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A Critical Study on the Ibini Ukpabi (Arochukwu Long Juju) Oracle and its Implications on the International Relations During the 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

The British attack on the Igbo during the early 20th century affected not only the economy of Ndi Igbo and their leadership; it ended up defining an entire ethnic group which was united before the Aro Expedition in 1901/1902. The Ibini Ukpabi oracle situated in Aro had at this time lost relevance and became so fraudulent to the detriment of original expectations of the millions of Igbo over whom the influence was. Meanwhile, the British government already found it difficult to penetrate Igbo due to the government of Aro which centered on the oracle and it was left with no alternative to fight the Aro confederacy. After defeating Aro, it took advantage and penetrated into the hinterland. With the aid of oral tradition, oral interview, secondary sources and internet materials, this study discovered that Igbo was under one government before the intrusion of the British.

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ABSTRACT

The British attack on the Igbo during the early 20th century affected not only the economy of Ndi Igbo and their leadership; it ended up defining an entire ethnic group which was united before the Aro Expedition in 1901/1902. The Ibini Ukpabi oracle situated in Aro had at this time lost relevance and became so fraudulent to the detriment of original expectations of the millions of Igbo over whom the influence was. Meanwhile, the British government already found it difficult to penetrate Igbo due to the government of Aro which centered on the oracle and it was left with no alternative to fight the Aro confederacy. After defeating Aro, it took advantage and penetrated into the hinterland. With the aid of oral tradition, oral interview, secondary sources and internet materials, this study discovered that Igbo was under one government before the intrusion of the British. The defeat of the Aro meant a fatal consequence on an entire ethnic group which began to exist as a republican group from then. The political landscape was redrawn only in the favor of British. And the Igbo entered into unending political struggles without much success even among other ethnic groups in Nigeria till date. The work concluded with a recommendation that since all happened then, the present Igbo and the Europeans should redefine their international economic relationship in favor of economic prosperity for the two groups, especially now that the Ibini Ukpabi oracle is no more in control and the European missionaries who took advantage of the Aro defeat to enter with the gospel have brought civilization.

Keywords: aro, igbo, ndi igbo, european, ibini ukpabi, international economic relations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The fact that the Igbo of Nigeria ever operated under one uniting force could be a rare knowledge. The popular knowledge which has been documented and believed by not a few of our people even all over the global world is the dictum that *Igbo e nweghi Eze*. *Igbo e nweghi Eze* simply means that Igbo recognizes no one as her king. This dictum has almost defined the contemporary Igbo as we hear some of them reiterating it. On a separate revelation, one finds out that this dictum is not only false, but can indeed be seen as a false allegation against an entity which existed as one for thousands of years before the arrival of the European colonizers. Under the colonizers, the Igbo was not only impoverished but disorganized politically for them be able to have their way. The whole essence of Chinua Achebe's maiden publication¹ derives its background from the Igbo story except that his work throws so much accusation to the Christian Missionaries in various parts of it with a passing implication on the political activities of the colonizers. This work is poised to address the role of a major catalyst of the Igbo, its sudden destruction at the wake of the 20th century without an attempt of replacement, and the International relations implications of the Aro Expedition.

For several thousands of years, the Igbo nation has equally maintained another dictum *from Nri to Aro*. This goes a long way to re-tell the story of

Ndi Igbo as an entity. The Igbo nation remained an entity with well recognized and respected administrative structure prior to the coming of the colonizers who first entered as people of various intentions but ended up colonizing the African tribes for the purpose of politics and economy in addition to social activities which mainly helped them to still achieve their original aim of economic exploitation. Some of the European visitors were archeologists and others were traders and explorers while some came in mainly as soldiers and politicians like Fredrick Luggard. Peter Edochie explains² that the Europeans came in clever motions to particularly take the Igbo man unawares and that same thing happened to Africa in general as no one expected their humiliating defeat when it happened. That was many years before the independence years of 1950s and 1960s.

Let us now have it on record that the relationship which happened between Africa and Europe had many adverse effects on some African communities and tribes. Africa existed in tribes before the advent of the European merchants who also transacted businesses with those tribes the way they met them until Europe met at Berlin and partitioned Africa with fake boundaries in the absence of Africans. This observation is not only on the artificial boundary creations and fake contractions for which many modern African so-called nations still pay dearly. It equally bears heavily on some particular tribes like the Igbo which was cleverly and militarily disorganized and are yet to recover from the blow to stand together in their full height.

