THE ANCIENT ULI KINGDOM: CHALLENGING THE ACEPHALOUS NARRATIVE IN IGBO POLITICAL HISTORY

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Abstract

Scholarship has long treated the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria as the textbook case of an acephalous society: republican, segmentary, and without kings. That picture is not false for many communities, but it has been asked to do more work than the evidence will bear. This article recovers the Oluoha, or Ezeala, kingship of Uli in present-day Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State as a sustained monarchical institution that took shape in the mid-fifteenth century and endured, with measurable continuity, until the early colonial period. Oral genealogies preserved by elders and title-holders name ten Oluohas—Ogbu, Nnachi, Otikpo, Anuebunwa, Onyemazu, Izuogu, Okwereogu, Ukoha, Ezenobi, and Udogu—each installed by a designated kingmaker. All ten belonged to the indigenous order and reigned before colonial government was planted in Uli. The white man did not create the Oluoha; he found the line already in place and converted the tenth holder, Udogu, into a warrant chief. Drawing on field interviews conducted in Uli and neighboring settlements, local historical compilations, colonial intelligence reports, and the wider Igbo historiography, the article reconstructs coronation practice, the range of royal functions, and the hybrid character of Uli government, in which monarchical office sat atop village assemblies, age grades, and title societies rather than abolishing them. Comparison with Nri, Onitsha, Arochukwu, and the Ihiala axis places Uli on a spectrum of Igbo political forms rather than outside Igbo culture. Colonial partition after 1910, and the warrant-chief appointments of Udogu and Okorie Akuaraa, fractured the old unity without wholly extinguishing the title. The Uli case does not overturn the republican reading of Igbo politics; it insists that the reading be made particular.
Keywords: acephalous society; Igbo historiography; Uli kingdom; Oluoha kingship; hybrid governance; pre-colonial political systems; oral tradition

Introduction

For the better part of a century the Igbo have occupied a privileged place in the anthropology of statelessness. In the binary that Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard set out in *African Political Systems*, societies either possessed centralized government or they did not. The Igbo were placed firmly in the second column, their public life described as segmentary, kinship-based, and hostile to the concentration of power in a single office.[1] That classification travelled well. Adiele Afigbo, Elizabeth Isichei, C. K. Meek, M. M. Green, and G. I. Jones, working from different materials and with different temperaments, all found in Igboland a preference for diffused authority—village assemblies, age grades, title societies, and lineage councils rather than a sovereign king.[2] The proverb *Igbo enwe eze* ("the Igbo have no king") seemed to capture not only a political arrangement but a moral stance.

The model explained a great deal. It accounted for the resilience of Igbo communities under slaving, missionary pressure, and colonial rule, and it rescued African political life from the assumption that only states counted as history. Its cost was a flattening. Once the acephalous label hardened into a regional character sketch, local kingships that did not look like Benin or Oyo were easy to treat as late, thin, or colonial artefacts. Communities that had, in fact, grown offices of coordinated rule over several centuries slipped to the margins of the literature. Uli is one of those communities.

Uli lies in the southeastern corner of Ihiala Local Government Area, Anambra State, at roughly 5°47′ N, 6°52′ E. From the middle of the fifteenth century it sustained a kingship known as the Oluoha, also called Ezeala, an office that joined political coordination to priestly custody of the land.[3] Oral tradition names Ogbu as the first Oluoha. After him the kingmakers installed Nnachi, Otikpo, Anuebunwa, Onyemazu, Izuogu, Okwereogu, Ukoha, Ezenobi, and Udogu, each crowned by a named title-holder whose office itself became part of the constitution of the kingdom.[4] Those ten men held office before the coming of the white man to Uli. The kingship was not a colonial afterthought. Continuity of that length is difficult to reconcile with the claim that Igbo political culture admitted no kings worth the name. When British administration finally arrived, it did not invent a ruler for the town. It took the sitting tenth Oluoha, Udogu, and converted him into a warrant chief.

