell to Montanaro, 30 September 1902: enclosures in Moor to C.O., 13 October 1902 (PRO CO 520/15/46500).

retreat.²³ On October 27 the column proceeded to Umu Ajata, where, after heavy resistance, a base camp was established. For the following week, "constant opposition" was encountered, and three major battles were fought in eastern Olokoru.²⁴ When the column reached the Bende-Owerri road it found the abandoned fortifications that the Ibeku and Olokoru had built to meet a British attack from the east: "Very strong stockades some a hundred yards in length were passed and the ground for some distance around them had concealed pits, and sharp wooden spikes in all directions."²⁵ By November 3 the defenders had begun the final stage of their resistance and had retired to "elaborate hiding places . . . cleverly concealed" in the deep ravines of the area. Nevertheless, six more pitched battles were fought, and the people did not surrender "until all the towns were destroyed." On 11 December 1902 a mass meeting was assembled and the demands of the British administration read to the Ibeku and Olokoru.²⁶

To the west, in the village of Umunoha in Mbaitoli/Ikeduru Division, the British also faced heavy resistance. Located here was the second most influential oracle in Southeastern Nigeria,

²³Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332); W.C.G. Heneker, Bush Warfare (London, 1907), 19-20.

²⁴Morrissey to Moor, 7 November 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332).

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Morrissey to Moor, 19 December 1902, and Heneker to Moor, 26 December 1902: enclosures in Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6332).

Igwe-ka-ala, and the British considered it as important to destroy this judicial competitor as the Aro oracle. On 16 November 1902 a British officer led eighty-three troops into Umunoha to investigate a reported murder, and upon entering the village found an assembly in process. When the villagers saw the troops, they fled in all directions, and when they failed to return, the officer burned down their assembly house. The following morning a "friendly" Umunoha leader came to speak with the officer at his camp near the marketplace.

I was explaining to him [wrote the officer] that there was no war palaver but that I had come to investigate a case of murder, when suddenly a volley was poured into us from a few yards off in the bush. Providentially no one was hit, but the action immediately became general and was kept up with little or no interval for four hours and a half, after which time it ceased altogether.²⁷

Having expended nearly all its ammunition and being unable to obtain food, the column then retreated to Owerri. The report of this operation was strongly criticized by Moor, who noted that it would give the impression that the British had been defeated, and that it was impossible for some time to follow up this initial action with a stronger expedition.²⁸

It was not until April 1903 that a column of over three hundred officers and men, with one cannon and two machine guns, could be dispatched. On April 25 the column approached Umunoha and on the following day prepared to enter the village. As one

²⁷Winn Sampson to Moor, 19 November 1902 (NAI Calprof 10/3/5).

²⁸Moor to Winn Sampson, 29 November 1902 (NAI Calprof 9/2/4).

officer reported

Omo-Naha [Umunoha] was attacked on the morning of the 26th of April. The column met with most determined resistance, the enemy yelling and shouting at close quarters all round. The first of the enemy's trenches was encountered four miles outside Omo-Naha. Here he made a determined stand and disputed every inch of the way to Omo-Naha. The situation at one time became almost critical, the enemy entirely surrounding the column and firing with cannon at less than fifty yards distance. Colonel Montanaro then altered the disposition of the troops, further protecting his transport and outflanking the foe. Eventually the column reached Omo-Naha, after over four hours' hard fighting, which lasted all the way to Omo-Naha, where a last stand was made by the enemy, who again made a determined attack on all sides, but was eventually driven off, desultory sniping on the camp being carried on throughout the rest of the day. Our casualties were slight. . . . It is owing to the extensive scouting and flanking movements that there were so few casualties. The enemy's loss is unknown, but it was reported to be severe.²⁹

Over the following two weeks all of Umunoha, as well as eleven allied villages, was destroyed, and on April 28 the oracle site, which was surrounded by an iron fence, was destroyed by cannon fire.³⁰ Yet a number of villages did not surrender, and as much as two years later the administration was still unable to secure the full cooperation of the Umunoha area.³¹

In the neighboring Divisions of Ihiala and Mgbidi, as we have seen, the village group of Ihiala, hard pressed by its aggressive neighbor, Uli, had appealed for British assistance in 1902. Uli prepared itself for the impending British assault as it had for

²⁹West African Mail, I, 13 (26 June 1903), 361.

³⁰Woodman to Probyn, n.d.: enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 29 July 1903 (PRO CO 520/19/31561).

³¹W. Egerton, "Overland Journey Lagos to Calabar via Ibadan, 1905," 16 July 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 16 July 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/27874).

previous Abam attacks organized by the Ihiala and blockaded the road from Owerri to Oguta.³² On 3 April 1903 a British force of over three hundred officers and men entered the Uli area, meeting heavy resistance near Amwoka, "the enemy retiring behind a long line of trenches." Considerable opposition was again encountered on the following day at Amwoka and on April 8 at Umuaku, the leading Uli village. On April 19 the Uli surrendered a portion of their arms to the British and permitted their leader, Izolobi, to be deported as a guarantee of their good conduct.³³

As related in the previous chapter, the area on both sides of the main road from Owerri to Udo on the Imo River had been only superficially dealt with by the Aro Expedition, and the villages along the road refused to cooperate with the District Commissioner at Owerri, H.M. Douglas. Only monthly convoys, accompanied by thirty troops, were able to travel along the road in safety. By late 1903 travel became unsafe even for these convoys.³⁴ In March 1904 a patrol entered the area, meeting heavy resistance around Ihite, Lagwo, and Nguru, but it was unable to secure the complete submission of the area before being withdrawn to deal with disturbances elsewhere. For the following year travel along the road continued to be restricted to monthly military convoys.³⁵ The area was again

³²See above, 57-9, 162.

³³Probyn to C.O., 25 March 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/18/14609); Probyn to C.O., 29 July 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/19/31561).

³⁴See above, 238-9.

³⁵Egerton to C.O., 7 May 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/24/19274).

invaded in early 1905 by a column of over three hundred officers and men, but the villagers retreated before so large a force, engaging only in sniping and occasional ambushes.³⁶ When the patrol was withdrawn, the road was again closed to all but military convoys. A smaller patrol entered the area in May 1905 but was unable to obtain the surrender of the hostile area around Ibeku before being withdrawn.³⁷

The most sustained and intense resistance between 1901 and 1905 was encountered in the areas inhabited by the Ibibio-speaking people. Although the Aro Expedition had spent considerable time in these areas and had collected large numbers of guns, the people continued to control their own roads and refused to submit disputes to the British Native Courts. In late 1902 the first of a series of patrols was dispatched to deal with the region. It was to end the domination of the Abak-Opobo road by the trader Akparanga of Ibekwe, and to destroy those villages that were allied with him. Only minor violent resistance was encountered, and on 10 November 1902 Akparanga surrendered. He was deported to Calabar, where he was to be indoctrinated and then returned to rule his people; in Moor's words, "He is a man of great intelligence and will I anticipate be of great use in the country when he appreciates the fact that it is better for him to carry out the views of the Government

³⁶Egerton to C.O., 13 June 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/24005).

³⁷Egerton to C.O., 21 June 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/24469).

than to oppose them."³⁸

In December 1902 a patrol of 115 troops was sent into Etinan, Uyo, and Oron Divisions to reopen the road between Eket and Oron. As in 1899, that road had been closed to British traffic by the refusal of the Ubium people to cooperate with the Eket allies of the British.³⁹ Further, the large Nsit clan had not surrendered their guns and had threatened any British officer who entered their territory. The patrol was able to reopen the road through Ubium without violent opposition, but the Nsit clan resisted the operations in major battles at Ikot Akpan Abia, Ndikpo, and Ibawa, and a large number of villages was destroyed when the people fled into hiding.⁴⁰ To the north, in Itu Division, the pro-British village of Afua was attacked and destroyed in January 1903 by surrounding villages that had not been disarmed by the Aro Expedition. A patrol of 130 officers and men was dispatched in March of that year, and large numbers of guns were confiscated following two major battles, with especially heavy fighting at Ikot Udom.⁴¹ And in late 1903 a patrol of nearly two hundred officers and men was sent to Eket Division to punish the villages of Ikpa, Uquo, and Efoi, which had detained and threatened a

³⁸Moor to C.O., 8 December 1902, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/16/265).

³⁹See above, 118-20.

⁴⁰Moor to C.O., 18 January 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/18/6331).

⁴¹Probyn to C.O., 19 August 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/20/34979).

British officer. Sustained resistance was met at all three villages, and the British forces sustained twenty-one casualties.⁴²

But it was clear that piecemeal operations of this type could not succeed in bringing the Ibibio people into line with British policy. In 1904 and 1905 two major expeditions, each consisting of over four hundred officers and men, invaded the entire area. In January 1904 the first of these expeditions entered Ikot Ekpene and Itu Divisions to deal with the particularly uncooperative northern Ibibio and Anang peoples.⁴³ Even though many villages surrendered their arms immediately, having been overawed by so large a column of troops, twelve major battles were fought, with heavy resistance on 10 and 11 February 1904 at Ikot Ukpong and Onong. Yet the High Commissioner acknowledged that the region was still "by no means . . . settled," and ordered the stationing of a British officer at a new administrative post at Ikot Ekpene so as to ensure the cooperation of this, "one of the richest oil producing districts in the Protectorate."⁴⁴

In November 1904 the second major expedition was dispatched into the Ibibio area, both to continue the disarmament begun by the earlier expedition and to end the resistance of the Offot

⁴²Probyn to C.O., 20 November 1903, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/21/44995); West African Mail, I, 30 (23 October 1903), 790; A.C. Douglas [Nemo], Niger Memories (Exeter, [1927]), 86-9.

⁴³See Fosbery to C.O., 4 January 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/24/4364).

⁴⁴Egerton to C.O., 6 May 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/24/19269).

people of Uyo Division, who had also opposed the Aro Expedition.⁴⁵ Heavy fighting was necessary in the Offot area at Ekpene Ukim and Ibesikpo in December 1904, and then the expedition proceeded to Abak Division, collecting arms amid scattered sniping for two months. At the conclusion of the operations, a new station was opened at Uyo in Offot country and a British officer permanently assigned there. An extension of the patrol then attacked Ikot Okobo in Etinan Division, which had refused to relinquish control of the trade route passing through it.⁴⁶

Apart from the major instances of resistance to military operations outlined above, there were large numbers of smaller encounters throughout the southern half of the area under study between 1902 and 1905. We have already examined the considerable resistance offered to District Commissioner H.M. Douglas and to the patrols sent to support him in Owerri, Etche, and southern Mbaise Divisions, as well as that met by W.G. Syer in Ahòada and Ikwerre Divisions.⁴⁷ Opposition to the British presence was also experienced in Ngwa Division around Itu in November 1902 and at Ndiakata in February 1905, where the people displayed "great bravery" but "extraordinary bad shooting."⁴⁸ In Afikpo Division

⁴⁵See above, 159-60; Egerton to C.O., 11 October 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/26/37051).

⁴⁶Egerton to C.O., 17 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24007).

⁴⁷See above, 234-42.

⁴⁸Moor to C.O., 28 December 1902, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/16/2478); Trenchard to Montanaro, 4 March 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 17 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24007).

in December 1902 a patrol of over three hundred officers and men encountered brief but intense resistance before the Afikpo village of Mgbom. The villagers, wrote one officer, "attacked us wherever they had an opportunity, showing great bravery in crawling through the grass, to get to close quarters. . . . The Afikpos who came within 200 yards rarely got away."⁴⁹ Having taken the hill upon which Mgbom was situated, the column bombarded the main Afikpo village of Ndibe and then fought a two-hour battle in the Ndibe marketplace.⁵⁰ After this show of force, the column marched into Ohafia Division, where political officers had experienced difficulty with many villages. No resistance was encountered and the operations were terminated.

In December 1903 a patrol of over three hundred officers and men was dispatched to the east bank of the Cross River at Nkpani in Obubra Division, where the people had refused to cooperate with the Native Courts and had prevented the people of the inland villages of Nko, Ugep, and Isaba from trading directly with the Cross River. It required four days of heavy fighting to obtain the submission of Nkpani and its allies, the British suffering eighteen casualties.⁵¹ And in February and March 1905 a patrol operated in Khana and Tai/ Eleme Divisions, where the Ogoni-speaking people continued to live in complete independence from the British, managing their own trade

⁴⁹Heneker to Moor, 17 January 1903: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 6 February 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/8250).

⁵⁰Ibid.; Heneker, Bush Warfare, 123.

⁵¹Fosbery to C.O., 4 January 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/24/4363).

and maintaining their traditional oracles.⁵² Strong opposition was met at Soo and Kari, and over two thousand percussion-cap guns were confiscated from seventy-two villages.⁵³

In general, then, the period from 1902 to 1905 was devoted to reaffirming the British presence in the area initially visited by the Aro Expedition. The only new territory invaded by the military patrols was to the northeast in the area of Ezzikwo and Abakaliki Divisions and to the northwest along the east bank of the Niger River (see map, page 274). In early 1903 the villages along the west bank of the Ewanyong (Anyim) River complained to the British that they were being raided by the Ikwo people to the west. In February and March a patrol of 150 troops entered this previously unvisited area of Ezzikwo Division and encountered resistance at Ebega, Ofurekpe, and Alobo.⁵⁴ A year later the British again encountered the Ikwo at Ohike, which had been raiding canoes on the Cross River.⁵⁵ But the Ohike refused to pay the fine imposed at that time, and in February 1905 they ambushed a British officer attempting to collect it, killing four of the troops accompanying him and wounding three others.⁵⁶ In order to

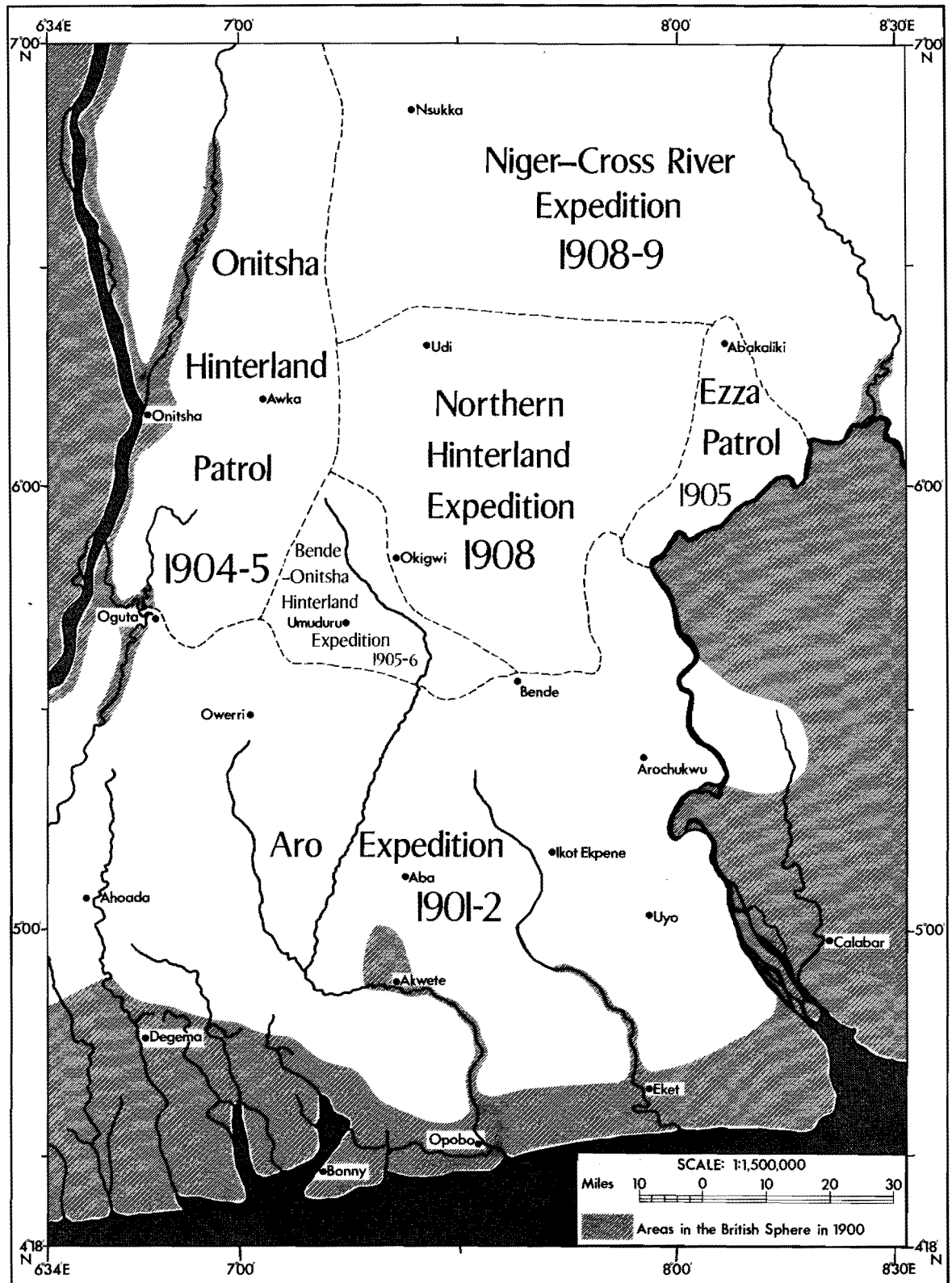
⁵²Fosbery to Egerton, 12 August 1904, and Fosbery, "Notes on the Ogoni Country & Inhabitants also re Andoni Natives," 12 August 1904 (NAI Calprof 10/3/6).