The objectives of the present study includes to recall and critically analyze the relationship which happened between the Europeans and the Igbo in general and the Aro kingdom in particular to present the effects especially bearing on the implications of this relationship on the functionalities of the judicial role Aro played in Igbo land. The positive side of the relationship of the European colonizers which helped the Missionaries –mainly their own kiths and kin shall be placed on record too; while the Oracle of

the Aro which attracted the Europeans could be said to be a special attraction of an international relation in this instance. The work shall offer profitable recommendations which shall help the modern Igbo, the Europeans, and the Aros before drawing a conclusion.

II. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Crises and wars among men result mainly from ambitions and disagreements and most times bothering on economic and social misplacements. The matter about the British penetration and defeat of Ndi Igbo, and Aro expedition of 1901/1902 resulted from the British ambition to exploit African tribes basically for economic and political reasons. This is the reason why it suits it well to analyze the Ibini Ukpabi and the Aro wars using Social conflict theory SCT.

The tendency towards conflicts is the basic element to human nature according to the thoughts of Machiavelli's and Hobbs'.³

There is no gainsaying that even conflict and struggle are capable of promoting human social existence by ensuring that the strongest of the species survive. The great Garman theorist and political activist Karl Marx who lived in 1818 to 1883 presents the root of this idea in several social conflict theories.⁴

The theory of social conflict seeks to answer such questions as: why do fists get clenched, even in the hearts? Why are societies in perpetual conflict? Why are the contending problems of the societies not solved at once? What are the major causes of conflicts?

Social conflict theory (SCT) sees society as a complex system characterized by inequalities and conflicts that generate social changes. The SCT is a Marxist based social theory which argues that individuals and groups within the society (social class) have differing amount of material and non material resources, technically put as the haves and have-nots, and that the most powerful groups use their power to exploit the less powerful. Marx further made a critique on the broad social system

by saying that the history of the existing society is the history of class struggle, free man and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serfs, guild master and journey man in a word, oppressor and the oppressed standing in constant opposition to one another carried on an uninterrupted now hidden, now open fight; a fight that each time ended either in revolutionary fight of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending class⁵. Nevertheless, SCT can be found useful in all social issues like sports, politics, normal social engagements and society at large. SCT can be viewed from the prism of social inequality, favoritism in various aspects of social living and society through mediums of ethnicity, age, gender, race etc. And these factors influence wealth, schooling, power, and prestige. SCT paradigm views the patterns that benefit some people more than it would others due to their social status. Notable scholars of SCT are Karl Marx, Marx Weber, and Fredrik Engels among many others.

The views, ideas and aspirations on social conflict theory cannot be over emphasized, as it shows the dichotomy of class struggles resulting from the factors of economy, based on the forces of production.⁶ Taking it from there, we need to note that, the dichotomy discovered in the case of the European colonizers and Ndi Igbo and Aro in the present Eastern region and Abia state of Nigeria was nothing but over-ambitious people seeking to suppress African tribes and to exploit them and make use of their human and natural resources for which reason, wars were declared on the Aro.

III. A BRIEF REMARK ON THE ORIGIN OF IGBO TRIBES IN NIGERIA

The Igbo or Ndi Igbo as we can severally see here is referring to the Igbo people. The same people are called the Ibos by foreign tongues especially the British personnel when they could not pronounce *Igbo* with ease. The Igbo constitute a major ethnic group in Nigeria and exist in profound ancestral tribes in varied strengths and numbers but share major cultural identities which mark them out anywhere they could be found. A

brief description of the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa by British personnel would help us here. The first British Governor General Lord Lugard who ruled Nigerian people from 1900-1919 aptly described the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria as follows:

Concerning the Igbo:

“This people of predominantly Eastern Nigeria are fiercely rebellious with no regard to authority. Though industrious and Religious in difference to the objectives of her Majesty and the crown, they are highly dangerous to be trusted with power”. Concerning the Yoruba:

“This people for twenty years opposed every governor and have fomented strife and bloodshed in the hinterlands. They are the most seditious and disloyal and they are purely prompted by self seeking money motives of any people I have ever met”. Concerning the Hausa:

“The Hausa-Fulani has no ideas. No ambitions save such as sensual in character. He is a fatalist spendthrift and a gambler. He is gravely immoral and is a serious menace to any society he seeks to attach himself”⁷.