Why Uli took this path, while many of its neighbors did not, is not a question that a single cause will settle. Fertile soils and river access created surpluses that needed management and corridors that needed defense. Population growth tightened the demands on land and custom. Sacred ideas about *Ala*, the earth deity, gave a would-be ruler a

language of legitimacy that was already indigenous. Exceptional men—Ogbu above all—used that language. The result was not a despotism. The Oluoha ruled by consultation, and the older republican machinery of the town continued to work. What emerged was a hybrid: monarchical enough to coordinate defense, trade, justice, and ritual; republican enough to remain recognizably Igbo.

The argument of this article is modest and, for that reason, harder to dismiss. Igbo political organization was never a single type. It ran along a spectrum, from village democracies at one end to consultative kingships at the other. Uli belongs on that spectrum. To say so is not to dethrone Afigbo or Isichei; it is to take seriously a warning both of them sometimes issued, namely that generalization must not outrun the local record. The materials for that record in Uli are chiefly oral—king lists, coronation memories, and anecdotes held by elders, priests, and titled men—supplemented by local compilations, a 1912 intelligence report on Ihiala District, and the comparative literature on Nri, Onitsha, Arochukwu, and the southern Igbo towns.[5] Oral tradition is selective, and colonial paper is interested. Used together, and read with the particularism that Franz Boas demanded of ethnography, they are still enough to show that the acephalous thesis, applied without remainder to all of Igboland, has hidden more than it has revealed.[6]

The Acephalous Paradigm and Its Limits

Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's 1940 volume did not invent the distinction between states and stateless societies, but it gave that distinction a durable academic home. Segmentary lineage theory, as they and their students developed it, showed how balanced opposition among kinship groups could produce order without a king. The Igbo fitted the type with uncomfortable ease. Power, in the standard account, was scattered among corporate groups; no single person spoke for a large territory; achievement titles such as *ozo* rewarded wealth and character rather than birth into a royal house.[7]

Afigbo gave the anthropological sketch historical depth. In *Ropes of Sand* he insisted that traditional Igbo government was a tissue of assemblies, age grades, title associations, and kindreds, not a pyramid with a monarch at the apex.[8] Isichei's *A History of the Igbo People* (1976) repeated the outline while adding a caution that the absence of large kingdoms was not the absence of government.[9] Meek, writing from the vantage of indirect rule, Green from a close study of a village, and Jones from the oil-river trading states, all found versions of the same republican grain.[10] There is no need to caricature this literature. It described, accurately, a great many Igbo towns. The difficulty began when a well-supported regional tendency was promoted into a civilizational rule.

The rule never quite held. Afigbo himself noted variation across Igboland.[11] The Eze Nri exercised a wide ritual hegemony without a standing army, binding communities through the *ofo* and the language of abomination and cleansing.[12] Onitsha and Oguta developed *obi* kingships shaped by riverine trade and, in Onitsha's case, by a remembered connection with Benin.[13] Arochukwu built a commercial-religious hierarchy around the Eze Aro and the oracle at Ibini Ukpabi.[14] In the southern Igbo country, including parts of the Ihiala axis, localized titles such as Oluoha show that coordinated leadership could grow inside Igbo cultural assumptions rather than against them.[15] These cases do not make Igboland a land of kings. They make it a land of experiments. Uli is one experiment that the literature has barely noticed.

Two theoretical habits help to keep the experiment in view. Segmentary lineage theory still explains how Uli's villages, kindreds, and age grades checked one another and the Oluoha himself. Historical particularism, the older Boasian insistence that each society be understood in its own sequence rather than slotted into a universal stage, warns against treating Uli as a failed state or a delayed copy of Nri.[16] Read together, the two approaches allow the Oluoha to appear as what the oral record says it was: a creative adaptation, not an anomaly and not a betrayal of Igbo values.

Uli in Place and Time

Geography is not destiny, but it is rarely innocent. Uli sits in the rainforest–savanna transition of the Igbo heartland, bounded by Amaofuo, Ihiala, Amorka, Ubulu, Ozara, Egbuoma, and Ohakpu. Westward the land runs to the meeting of the Atamiri and Enyinja, waters associated with Amorka, and then across the Usham toward the lower Niger.[17] The soils took yam, cassava, maize, and the oil palm. Streams and small lakes supplied fish and, more importantly, routes. Produce moved out; salt, dried fish, and later European goods moved in. Surplus invited coordination. Open paths invited raids. Both conditions favored someone who could summon labor, settle disputes over farmland, and call out young men when the paths were no longer safe.