⁵³Hosley to Montanaro, 23 March 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 15 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24006).

⁵⁴H.H. Sproule, report of 20 March 1903: enclosure in Probyn to C.O., 19 August 1903 (PRO CO 520/20/34978).

⁵⁵Egerton to C.O., 1 September 1904, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/25/34007).

⁵⁶Egerton to C.O., 16 July 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/28024).



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punish Ohike and to end the raiding by the Ikwo people on their neighbors and on the Cross River, the British dispatched a patrol of three hundred officers and men into Ezzikwo and Abakaliki Divisions in March 1905. This patrol was also to investigate reports of lead deposits in the area. In late March and early April it encountered resistance at Eka, Idembia, Ebia, and Opotokum, and then moved on to establish a new station at Abakaliki, in the area of the lead deposits.⁵⁷

The second previously unvisited area, the interior of the east bank of the Niger River, was invaded in November 1904 by the Onitsha Hinterland Patrol. The goal set for the operations was to regularize trade in the Anambara River valley by abolishing tolls and by compelling inland villages to submit disputes to the British.⁵⁸ For two and a half months the patrol operated in a thirty-mile wide area along the Niger extending from Idah Division to Ihiala Division. Serious resistance was encountered at only three places, but constant sniping and attempted ambushes hampered the progress of the operations. In January 1905 the patrol destroyed the Agbala oracle at Awka and established a permanent administrative station in that village.⁵⁹

⁵⁷W.A. Crawford Cockburn, "Report on Survey of Routes to Lead Mines in Amargo-Ezza Country and attitude of Neighboring Tribes," [November 1904], and subsequent correspondence (NAE CSE 1/5/1); Egerton to C.O., 16 July 1905, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/31/28024).

⁵⁸Egerton, "Memorandum of Instructions to Officer Commanding Onitsha Hinterland Patrol": enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 October 1904 (PRO CO 520/26/37051).

⁵⁹Moorhouse to Montanaro, 20 April 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 13 June 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/24005).

Apart from the two instances mentioned, there was no patrol or exploratory activity in any previously unvisited area between 1902 and 1905. In 1902 Moor had proposed that an expedition invade the area between Onitsha and Bende, but the demand for troops to deal with areas supposedly already under British control, as well as the request that officers be lent to northern Nigeria in early 1903, forced the postponement of the plans.⁶⁰ In August 1903 the Acting High Commissioner, Leslie Probyn, repeated the proposal, but the continuing shortage of officers again forced the cancellation of the expedition.⁶¹ Only in 1905, when the new High Commissioner, Walter Egerton, was satisfied that the area of the Aro Expedition was fully under control, was it possible to proceed with the Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition. The plans submitted to the Colonial Office were ambitious: they called for the subjugation of as much as three thousand square miles of territory south of 6°30' north latitude.⁶² Egerton's more cautious deputy, J.J. Thorburn, suggested that the southern areas were still far from secure and that the year's operations would be better spent dealing with such areas as the Bende-Owerri road, which was still closed to all but strong military convoys.⁶³ But Egerton overruled

⁶⁰Moor to C.O., 22 August 1902 (PRO CO 520/15/41428); Probyn to C.O., 25 March 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/14609).

⁶¹Probyn to C.O., 10 August 1903 (PRO CO 520/20/33411); Probyn to C.O., 25 August 1903 (PRO CO 520/20/34983).

⁶²A.F. Montanaro to Egerton, 26 April 1905: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 5 May 1905 (PRO CO 520/30/18351); J.J. Thorburn, "Memorandum of Instructions Issued to Officer Commanding Bendi-Onitsha Hinterland Patrol," 10 November 1905: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 9 December 1905 (PRO CO 520/32/353).

⁶³Thorburn to C.O., 31 August 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/33916).

Thorburn, pointing out that the villages along the Bende-Owerri road were passively but not actively hostile and that dealing with the area to the north of them would probably help to bring them into line.⁶⁴

In early November 1905 two large columns were assembled, one at Bende with 340 officers and men and the other at Awka with 210 officers and men. They were to proceed directly toward each other through the unmapped territory between them and meet somewhere on the upper Imo River. From there, they were to send small parties southward into the area of modern Mbano, Etiti, and Mbaise Divisions, while the major part of the force turned northward to meet another column dispatched from Abakaliki. In the event, however, the plans were changed radically by an unexpected occurrence. On November 16 a British doctor, named Stewart, attempting to make his way by bicycle from Owerri to Calabar, took a wrong turn and instead rode toward Udo on the hostile Owerri-Bende road. He had been preceded along that road by a convoy of sixty troops, who had noted armed Ahiara and Onicha-Amairi men near the road. As Stewart tried to catch up with the convoy, his path was blocked by hostile villagers who eventually captured him, carried him around the market places of Etiti and northern Mbaise Divisions, and then killed him at the Afor market of Onicha-Amairi.⁶⁵

⁶⁴See minutes on Ibid.

⁶⁵H.M. Douglas, "A Report on the Death of Dr. Stewart in Owerri District," 23 November 1905: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 19 December 1905 (PRO CO 520/32/1202); F. Hives, Justice in the Jungle (London, 1932), 175-89. The circumstances surrounding

The news of Stewart's death reached the two columns as they were proceeding toward each other in late November 1905. When they finally met at the Imo River opposite the village of Onicha, they were ordered to abandon all northward operations and instead to focus their activities on the Owerri-Bende road to the south. On November 30 they crossed the Imo and established a base camp at Onicha, after resistance at that village.⁶⁶ From there they moved into Mbanu, Etiti, and Mbaise Divisions, where, according to the commanding officer, "The most continued and

the death of Stewart are common knowledge throughout Igboland today, as the story has been transformed into a virtual legend. People of all ages, especially in Mbaise and Etiti Divisions, say that Stewart dropped written messages all along the roads to inform his fellow officers of what had happened to him, and that the people of Onicha-Amairi tied his bicycle to a tree to prevent its returning to Owerri to report his death. They also say that the reason Stewart was killed was that the people were ignorant and afraid of Europeans, having never seen one before. The latter claim is, however, a rationalization. The area was not in the least unfamiliar with Europeans, having been invaded by three military patrols since 1901 in addition to monthly armed convoys along the Owerri-Bende road. The investigation carried out in Mbaise Division immediately after Stewart's death revealed that the people thought they had captured H.M. Douglas, the despised District Commissioner of Owerri, whom they had sent threatening messages a few months earlier. (Hives, Justice in the Jungle, 191-4; H.M. Douglas, "Report on the Owerri District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1905," extract: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 31 August 1905 [PRO CO 520/31/33916].) In fact, it is still believed in some areas that it was Douglas, and not Stewart, who was killed. (See for example the interview with Okwu Achilefu of Umuwanwa [born about 1897] in A.I. Atulomah, "The Establishment of British Rule in Umuopara [1901-1929]," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973, 68.)

⁶⁶ Moorhouse to Egerton, 6 June 1906: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 9 June 1906 (PRO CO 520/36/23268); C.E. Vickery, "A West African Expedition," United Service Magazine, n.s. XXXIII, 933 (August 1906), 554-5.

obstinate resistance was met with, trenches and stockades being found everywhere."⁶⁷ In particular the village-group of Ahiara offered intense resistance. As one officer described it, the approach to the village-group was defended by "a magnificent trench and stockade, stoutly held by the enemy. . . . From here onwards to the centre of their town was a succession of stockades and trenches, more or less stoutly held; the din was terrific with the discharge of their Danes and their war cries."⁶⁸ Similar fighting occurred around Onicha-Amairi, Obizi, and Alike, where trenches "over 1000 yards long" were encountered. "There is no doubt," wrote one officer, "that Doctor Stewart's murder has encouraged all these people to fight. There is not a single town here that has not fired at us and round Alike great hostility was shown, the natives coming up in great style but luckily cannot shoot straight."⁶⁹

Until mid-February the combined columns pursued the defenders, who gradually retreated to concealed encampments with their families and possessions. One hundred troops were then assigned to complete the capture of the fugitives, while the remainder of the column carried out an abbreviated invasion of the areas to the north, succeeding in exploring parts of Nkwerre Division and

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Vickery, "West African Expedition," 556.

⁶⁹Trenchard to Thorburn, 22 December 1905: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 5 January 1906 (PRO CO 520/35/3847).

the western half of Okigwi Division.⁷⁰ In April 1906 a new station was established at Umuduru, and the Expedition was terminated, having fulfilled only a small part of its initial goals.⁷¹

Further expansion to the north was halted until 1908, while attention was again focused on areas supposedly subjugated by earlier expeditions. Until that year, over one-third of the area under study remained independent of any British influence whatever (see map, page 274). Although Governor Egerton strongly urged the completion of expedition work in 1906, the Colonial Office, both for financial reasons and as a result of its new policy of "peaceful penetration," withheld its approval.⁷² Consequently, uncooperative areas beyond the borders of the British presence had to be ignored for several years, and efforts were made to protect the disarmed villages in the British sphere from their attacks.⁷³ Even in areas considered to be under British control, political officers found it difficult to obtain military support for their activities because of the new Colonial Office policy limiting the use of force. As a result, many officers curtailed their touring schedules, and large areas ceased to be regularly

⁷⁰Vickery, "West African Expedition," 556-61.

⁷¹H. Bedwell, "Annual Report on the Eastern Province for the Year 1906," 27 April 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 22 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/28311).

⁷²See above, 187-8. See also Egerton to C.O., 7 September 1906, and minutes (PRO CO 520/37/35815).

⁷³See Egerton to C.O., 12 April 1907, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/44/15825).

visited.

Only the most extreme cases of hostility to the British administration were punished by patrols, as detailed in Appendix A of this study. For example, in July 1907 nearly all of Etche Division expelled its warrant chiefs and participated in the destruction of the Native Court building at Okomoko, reportedly because the Native Court clerk there had been overly demanding of forced labor for road and construction work, and because he had been using his position to extort money and services from the surrounding villages.⁷⁴ A patrol of 130 troops was immediately dispatched, meeting heavy resistance at Okehi, Afara, and Nihi, where, it was reported, the patrol's machine gun was employed on "two or three opportunities . . . with excellent effect," causing heavy casualties.⁷⁵ The patrol then moved northward into Owerri Division, where the people of the Ngor clan were again blocking British passage on the Owerri-Aba road. Opposition was encountered at five villages, "the natives taking refuge in their houses and on the roofs and offering a stout resistance."⁷⁶

While these and other operations were being carried out, Egerton completed his plans for the "pacification" of the remaining one-third of the Protectorate that had not yet been visited by Europeans. In 1908 and 1909 two major expeditions

⁷⁴Fosbery to Egerton, 22 July 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 5 August 1907 (PRO CO 520/48/30246); Egerton to C.O., 5 December 1907 (PRO CO 520/50/45018).

⁷⁵Haywood to Officer in Command, Calabar, 1 October 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O., 21 October 1907 (PRO CO 520/49/39696).

⁷⁶Ibid.

were dispatched for this purpose. They both encountered prolonged, intense resistance and killed a total of approximately one thousand Southeastern Nigerians.⁷⁷ In January 1908 the Northern Hinterland Expedition, consisting of 650 officers and men, with seven machine guns and two cannons, invaded the area between Awka and Abakaliki (see map, page 274). Resistance was especially heavy at Ishiagu and Inyi, as the officer in command reported:

The Ishiagos had built small rifle pits and occupied a hill over which the Column had to pass, the country was open and shrapnel and maxim fire in front and a turning movement on the left flank drove them out; the Ihni [Inyi] crossed their boundary and attacked me in a small place in Akpugo territory, firing was heavy for a time & lasted until we drove them out of the bush into the open when they were soon on the run. . . . For the next three or four days both tribes adopted "fire and run" tactics in and around their villages and then sent in messages of submission. They gave no further trouble. Our early success against these two tribes undoubtedly had the effect of bringing about the submission of many other tribes and villages.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, six further major battles were necessary to make the area safe for British passage. A new station was established at Udi, and the Umuduru station was moved northward to Okigwi. Finally, between December 1908 and March 1909, the Niger-Cross River Expedition, with 650 officers and men, operated in the remaining unvisited region. Resistance was encountered at six places in the area of the present study, with especially heavy opposition at Okpatu (Udi Division), where "the enemy armed with spears and flint locks charged a small column and came right on,

⁷⁷On the estimation of African casualties due to British military action, see Appendix B of the present study.

⁷⁸Moorhouse to Egerton, 8 May 1908: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 22 June 1908 (PRO CO 520/62/24781).

two men being wounded with spears. They were driven off and firing ceased at once."⁷⁹

As these expeditions were in progress, Egerton expressed his optimism that the need for military action in Southeastern Nigeria would soon be at an end. As he wrote to the Colonial Office,

It is satisfying to note that year by year fewer patrols are required in the old portions of the Protectorate and that when military patrols have to be authorised less serious fighting takes place than formerly. The numerous different tribes in the Eastern and Central Provinces of the Protectorate are learning that the British occupation does not entail any interference with reasonable native customs and are beginning to appreciate the advantages of the establishment of law and order and the facilities it affords for more extensive agriculture and trade.⁸⁰

But this optimism, as immediately succeeding events proved, was built on delusion. As has been noted, by late 1906 political officers were being instructed to avoid the use of force, in line with the Colonial Office's new "peaceful penetration" policy. One officer, for example, was criticized by the Deputy Governor when he sent armed police into a hostile area to effect an arrest; he "should I think have visited the town in person and tried to secure the arrest by persuasion and peaceful methods."⁸¹ Local officers were instructed to fulfill their missions "without having to use military force" yet were also warned that it was "advisable where offensive action has been taken by natives to take no risks."⁸²

⁷⁹Trenchard to Egerton, 11 May 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32311).

⁸⁰Egerton to C.O., 8 September 1908 (PRO CO 520/65/35239).

⁸¹Thorburn to C.O., 31 August 1907 (PRO CO 520/48/33525).

⁸²Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, to District Commissioner, Owerri, 7 April 1910 (NAE Calprof 13/3/12).

Faced with these contradictory imperatives, officers remained close to their stations, applying, usually unsuccessfully, for military support for their proposed tours.⁸³

By mid-1909 it had become apparent that large areas of Southeastern Nigeria had not been visited or patrolled for over three years. These areas increasingly refused to perform road and construction work or to recognize summonses and warrants from the Native Courts. Particularly affected were Abak and Awgu Divisions, as well as the heavily populated band of territory extending between Ihiala and Umuahia Divisions. As the Colonial office learned of these conditions, it began to reconsider its policy of "peaceful penetration" as applied in Southeastern Nigeria, noting that "Scarcely any district appears to be under control."⁸⁴ Although it did not overturn its policy at this time, the Colonial Office did begin to permit more latitude to Egerton and his staff in judging the necessity for military action, in accordance with the recommendation of the Inspector General of the West African Frontier Force:

Judging by what I saw of the natives in the Owerri and neighbouring districts, frequent patrols and strong escorts will be necessary for some years to come, as the inhabitants are very uncivilized. It would not be safe to move any of the companies stationed in the central districts, east of

⁸³ See Binny to Fosbery, 17 April 1911, and W.G. Ambrose, report of 7 August 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

⁸⁴ Minute by J. Anderson, 6 June 1910, on Egerton to C.O., 5 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/16253).

the Niger.⁸⁵

Abak Division, which, as we have seen, had been closed to British officers since 1905 and had become a virtual enclave dominated by Bonny and Opobo traders, had already been dealt with by a patrol approved in 1909.⁸⁶ Awgu Division, which had been visited only briefly by the Northern Hinterland Expedition in 1908, had also refused to cooperate with British officers and had become the object of three patrols between 1909 and 1911, as described in Chapter V.⁸⁷ But by far the most extensive area of renewed resistance to the British was the broad band of heavily populated territory between Ihiala and Umuahia Divisions. Most of this area had been visited and partially destroyed by the Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition of 1905-1906, but since that time very little effort had been made by political officers to maintain the cooperation of the area. Not only were they denied the military escorts they considered necessary, but the region was on the border of the four administrative districts headquartered at Onitsha, Owerri, Bende, and Okigwi. As so often happened, officers at all four stations avoided taking responsibility for the border regions with other districts and so refused to tour in those regions.