The above reference does not only show the mind of the British about the Igbo. It manifested in their dealings with these ethnic groups years later. The Igbo group was evidently disorganized through various well arranged wars as well as strategic politics. Some of the hard to forget wars included but not only: the Ekureku war of 1883-1914; the Aro wars of 1899-1902 within which time the Aro Expedition was recorded in December 1901-January 1902; the Afikpo war of 1903-1904; the Ezza war of 1905; the Nri war of 1905-1911; the Aba women riot also known in some quarters as the Igbo women war of 1929.

The British people met the Igbo man with the conclusive mental misunderstanding that he was rebellious to their authority. But that was not true. What is true is that the Igbo man was merely being compared with his Hausa-Fulani neighbor who the British already described as ignorant and

bereft of ideas, no ambitions. In order to successfully exploit the region, the need to work harder was found in their decision to disorganize an already existing organized structure, impoverish it and dump it helpless till date, evidently in favor of the group described as ambitionless, sensual in character, and a gambler. It is hard not to add at this beginning that this foundational disorganization of the Igbo is what still keeps an entire Nigerian nation in its present economic misplacement, political cluelessness, and security battles.

The ancestral lands of Ndi Igbo are found basically within the regions of the present South East, parts of South-South, and parts of Middle belt of Nigeria. In the years before the Berlin conference in which the Europeans officially agreed to partition Africa with fake boundaries, the entire Igbo nation was one and observed a common understanding especially on governmental issues. Some Igbo tribes claim Jewish ancestry but it is not clear yet whether all the Igbo tribes could exist together under this same claim. What is possibly good to know here is that the Aro lay claim on Israel ancestry. Elder Enyinnaya Nwankwo spoke in great confidence while explaining that:

“We the Aros claim descent from Jacob. Indeed, apart from Ibini Ukpabi situated in Aro, the idol which Rachael the second wife of Jacob stole from her father Laban is found in Aro till today and the stone to prove this claim is still found in some parts of Aro villages especially in Ibom isii kingdom”⁸

Chukwuka Okafor made an elaborate explanation on the subject of Igbo-Jew ancestry when he took the knowledge of Numbers 26:16-18 into deep exegetical consideration.⁹

Of Ozni, the family of Oznites; of Eri the family of Erites; of Arod, the family of Arodites; of Areli, the family of Arelites. These are the families of the sons of Gad according to those who were numbered of them: forty thousand five hundred (Numbers 26:16-18).

The argument points out that these sons of Gad who were numbered for the purpose of going out for war after God had already expressed His annoyance on Israel's doubt and vowed that none of them was going to enter the promised land must have run out of the camp and later found themselves in the present South-East of the present Nigeria unplanned. Several communities which have “Ri” as either prefix or suffix with their surrounding communities are the initial sons; hence Nri, Eri, Aguleri, Umeuri, Aro, and numerous others.

Years ago, the CNN reported with a concise explanation of this Igbo Jew concept as follows:

"The son of Yaakov, Jacob, [was] Gad and I learned that he was among those people who went out of Israel to exile," Abor says. "So from there he had a son called Eri and a son gave birth to a son called Aguleri and that's how the Igbo race began."

From generation to generation, some Igbo have passed down various versions of a migration story framed around Jacob, a patriarch of Judaism. A popular version of the narrative holds that Gad, the seventh son of Jacob, had three sons who settled in present-day southeastern Nigeria, which is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo. Those sons, Eri, Arodi and Areli (as mentioned in the book of Genesis), are said to have fathered clans, established kingdoms and founded towns still in existence in southeastern Nigeria today, including Owerri, Umuleri, Arochukwu and Aguleri”¹⁰.

The point being made here is that even if the Igbo in Nigeria may not have been conclusively one of the lost sons of Jacob, there is something of mystery connected to this assertion which many more people are alluding to. One of clear evidences difficult to deny is that most of the cultural practices of Ndi Igbo in Nigeria seem similar to those of the Jews living elsewhere. This becomes so shocking in view of the reality that such cultures existed with them long ago before the advent of Christianity into the Igbo land

during the early part of 19th century. The implication of this revelation is that if Ndi Igbo practiced similar things before they began to read the bible to see the Jews practices written down in the bible, then, there is something one is faced to search out about the relationship of the two groups of people. There must be something of connection holding the two people, a tie that must not be hurriedly explained away.