Origin stories in Uli, as in much of Igboland, are genealogical rather than cartographic. They fasten pioneer settlers to shrines and to the first public offices. By the mid-fifteenth century, according to the traditions collected for this study, population and neighborhood pressure had grown sharp enough to institutionalize kingship. Ogbu emerged as first Oluoha and Ezeala, a double title that made him coordinator of men and custodian of *Ala*.[18] The sacred half of the office mattered. In a world where the earth punished blood-guilt and rewarded just dealing, a ruler who spoke for

the land possessed a sanction that no assembly vote could easily cancel.

None of this erased the older furniture of Igbo public life. Kindreds remained the first court of belonging. Age grades still cleared paths, fought, and buried the dead. Title societies still turned wealth into honor. Village assemblies still argued. The Oluoha was laid on top of these things, not in place of them.[19] That layering is the political fact that the acephalous model, in its stricter versions, has no room for. It is also the fact that made the institution durable. A king who needed the age grades to fight and the titled men to crown him could not become a stranger to his own town.

The reconstruction that follows rests first on interviews with elders, priests, farmers, titled men, and other custodians of memory in Uli and nearby settlements, conducted between December 2025 and July 2026. It draws as well on Ben Olisaemeka's unpublished compilation *Uli Ancient Kingship* and on Gilbert Chude Okonkwo's printed local history.[20] Colonial paper, especially the 1912 intelligence report on Ihiala District held at the National Archives, Enugu, supplies an outside check at the moment the old order met the new.[21] Memory is partial; so are files. Where the accounts converge—on the sequence of rulers, the identity of kingmakers, the character of coronation, the split under warrant rule—the tradition is treated as historically usable. Where they color a reign with later pride or later grievance, the coloring is noted rather than laundered away.

Coronation, Office, and the Hybrid Constitution

The Oluoha was made, not merely born. Kingmakers—titled men whose offices were themselves hereditary or tightly held—selected a candidate. He went into seclusion for cleansing, then moved from shrine to shrine with sacrifices, commonly white animals, offered to ancestors and to the deities of the land. Investiture placed in his hands the *ofo* of justice, beaded marks of rank, and the ivory trumpet that announced him. Oaths, drums, masquerades, and several days of feeding followed. Neighboring communities came. The feast was politics by other means: it bound the new man to the living, the dead, and the towns that would have to live with him.[22]

The sequence of crowning is itself a constitution. Utughutu, also called Obieze, crowned Nnachi; Ogbunanwa (Ogwogiri) crowned Otikpo; Ebughieme crowned Anuebunwa; Udejimba crowned Onyemazu; Nkpume crowned Izuogu; Uchenwoke (Oti) crowned Okwereogu; Ihemenammadu crowned Ukoha; Atuokwu crowned Ezenobi; Obikauna crowned Udogu.[23] No single lineage monopolized the making of kings. The distribution of that privilege among named houses is one of the checks that kept the Oluoha from becoming an autocrat. Another check was the continued vitality of the assemblies and the *ozo* men. A third was the spiritual condition of the office. An Oluoha who offended *Ala* endangered the yams. That was not a metaphor that farmers took lightly.

Functions clustered in five areas. The Oluoha coordinated agriculture at the level of calendar and festival, most visibly in *Iwa Ji*, the New Yam Festival, and in the appointment of shrine priests. He spoke in disputes that outgrew the kindred, especially those touching inheritance, marriage, and boundaries. He summoned age grades for path-clearing, market work, and war. He received strangers—migrants, traders, later missionaries—and decided, with his council, how far they might settle. He was, finally, the public face of the town's dealings with its neighbors, whether by covenant, marriage, or arms. None of these tasks required him to abolish the republic beneath him. They required him to stand where the republic, left to itself, moved too slowly.