Thus, the important village group of Uli had not been visited

⁸⁵Minute by General R.S. Wilkinson, 20 June 1910, on Egerton to C.O., 21 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/17910).

⁸⁶See above, 215-19.

⁸⁷See above, 189-97.

since 1906, when the District Commissioner of Owerri was expelled by the hostile villagers, and for the next four years they "did not believe the District Commissioner dare come there."⁸⁸ Virtually all of Mgbidi and Nkwerre Divisions were similarly avoided by British officers; after an investigation in 1911 it was reported that the villages of this extensive area

seem--from their own accounts--to have been left to themselves for some years (one town says 5 and another says 3). They have disputes with their neighbours, which they do not bring to Court as they don't attend any Native Court, and as they cannot settle these disputes they close their roads and will not trade with each other.⁸⁹

Further to the east, in Mbaitoli/Ikeduru Division, it was discovered that extensive areas, such as Inyishi village group, had not been visited since 1906 and that "not having been visited for four years, they had thought the Government would take no action against them."⁹⁰ After the transfer of the administrative station at Umuduru to Okigwi in 1908, large parts of Mbano Division were also left unvisited.⁹¹ Most important, the extensive areas included in modern Mbaise and Etiti Divisions were very seldom

⁸⁸Tew to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 6 May 1910 (NAE Calprof 13/3/15).

⁸⁹F.H. Ingles, "Orlu District, Eastern Province, Monthly Report for August, 1911," 1 September 1911 (NAE Calprof 13/4/2). See also Mair to Officer in Command, Southern Nigeria Regiment, 1 March 1911: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 6 May 1911 (PRO CO 520/103/17812); Tew to Bedwell, 30 January 1911 (NAE Calprof 13/3/25).

⁹⁰Tew to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 20 April 1910: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 14 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/17108); B.H.W. Taylor, report of 19 April 1910: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 21 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/17910).

⁹¹Ambrose to Secretary, Eastern Province, 10 October 1910 (NAE Calprof 13/3/25).

traversed by British officers following the widespread destruction in the aftermath of the murder of Dr. Stewart in 1905. Large parts of Obowo and the Imo River valley had never been visited by any Europeans at all.⁹² Not until 1909 was a Native Court established at Nguru with responsibility for this area. And the northern half of Umuahia Division, it was discovered, had been avoided by the British since 1907.⁹³

By 1909 this withdrawal of British influence created a vacuum of power throughout the area. Anti-British sentiment was crystallized and focused by the revival of a number of local oracles, in particular Ogbunorie of Ezemogha in Nkwerre Division, Unyim of Ama Ogugu in Umuahia Division, and several branches of Ifallum in Mbaise Division.⁹⁴ All of these oracles encouraged unity and secrecy among the various anti-British factions, and each of them served as a judicial agency. Local lodges of the Okonko men's society also served a legal function, and under the influence of Bonny and Opobo traders operating on the Imo River adopted the regalia and procedures of the British Native Courts in mediating

⁹² See Whitehead to Fosbery, 18 March 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/4); Tew to Bedwell, 20 June 1910 (NAE Calprof 14/5/98); Taylor to Commandant, 14 May 1911, and Hives to Moorhouse, 30 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

⁹³ Hives to Moorhouse, 30 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

⁹⁴ H.R.H. Crawford, "Obonorie Ju-Ju," 14 April 1911, and Crawford to Provincial Commissioner, Calabar, 14 April 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/2); Tew to Bedwell, 20 September 1910, and Ambrose to Secretary, Eastern Province, 10 October 1910 (NAE Calprof 13/3/25); Hives to Copland-Crawford, 30 April 1909 (NAE Calprof 13/2/7); F. Hives, "Notes on the Ifallum Juju of Amu-Mara," [May 1911] (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

local disputes. At the village of Umunama, for example, Warrant Chief Chilaka had adapted the Okonko lodge to his own purposes: "Chilaka had a complete 'Court,' he sitting as District Commissioner and Kamalu (a chief) sitting as Assistant District Commissioner, Eze Solomon Hart as Clerk of Court, others, viz Warder of the Prison, Corporal, Court Messenger, etc, etc."⁹⁵

In early 1910 factions that had been disadvantaged by the rise of the warrant chiefs and other British allies took the initiative and expelled them from their villages, in some cases reestablishing local control of the trade routes. In March 1910 most of Mgbidi and southern Ihiala Divisions refused to accept Native Court summonses and assaulted British police and messengers. The villages of the area, led by Uli and Ejemekuru, took control of the heavily traveled roads from Oguta to Owerri and Okigwi and obstructed British traffic.⁹⁶ In the same month the anti-British factions of the large Inyishi village group, led by Ikembara, drove away their warrant chiefs and destroyed the local Native Court buildings.⁹⁷ And in November 1910 the villages of Umunakanu and Umuezeala in Mbano Division threatened to destroy the Native Court at Umuduru.⁹⁸ Small patrols were dispatched to deal with

⁹⁵Hives to Moorhouse, 23 May and 6 June 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1). See also Hives to Fosbery, 15 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1).

⁹⁶M.L. Tew, report of 14 April 1910: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 5 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/16253); Tew to Bedwell, 20-22 September 1910, 10 October 1910, and 30 January 1911 (NAE Calprof 13/3/25).

⁹⁷Tew to Bedwell, 20 April 1910: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 14 May 1910 (PRO CO 520/93/17108).

⁹⁸Bedwell to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 19 November 1910 (NAE Calprof 13/3/25).

each of these areas, but it was increasingly clear to the British administration that only major operations aimed at the oracles and the Okonko society lodges would end the resistance of the entire region.

Accordingly, in November 1910 the Orlu Patrol, consisting of over 225 officers and men, invaded the area of modern Mgbidi Division. After one month of operations there, it succeeded in reopening the roads to Oguta. It then proceeded to Nkwerre Division, carrying out attacks on numerous villages around Orlu and destroying the Ogbunorie oracle at Ezemogha on 11 January 1911. After opening a new administrative headquarters at Orlu, the patrol moved into Mbano Division to reinforce the position of the threatened Umuduru Native Court, but it was withdrawn before completing its assignment. Throughout the area of its operations the patrol encountered "elaborate preparations" for defense, including trenches and man-traps. Several major battles were fought, with the most intense resistance led by Okporo and Ihima of Mgbidi Division.⁹⁹

To deal with the large areas of Mbano, Etiti, and Mbaise Divisions that continued to resist the British, another column, called the Owerri-Bende-Okigwi Patrol, was assembled in February 1911. For two months it operated in Mbano Division, further strengthening the authority of the Umuduru Native Court, and

⁹⁹Mair to Officer in Command, Southern Nigeria Regiment, 1 March 1911: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 6 May 1911 (PRO CO 520/103/17812); Crawford to Provincial Commissioner, Calabar, 14 April 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/2); G. Adams, "Resurrection of the Long Juju" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 375 [3]).

then proceeded to deal with Etiti and Mbaise Divisions. Several weeks were devoted to suppression of resistance in Obowo, where heavy casualties were inflicted on the defenders in attacks on their concealed encampments. In May 1911 the patrol was reinforced at the request of the officer in charge and then moved up both banks of the Imo River above Ezizama to destroy the branches of the Ifallum oracle and the Okonko lodges operating in the area. Everywhere it was reported that the defenders "were well armed with cap guns and had an unlimited supply of powder. . . . Shots were exchanged with the rebels daily and at times our camps were sniped." Finally, the patrol dealt with the Owerri-Bende road, where resistance was particularly heavy. As the officer in charge reported

The fact that a "Whiteman" (Dr. Stewart) was murdered by the people of the country in question has, without a doubt never been forgotten, they making a boast of it to others, and have forgotten the punishment they received and it is more than probable that they still have parts of Dr. Stewart's remains in their possession. This in itself would be sufficient to make a strong Juju against the Government.

In June 1911 the patrol departed, having achieved one of its chief objectives: "Showing the people that although troops were not stationed in their country the District Commissioner could get them if required."¹⁰⁰ One further patrol visit was necessary in Mbano Division in early 1912, however, before the area could be considered relatively secure.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Hives to Fosbery, 8 May 1911, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 6/1/1); Cunliffe to Egerton, 21 July 1911: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 2 August 1911 (PRO CO 520/105/28275).

¹⁰¹W.G. Ambrose, "Okigwi Escort, Final Report," 12 April 1912 (NAE Calprof 13/4/7).

Over the succeeding two years there was a measurable lessening of military activity in Southeastern Nigeria. This was partly due to the restrictions placed on the operations of the political branch by the Supreme Court, but it is also evident that the superiority of British arms was gradually being established and that disadvantaged factions were consequently reluctant to challenge the position of the warrent chiefs and other British allies. Although military escorts and patrols continued to be used extensively throughout the Protectorate, violent resistance to them in the southern areas nearly came to an end. In the northern areas first invaded in 1908 and 1909, however, significant opposition continued, especially in Awgu Division, as we have seen.¹⁰² In particular, resistance was offered to the survey parties that toured those areas in preparation for the construction of the Eastern Nigerian Railway. It was rumored that these parties were actually a preliminary step to the confiscation or taxation of the land. As a result, many villages opposed the progress of the survey and destroyed the markers left to delineate the rail line.¹⁰³ The further north the parties moved, the more intense became the resistance. In one case, a group of surveyors was attacked thirty times as it moved up the proposed rail line; "whenever a native chainman was sent to a village he was beaten & driven out & his rod broken."¹⁰⁴ Henceforth, strong police or

¹⁰²See above, 195-8.

¹⁰³See Lugard to C.O., 25 October 1914, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/19/45290).

¹⁰⁴Minute by Fiddes on Boyle to C.O., 21 May 1914 (PRO CO 583/14/21749).

military columns escorted the survey parties in all areas.

In 1914, however, the ability of the British to support their chosen allies with armed force was once again called into question. As we have seen, the new Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, introduced a number of changes in the administrative system that created the impression that the British were withdrawing some of the authority and power of the local political officers.¹⁰⁵ These changes occurred at the very moment that the warrant chiefs were being called upon to gather large groups of villagers for forced labor on the railway, and in the resulting period of discontent and resistance to the chiefs' demands, a number of supposedly established districts of the Protectorate became hostile to the British presence. For example, most of Bende Division and large parts of northern Itu Division, following the removal of the political officer from the Bende station as an economy measure, refused to answer Native Court summonses or to provide road and railway laborers.¹⁰⁶ As Lugard's successor, Sir Hugh Clifford, observed in 1919, "the sudden dismissal of so many regular labour gangs and the rapid and visible deterioration of all the Government stations in this part of the country helped to convince the local population that the white man had fallen upon evil days and that his power, efficiency and wealth were things of the past."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵See above, 188-9.

¹⁰⁶Sinclair to Maxwell, 28 September 1914, and attached correspondence (NAE Rivprof 8/2/527).

¹⁰⁷Clifford to C.O., 28 October 1919 (PRO CO 583/78/66560).

These conditions were exacerbated by the serious shortage of political officers throughout 1913 and 1914 that prevented extensive touring.¹⁰⁸

Then, in August 1914, war broke out in Europe, and the German forces stationed in the Cameroons on the eastern border of Nigeria were assembled near the frontier in preparation for an invasion of the British Protectorate. All available Nigerian troops, including those stationed at various political headquarters throughout Southeastern Nigeria, were rushed eastwards to counter the German attack. Simultaneously, orders were dispatched from London that the Eastern Nigerian Railway should be completed in the shortest possible time so that the recently discovered deposits of coal in Enugu, Udi, and Nkanu Divisions could be made available for the war effort. Political officers summoned the warrant chiefs in their districts and ordered them to gather large groups of laborers to work on the rail line. The combination of these new and heavier demands for work and the departure of local troops to the Cameroons led disadvantaged factions throughout Southeastern Nigeria to take the initiative and refuse to cooperate with the orders of the warrant chiefs and the Native Courts. Three months after the outbreak of the war Lugard reported to the Colonial Office that "I have rebellions and unrest in every direction in the Southern Provinces," and that it was "unsafe for a European to traverse the greater part of this country without an escort

¹⁰⁸ See H. Bedwell, "Eastern Province Handing Over Notes," [1913] (NAE Calprof 15/1/1).

of troops."¹⁰⁹

From 1914 to 1919 the British experienced a renewal of the traditional testing atmosphere of Southeastern Nigeria, in which factions disadvantaged by the rise of lineages and villages allied with the British sought means of counterbalancing the influence of the momentarily weakened Europeans. Tensions were heightened by the severe shortage of British officers for the duration of the European war, since warrant chiefs were left unsupervised in the exploitation of their positions.¹¹⁰ A detailed examination of the records from this period reveals that a large majority of the villages of Southeastern Nigeria refused to recognize the authority of the Native Courts or of British officers, and that significant violent resistance to the British presence was encountered all along the main roads and the railway line.¹¹¹ The concentration of active hostility in the areas of major traffic is indicative of the character of the British presence. To a large extent British influence had been established only along the main commercial arteries of the region, and villages away from the larger roads seldom came into contact with local officers. Furthermore, it was the people along the main roads

¹⁰⁹Lugard to C.O., 20 November 1914 (PRO CO 583/20/48790); Lugard to C.O., 6 February 1917 (PRO CO 583/55/10743).

¹¹⁰See Boyle to C.O., 1 May 1919 (PRO CO 583/75/33181); Clifford to C.O., 6 February 1922, and enclosures and minutes (PRO CO 583/108/10729).

¹¹¹See for example Maxwell to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 7 September 1914 (NAE Umprof 3/1/8); District Officer, Degema, to Maxwell, 11 September 1914 (NAE Rivprof 8/2/505).

and the railway line who were called upon most extensively for construction and repair work and who therefore felt the pressure of British demands most directly.

The first outbreak of violence was in one of the most established areas of the Protectorate, southern Ngwa Division. In late August 1914 the village-groups of Obete and Aba Ala drove out their warrant chief and threatened to kill any British agent who entered their area. When two court messengers were sent from the Azumini Native Court to serve summonses in connection with the matter, they were killed and their heads were displayed in the Obete marketplace. Later investigations revealed that the villagers had been angered by rumors that the British intended to confiscate their land for the purposes of a proposed experimental oil palm station, and that an Ohambele leader had held meetings in early August 1914 to urge opposition to the land confiscation. When the European war broke out later that month, further meetings were held and plans were made to destroy the administrative headquarters in Aba, the leaders being encouraged by the removal of the Owerri garrison to the Cameroons. These plans were supported by Alexander Hart, an African agent of a German firm located in Opobo, and by other coastal traders. They told the people that the Germans would defeat the British and force them to leave Nigeria. On August 31 a patrol of 112 police invaded the area, meeting resistance at Ohanze. For the following two days the column encountered "heavy firing" at Obete, where it was reported that "they resisted us most stubbornly, retiring from trench to trench, each one being from

twenty to fifty yards long." On September 6 further opposition was met at Aba Ala, and over the succeeding two weeks the villages of the area were destroyed and the concealed encampments of the people searched out. By the time that the area surrendered, the British had suffered fourteen casualties, and an estimated two hundred African defenders had been killed.¹¹²

Further up the rail line, in northern Ngwa, Umuahia, Bende, and Ohafia Divisions, there was already considerable disaffection, as we have seen, due to the withdrawal of the British officer previously stationed at Bende. In early September 1914, encouraged by rumors that the Germans had defeated the British in Europe, villages throughout the area refused to recognize Native Court jurisdiction or to send requested levies of railway workers.¹¹³ In October 1914 a police patrol toured the area but encountered no active resistance, and by January 1915 the whole area had once again refused to cooperate with the British. Another police patrol was dispatched in April 1915, but it too met no violent opposition. It had been ordered to take no offensive action, and as a result, in the words of the officer in charge, "it accomplished little or nothing. . . . [N]o punitive measures were taken and the people not unnaturally think they can flout the authority of the Nigerian Government as no demands were enforced."¹¹⁴

¹¹²Maxwell to Walker, 30 August 1914, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 3/1/8); Lugard to C.O., 28 October 1914 (PRO CO 583/19/45292); Lugard to C.O., 27 February 1915 (PRO CO 583/31/14272).