IV. THE ARO KINGDOM

The Aro, variously known as Aro Okeigbo, Igbo ukwu, etc is one of important tribes of Igbo in Nigeria. The Aro ancestral land is found in the present Abia state. It borders with Obotenmi community of the present Akwa Ibom state, formerly Cross River on the western side; Ututu Ezema covers their Northern and Eastern sides; while another ancient Igbo community –Ihechiowa stays by the south. It is recalled that both Ututu and Ihechiowa migrated from Ibeku somewhere in Umuahia, Abia State many years before the 15th century. Another story also puts it that one of the villages in Ihechiowa by name-Uburu Ihechiowa was the one which donated part of her own already acquired landed property to accommodate her neighboring Amuvi Aro when the later arrived to meet the former already there.¹¹ That was during the good old days. And till today the two villages have a relation despite belonging to two different autonomous kingdoms. The Aro, Ututu, Ihechiowa, together with a few other Igbo communities make up a group which Professor Ogbu Kalu referred to as the Cross river-Igbo communities because of their proximities with the mere river divides between them and Cross river people.¹²

Arochukwu as it is presently called has been prominent beyond their neighbors for some obvious reasons. First is the Ibini Ukpabi oracle which played an important governmental role over the whole of Igbo tribes before the coming of the British. That was before the Aro expedition and we shall soon turn to the stories. Second is the attraction of the British which was also as a result of Aro dominance. After conquering the

Aro, the British had stationed their district office in Aro from where the rest of the other communities were being ruled. Presently, the neighboring communities of Ututu, Abam, Isu, and Ihechiowa all share with her name Arochukwu as one of the LGAs of Abia state. In fact, it is not a secret that among the five communities, Ihechiowa has the highest population but due to political feebleness, Arochukwu remains the elephant community in dominance over all¹³. The factor of Aro internal organization is also important in their so-called prominence. Every Aro in all parts of the world pays allegiance to the Eze Aro who must be in the ancestral Aro home. Serious cases affecting an Aro man and another Aro man must not go beyond the Eze Aro. In other words, among them, there could be squabbles but the way they handle them remain different from the way they react when it involves non Aro. The dictum *nwa Aro a naghi a gwa nwa Aro ibe ya na Ibini Ukpabi na-akpo ya* “An Aro son has no reason to summon the next Aro son to the Ibini Ukpabi oracle” says it all. This means that they are meant to trick others but not among them.

The Aro is known for her traditional slogan *Ako bu ije* ‘life is about being clever’. This is printed as their emblem. An Aro must dominate every group he identifies with. To achieve that he does not need to fight or quarrel. In fact, a real Aro knows what to do for others to fight for him while he assumes the position without struggles. They are highly feared by several Igbo tribes in the hinter land, not within their neighboring communities especially among the Ihechiowa and Ututu possibly because of historicity and proximity. Nevertheless, Aro is a special Igbo community respected and revered for their outstanding specialties.

V. THE IBINI UKPABI (LONG JUJU) OF ARO

What needs to be said more is that the Igbo remained organized especially under the influence of some revered oracles and deities which notably influenced the Igbo cultural faithfulness, unity of purpose and morality. Recall that this happened

long before the advent of Christianity in Igbo land. Aro remained prominent among the various tribes and kingdoms of Igbo. Studies show that the Igbo has been in the concept of worshipping *Ani* (the earth goddess) but has never at any time seen *Ani* as the supreme deity¹⁴ and the Aro came up to assume leadership. The reason for this sudden importance of Aro is not unconnected to the existence of Ibini Ukpabi (British long juju) which must have existed from unidentified ancient period as a natural creation. Ibini Ukpabi known as and called *Chukwu okike Abiama* (God the creator of wonders) was said to be found in a cave and, strategically residing by a waterfall in one of Aro villages. The site created some amount of mysterious interpretations and awe around the oracle of Ibini Ukpabi. Aro gradually earned the suffix Chukwu and started being known as and called Arochukwu, almost making Aro Okigbo and other praise name less prominent. Why this became possible is simple to understand. Ndi Igbo from all walks of life went to Aro to consult “God” and simply explained that they went to Aro-Chukwu. Presently the word is no longer Aro-chukwu but Arochukwu. Let us recall that the Aro man is naturally intelligent and very clever among the rest of the Igbo. So the Eze Aro was able to convince the entire Igbo of those days in the present Cross river, Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu, Anambra, and Imo that Chukwu’s dwelling place has been found in Aro land and it was accepted.