Ten Reigns

What follows is not a chronicle in the European sense. Dates before the late nineteenth century are approximate, and achievements attributed to a named Oluoha sometimes gather the work of a generation under one remembered face. The sequence itself, however, is stable across informants, and it is a pre-colonial sequence. Ogbu through Udogu reigned under the old constitution of Uli, before the white man settled a rest house in the town and began to rule it. The texture of each reign—what the town chose to remember—is evidence of a kind. Institutions live in the stories told about the men who held them.

Ogbu stands at the beginning as founder and, in some tellings, as a titular name that older proto-Uli figures had already borne before the Ogbu Obieze who matters for the kingship.[24] He is remembered as the maker of covenants: Ogbu-Egwe, Ogbu-Nnachi, Ogbu-Ebem Teghete. He kept the land. He is also remembered as a war leader. In the first conflict with Ihiala he had his men painted in the bold black designs that later gave the town its name. The saying *Uli egbu ataji*—Uli kills and leaves the victim dyed black—preserves the terror of that device. Uri, the body art, became Uli, the place.[25] After the fighting he called Nnachi into a covenant of life. He set the ritual calendar, instituted *Iwa Ji*, and placed priests over Ihuala, Urasi, and Atamiri. Diplomacy did the work that numbers could not yet do: marriages, exchanged titles, recognized boundaries. Then he did something that the traditions treat as the key to the whole constitution. He is credited with the saying *Agam aburu eze buru aguruchi*—"Shall I be both king and kingmaker?"—and with acting on it. He ceded the kingship proper to Nnachi's line and kept the making of kings in his own house. The firstborn of Ogbu still bears the title Ezeala Ogbu.[26] Founders who refuse to hoard both the

crown and the right to confer it are rare in any literature. The story may have been polished in the telling. Even as a polished story it tells us what Uli thought a legitimate order required: a king, and someone other than the king to make him.

Nnachi, crowned by Utughutu/Obieze, inherited the covenants and spent his reign thickening them. He enlarged groves, founded shrines, and drew the *ozo* title more tightly into the moral life of the town, so that advancement still rewarded achievement but now also policed ritual standard.[27] Border trouble with neighbors was handled, the traditions say, by talk, oath, and alliance as often as by force. Inheritance custom was clarified as the population grew and land began to feel the pressure. Diplomatic marriages and the exchange of protective titles tied Uli into a regional web of recognition.[28] If Ogbu invented the office, Nnachi made it look like a government rather than a personal following.

Otikpo, crowned by Ogbunanwa/Ogwogiri, is the infrastructure king in local memory. Footpaths that had been seasonal tracks were widened and kept. Markets were given shape and a place. Age grades were set on a rota for path-clearing, a humble reform that made trade less of a gamble in the rains and bound young men to a public rhythm.[29] The same grades, more tightly organized, patrolled the new corridors. Otikpo's reign is a reminder that centralization in a forest town often looks like a better road and a watched market, not like a palace guard.[30]

Anuebunwa, crowned by Ebughieme, is remembered for law. Custom touching inheritance and marriage was restated, and a trusted elder with a trained memory was appointed to recite the town's rules when disputes arose—an oral chancellor in a society that did not write.[31] In his time a group of migrants from the Benin direction arrived. Anuebunwa received them, heard their ways of judging and of showing respect to a ruler, and took what would travel. The borrowings were selective: how a grave case might be heard, how the Oluoha might be approached in assembly. They were not a wholesale Beninization of Uli. Communal labor on farmlands, encouraged in the same reign, raised output and eased the lean months.[32] The episode matters for the larger argument. Uli's kingship was not a sealed inheritance from a single Igbo template. It learned, and it chose what to keep.

Onyemazu, crowned by Udejimba, turned the town toward the rivers. Pacts with riverine partners moved yams and palm goods against salt and dried fish. Trade thickened along the Ucham and Agbo. The same routes drew marauders, and Onyemazu fought them.[33] He also received smiths and weavers and let them settle. Better hoes and cloth are not the usual stuff of king lists; they are the stuff of a polity that understood prosperity as a public concern. Self-sufficiency and a more interesting market were two sides of one policy.