¹¹³Sinclair to Maxwell, 28 September 1914 (NAE Rivprof 8/2/527).

¹¹⁴Walker to Maxwell, 18 November 1914, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 4/1/1).

A more aggressive patrol was dispatched in June 1916, and after considerable destruction the area was brought into line.¹¹⁵ A large district to the south of Bende, however, around Bende Ofufa, could not be dealt with until late 1919 due to the continuing shortage of troops and officers. From 1914 to 1919, reported the officer at Ikot Ekpene, there was "no one . . . with any knowledge of this particular area, there was no map, and the natives have been left severely alone."¹¹⁶

To the north and west, in Okigwi and Mbano Divisions, where a patrol had operated without opposition from June to August 1914, large areas went over to resistance a few days after the departure of the Okigwi garrison for the Cameroons front.¹¹⁷ Civil war broke out in Acha between pro- and anti-British factions, and attacks on court messengers were reported at Ishiagu, Umunekwu, and many other villages. By early 1915 most of Mbano and Nkwerre Divisions had become hostile to the British, and the road between Umuduru and Umuahia was closed to British traffic.¹¹⁸ In January 1915 a patrol of 80 police operated in the area but had to be withdrawn

¹¹⁵Boyle to C.O., 9 October 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/52124).

¹¹⁶F.N. Ashley, report of 8 September 1919: enclosure in Clifford to C.O., 31 October 1919 (PRO CO 583/78/66565). See also Ashley, report of 31 August 1919, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Calprof 4/6/7); District Officer, Ikot Ekpene, to Resident, Calabar Province, 15 February 1917 (NAE Calprof 4/6/2).

¹¹⁷Hargrove to Maxwell, 16 April 1914, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

¹¹⁸Hargrove to Maxwell, 19 September 1914, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 3/1/7).

after a short time because of disturbances elsewhere. When it returned in May of that year it carried out three months of destruction of villages and crops, meeting resistance at Ikpem and Umunakanu. When it departed in July 1915, some Mbano areas had still not submitted.¹¹⁹ The patrol was also unable to deal with Nkwerre and Mgbidi Divisions, which since September 1914 had refused to accept Native Court summonses and had attacked police and messengers, led by the villages of Ebenator, Orsu, Ihitenansa, Umu Obom, and Ndizuogu. In November and December 1915 a patrol of one hundred troops operated in the area, engaging in three major battles and destroying extensive territory.¹²⁰

To the north, in southern Aguata Division, the villages of Akpo and Achina attacked the Native Court at Isuoffia in early September 1914, driving out the clerk and freeing the prisoners in the jail. Local tradition relates that these villages were angered by the heavy demands made upon them by the warrant chiefs for road and construction labor, and that the imprisoned men had been charged with refusal to work on the Awka-Isuoffia road.¹²¹ On September 16 a force of sixty troops invaded Achina and was attacked for an hour in the marketplace by two hundred armed defenders. After driving them off, the troops turned their

¹¹⁹Boyle to C.O., 4 November 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/38/55086).

¹²⁰Boyle to C.O., 7 November 1916, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/49/58210).

¹²¹See F.E. Ezenduka, "Achina Town from the Earliest Times to the Coming of the British," B.A. Project, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1973, 43-4, 74.

attention to Akpo, where a major battle was fought on the following day. For the next week, the column destroyed extensively in the neighborhood and induced the people to surrender.¹²² An Achina participant in the fighting recalled that

We thought we could defeat the British patrol troops. But when the war broke out they really tortured us. They nearly ruined us. They destroyed our houses and set some on fire. They also looted our goats and fowls and also destroyed our crops. The enemy disorganized us and many of us ran to Umuchu and Akokwa. It was a bitter experience because we lost many things even those property sent to Umuhu and Akokwa were also lost. Umuchu people seized them.¹²³

Barely three months later, however, the people of Umunze burned a local mission church in anger over the extortionate demands of their warrent chief. At the advice of some local Aro, they had gone to Calabar to seek permission "to sever their connection with the Government and the Native Court Chiefs." They were, in fact, given a letter by a Supreme Court judge that put in writing their complaints against their warrant chief for presentation to the District Officer at Awka, but they interpreted the letter as permission to refuse to cooperate with the Native Court at Isuoffia. In February 1915 a patrol entered the area and conducted two months of operations, until the people surrendered.¹²⁴ Finally, in early 1906 the village of Uga, formerly allied with Akpo and Achina in the latter's resistance to the British, burned two

¹²²Lugard to C.O., 19 November 1914, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/20/48784).

¹²³Interview with E. Umebinyue (born about 1892), in Ezenduka, "Achina Town from the Earliest Times," 85.

¹²⁴Lugard to C.O., 3 July 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/34/33760).

mission school buildings and refused to cooperate with the Isuoffia Native Court. "Several weeks" of "stubborn resistance" occurred before the area fully surrendered.¹²⁵

The heavily populated area of Mbaise and Etiti Divisions, which had been so extensively patrolled over the previous ten years, also increased its resistance to the British during this period. In mid-1915 the people of Onicha-Amairi reopened their Afor market, where Dr. Stewart had been killed in 1905, in defiance of British orders closing it permanently. By early 1916 large areas around Nguru, led by Onicha-Amairi and Ezeborgu, had stopped accepting summonses and arrest warrants from the Native Courts and had engaged in assaults on police and messengers. They were encouraged in these actions by agents of the "Akwete Prophet," Gabriel Braid, who traveled through the area "preaching the destruction of jujus, the power of the Prophet, the helplessness of the Government, & inciting the people to revolt."¹²⁶ In April 1916 a patrol entered the area but had to be withdrawn immediately because of disturbances elsewhere. As a result, wrote one officer, "these people have got it into their heads that the white man has lost his power and rumor has it that they say all the Government men were killed by the Germans."¹²⁷ Only in November 1916 were sufficient troops assembled to invade the

¹²⁵Boyle to C.O., 18 November 1916 (PRO CO 583/ 49/ 60741).

¹²⁶Acting District Officer, Owerri, to Maxwell, 19 February 1916 (NAE Rivprof 8/4/91).

¹²⁷Lynch to Maxwell, 28 August 1916 (NAE Umprof 7/4/4).

area, encountering violent opposition in three major battles over a two month period.¹²⁸

By far the heaviest and most sustained resistance from 1914 to 1919 was encountered in the area of Awgu and southern Udi and Nkanu Divisions. Since this region has already been dealt with in detail elsewhere, it is necessary here only to note that during this period nine patrols were dispatched to deal with the area, engaging in over twenty-four months of punitive activity with nineteen major battles, and killing an estimated one thousand people.¹²⁹ Central and northern Udi and Nkanu Divisions also resisted British demands, especially in connection with road and colliery labor. In early 1914 the village of Oghe had fired on a railway survey party and had been punished by a patrol in March of that year.¹³⁰ Then, in September 1914, with the withdrawal of local troops to the Cameroons front, all of northern Udi Division became hostile and had to be visited by a patrol, with heavy resistance at Nzue in January 1915.¹³¹ It was not until later that year that the British became aware that the hostility of Udi Division was due to the exceptionally extortionate conduct of the warrant chiefs of the area, such as those in Nachi, who

¹²⁸Lugard to C.O., 11 June 1917, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/58/35993).

¹²⁹See above, 198-203; and Appendix B of the present study.

¹³⁰Boyle to C.O., 21 May 1914 (PRO CO 583/14/21749).

¹³¹Cooke to Commandant, Nigeria Regiment, 18 February 1915: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 29 April 1915 (PRO CO 583/32/23453).

kept for themselves money that had been given to them by the British to be distributed to railway laborers from their village.¹³² Similar conduct by the warrant chief of Umulumbe throughout 1915 led to his expulsion at the end of that year and strong opposition to a British patrol sent to reinstate him in March 1916.¹³³

Further to the north, in Nsukka, Isi Uzo, and Igbo Eze Divisions, the villages of Ukehe and Oba began to refuse Native Court summonses and to blockade the Udi-Nsukka road in early 1916. At Enugu Ezike there was a revival of the Olo men's society, and it was reported that three deaths by ordeal had occurred at the orders of its leaders. A patrol sent in mid-1916 encountered no resistance and imposed several fines.¹³⁴ In 1917 similar events at Opi and Ekwegbe led to the dispatch of another patrol, which also met no active opposition.¹³⁵ But in mid-1918 the entire area again began to resist the Native Courts, encouraged by reports that the British were leaving in the wake of further administrative changes. The patrol dispatched on this occasion encountered "serious opposition," led by the Oha men's society, and fought five major battles in February and March 1919.¹³⁶

¹³² N.C. Duncan, report of 5 March 1916: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 10 November 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/58145).

¹³³ N.C. Duncan, report of 15 March 1916: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 10 November 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/58145).

¹³⁴ Boyle to C.O., 14 October 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/52680).

¹³⁵ S.W. Sprosten, report of 10 January 1918, and attached correspondence (NAE CSE 21/6/5).

¹³⁶ Boyle to C.O., 14 June 1919 (PRO CO 583/75/40084).

An area of particularly heavy resistance between 1914 and 1919 was Ezzikwo Division and the regions to the west. Here, the British had barely managed to contain the rapidly expanding Ezza and Ikwo clans in their annual encroachment on the lands of neighboring groups. In September 1914, encouraged by rumors spread by Aro traders that the British had been defeated in the European War and were leaving Nigeria, the Ezza invaded Afikpo and Ishielu Divisions in search of new land. In October they attacked the village of Okpoto and closed the Abakaliki-Udi road to British traffic.¹³⁷ Soon thereafter they allied with the anti-British factions of Onicha and Ugulangu and carried out massive raids on Isu, Oshiri, and Agbabo.¹³⁸ A patrol of eighty police was dispatched in February 1915 to force the Ezza to return to their homeland in Ezzikwo Division. The officer commanding the patrol met with the Ezza leaders, who adopted a "very casual" attitude and "said they had no 'palaver' with the 'white man.'" They appeared to think that their feud with the [Agbabo] was no business of mine."¹³⁹ After initial resistance at Onicha on 7 February, the Ezza were met by the patrol on 16 February as they approached Oshiri. The officer in charge reported that "Some 1½ miles out of town about 400 armed Ezzas were met with advancing

¹³⁷Ingles to Copland-Crawford, 16 October 1914, and subsequent correspondence (NAE CSE 21/3/3).

¹³⁸Sinclair to Maxwell, telegram of 5 February 1915, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Umprof 4/1/4).

¹³⁹Sinclair to Maxwell, 18 February 1915: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 7 July 1915 (PRO CO 583/34/35896).

in a long skirmishing line, firing their guns, and shouting out that they wanted war." Volley fire by the police forced them to retreat eastward.¹⁴⁰

But the patrol was forced to leave soon afterwards to deal with disturbances elsewhere, and the Ezza continued to raid in Afikpo Division and refused to cooperate with the British. Not until February 1916 could sufficient soldiers be spared to deal effectively with the area. In that month 160 troops entered the Ezza area, meeting resistance at Ugulangu and several other villages. On March 3 the leaders of the clan surrendered and promised to pay the fines assessed on them, but the officer commanding the patrol reported that "This promise the Chiefs appear to have had no intention of fulfilling, while they would also seem to have been using Aro emissaries to consult Native Lawyers in Calabar as to the extent to which they might safely go in defying the Government."¹⁴¹ The patrol then began the systematic destruction of the villages in the area, including the central shrine of the Ezza people at Eke-Moha, which they defended in a desperate battle at Amudo on March 15, leaving forty-three dead in the field.¹⁴² A further week of operations was necessary to obtain the submission of the clan.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Simpson to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 26 March 1916: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 19 October 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/54001).

¹⁴²Cavendish to Inspector General of Police, Lagos, 28 March 1916: enclosure in Boyle to C.O., 19 October 1916 (PRO CO 583/49/54001).

Further to the east in Ezzikwo Division, the Ikwo clan, although visited by a number of military escorts between 1903 and 1912, had remained virtually autonomous. In 1913 the officer stationed at Afikpo reported that he was terminating communications with them because they were "not properly subjugated."¹⁴³ Another officer reported that the Ikwo

openly boasted in their markets that the "whiteman" was afraid to visit their country and that should anyone try to do so he would be driven out. Previous ineffectual attempts to penetrate into the country with insufficient force have confirmed them in the belief in their power to put their threats into practice. . . . The result has been that crimes have gone unpunished and the Ekwis [Ikwo], encouraged, doubtless, by Aros and other self-seeking vagabonds, have come to believe themselves invincible, a law unto themselves and entirely outside the control of Government.¹⁴⁴

But the outbreak of the European War and of fighting in the Cameroons prevented the dispatch of a patrol against them until 1918. In January of that year a column of over two hundred officers and men invaded the area, meeting sustained resistance in major battles at three locations, Ndifu Eleke, Igboji, and Amagu. Not until March 25 was the surrender of all parts of the Ikwo clan obtained.

Resistance to the British presence occurred in several other areas throughout the Protectorate between 1914 and 1919. Among the Ogoni-speaking people of Khana and Bori Divisions there was considerable opposition to British officers beginning in 1913,

¹⁴³Duncan to Lugard, 25 May 1913: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 11 August 1913 (PRO CO 520/127/28021).

¹⁴⁴C.T. Lawrence, report of 5 April 1918: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 28 June 1918 (PRO CO 583/66/40418).

and three patrols were sent to that area in an eighteen month period. At the outbreak of the European War an alliance of seventeen villages killed a warrant chief and closed the area to the British, encouraged by rumors of an imminent German victory, spread by the same Bonny and Opobo traders who had been involved in the resistance in southern Ngwa Division. But a police patrol brought this opposition to a swift conclusion after a major battle at Beeri in September 1914.¹⁴⁵ To the northwest, among the Afaha clan of Anang Division, there was also considerable hostility toward the British beginning in September 1914. They attacked road workers and coastal traders, fired on police, and threatened to destroy the Native Court at Azumini. Many villages, under the aegis of the revived Egbo and Idiong men's societies, refused to provide laborers for the railway. Police patrols sent to the area between 1915 and 1917 were able to reestablish minimal cooperation with the administration, but the District Officer at Uyo was compelled to admit that "The Anang country . . . is as yet hardly under Government control."¹⁴⁶

In eastern Afikpo Division the sudden withdrawal of troops and officers in September 1914 led the people of Igbo to ally with

¹⁴⁵Lugard to C.O., 27 February 1915 (PRO CO 583/31/14272); Lugard to C.O., 26 May 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/33/28156).

¹⁴⁶M.E. Howard, report of 18 October 1915 (NAE Calprof 4/4/16). See also M. MacGregor, "Report on Kwa Towns under Azumini Native Court in Aba District," 4 October 1915, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Rivprof 8/3/411); MacGregor to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 5 October 1915, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Calprof 4/4/26); Davidson to Bedwell, 10 July 1916, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Calprof 4/5/34); Ashley to Davidson, 6 October 1917, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Calprof 5/7/674).

the anti-British faction of Itigidi and attack the pro-British elements of Itigidi. Police sent to investigate were driven away. In March 1915 a patrol of eighty police was dispatched to the area and a prolonged and intense battle was fought at Igbo on March 12. Within a week the leading elements of the Igbo-Itigidi alliance were induced to surrender.¹⁴⁷ In the southern half of Oguta Division virtually all villages became hostile to the British presence in mid-1915 as a result of the extortionate demands of the warrent chiefs of Umuakpu Native Court. In March and April 1917 a military patrol fought major battles at Opete and Asa and carried out two months of destruction of houses and food supplies.¹⁴⁸ And in Obubra Division in 1917 the village of Igbo-Emaban renewed its traditional encroachment on the lands of the Asigo and was forced to retreat to its own territory by a military patrol in June and July of that year.¹⁴⁹

By late 1919 the British had once again established their influence through the sustained employment of force. Disadvantaged factions continued to seek alternative power sources both inside and outside the administration to counterbalance the British power, but they were less and less willing to test the British presence by violent resistance. Over the following decade warrant chiefs

¹⁴⁷Lugard to C.O., 29 May 1915, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/33/28160).

¹⁴⁸Lynch to Simpson, 2 September 1916, and subsequent correspondence (NAE CSE 21/5/3); Lugard to C.O., 21 July 1917, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/58/43039).

¹⁴⁹Lugard to C.O., 1 September 1917, and enclosures (PRO CO 583/59/47856).

continued to be attacked and Native Court jurisdiction questioned, but the arrival of police or troops almost always brought the opposing factions into line without resort to violence. Yet the large number of political fines and penalties imposed on villages throughout Southeastern Nigeria between 1919 and 1929 reveals that disadvantaged factions had not passively accepted their fate, but were willing to test the ability of the British administration to support its chosen allies at every opportunity.¹⁵⁰ All that had been established was the indisputable military superiority of the British. Every other avenue of opposition--and there were many, as we have seen--was exploited to the greatest possible extent.