Thus, it was already propagated, believed and accepted across the entire Igbo land that God lives in Aro. The God of Heaven and Earth did not find any other place on Earth to stay. But He was found in Aro land. His compound remained a special cave. They convinced most people and every Igbo man visited Chukwu okike Abiama as an obligation especially when he is invited. Whether this saying was a deception or not is left to historians to unravel. What is clear and undeniable is the fact that the entire Igbo race revered Ibini Ukpabi and visited it any time it was said to have summoned them. As it happened, many families throughout the hinterlands proudly

named their sons after Chukwu. Chukwu is still a popular Igbo name till this day except that many people misunderstand that the name Chukwu which either their father or uncle is bearing as a Christian name since Chukwu in Igbo simply means God in English. Even when many in this generation, suspecting that their names assumed from certain local oracles have tried to change their names to probably reflect their new faith in Christ, those who answer Chukwu would not.

As it were, Ibini Ukpabi played a highly accepted governmental role until corruption came into it like any other human system. The organization of the oracle reflected the organization of Igbo and indeed that of Aro Kingdom. Eze Aro was represented in all of Igbo land including Idoma whose king *Ochidoma* actually come from the original name given by Eze Aro himself as *Onyenachi Idoma*; Onitsha whose first *Obi* was installed by Eze Aro; Ihiala where Eze Aro sent *ogwugwu* –a branch of Ibini Ukpabi, etc. These representatives were consulted on every matter by their people until the matter became heavy enough to reach Aro land. The Eze Aro himself referred cases to Eze Ibom isii when Ibini Ukpabi was needed to intervene. Eze Ibom isii called the Ibini Ukpabi chief priest who tried such cases too until they were found fit for the ‘supreme God’ to get involved. That was –a *point of no return*. This means that the Ibini Ukpabi chief priest only took over when the Eze Ibom isii could no longer handle any such cases.

Let us note that in the Igbo traditional setting, the oracle held executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The knowledge here is being elucidated by the known practice of having Aro villages in the Igbo hinter land till date. The Aros live almost in every part of Igbo land and have their leadership who submit to the Eze Aro in all cases. It was the Eze Aro who would crown Obi of Onitsha as well as of Idoma, and who actually used to be an Aro blooded man¹⁵.

But during the era of slave trade, at the height of trading on human beings, Ibini Ukpabi was used as an instrument of aid to this viable economic

activity and the deception became gradually known. The trick was that instead of killing the offender of the society in the cave to avert the anger of Chukwu, a ram was readily available to be killed while the man was taken away to be sold to slave dealers for money. By the time the British began to have problem of penetration into the Igbo land, they needed to know why they found it as such difficult, and it was obvious that the allegiance to a strong government made the Igbo a strong force to reckon with. Since the oracle was already operating in deceit, the hypocrisy around it needed to be unveiled and perhaps the entire system quashed. It was already a challenge before the arrival of Lugard. But the Aro wars fought during his time. Next is to analyze the Aro expedition and the implications on the Igbo and on the Aro.

VI. THE ARO EXPEDITION OF DEC. 1901- JAN. 1902

As have been highlighted before in this work, the British government already knew that an extra force was needed on the Igbo if the expected gains must show up. The Aro expedition remains one of the great wars that fought in Igbo land to open up the Igbo land for political and economic exploitation by the British government. It is popularly known as Aro expedition. But since it was of various stages and very fierce against the Aro in conclusion, one could be free to refer to what happened then as wars, not war. Later wars included unsuccessful resistance in some other parts of Igbo land which were easily taken care of. The centre was already broken when the Aro wars ended in favor of the British government. And in order to punish Ndi Igbo, warrant chiefs were introduced which was actually hated and abhorred by the Igbo. These chiefs were remunerated by the colonial government so they had no real authority over anyone. That seems to be the point when the dictum *Igbo e nweghi Eze* began and has tarried even after independence till date. In fact it seems that the redrawing of the political landscape of the Igbo took turns from that point. The Igbo was by this action of the

British disorganized as they remained leaderless for these long years. But then, the Christian Missionaries equally took advantage of Aro defeat and made considerable breakthrough into the Igbo hinterland. Though the Missionaries were mostly Europeans, they were never after political or economic exploitation as their brothers. The Christian missionaries advanced from Owerri into the hinterlands- planting Churches all over the Igbo land. This made the Igbo to embrace the foreigners and forget any known ill feelings arising from the disorganization of the Igbo structure. It was more so especially because the missionaries themselves were a group of Godly persons who only came for the good of mankind wherever they went and whose job only became easier after the defeat of the Aro.