Izuogu, crowned by Nkpume, is the defense-and-ritual Oluoha. Patrols on the trade paths were coordinated rather than left to whichever grade happened to be nearest. At Akaba Uli young men were drilled in wrestling and in the use of weapons, company by company.[34] Cleansing rites performed in his name extended Uli's reputation as a place that could lift spiritual affliction as well as fight. He is also credited with the second war against Ihiala, a contest remembered as a settlement of boundaries and a demonstration that the town could still field a force.[35]

Okwereogu, crowned by Uchenwoke/Oti, patronized festivals, masquerades, and the recitation of the past. He pushed improvements in the storage of yam and grain. He also encouraged polygyny on frankly political grounds: more wives meant more farm hands and more sons who could fight. Households of eight, ten, even twelve wives are recalled among prominent men; four wives settled, over time, as a respectable mark for the titled.[36] He brought the Odi Ike dance into coronations and major title-taking. He appointed *Ndi Ule*, elders charged to inspect marriages and *ozo* initiations so that eligibility and ritual purity did not become a private affair. Culture, in this reign, was not ornament. It was a way of keeping standards public.

Ukoha, crowned by Ihemenammadu, administered. Market rules were sharpened and modest tolls collected on goods in transit; the proceeds went to paths, markets, and shrines.[37] The palm economy received particular care: more trees planted, tappers encouraged, raw material supplied to basket makers and other craftsmen. Dibias were grouped by specialty and invited to show their medicines in the markets. Harmful practice was punished; protective charms for warriors were commissioned. Later travelling mendicant doctors are said to have taken their cue from arrangements made in this period. Through it all Ukoha strengthened the council of elders, a move the traditions present as prudence rather than weakness. Revenue and ritual, in other words, were not allowed to gather in one pair of hands.

Ezenobi, crowned by Atuokwu, is the last Oluoha whose reign can still be told as a story of indigenous sovereignty. He multiplied *Ala* shrines and pressed the ritual case for restraint in the use of forest and water. He mediated between towns. Then the Europeans arrived. Oral tradition and a colonial paper trail both insist that Uli did not receive them quietly. Ezenobi is remembered for resistance to a first and a second attack. In the first encounter, captured white men were, according to the local account, put to a severe traditional death, their heads later displayed

at his *iba*. Ihiala forwarded a version of the incident to officers at Onitsha. The fighting that followed is recalled as *Agha Ulumba* or *Oyibo Ihiala*. For some four months Uli men waged irregular war—ambush, surprise, withdrawal—under Ezenobi's name.[38] The details of the punishment cannot be independently verified at this distance, and they carry the heat of later telling. What can be said with more confidence is that Uli entered the colonial archive as a town that had fought, and that the Oluoha was the figure around whom that fighting was remembered.

Udogu, crowned by Obikauna, was the tenth Oluoha and the last to hold the office under the old indigenous order. His installation belongs to that pre-colonial line, not to the warrant list the British later compiled. When the white man finally came into Uli in force, Udogu was already Oluoha. Between about 1890 and 1910 he received the first Christian missionaries. In time the town passed under colonial administration. The British then cut Uli in two and converted the sitting king: Udogu was made warrant chief over one section; Okorie Akuaraa of Umuoma was given the other.[39] Jurisdictional lines above the town shifted as well. In 1910 Udogu granted a central site for a rest house, the building that marked Uli's arrival on the administrative map.[40] The conversion of the tenth Oluoha into a warrant chief is the hinge of the whole colonial story. It is also the strongest argument against the claim that Igbo kingship in Uli was a colonial fiction. A man cannot be converted into an office that did not already exist. Accommodation of this kind is easy to moralize after the fact. Read from inside the reign, it looks like the last act of a hybrid office: the same pragmatism that had once received Benin migrants and river traders now calculated that open war would not save the kingship, and that a warrant, however diminished, might.