¹⁵⁰ See for example Clifford to C.O., 25 February 1920 (PRO CO 583/84/15638); Cameron to C.O., 4 May 1921 (PRO CO 583/100/27496); Baddeley to C.O., 8 August 1925 (PRO CO 583/134/39545); and the records of collective fines of various dates between 1921 and 1929 in the Nigeria Correspondence Registers (PRO CO 763/9-17).

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Resistance to the British invasion of Southeastern Nigeria was prolonged and intense, and it continued with few interruptions until 1919. At issue, in essence, was the control of the lucrative areas of trade and justice, as well as the local political power arising therefrom. Independence and latitude in these matters had traditionally been maintained by balancing the demands of competing outside power sources and by taking advantage of any vacuum of power to reassert local autonomy. Resistance to the British was not a blind, negative response to little understood foreigners, but rather a manifestation of the customary process by which factions disadvantaged by current or developing power arrangements sought to revive their declining fortunes by appeal to competing outside power sources.

The British had conquered no one, and relatively little independence had been surrendered. To speak of independence in the Southeastern Nigerian context as the right to determine one's own internal and external affairs without outside interference is to distort the historical and social realities of the area. Among the Igbo and Ibibio there had always been outside interference, whether from an adjoining village or from some greater distance. Such interference was, in fact, usually invited by dissident individuals or factions who sought to increase their

own power, and the management of dissidence was thus closely related to the management of external interference. The goal was not to exclude foreigners entirely but to keep their influence at a manageable level, usually by pitting them against other foreigners who had an interest in the area. By applying their considerable military might to Southeastern Nigeria, the British had proven their right to participate in--but not to dominate--local politics and economics, as other trade-professional groups before them had. They were introduced into factional disputes by elements seeking to use them, and this involvement gave them the opportunity to establish their influence in local politics. Resistance to their influence usually took the form of opposition, violent or otherwise, by factions hostile to the pro-British elements, who sought to counterbalance the British presence by appeal to other outside power sources or to disparate elements within the British administration itself.

Violent resistance, which has been the focus of the present study, was a generalized phenomenon. There are few significant correlations between specific social and economic conditions and the degree of violent opposition to the British. In the only previous scholarly attempt to discover such correlations, G.I. Jones has suggested that in areas characterized traditionally by large, cohesive village groups there was less resistance than in fragmented, dispersed sections of the country. As examples of the former, he specifies the Nkwerre and Awka areas while the latter are exemplified by such Divisions as Ngwa, Etche,

Abak, Ikot Ekpene, Uyo, and Itu.¹ Although Jones's hypothesis appears to be verified by reference to patterns of violence in the Women's War of 1929, it is clearly contradicted by the data from the period 1900-1919. The Nkwerre area experienced as much violent resistance as Ngwa or Uyo Divisions in this period, if not more. And the unique passivity of the Awka area appears to be attributable more to the caution urged by its itinerant blacksmiths, who had had extensive experience of British military might in other areas, than to any indigenous social or economic factors.²

The map included at the end of this study reveals that the heaviest concentrations of resistance were in the areas of greatest population density and trade activity. Yet resistance was localized. It was not coordinated or unified over large areas, even though villages in the neighborhood of a resisting faction observed the British reaction closely and determined their own posture accordingly. Traditional warrior clans, such as the Abam, Abiriba, and Ohafia, were neither more nor less hostile to the British than other groups but rather cooperated or resisted according to the same local imperatives that motivated neighboring clans. The Abiriba, even though allegedly closely allied with the Aro, refrained from opposing the columns of the Aro Expedition, with the single exception of Idima, which had provided mercenary warriors

¹G.I. Jones, "Councils among the Central Ibo," in Councils in Action, ed. Audrey Richards and Adam Kuper (Cambridge, 1971), 73-4.

²See Mathews to Secretary, Southern Provinces, [1927] (RH MSS. Afr. s. 783, box 3).

for the raid on Obegu.³ Similarly, the only Ohafia villages that resisted the British were the ones that had participated in the Obegu attack, Akanu and Ebem.⁴

In general, the intensity of violent resistance was determined by the degree to which the British attempted to make their own power absolute in a given area, as well as by their ability to support their chosen allies. Villages located along main roads or near the proposed rail line felt the burden of British demands more heavily than other villages, and so tended toward violent resistance, especially if the local District Commissioner was aggressive and tactless. Large, expanding clans, such as the Ezza and Ikwo, which were halted in their natural course of absorbing neighboring lands, also opposed the British. But armed resistance seldom occurred in or near villages where administrative headquarters were located, since police and troops were a visible presence there. Instead, boundaries between districts, where officers toured infrequently and where responsibility was disputed, were often the site of violent opposition to the British.

Yet it must not be concluded that resistance was merely a

³C.J. Mayne, "Intelligence Report on the Abam, Abiriba, Umuhu, and Nkporo," [1932] (NAI CSO 26/3/28939); "Evidence relating to the Obegu Massacre," 12 February 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 5 March 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/12689).

⁴H.L. Gallwey, "Political Report in Connection with the Aro Field Force Operations," 1 April 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 18 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18725); Eke Kalu, "An Ibo Autobiography: The Autobiography of Mr. Eke Kalu, Ohaffia's Well-Honoured Son," Nigerian Field, VII, 4 (October 1938), 163-4.

reaction to policies formulated in Europe and implemented by force in the field. Whether or not it was the conscious intention of Southeastern Nigerians, their use of violence had a profound effect on the character of the British administration and on the attitudes of the Colonial Office. Although the British public was largely indifferent to and suspicious of imperial ambitions in Africa after the Boer War, it was also critical of the widely publicized atrocities committed by the Belgians in the Congo. There was considerable sensitivity to any suggestion of impropriety by the British in their colonies, and the Colonial Office strove to avoid undue publicity of military activities in such areas as Southeastern Nigeria.⁵

As a result, the Colonial Office made it known in a number of ways that it preferred not to use force in implementing its policies, and urged restraint on the Nigerian administration. A case in point was the issue of taxation. The British had learned in the 1890s in Sierra Leone and elsewhere that forest-zone peoples considered direct taxation a burdensome and degrading imposition and were likely to resist its introduction with considerable vigor.⁶ Anxious to avoid further conflict and loss of

⁵See for example minutes on Moor to C.O., 7 July 1901 (PRO CO 520/12/25807); and minutes on Moor to C.O., 17 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18724).

⁶See LaRay Denzer and Michael Crowder, "Bai Bureh and the Sierra Leone Hut Tax War of 1898," in Protest and Power in Black Africa, ed. R.I. Rotberg and A. Mazrui (New York, 1970), 169-212. See also Mary Kingsley, address to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 17 March 1899, in West Africa, I, 3 (July 1900), 92; E.D. Morel, editorial in West Africa, III, 70 (19 April 1902), 411-15; Egerton to C.O., 29 December 1906 (PRO CO 520/38/2149).

trade revenues, and aware that Southeastern Nigeria was especially "truculent," the Colonial Office refused numerous proposals by the Nigerian administration to apply direct taxation to the area.⁷ This is especially significant in light of the fact that Sir Frederick Lugard, the main advocate of direct taxation, essentially hoped to demonstrate to the people of the interior through taxation what the endless military patrols had been unable to prove--that the British had "conquered" Southeastern Nigeria.⁸

In general, the Colonial Office's restraint in this and other matters led local officers to be extremely cautious in the implementation of any new policy for fear it would cause a rising and thus impair their own chances for advancement.⁹ Instructions to officers in the field typically took the form of "patrol approved but should be made as small as possible and every endeavour made to avoid fighting," or "use your utmost endeavours to prevent any trouble arising in your district likely to necessitate the dispatch of troops."¹⁰ Even officers conducting field research were warned that they should act "in such a way as not unnecessarily

⁷See minutes on Lugard to C.O., 11 August 1914 (PRO CO 583/17/29836); minutes on Lugard to C.O., 13 March 1915 (PRO CO 583/31/15673); and minutes by Moorhouse, 10 September 1917 (NAE CSE 21/6/4).

⁸See above, 204-6.

⁹See minutes on Moor to C.O., 5 April 1901 (PRO CO 520/7/14910); C.O. to Lugard, draft of 7 April 1913 (PRO CO 520/122/9053); and minutes on Cameron to C.O., 20 June 1924 (PRO CO 583/126/31934).

¹⁰Minute by Egerton, 14 February 1905 (NAE CSE 1/5/1); Acting Secretary, Eastern Province, "Circular Minutes to District Commissioners," [1908] (NAE Calprof 14/3/5).

to arouse native susceptibilities or antagonisms" and "that at the least sign of opposition detailed investigation should be discontinued."¹¹ As one officer wrote, "we had the strictest orders to avoid any provocative action which might land the Government into another 'little war.'"¹² The resulting caution of local officers was evident from many of their reports. "[A]s it is impossible to disarm the country, & partial disarmament only causes trouble," wrote one officer in 1902, "the question has been avoided as much as possible."¹³ After the establishment of the Abak station in 1909, the officer there reported that "I am careful only to issue summonses to towns likely to accept them."¹⁴ In the same year the officer at the newly opened Okigwi headquarters observed that a road through Awgu Division was needed, "but the making of this would not please the natives at all and I do not propose to attempt to make it."¹⁵ And the Assistant District Officer at Afikpo in 1919 recalled many years later his attempt to settle a land dispute:

Hearing that the District Officer was not far away I hastened for his advice and was re-assured to hear him say that all was well but in no circumstances to make any decisions or there really would be trouble! It was, apparently, a hardy

¹¹Mathews to Meek, 22 November 1929 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 783 [3]); L.T. Chubb, Ibo Land Tenure, 2nd ed. (Ibadan, 1961), 3.

¹²F. Hives, Momo and I (London, 1934), 27.

¹³R.K. Granville, "Political Report on Bendi District for quarter ending 30th June 1902" (NAI Calprof 10/3/3).

¹⁴N.C. Duncan, "First (July) Report on Anang," 31 July 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 11 September 1909 (PRO CO 520/81/32340).

¹⁵H.S. Burrough, "Report on Okigwi District for the half year ending 30th June 1909," extract (NAE Calprof 13/2/21).

annual and incapable of solution, save, perhaps, by detailed survey and a company of troops. Neither the surveyor nor the troops were available so nothing could be done. However, I heard no more of it though doubtless it recurred at intervals and may by doing so even to this day.¹⁶

It has been correctly observed that in more than one British colony the areas that received the most attention and consideration were the ones that were the most troublesome. As J.E. Flint has noted, "In the British Empire the stimulus of revolt has so often been the prelude to major reforms of long-neglected colonial institutions. There is something in the character of the Englishman which makes him insist that violence must have a cause."¹⁷ The same principle operated in Southeastern Nigeria, as reflected in the instructions given to a local officer following the Akembara Patrol of 1910. He was to investigate the causes of the disturbance at length, since "when natives destroy Government buildings of this kind there is generally some reason, however foolish, at the back of it. . . . I want to be satisfied that the palaver has not arisen from any action, unknown to Government, by a Court Messenger or a policeman or someone pretending to be either."¹⁸ Areas considered likely to be troublesome were treated with caution and were accorded special attention, often receiving their own Native Court, mission school, or other amenity.¹⁹ It is possible to

¹⁶"Reminiscences of Sir F. Bernard Carr, C.M.G., Administrative Officer, Nigeria, 1919-1949" (RH MSS. Afr. s. 546).

¹⁷J.E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London, 1960), 203.

¹⁸Fosbery to Tew, 5 May 1910 (NAE Calprof 13/3/12).

¹⁹See for example F.S. James, "Annual Report, Central Province, Southern Nigeria, 1906," 6 March 1907: enclosure in Thorburn to C.O.,

suggest that the people of the interior realized quite early that the British officers were wary of violent confrontation, and that they manipulated this wariness--through the periodic application of a modicum of violence--to determine for themselves the pace of the otherwise inexorable advance and absorption of British technology and institutions. It may be necessary to reevaluate, therefore, the recent judgment of a Nigerian scholar that "In the short run . . . large-scale or small-scale wars of resistance between 1861 and 1914, in which traditional rulers and people participated were a record of failure so far as the indigenous groups were concerned."²⁰ On the contrary, inasmuch as the goal of those wars was to moderate and restrict the impact of the British presence, they may in fact be considered a qualified success.

The British were affected by the local political process as much as they affected it in return, and it is difficult to say at any time which side held the initiative. The British were drawn into local politics in support of factions that appealed to them for help, and they employed their considerable military power to alter the volume and direction of trade. Yet in some ways they were clearly less effective as a trade-professional power than the

15 July 1907 (PRO CO 520/47/27692); Norton-Harper, report of 21 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 28 August 1909 (PRO CO 520/80/30916); Maclaren to Maxwell, 17 October 1916 (NAE Umprof 7/4/1); Falk to Resident, Calabar Province, 22 April 1920 (NAE Calprof 4/6/7); Shelton to Resident, Ogoja Province, 26 December 1929: enclosure in Thomson to C.O., 24 January 1930 (PRO CO 583/169/706/21).

²⁰T.N. Tamuno, "Some Aspects of Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 2 (December 1965), 293.

Aro and other preceding groups had been. The legal procedures and penalties they adopted were, by their own eventual admission, comparatively ineffective in dealing with both civil and criminal offenses in the area.²¹ They refused to recognize the legal standing of such issues as witchcraft and sorcery accusations and oaths by ordeal.²² Furthermore, they were insensitive to the complexities of Southeastern Nigerian society and were unaware for many years of such pervasive social elements as women's organizations, age-grade societies, and cult slavery. Previous trade-professional groups like the Aro had themselves been part of the society and could understand and manipulate its processes more effectively.

Above all, the British were confounded by the pervasive pluralism of Southeastern Nigeria. To them, it was merely primitive and chaotic, and the notion of balance of competing elements was entirely incomprehensible.²³ In the Native Courts and the Supreme Court they stressed codified law and precedent, ignoring the equally important factors of force, personal influence, and factional balance and equivalence. Their attention to precedent and tradition meant that they gave undue weight to the viewpoints of male elders, who were assumed to be the repository of village

²¹See James to C.O., 19 June 1912, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/115/22229).

²²See A.E. Afigbo, "The Eclipse of the Aro Slaving Oligarchy of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1901-1927," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, VI, 1 (December 1971), 17.

²³See for example H.H. Johnston, "A Report on the British Protectorate of the Oil Rivers (Niger Delta)," 1 December 1888 (PRO FO 84/1882).

lore, to the neglect of such equally powerful pressure groups as women and middle-aged people.²⁴ The British sought to simplify the social process by recognizing one faction or village in each area as paramount. They thus created gross imbalances in a system that required fluidity and ambiguity in order to balance all competing elements. Such imbalances had occurred under the Aro and other previous trade-professional groups, for they too had operated through local agents in each village. But the Aro had a more finely developed sensitivity to the realities of village life, as well as a more effective intelligence system.²⁵ They knew that an overlong association with a particular faction would eventually generate dissension and disorder and thus damage their commercial interests, and they balanced competing village segments against one another to maintain their own position. The British, on the other hand, operated more on principle and preconception, and they tended to retain their alliances with particular factions for far too long.

The British wished to create a non-plural, monolithic, hierarchical system of government, but the Southeastern Nigerians would not permit it. They sought redress in the only way available to them--the reassertion, sometimes violent, of the position of those factions disadvantaged by the rise of the pro-British

²⁴See Menendez to Moor, 4 January 1903: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 7 January 1903 (PRO CO 520/18/6312)

²⁵See C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe (London, 1937), 48; S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, XIV, 3 (Autumn 1958), 304.

elements. Regions or factions that protested violently were rewarded by the fulfillment of a large part of their demands-- demands that had been ignored when presented in a more peaceful form. The British reacted to local initiatives and were as subject to the conditions of the social environment as Southeastern Nigerians were.

Yet we must not ignore the considerable impact that the British made on Southeastern Nigeria, which I believe falls into three areas. First, they succeeded in concentrating the use of force in their own hands to a great extent. As a result, trade and travel became somewhat easier and safer than they had previously been. For example, following the Onitsha Hinterland Patrol of 1905-1906, the Niger Company representative at Oguta reported that many peoples from the north and east who had previously been unable to trade directly with him were now in personal contact with his station.²⁶ Second, they gradually increased the scale of political organization, although by 1919 this development was barely perceptible. Third, they introduced a great deal of new technology in areas such as medicine, communication, and transportation. Yet it must be remembered that this technology would probably have been introduced at a comparable rate, even if the British had not chosen to invade Southeastern Nigeria. It is clear that coastal entrepreneurs such as Jaja of Opobo were well on the way to establishing modernizing, developing states at the point that the European invasion interrupted them. These states could also have

²⁶ Egerton to C.O., 16 July 1905 (PRO CO 520/31/27874).

facilitated the great increase in international trade for which the British took so much credit.