Ogbu Kalu summarized the Aro expedition explaining it in three factors. Thus:

“Three factors led to the Aro expedition of 1901/2. Firstly, European international politics culminating in the Berlin Conference of 1885 touched off a scramble for colonies. Colonies provided raw materials and market outlets for industries; ownership of colonies conferred prestige and diplomatic weapon. Each European nation endeavoured to secure colonies or to expand her hold on existing ones. The British “official mind “ moved to expand in Africa, however reluctantly Robinson and Gallagher might presume. Secondly, there was the desire to tap the resources of the hinterland, spread civilization and establish legitimate trade. This programme ran into difficulty because of the Aro monopoly of the middleman role which they maintained with the dreaded long juju oracle. A third reason for the Aro expedition was the official exaggeration of the inhuman practices of the oracle and the power of the Aro. Suffice it to say that the elaborate expedition did not destroy the Aro Commercial power, but it succeeded in opening up the Igbo hinterland. Missions pushed in behind the smoke of the guns”.¹⁶

From the above explanation, it is obvious that the Anglo-Aro war ought to be seen from dimensions

beyond one. One can only agree that in the midst of the conceives of ills; in the midst of the British strategies to defeat and dominate the Igbo, God opened a window by which the gospel entered in order not to allow it take the shape of a complete damnation.

From another historian we get the reasons for the Aro Expedition as follows:

“Reasons for the war advanced by Sir Ralph Moore, the British High Commissioner of the Nigerian Coast Protectorate, included: To put a stop to slave dealing and the slave trade generally with a view to the Slave Dealing Proclamation No. 5 of 1901 being enforced throughout the entire territories as from first of January next; to abolish the Juju hierarchy of the Aro tribe, which by superstition and fraud causes much injustice among the coast tribes generally and is opposed to the establishment of Government. The power of the priesthood is also employed in obtaining natives for sale as slaves and it is essential to finally break it; to open up the country of the entire Aro to civilization; to induce the natives to engage in legitimate trade; to introduce a currency in lieu of slaves, brass rods, and other forms of native currency and to facilitate trade transactions; to eventually establish a labour market as a substitute to the present system of slavery”¹⁷

Additional reason for the Aro expedition has been provided by Enyinnaya Nwankwo- an Aro son as follows:

“Note that the Aro man does not have anything to do with leprosy. The disease is dreaded the way it is done in Israel. It happened that the Europeans were misconceived as lepers because of the color of their skins. While the Aro people were still nursing the wound in their heart of the struggle which led them to have already fought in the year 1899, Dr Becky a missionary worker came along with the intention of treating the sick in Aro not suspecting the thinking of the natives about his skin color. But as the Doctor touched the people to normally diagnose and prescribe drugs, the

natives rose against that kind act of his and protested why a leper could touch an Aro man. This resulted to the killing of the Christian health worker and the news reached the governor general. To the best of Aro thinking, this death of Dr Becky’s presented the last straw that broke the camel’s back. The terrible war broke out and remained the final and conclusive strife that stopped the Aro power without bothering to bring a possible leadership replacement to Ndi Igbo. Note that the name Becky became the reason why the Igbo call white men Bekee. Becky sounded to them as Bekee”¹⁸.

Nevertheless, the Aro and indeed the Igbo resisted the British fighters enough even when they had no equivalent weapons comparable to those of the British soldiers. When the Aro knew of the British intension, attempts were made to ward off the British attackers. Even though the British later had their way it was not during the first instance of the war in 1899. The British only had their way in January 1902 during the main war which fought not less than two months.

From the foregoing, we come to the knowledge that the British equally used the opportunity of their Aro defeat to further establish their capitalist system and expand a capitalist economy among Ndi Igbo. Ndi Igbo immediately grabbed the capitalist economy to their own good because they are already industrious by nature. By this, two advantages are immediately on record; the first being the Christian Missionary Churches which were established consequent upon the expedition result. Of course the introduction of capitalist economy among them was a second advantage.

VII. THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARO WARS

It is worthy to mention at this time that relationship is cultivated by different circumstances including war, peace, etc. Aro was made popular by the long juju oracle at least to the extent of facing the British Army. The Igbo was equally seen as important in the British project of colonization. Having said that, let us

compare the Aro situation with another situation elsewhere in Calabar.

Some Calabar chiefs wished to embrace new economic impetus as well as social status on learning that slave trade had been abolished. That was during the early 19th century. Different chiefs applied to the Europeans for that purpose. E. U. Aye captured the exact text and presented part of the deal as follows:

“King Eyo put the matter clearly:

If I can get some cotton and coffee to grow and man for teach me, and make sugar cane for we country come up proper, and sell for trade side I very glad’ (Dec. 1, 1842)”

King Eyamba completed the point:

“and then some man must come for teach book proper and make all men saby God like white man, and then we go on for same fashion’ (Dec. 4, 1842).¹⁹

The point being made here is that those Calabar chiefs had a target, including economic needs, educational needs, social needs and Religious needs. Their application stated exactly what they wanted. The Presbyterian Missionaries landed in Calabar on the 10th of April 1846 with all the needs applied for. They took four years to get prepared and when they landed it was a peaceful transaction all through.

The story is different from that of the Aro. In the case of the Aro, the British got themselves ready to fight the Aro in order to have their way and get what they want in Igbo land. The Missionaries only took advantage of Aro defeat. The very people who took the lead were the colonizers. It must be stated that when a man gives you what you request for, your response is always different from who was forced to get what he never requested to have. This is what happened in 1901/02. This could also summarize the wrong notion that the Igbo was a rebellious group.

On the other hand, we need to still state our finding here that the Aro must have aided to her

defeat in some strategic ways. First, the Ibini Ukpabi oracle was a center of unity and cultural respect as it were. The whole Igbo respected its judgment and would do nothing without referring to it in time of such needs. The chief priests suddenly began to fault the regulations and law of the oracle thereby beginning to limit its spiritual efficacy and even authority by conducting illegitimate business in hypocrisy.

Second, the very persons who they sold away to Europe later became more civilized and could even reveal what was done to them in their days of ignorance. By the revelation of such secret evils around Ibini Ukpabi, the white man came to know that the Igbo were merely revering fraud in the name of an oracle which was no longer potent enough.

Then, finally, the war erupted and the majority of those who fought the war could still be drawn from among those mistreated but freed slaves. Therefore, the oracle of Ibini Ukpabi met its fall in 1902 only to become a tourist center presently.

What remains for us is to draw our conclusion on this discussion, with some useful recommendations.

VIII. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends with emphasis that, since the Europeans claimed to have good plans for Africa, let the good relationship intensify especially now that both the Europeans and African tribes have over the years found out the good inputs and the not-too-good inputs of each other. Amendments and rebuilding are possible. Let the relationship between the Europeans and the Igbo reflect better friendship now because both have more to offer each other than when they initially contacted.

Second, let the wrong notion of Igbo rebellion stop as we all have found out that it is never true. Situations are faced according to how they present themselves, as it happened during the pre-colonial days and through the colonial period.

It is recommended that the good things already discovered about the Igbo be encouraged by all now especially their friend –Europe.

Ibini Ukpabi site is already a tourist attraction. Let the Igbo come together, no longer by the uniting force of a juju which ceased to exist, but on the enlightenment that the Europeans only did what they could do at the time based on available idea.

Let Ndi Igbo endeavor to stand together now under the leadership role of the God introduced by the European Missionaries after the disorganization of Aro confederacy and present the best of what they are known for. It is true that after the disorganization, there was no replacement of their choice to continue in their former ways, now can be a better time to reorganize and exchange more economic activities with the Europeans.

Ibini Ukpabi brought the Europeans to relate with the Aro and the Igbo in brutal ways for personal gains and exploitation reasons, now is the time to turn that relationship for better, remembering that the two groups know themselves already. After all, by the works of Missionaries, some Igbo sons had good educational opportunities after the Aro Expedition.

Let the Europeans, the Igbo, and Aro forgive their historical messes and mistreatments and forge forward to greater good and productive international economic relations.

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