If the considerable impact of the British is seen in a historical and environmental context, it becomes clear that influence and change flowed not only from British to African, but from African to British as well. This assertion contradicts the position taken by A.E. Afigbo that Southeastern Nigerians "did not understand" the aims and methods of the British administration and that they failed "to modify their indigenous system enough to meet the needs of the changed times."²⁷ The most remarkable evidence to the contrary, as we have seen, was the exploitation by inland villagers of divisions and disagreements among the British, counterbalancing, for example, the demands of the political branch by appeal to the Supreme Court.²⁸ Equally revealing is the degree to which the traditional men's societies were adapted to the needs of the warrant chiefs and other village leaders. In many areas, wrote C.K. Meek in 1940, "the Ozo, or other title-conferring societies, are still flourishing institutions and are closely linked with the administrative system. All prominent men in public affairs are members of the society, and it would be difficult for any non-member to attain to any position of eminence."²⁹ In the early 1930s it was found that the secret

²⁷A.E. Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929 (London, 1972), xi-xii.

²⁸See above, 177-81.

²⁹C.K. Meek, "Administration and Cultural Change," in Europe and West Africa: Some Problems and Adjustments, by C.K. Meek, W.M. MacMillan, and E.R.J. Hussey (London, 1940), 26.

societies of the Anang people were far from moribund. As one officer wrote, "without such multitudinous and sometimes petty societies with their heads and their power and rights of trying certain cases the village or Native Courts would be full to over-flowing with trivial cases; in fact, without them, life would be impossible."³⁰ In Ngwa Division the Okonko society remained active and growing. In 1920 the District Officer at Aba reported that

Most chiefs holding warrants are members, and no doubt a good many cases coming to the Native Court are talked over in the club house before the hearing and a verdict is decided on before the case is called. . . . The members of the club with whom I have discussed the matter lay great stress on the fact that they have always used the influence of the society to carry out the wishes of the Government as regards Road work, supply of labour etc. and I have reasons for believing this statement to be true.³¹

The most striking example of adaptability in the changing circumstances was that of the Aro. Defeated at their capital in 1901, they continued to exploit their dominance of trade in areas further to the north until well after British expeditions expelled them from some of the main markets. In Awgu Division, as in many other places, they continued to serve as a counterbalancing power source to the British presence.³² They quickly adopted the

³⁰H.H. Marshall, "Obong Village Group of the Anang Sub-Tribe," February 1932 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 413; or NAE E.P. 9654). See also E.R. Chadwick, "An Intelligence Report on the Olokoro Clan in the Bende Division of Owerri Province," 1935 (NAI CSO 26/4/30829); D. Heath, "African Secret Societies," (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1342 [1]); Meek, Law and Authority, 153.

³¹E.M. Falk, report of 18 November 1920 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [1]); see also Resident, Owerri Province, to Falk, 6 October 1920, and subsequent correspondence (NAE Abadist 1/12/54).

³²See above, 173-4.

procedures and forms of the British administration, using such legal channels as appeal to the Supreme Court to reaffirm their control of large pieces of land outside of Arochukwu.³³ Within a few days of their defeat at Arochukwu they were offering their services to inland villagers and to the British as mediators and messengers, and they often exploited this role for profit.³⁴ While thus relating openly and legally to the British administration along a broad front, they continued to operate their Ibinukpabi oracle in secret.³⁵ In economic matters, too, the Aro responded positively to the changed conditions. They eagerly accepted Sir Ralph Moor's suggestion that they be in the forefront of traders under the new regime, and they sent delegations as far as Lagos in 1906 to learn more about manufacturing and commercial techniques.³⁶

It has been claimed, by Anene among others, that the culture of Southeastern Nigeria was imperiled by the British presence, and that it was only the active search for traditional rulers after

³³ Ambrose to Bedwell, 2 September 1913 (NAE Rivprof 2/6/13); Chubb, Ibo Land Tenure, 42.

³⁴ See Montanaro to Moor, 12 January 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 16 January 1902 (PRO CO 520/13/6913); Wordsworth to Moor, 24 November 1902: enclosure in Moor to C.O., 8 December 1902 (PRO CO 520/16/265); Fosbery to Egerton, 15 June 1909: enclosure in Egerton to C.O., 3 July 1909 (PRO CO 520/80/24532); Lynch to Provincial Commissioner, Owerri, 15 April 1915: enclosure in Lugard to C.O., 3 July 1915 (PRO CO 583/34/33760).

³⁵ See Chamley to Harcourt, 10 August 1910, and associated correspondence (NAE Calprof 13/2/22); Lugard to C.O., 2 September 1913, and enclosures (PRO CO 520/127/31759); Watt to District Officer, Aba, 5 December 1922 (NAE Abadist 1/12/54); Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles," 305.

³⁶ Moor to C.O., 12 April 1902 (PRO CO 520/14/18698); West African Mail, IV, 198 (11 January 1907), 993.

the Women's War of 1929 that prevented the total extinction of that culture.³⁷ But this assertion can be sustained only if Southeastern Nigeria is described in the precolonial period as a pure gerontocracy. We have seen, however, that gerontocracy was merely one ideological theme among many used in local politics. In general, it was most useful as a focal point for those factions disadvantaged by the rise of particular strongmen and their followings, who threatened to aggrandize to themselves an unwonted amount of power. The essence of this process was the maintenance of a balance between individual aspirations and group mores, with a constant shifting of allegiances to adjust momentary imbalances in the system.³⁸

Viewed in this light, the warrant chief system, which was the result of the introduction of British influence and wealth into Southeastern Nigerian villages, paralleled to a considerable extent previous infusions of influence and power by other trade-professional groups. Just as the Aro had cultivated and supported agents in villages along important trade routes, so the British established their own local agents to implement their administrative and commercial goals. These agents, with their quantities of money from trade and influence peddling, gathered around themselves large followings and institutionalized their power in the village context by forming or importing title and secret societies. Before the

³⁷ See above, 7.

³⁸ See above, 41-8.

twentieth century, societies such as Ozo, Ekpe, and Okonko resulted from infusions of wealth by the Aro, Nri, and other groups; after the establishment of the British presence, "red cap chief" societies embodied the new stratum of the village populace that had profited through association with the British.³⁹ These societies, sometimes working in cooperation with the surviving older societies, organized self-help projects, discussed local politics in the confines of their meeting house, and made significant decisions regarding village projects, finances, and alliances. They also became the chief advocates of Christianity and education, just as previous title societies had imported a constellation of cultural forms to entrench their position further, usually from the trade-professional group that had been the source of their wealth and power.⁴⁰

It would be misleading, of course, to equate the cultural elements imported by the British with those introduced by such previous groups as the Aro, Nri, and Awka. Even though these earlier cultural importations were also foreign, they were mostly the creations of nearby West African peoples and were therefore far more similar and congenial to indigenous cultural forms than were European technology and religion. Consequently, the European elements were not so easily accepted and absorbed, and the factions that sought to adopt them were less willingly

³⁹ See M.M. Green, Igbo Village Affairs (London, 1947), 75.

⁴⁰ See above, 46-7. See also S. Ottenberg, Leadership and Authority in an African Society: The Afikpo Village-Group (Seattle, 1971), 29.

countenanced by their fellow villagers than had been, for example, the original importers of the Ozo society in northern Igboland. Nevertheless, those factions sought to use the European elements as had the importers of previous cultural complexes: as an alternative ideological framework through which to express their growing wealth and power in relation to the dominant factions they sought to replace. Thus, it is unlikely that the invasion by the British and the establishment of the warrant chief system led to a significant revolution in the structure of day to day politics in the Southeastern Nigerian village.

Many questions remain unanswered, however, and it is impossible without further detailed research to determine the degree to which the British presence induced real changes in the politics and society of the area. For Afigbo, who prefers to see traditional Igboland as a gerontocracy, the warrant chiefs were nothing but "a motley array of hooligans, self-seeking upstarts, refugee criminals, ward, village, and clan heads."⁴¹ Their status under the British, according to his view, was without precedent:

[T]hey treated the elders and titled aristocracies, in whose hands power and authority had lain in the pre-colonial era, with scant ceremony. . . . No force which the people could muster, neither public opinion nor brute force, was effective

⁴¹A.E. Afigbo, "Chief Igwegbe Odum: The Omenuko of History," Nigeria Magazine, 90 (September 1966), 224.

against this untraditional coterie since only the Government could depose them. In the village the Warrant Chief usurped the traditional position of the popular assembly, settled cases on his own authority, prosecuted those who attempted to seek justice through the traditional methods and acquired the power to commandeer the age-grades to do his own private bidding.⁴²

But to other well-informed observers, notably M.M. Green, the activities of the warrant chiefs were not qualitatively different from those of previous strongmen, since they both played an active role in mediating disputes and dispensing patronage long before matters ever reached the village assembly or the elders.⁴³ And at least some of the administrative officers who conducted investigations of the conduct of warrant chiefs in the 1920s and 1930s concluded that they had in fact been influenced by the opinions of their fellow villagers and had moderated their behavior accordingly.⁴⁴ The definitive resolution of this debate must await further research. While it may be impossible to compare the methods of pre-colonial strongmen with those of the warrant chiefs at this late date, it should at least be possible to determine from available oral and documentary material what percentage of those appointed warrant chiefs were truly "new men" and what

⁴²A.E. Afigbo, "Revolution and Reaction in Eastern Nigeria: 1900-1929 (The Background of the Women's Riot of 1929)," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 3 (December 1966), 542.

⁴³See Green, Igbo Village Affairs, 105-6. See also J.S. Harris, "Some Aspects of the Economics of Sixteen Ibo Individuals," Africa, XIV, 6 (April 1944), 302-35.

⁴⁴See for example E.M. Falk, "Notes on the Customs and Superstitions etc. of the population of Aba Division," 24 December 1920 (RH MSS. Afr. s. 1000 [1]); C.J. Mayne, "Intelligence Report on the Abam, Abiriba, Umuhu, and Nkporo," [1932] (NAI CSO 26/3/28939); E.R. Chadwick, "An Intelligence Report on the Olokoro Clan in the Bende Division of Owerri Province," 1935 (NAI CSO 26/4/30829).

percentage were already established as holders of wealth and power before the arrival of the British.

Much of the intensity of the debate on the warrant chief system is due to the fact that the complaints against it between 1900 and 1930 were phrased in the language of conservative protest and appear to represent a harkening to the past--the struggle of suppressed traditional institutions to survive the imposition of foreign forms. But this appearance is probably deceptive. The protests against the warrant chiefs were generally made by factions currently out of favor with the British administration. These factions were no older or more traditional intrinsically than the factions, led by the warrant chiefs, that they hoped to replace. They were, in every way, equivalent groupings. But in traditional fashion they espoused the ideology of village unity and lineage loyalty to support their claims against the upstart, the wealthy strongman, the warrant chief. The ideology of gerontocracy thus became the focus of much attention, as it was employed as a rallying point by disadvantaged factions.

These factions did not find it difficult to locate the traditional institutions around which they sought to gather, despite their alleged decline during the first forty years of the British presence. Much community action throughout the British period had in fact been organized along lineage lines, such as the payment of fines, payment of lawyers' and petition-writers' fees, and initiation of action to obtain a village church or school.⁴⁵ Even

⁴⁵See for example Baddeley to C.O., 13 March 1928 (PRO CO 583/158/183/1).

areas with strong warrant chiefs had retained the use of their village assemblies for certain types of legislative and legal action, with the tacit approval of the British administration.⁴⁶ And as much as every District Officer tried to work through the warrant chiefs, he also knew that many demands--and especially surrender following violent resistance--could be fulfilled effectively only by the elders and other lineage leaders of each village.⁴⁷

It is true that certain artifacts and practices disappeared rapidly in face of the cultural importations of the British, and that many old people died convinced that their society was coming to an end. But this had happened many times before in Southeastern Nigeria with each infusion of wealth and influence by outside power sources. Every generation saw itself as the last of a kind and decried the callousness of youth, and this process continues today. It is therefore misleading to identify Southeastern Nigerian culture with particular institutions or customs. The essence of that culture is rather the process by which, in each generation, innovations are subsumed into the societal fabric. As Ottenberg has observed,

[O]f all Nigerian peoples, the Ibo have probably changed the

⁴⁶See for example N.A.P.G. MacKenzie, "Intelligence Report on the Obowo and Ihite Clans of the Okigwi Division," [1933] (NAI CSO 26/3/29945).

⁴⁷See for example Hives to Moorhouse, 30 May 1911 (NAE Umprof 6/1/1); Ambrose to Bedwell, 25 July 1913 (NAE Calprof 13/6/47); H.Lovering, "Omoakpo Patrol Report," 14 May 1917 (NAE CSE 21/5/3).

least while changing the most. While many of the formal elements of the social, religious, economic, and political structure, such as lineages, family groups, age grades, and secret societies, have been modified through culture contact, many of the basic patterns of social behavior, such as the emphasis on alternative choices and goals, achievement and competition, and the lack of a strong autocratic authority, have survived and are a part of the newly developing culture. But basic patterns of social behavior, of interpersonal relationships, have changed little though new symbols of success replace old ones and new goals appear.⁴⁸

The conflicts and tensions of the early British episode were the result of the working out by the current generation of the same types of local factional disputes that had concerned their forefathers, but with a different cast of characters and external power sources. Many institutions and customs changed, but the process remained essentially the same.

⁴⁸S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Receptivity to Change," in Continuity and Change in African Cultures, ed. W.R. Bascom and M.J. Herskovits (Chicago, 1959), 142.

APPENDIX A

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RESISTANCE IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

In the following table I have compiled all currently available data on British patrols in Southeastern Nigeria that encountered significant violent resistance. The specific archival references for the data are presented in Appendix C. Unfortunately, substantial gaps still exist, largely because at times (such as all of 1906) reports were perfunctory in the extreme, and also because the Rivers Provincial papers at the Nigerian National Archives in Enugu are unavailable for research at present.

I have chosen 1890 as the beginning of the table because it was in that year that the British first used African land forces in inland areas. Before then, operations were almost entirely naval and were limited in extent by the capabilities of British warships. A perusal of the data reveals an intensification of military activity in 1901, when the British first pushed decisively inland--hence the dates of the present study.

The most difficult aspect of the data to characterize has been "main battle." By this term I refer solely to clear instances of organized resistance by large groups of Africans, as in the defense of a stockade or a massed attack in a market place. Usually such resistance involved more than just the village mentioned as the site

of the battle, since a number of villages would combine forces for a decisive confrontation with the British at one place. It should be mentioned, however, that it is not always easy to be certain from the British reports which battles were main and which were small.

Above all, it must be noted that this table does not record the numerous police and troop escorts and other "shows of force" that met with only light opposition. Such ventures far outnumbered (by perhaps ten to one) those that met with significant resistance. Almost all patrols, whether or not they experienced a main battle, encountered a certain amount of sniping by individuals concealed in the bush. This was the case, for example, with a patrol sent to Nzue in June 1915; although no massed resistance was met with, continuous sniping occurred, and the British troops killed three defenders for an expenditure of ten rounds of small arms ammunition.¹ I have not included such patrols in this table because it is now difficult, given the current availability of data, to reconstruct more than a very small number of them.

The numerical data given for each patrol have been repeatedly cross-checked to verify their accuracy. Several observations should be made, however, with regard to the definitions of the categories employed. The numbers given for the British forces denote the maximum put into the field on a given patrol, but they do not reflect either the large groups of carriers attached to each patrol or the levies of local "friendlies" who assisted the

¹Temp. Lt. G.F.B. Handley to Headquarters, Nigeria Regiment, Lagos, 24 June 1915 (NAE CSE 21/4/3).

troops in destroying hostile villages. Exact numbers are too seldom rendered in the documents for these latter two categories to have been included in the table, but it should be mentioned that in general they outnumbered the uniformed troops and officers by at least two to one, and occasionally by as much as five to one.

Perhaps the most significant figure in the table, and the most useful for purposes of comparison with other examples of African resistance, is "Man/days under fire." Normally this is the product of the number of troops on a patrol and the number of days the patrol came under fire, but occasionally it is somewhat less, since it was sometimes only part of the patrol, acting independently, that was subject to fire. While the documentary sources have not always permitted precision in the calculation of this figure, I believe that in general it is the most revealing index of resistance. It does not, however, include the virtually daily exposure of small police patrols and escorts to sniper fire. Such exposure will probably never be quantified, although it must be weighed heavily in any evaluation of the intensity of resistance in Southeastern Nigeria.

Year	Month	British Designation	Divisions (Modern)	Main Battles (with dates)	Maximum British Forces						Patrol/Days in field	Patrol/Days under fire	Men/Days (Approximate) in field	Men/Days under fire (Approximate)	British Casualties						British Small-Arms Ammunition Expended	British Cannon Shells Expended
															Dead			Wounded				
					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon	African					British	Other	African	British	Other			
1890	February	Abutshi Patrol ^c	Idemwili	Obosi (7 Feb)	181	5	71 ^d	b	b	17	14	3,162	2,604	1	0	0	5	1	0	b	b	
1890	March	Enyong Operations	Calabar	Ikot Ndav (18 March) ^e Atan (18 March)	b	1	f	1	b	1	1	b	b	0	0	0	0	0	12 ^a	b	b	
1890	September -October	Oguta Patrol ^c	Aboh Oguta Ogba/Egbema	Wdoni Creek (Sept-Oct)	g	b	0	b	b	56	12 ^a	b	b	0	0	0	1	1	0	b	b	
1891	January	Oguta Patrol ^c	Oguta	Osu (8 Jan)	160	4	b	2	0	1	1	164	164	0	0	0	1	0	0	b	0	
1891	June	Akwete Operations	Ukwa	Akwete (23 June)	b	1	b	b	b	2	1	b	b	0	0	0	5	1	0	6000 ^a	b	
1891	September	Abatshi Patrol ^c	Ogba/Egbema	Ebocha (23 Sept)	298	3	b	b	b	5	1	1,505	301	b	0	0	43 ^h	0	0	b	b	
1893	October	Okerike Operations	Akamkpa	Okurike (3 Oct)	100	2	b	b	b	1	1	102	102	0	1	0	2	0	0	b	b	
1894	July	N'Koza Patrol ^c	Anambra	Nkoza (4 July)	167	4	b	1	1	5	1	855	171	0	0	5	15	0	14	b	b	
1895	February -April	Itu Operations	Itu	b	50	1	b	b	b	60 ^a	20 ^a	b	b	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	b	
1895	August -September	Cross River Expedition	Obubra Ikom Afikpo	Ediba (August) Obubra (August)	120	4	b	b	b	18	2	2,232	248	0	0	0	0	0	0	b	b	
1896	February -March	Ediba Expedition	Calabar Akamkpa Obubra	Ediba (March)	111	2	b	b	b	45 ^a	3 ^a	5,085	339	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	b	
1896	April	Obohia Expedition (Opobo District Expedition)	Ukwa	Obohia (16 April)	120	4	200 ^d	1	1	7	1	868	124	0	0	b	1	0	b	b	b	
1897	October	Oron District Operations	Oron	Udun Ukpo (Oct) ^e	60	1	b	b	b	3 ^a	1 ^a	183	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	b	b	
1898	January	Cross River Expedition	Obubra	Ekuri (20 & 31 Jan) Oferekpe (31 Jan)	185	4	b	b	1	18	2	2,862	522	5	1	b	37	2	b	b	b	
1898	April-May	Central Division Expedition	Opobo Abak Ukwa Tai/Elem Okrika Obio	Umukoroshe (April-May)	135	b	600 ^d	1	1	60 ^a	7	8,100	945	3	0	2 ^d	22	2	8 ^d	b	b	
1898	September	Ehea Operations	Ukwa Ngwa	Ihie (5 Sept) Amaro (5 Sept)	0	b	d	b	b	9	1	b	b	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	b	

^aApproximate. ^bInformation not available. ^cRoyal Niger Company operations. ^dLocal levies. ^eIncomplete listing. ^f300 fully-manned war canoes.
^gTwo armed steamers. ^hFigure combines dead and wounded.

Year	Month	British Designation	Divisions (Modern)	Main Battles (with dates)	Maximum British Forces						Petrol/Days in Field	Petrol/Days under fire	Men/Days in Field (Approximate)	Men/Days under fire (Approximate)	British Casualties						British Small Arms Ammunition Expended	British Cannon Shells Expended
															Dead			Wounded				
					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon	African					British	Other	African	British	Other			
1899	February -March	Central Division Expedition	Eket Etinan Opobo Abak	Ikot Etefia (6 Feb) Afaha Eket (9-10 Feb) Ikot Abia (12 Feb) Ikot Udoma (12 Feb) Ikot Ante (24 Feb) Abiakpa (5 March) Ikot Adaka (7 March) Ikot Inyang (7 March)	172	5	b	1	1	40	17	5,540	2,519	3	0	b	5	0	b	34,144	19	
1901	January -February	Ubium Expedition	Etinan	Nabong (23 Jan) Ikot Ibanya (27 Jan) Ikot Ekpena (28 Jan) Akai (29 Jan) Ikot Okporo (30 Jan) Obio (6-7 Feb)	152	8	b	b	b	26	13	4,160	2,080	2	0	b	5	0	b	b	b	
1901	September	Oron District Expedition	Oron Etinan	Urna Kwan (6 Sept) Akai Nyo (7 Sept) Ikono (14 Sept)	300	12	b	b	b	23	8	7,176	2,496	2	0	b	6	0	b	b	b	
1901	November	Ikpa Operations	Uyo Itu	Ibiaku (Nov)	0	0	c	b	b	3 ^a	3 ^a	b	b	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	b	
1901-2	November -April	Aro Expedition	Arochukwu Afikpo Ohafia Calabar Ukwa Ngwa Aba Umuhia Etche Akamkpa Ikot Ekpena Itu Abak Opobo Uyo Eket Etinan Ikwerre Etiiti Mgbidi Ogba/Egbema Oguta Owerri Mbaise Bende Mbaitoli Ikeduru Nkwerre	Esu Ita (28-30 Nov, 7-8 Dec) Ogwe (2 Dec) Uma Akwa (2 Dec) Ihie (3 Dec) Uma Ugu (4 Dec) Uma Ekechi (4 Dec, 12 Feb) Ekoli (5 Dec) Ebunwana (5 Dec) Ndi Okoroji (8 Dec) Ebem (18 Dec) Ndi Okori (18 Dec) Arochukwu (24-28 Dec) Idima (Jan) Oloko (1-13 Jan) Anyan Ofogu (10 Jan) Nada (11 Jan) Okwariki (13 Jan) Obichie (13 Jan) Ibakesi (19-20 Jan) Oku (21 Jan) Aka (22 Jan) Ikot Mbo (22-23 Jan) Afaha (23 Jan) Ikot Oku Ikono (24 Jan) Ifuho (25 Jan) Ikot Obo (26 Jan) (Continued)	1673	72	b	7	5	132	90 ^a	230,340	63,210	17	0	b	86	13	b	40,732	267	

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

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					Cannon	Machine Guns	Other	British Officers	African Troops					Dead		Wounded					
														African	British	Other	African	British	Other		
1901-2 (Cont.)	November -April (Cont.)	Aro Expedition (Continued)		Ikot Osukpong (27 Jan) Ikot Inyang Ese (28 Jan) Ibunta (29 Jan) Nung Ikot (30 Jan) Ibekwe (30 Jan-1 Feb) Itu (7 Feb) Umu Ocham (7 Feb) Umu Ogo (7 & 19 Feb) Ikot Edet (8 Feb) Ikot Inyang (8 Feb) Ariaria (8 Feb) Abang (8 Feb) Abiakpa (8 Feb) Ikot Adaka (12 Feb) Ikot Okong (12 Feb) Udeh (12 Feb) Elele (12 Feb) Obelle (12 Feb) Effen (15 Feb) Umu Ozo (19 Feb) Omuma (23 Feb) Ekparakwe (24-25 Feb) Ubumini (3 March) Ikiri (3 March) Ama Achi (5 March) Umu Ikara (6 March) Umu Lolo (7 March) Isuobiangwu (8 March) Awarra (10 March) Uba (10 March) Izombe (13 March) Onor (14 March) Amaba (16 March) Olokoro (16 March) Eziala (18 March) Iba (14 Feb)																	
1902	July	Ngor Punitive Operations	Owerri	Umu Alum (9 July) Umu Anum (10 July) Aneke (13 July)	90	4	600 ^c	2	0	15	6	1,410	384	1	0	b	6	1	b	2,593	0
1902	September	Ibeku-Olokoro Punitive Operations	Umuahia	Umwana (28 Sept) Imehu (28-29 Sept) Umu Aroko (28-29 Sept) Abana (29 Sept)	130	4	b	1	1	2	2	268	268	3	0	b	7	0	b	7,130	22
1902	October -November	Ibekwe Expedition	Opobo Abak Ngwa	Itu (18 Nov)	120 ^a	8	b	1	1	25 ^a	10 ^a	2,651	1,347	0	0	b	2	0	b	880	b

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

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					Dead			Wounded														
					African	British	Other	African	British	Other												
1902	October -December	Ibeku-Olokoro Expedition	Umashia Bende	Onor (26 Oct) Oko (26 Oct) Amuzu Ukwu (26 Oct) Umu Ajata (27 Oct) Amuzu Nta (28 Oct) Umu Deri (29 Oct) Abana (2 Nov) Ebem (11 Nov) Afarata (12-15 Nov) Isieke (12-15 Nov) Amoforo (12-15 Nov) Amede (12-15 Nov) Omode (28 Nov)	266	10	b	1	1	51	29 ^a	14,076	8,004	4	0	b	4	0	b	11,134	12	
1902	November	Omonoha Operations	Mbaitoli /Ikeduru	Umunoha (17 Nov)	83	1	b	1	0	2	1	168	84	0	0	b	0	0	b	12,000 ^a	0	
1902	December	Ubiun-Nsit Patrol	Eket Etinan Uyo Oron	Ikot Akpan Abia (11 Dec) Ndikpo (13 Dec) Ibawa (15 Dec)	115	b	b	b	b	19	3	2,280	360	0	0	b	5	0	b	550	b	
1902-3	December -January	Afikpo Expedition	Afikpo Bende Ohafia	Mgbom (28 Dec) Ndibe (28 Dec)	301	12	b	2	1	14	2	4,382	626	1	0	b	4	0	b	1,288	10	
1903	February -March	Ikwe Expedition	Abakaliki Ezzikwo	Ebega (19 Feb) Ofurekpe (20-21 Feb) Alobo (22 Feb)	152	3	b	1	1	20	4	3,100	620	0	0	b	11	1	b	5,940	4	
1903	March	Utut-Oboid-Ono Patrol	Itu	Ikot Udom (2-3 March) Edem Urua (4 March)	129	4	b	2	0	16	4	2,128	532	0	0	0	2	0	1 ^c	3,103	0	
1903	April-May	Uri-Omonoha Expedition	Ihiala Mgbidi Mbaitoli /Ikeduru	Umunoha (26 April) Amvoka (3-4 April) Uli (8 April)	288	13	b	2	1	40	35 ^a	12,040	10,535	1	0	b	19	2	b	10,176	105	
1903	September -October	Eket District Expedition	Eket	Ikpa (24-25 Sept) Uquo (25 Sept) Efoi (20-21 Sept, 9 Oct)	185	6	b	2	0	28	6 ^a	5,348	1,146	2	0	b	18	1	b	5,034	0	
1903	December	Mkpani Patrol	Obubra	Nkpani (2-5 Dec)	288	14	b	b	1	5	4	1,510	1,208	2	0	b	14	2	b	11,610	5	

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

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					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon					Dead			Wounded				
														African	British	Other	African	British	Other		
1904	January -April	Ibibio Expedition	Umuahia Ikot Ekpene Itu	Ukpom Anwana (22 Jan) Ukpom Ita (22 Jan) Ikot Ukpung (10 Feb) Onong (11 Feb) Ukana (Feb) Ikot Ntuen (Feb) Ndi Okoro (7 March) Ibobo (10 March) Ikpe (20 & 30 March) Abiakpo Ikot Essien (21 March) Mbiabong Etim (16 Jan) Nto (16 Jan)	510	21	b	b	2	91	23 ^a	32,921	9,133	3	0	b	17	0	b	18,198	62
1904	March -April	River Imo Expedition	Ngwa Owerri Mbaise	Ihite (25-27 March) Nguru (April) Lagwo (April)	211	7	b	2	0	34	10 ^a	7,412	2,180	0	0	b	0	0	b	5,547	0
1904	June	Ohaki Patrol	Ezzikwo	Ohike (5 June)	68	2	b	1	0	1	1	70	70	0	0	b	0	0	b	85	0
1904	June	Ikot Ekpene Patrol	Itu	b	60 ^a	b	b	b	b	14 ^a	2 ^a	840	120	0	0	2 ^c	2	0	3 ^c	b	b
1904	October -November	Ekpaffia Punitive Expedition	Ahoada Ikwerre	Oduaha (28 Oct) Orumenye (31 Oct) Ogbo (2 Nov)	241	7	b	2	1	19	3	3,992	528	0	1	b	7	0	b	7,604	3
1904-5	November -February	Etche Patrol	Etche	Olakwo (Nov) Umuatoro (Dec)	211	6	b	2	1	93	5 ^a	20,181	1,085	0	0	b	9	0	b	1,809	4
1904-5	November -February	Ibibio Expedition	Itu Uyo Ikot Ekpene Abak Ngwa	Ekpene Ukim (5 Dec) Ibesikpo (9 Dec) Ndiakata (6-7 Feb)	379	14	b	b	1	104	20 ^a	40,872	7,860	5	0	b	21	1	b	14,748	3
1904-5	November -March	Onitsha Hinterland Patrol	Idah Nsukka Agwata Udi Njikoka Anambra Idemmili Ihiala Mgbidi Mbaitoli /Ikeduru Owerri Mbaise Nkwere Nnewi	Obukpa (1 Dec) ^e Enugu (8 Jan) Umu Oji (21 Jan)	298	9	b	2	1	125	31 ^a	38,375	9,517	0	0	b	0	0	b	14,639	19

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

^dNot identified on map.

^eIncomplete listing.

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					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon	Dead					Wounded							
										African					British	Other	African	British	Other			
1905	February -March	Ogoni Patrol	Khana Tai/Elemé	Soo (18 Feb) Kani (19 Feb)	158	7	b	b	1	26 ^a	5 ^a	4,290	825	0	0	b	0	0	b	4,160	10	
1905	February	Ikotokobo Patrol	Etinan	Ikot Okobo (21 Feb)	71	3	b	b	0	9	2 ^a	666	148	0	0	b	1	0	b	1,775	0	
1905	February	Oheke Operations	Ezzikwo	Ohike (27 Feb)	29	2	b	b	0	5 ^a	1	155	31	4	0	b	1	0	b	b	0	
1905	March -June	Ezza (Cross River, Obubra Hill) Patrol	Ohafia Ezzikwo Abakaliki	Asaga (15 March) Eka (31 March-1 April) Idembia (1 April) Opotokum (9 April) Ebia (4 April)	279	11	b	b	1	82	11	23,780	3,190	0	0	b	6	1	b	8,404	10	
1905	April-May	Noria-Ovoro Patrol	Owerri Mbaise	Norie (22-23 April) Obor Ovoro (24 April) Ovoro (27 April)	86	4	o	1	0	14	6	1,260	540	4	0	0	3	0	3 ^c	2,080	0	
1905	July	Osaka Operations	Umuahia Itu	Usaka (6 July) Bende Ofufa (6 July)	90	3	b	1	0	9	1	837	93	1	0	b	0	0	b	b	0	
1905-6	November -May	Bende-Onitsha Hinterland Expedition	Bende Umuahia Aguata Nkwere Mbano Etiti Mbaitoli /Ikeduru Mbaise Njikoka Okigwi	Nkpa (Nov) ^e Onicha (Nov) Nzerim (Nov) Udo (6 Dec) Umu Numu (7 Dec) Alike (14-15 Dec) Umu Dioko (15 Dec) Ahiara (Dec) Onicha Amiri (Dec) Eziama (March) Ngodo (March) Okpodo (March) Ezeudo (Dec)	525	19	b	5	2	182	60 ^a	99,008	32,640	0	0	b	38	1	b	b	b	
1906	April-May	Ezza-Izhi Patrol	Abakaliki Ezzikwo	b	b	b	b	b	b	45 ^a	b	b	b	b	0	b	b	b	b	b	b	
1906	September	Awgulu Operations	Aguata	Agu (15-16 Sept)	200	b	b	b	b	5 ^a	2	1,000	400	b	0	b	b	b	b	b	b	
1906	October -November	Enen Patrol	Uyo Etinan	b	b	b	b	b	b	45 ^a	b	b	b	b	0	b	b	b	b	b	b	
1907	January	Ishinkwa Patrol	Afikpo	Isinkwo (2 Jan)	90	4	b	1	0	10	1	940	94	0	0	b	1	0	b	b	0	
1907	January -March	Aka-Ogoni Patrol	Abak Opobo Khana Bori Tai/Elemé	b	162	6	b	2	0	55	5 ^a	9,240	840	b	0	b	b	b	b	b	0	

^a Approximate.

^b Information not available.

^c Local levies.

^d Not identified on map.

^e Incomplete listing.

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					Dead		Wounded														
					African	British	Other	African	British	Other											
1907	February -March	Ikot Ekpene Patrol	Ikot Ekpene Itu	b	155	6	b	1	0	25	5 ^a	3,466	676	0	0	b	0	0	b	1,576	0
1907	February	Uruala Patrol	Nkwerre	Uruala (Feb) Osina (Feb) Obodo (Feb)	88	3	b	b	0	12 ^a	9 ^a	988	715	0	0	b	2	0	b	b	0
1907	July -September	Etchi-Ngor Patrol	Etche Owerri	Okehi (27 July) Afara (28 July) Nihl (29 July) Umu Neke (22 August) Mbelu (22 August) Umuhu (23 August) Umueze (23 August) Umu Owerri (23 August)	130	5	b	1	0	56	9 ^a	7,560	1,215	2	0	b	11	0	b	3,511	0
1907	November	Abakaliki District Escort	Ishielu	Ezangbo (8 Nov) Ngbo (12 Nov)	60	3	b	b	0	17	3	1,071	189	0	1	b	0	0	b	b	0
1908	January -February	Ogoni Patrol	Bori	Deyor (17 Jan) Nweol (21 Jan)	60 ^a	b	b	1	0	14 ^a	2	840	120	0	0	b	1	0	b	b	0
1908	January -April	Northern Hinterland Expedition	Afikpo Aguata Awgu Udi Okigwi Nkanu Ezzikwo Ishielu	Inyi (Feb-March) Ishiagu (Feb-March) Udi (Feb-March) Awgu (Feb-March) Nachi (Feb-March) Nsude (Feb-March) Akpugo (Feb-March) Ihe (Feb-March)	621	30	b	7	2	84	12 ^a	54,684	7,812	2	0	b	b	0	b	16,866	11
1908	May	Enen Patrol	Abak	Ukanafun (23 May)	60	b	b	b	0	14	2	840	120	1	0	b	0	0	b	267	0
1908-9	December -March	Niger-Cross River Expedition	Udi Igbo Eze Isi Uzo Enugu Nkanu Ishielu Abakaliki Oturkpo Ogoja Nsukka	Eha (Dec) Okpatu (Dec) Enugu Ezike (Dec-Jan) Umuagana (Dec-Jan) Orokam (Dec-Jan) Orba (Dec-Jan)	630	26	b	b	b	95 ^a	16 ^a	62,320	10,496	2	0	b	6	0	b	16,800	b
1909	May-June	Afa-Anang Patrol	Abak	Abak (5 & 7 June)	95	5	150 ^c	1	0	48	14	4,800	1,400	1	0	b	0	0	b	3,476	0
1909	June	Bende District Patrol (Amagugu Escort)	Okigwi Umuahia Bende	Omaza (4 June) Umu Ewe (7 June)	60	1	b	1	0	6	3	366	183	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	0
1909	June	Ishinkwa Escort	Afikpo	Isinkwo (9 June)	60	b	b	b	0	4	2	240	120	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	0

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

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					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon					Dead			Wounded				
														African	British	Other	African	British	Other		
1909	September -October	Nkerifi Patrol	Nkanu Avgu	Nkerifi (22-23 Sept) Maku (2 Oct)	115	3	b	1	0	40	14	4,720	1,652	0	0	b	1	0	b	1,691	0
1909-10	November -January	Abini Patrol	Akamkpa	Abini (9 Nov, 21-22 Dec)	150	6	b	2	0	20	4	2,995	499	3	0	b	5	0	b	6,223	0
1910	April	Akembara Patrol	Mbaitoli /Ikeduru	Oku (15 April)	90	2	b	1	0	9	4	828	368	0	0	b	0	0	b	475	0
1910	July-August	Ogu Escort	Avgu	Avgu (July) Nenve (August)	90	2	b	b	0	30 ^a	4 ^a	2,760	368	1 ^a	0	b	1 ^a	0	b	b	0
1910-11	November -February	Orlu Patrol	Mgbidi Nkwerre Mbaitoli /Ikeduru Mbano Okigwi	Atta (19 January) ^c Ihioma (February)	220	9	b	2	0	82	14 ^a	14,797	2,750	0	0	b	2	0	b	5,713	0
1911	February -June	Owerri-Bende -Okigwi Patrol	Etiti Mbaise Umuahia Afikpo Mbano	Umuim (7 March) ^e Orimozo (4 March) ^d Obowo (12,19,28 April; 17, 22 May) Lagwo (7 May) Ibeku (7 May) Itu (13 May) Usa Ada (June) Umu Omeke (n.d.) Umu Logo (n.d.) ^d Umu Ngwa (n.d.) ^d	177	5	b	b	0	117	14 ^a	14,543	1,700	1	0	b	2	0	b	4,254	0
1911-12	October -April	Okigwi Escort	Okigwi Avgu Mbano	Mpu (17 Oct) Ugwueme (Oct) Nenve (Nov-Dec) Nzerim (28 Feb & 14 March)	60	2	b	1	0	170	14 ^a	10,540	868	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	0
1912	October -November	Nyimago Patrol	Abakaliki	Iboko (8 Oct)	120	b	b	b	0	42	1	5,040	120	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	0
1912	December	Afa-Umburembe Escort	Udi	Umulungbe (20 Dec)	60	b	b	b	0	8	2	480	120	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	0
1913	March-May	Okigwi District Patrol	Avgu	Avgu (22 & 27 March) Enwen (28 March) Uduma (April)	80	3	b	b	0	96 ^a	7 ^a	7,968	581	0	0	b	0	0	b	2,545	0
1913	May	Abba-Amudu Patrol	Afikpo Ezzikwo	Inyibichiri (11 May)	90	b	b	1	1	18	3 ^a	1,620	270	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	0

^a Approximate.

^b Information not available.

^c Local levies.

^d Not identified on map.

^e Incomplete listing.

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					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon					Dead		Wounded					
														African	British	Other	African	British			Other
1913	December	Mbum Escort	Afikpo	Uguliangu (6 Dec)	30	1	b	b	0	3	2	93	62	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	0
1913-14	December -January	Onitsha District Patrol	Ihiala	b	120	b	b	b	0	23	7 ^a	2,760	840	0	0	6 ^c	0	0	5 ^c	1,257	0
1914	February	Bende District Escort	Bende Umuahia	Ohunmala (Feb) ^d	30	1	b	b	0	3	1	93	31	0	0	b	0	0	b	b	0
1914	March-April	Udi District Escort	Udi	Oghe (27 March)	120	b	b	b	0	14	2 ^a	1,680	240	0	0	b	0	0	b	512	0
1914	August -October	Ogoni Patrol	Khana Bori	Beerri (Sept)	80 ^f	3	b	b	0	40 ^a	4 ^a	3,320	332	0	0	b	0	0	b	891	0
1914	August -September	Aba District Operations	Ngwa	Ohanze (31 August) Ohete (1 & 3 Sept) Aba Ala (6 Sept)	112 ^f	3	b	b	0	14	4	1,610	460	1 ^f	0	1 ^c	8 ^f	0	4 ^c	8,313	0
1914	September	Arkpo-Atchina Escort	Aguata	Achina (16 Sept) Akpo (17 Sept)	60	2	b	1	0	9	2	558	124	0	0	b	2	0	b	1,550	0
1914-15	October -February	Udi Patrol	Udi Nkanu Awgu	Akebe (9 Oct) Obinagu (19 Oct) Akpugo (3 & 10 Nov) Amurri (26 Nov, 5 Feb) Amakunze (29 Nov) Opugu (2 Dec) Nzue (20 Jan)	222	6	b	b	0	132	22 ^a	26,262	4,164	0	0	b	3	0	b	15,000 ^a	0
1915	January -February; May-July	Okigwi Patrol	Mbano Okigwi Awgu Nkwerre	Ikpem (6 May) Umunakanu (27 May) Nenve (January)	80 ^f	b	b	b	0	120	8 ^a	9,600	640	0	0	b	1 ^f	0	b	b	0
1915	February -March	Afikpo Patrol	Afikpo	Onicha (7 Feb) Oshiri (16 Feb) Igbo (12 March)	79 ^f	2	b	b	0	46	3	3,294	219	0	0	1 ^c	7	0	b	2,241	0
1915	February -April	Awka Patrol	Aguata	Umunze (27-28 Feb)	b	b	b	b	0	58	2	b	b	1	0	b	2	0	b	940	0
1915	August -December	Northern Okigwi Patrol	Awgu Nnewi Ihiala Mgbidi Nkwerre	Nenve (20 August) Orsu (22 & 24 Nov; 21 & 23 Dec) Ihitenansa (27 Nov) Ebenator (27 Nov)	100	b	b	b	0	127	43 ^a	12,700	4,300	2	0	b	5	0	b	b	0
1916	January -March	AbaJa Patrol	Udi	Umulungbe (March)	50	0	b	b	0	60 ^a	4 ^a	3,000	200	1	0	b	0	0	b	b	0

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

^dNot identified on map.

^eIncomplete listing.

^fPolice.

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					African Troops	British Officers	Other	Machine Guns	Cannon					Dead			Wounded				
														African	British	Other	African	British	Other		
1916	January -March	Afikpo District and Ezza Country Patrol	Afikpo Ezzikwo	Ugulangwa (14 Feb) Eka (26 Feb) Ogboji (26 Feb) Ezza-Ama (26 Feb) Amudo (15 March)	158 ^f	b	b	b	0	60 ^a	7 ^a	9,480	1,106	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	0
1916	b	Oga Patrol	Aguata	Uga (n.d.)	b	b	b	b	0	60 ^a	20 ^a	b	b	0	0	b	0	0	1 ^c	b	0
1916	September -December	Owerri Province Patrol	Awgu	Nenwenta (Sept) Maku (19 Oct)	60	1	b	b	0	75 ^a	3	4,575	183	b	0	b	b	0	b	b	0
1916-17	November -February	Nguru Patrol (Onicha Patrol)	Etiti Mbaise	Onicha Amairi (20 Nov) Ihitte (25 Jan) Avutu (8 Feb)	55	2	b	1	0	73	6 ^a	4,161	342	b	0	b	b	0	b	1,570	0
1917	March-May	Omoakpo Patrol	Oguta	Opete (March) Asa (April)	60	2	b	b	0	68	7 ^a	4,216	434	0	0	b	0	0	b	616	0
1917	June-July	Igbo-Emaban Patrol	Obubra	Igbo-Emaban (28 June)	70	3	b	1	0	15	7 ^a	1,095	511	0	0	b	1	0	b	186	0
1917	June -October	Lengwi Patrol	Awgu	Nenwe (29 June-4 July)	71 ^f	3	b	1	0	111	7	8,214	518	2	0	b	0	0	b	1,868	0
1917	July-August	Amakor Patrol	Awgu	Maku (30 July)	60	b	b	1	0	45 ^a	4	2,700	240	1	0	b	2	0	b	1,931	0
1917	November -December	Achi Escort	Awgu	Achi (21 Nov)	30	b	b	b	0	28	2	840	56	0	0	b	0	0	b	261	0
1918	January -March	Ekwi Patrol	Ezzikwo	Ndifu Eleke (25 Jan) Igboji (15,16,19 Feb) Amagu (March)	200	13	b	3	1	62	18 ^a	12,906	3,734	0	0	b	0	0	b	9,508	38
1918	April -November	Udi-Okigwi Patrol	Awgu	Ugbo (2 April; 11-27 May) Maku (June) Enwen (June) Achi (July-August)	180	b	b	2	0	214	58 ^a	33,390	8,700	2	0	b	3	0	b	24,514	0
1919	January -March	Lengwi Patrol	Awgu	Nenwe (Feb)	100	5	b	1	0	36	5	3,780	525	0	0	b	0	0	b	665	0
1919	February -April	Obolo Patrol	Igbo Eze Isi Uzo Oturkpo	Imilike (4,10-15 Feb) Igogoro (16 March) Onicha (17 March) Inyi (18 March) Ogrite (19-22 March)	120	b	b	b	0	87	14	9,900	1,560	0	0	b	2	0	b	3,218	0
1919	August	Bende-Ofufa Patrol	Itu Umuahia	Bende Ofufa (17-18 Aug)	122	2	b	1	0	20	3	2,440	372	1	0	b	0	0	b	345	0

^aApproximate.

^bInformation not available.

^cLocal levies.

^dNot identified on map.

^eIncomplete listing.

^fPolice and military combined.

APPENDIX B

AFRICAN CASUALTIES

DUE TO BRITISH MILITARY ACTION

One of the most significant indices of the intensity of violent resistance is the number of casualties a defender is willing to sustain. But for obvious reasons reconstruction of precise casualty figures for Southeastern Nigeria is impossible. Elders everywhere agree that many people were killed and wounded, and often the names of specific individuals are recalled, but estimates of even the correct order of magnitude cannot be made from these recollections.

It is possible, however, to approximate the number of casualties sustained by Southeastern Nigerians by reference to the reports of British officers after each patrol. These reports must be used with great caution, given the propensity of military men to inflate the results of their exploits. For this reason, I have made reference only to reports in which officers claimed to have personally investigated the estimates they had made. I have also stressed military operations subsequent to 1912, when Governor Lugard began to reward prevention, rather than infliction, of African casualties. The resulting data reveal a very rough correlation between the number of fatalities due to military action and the number of rounds of small-arms ammunition expended:

Patrol	Year	African Fatalities Reported	Small-arms Ammunition Expended	Fatalities per Round
Igbo-Emaban	1917	29	186	6
Owerri-Bende- Okigwi	1911	470	4254	9
Ohaki	1904	7	85	12
Omoakpo	1917	45	616	14
Udi District	1914	30	512	17
Okigwi District	1913	140	2545	18
Akembara	1910	23	475	21
Lengwi	1919	32	665	21
Bende-Ofufa	1919	13	345	27
Enen	1908	9	267	30
Ogoni	1914	30	891	30
Ekwi	1918	319	9508	30
Afa-Anang	1909	100	3476	35
Nguru	1916	31	1087	35
Obolo	1919	87	3218	37
Arkpo-Atchina	1914	36	1550	43
Afikpo	1915	45	2241	50
Orlu	1910	100	5713	57
Udi	1914	124	10869	88
Abini	1909	56	6223	111
Achi	1917	2	261	130

When African leaders were asked at the conclusion of patrols to estimate the number of their own dead, they usually put the figure at two to four times the number given by the British officers. Some of this discrepancy may be due to exaggeration, but part of it was undoubtedly due to deaths by other causes. The above statistics exclude, for example, casualties resulting from explosive shells, bayonet attacks, disease, and privation. They also refer only to bodies left in the field and do not reflect later fatalities due to wounds.

It is likely, then, that estimates of casualties based on the data presented above are conservative, and that the actual number of dead was considerably higher. But lacking an index for estimating the magnitude of this error, the historian must rely on the data at his disposal. These data show that approximately forty rounds of small-arms ammunition were expended to kill one African. By reference to the statistical summary of patrols in Appendix A of the present study (making allowance for missing data in that summary), it is possible to estimate that at least ten thousand Southeastern Nigerians died as a result of British military action between 1900 and 1919.

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For the student of local and regional history in Southeastern Nigeria, the most useful collection of documents is at the Nigerian National Archives, Enugu (NAE). Although some important periods and areas are missing, both because of previous loss due to fire and because of destruction during the recent Civil War, careful study of the documents permits the researcher to reconstruct a basic factual outline of events as well as the British interpretation of those events. The Enugu documents are organized by provinces and districts, but there is considerable overlap in their coverage. At the present time the Rivers Provincial Papers

are being cataloged and are not available to the researcher; when they do become available, they will be an extremely valuable resource.

Finally, a very small amount of material is available at the Nigerian Military Museum, Zaria. For the purposes of this study, the only useful item found there was a typescript of about 1900 entitled "Punitive Expeditions of the Royal Niger Constabulary, 1886 to 1899."

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