Uli among Other Igbo Polities

Set beside Nri, Uli looks earthbound. The Eze Nri claimed a ritual reach that crossed many settlements and needed no garrison; Uli's sacred authority was real but local, tied to particular groves, particular rivers, and the yams of one territory.[41] Set beside Onitsha or Oguta, Uli looks inland. Those *obi* kingships drank from the Niger trade and from courtly habits that had travelled up the water. Uli's hybridity was homegrown: palm and path, age grade and shrine, with only occasional borrowings from the west.[42] Set beside Arochukwu, Uli looks uncommercial in the imperial sense. The Aro built an oracle-centered network that moved people and goods over long distances. Uli fought river thieves and collected modest tolls. It did not project power far from its own farms.

The closer comparison is with the southern Igbo towns of the Ihiala country, where *ozo* titles ran strong, earth priests mattered, and paramountcies of limited radius appeared without anyone announcing a revolution in Igbo political thought.[43] Uli went further than some of those neighbors toward a named, continuous kingship. The reasons already suggested—ecology, trade corridors, demographic pressure, ritual invention, and the particular decisions of Ogbu and those who followed him—do not form a law. They form a cluster. Other towns in similar country did not make an Oluoha. That is the point of particularism. Conditions make some paths thinkable; they do not walk them.

What the comparison dissolves is the old binary. Igbo communities were not either stateless or failed copies of states. They were workshops. They kept the republican tools that worked and, where coordination paid, they added an office that could summon, judge, and bless. Uli is simply one workshop whose tools have been left in the corner of the literature.

Colonial Partition and the Afterlife of an Office

The rest house of 1910 was a small building and a large fact. It planted administration inside the town and made Uli visible to men who thought in districts, warrants, and files.[44] The warrant-chief system then did what it did across Igboland: it mistook a coordinator for a sovereign, then multiplied the mistake by cutting the coordinator's territory in two. What matters for Uli is the direction of the change. The British did not look around an acephalous town and invent a chief. They found the tenth Oluoha already on the stool and turned him into a warrant chief. Udogu and Okorie Akuaraa were not co-kings in any indigenous sense. They were convenient hinges for a foreign machine.[45]

Justice and land, once argued in the Oluoha's hearing and in the assemblies, moved toward colonial courts. The spiritual half of the Ezeala title proved harder to confiscate. A man who still stood for *Ala* could be ignored in a district office and still matter at a funeral or a boundary oath. Later reforms, and the cultural revivals of the independence decades, gave the title rooms in which to breathe again, chiefly in dispute settlement and in the public performance of heritage. Continuity of that sort is not the same as the continuity of the fifteenth-century office. It is evidence, even so, that the institution had sunk roots deeper than a warrant could pull.[46]

Uli's colonial passage is therefore neither a simple killing nor a simple survival. It is the familiar Igbo story of an indigenous arrangement forced through a bureaucratic sieve and coming out altered, diminished, and still named. The acephalous thesis has sometimes treated warrant chiefs as proof that Igbo kingship was a colonial fiction. Uli will not support that reading. Ten Oluohas reigned before the white man governed the town. The tenth of them, Udogu, was then converted into a warrant chief. Colonialism did not invent the Oluoha. It found him, halved his territory, and renamed him.

Conclusion

The ancient Uli kingdom will not rewrite the political map of Igboland. Most Igbo communities did not develop a continuous kingship of this kind, and the republican habits that Afigbo and others described remain the best first approximation for a great part of the region. What Uli does is to make the approximation answerable to a local archive. That archive—oral, uneven, stubbornly detailed—shows an office created in the mid-fifteenth century and carried through ten Oluohas who reigned before the white man came to govern Uli. Those men were balanced by kingmakers and by the older machinery of assembly and title. They exercised authority in agriculture, trade, justice, war, and the care of the land. Only after that long indigenous run did colonial partition arrive, and only then was the tenth Oluoha, Udogu, converted into a warrant chief.

Several conclusions follow, none of them spectacular, all of them inconvenient for a flat acephalous story. First, centralized leadership in Igboland was not confined to Nri, the riverine *obi* towns, and Arochukwu. It could grow in an inland farming community without a famous oracle or a great river port. Second, such leadership did not require the destruction of Igbo republican practice. The Oluoha was a layer, not a replacement. Third, oral king lists, handled with ordinary historical caution, can carry institutional time-depth that colonial documents, which arrive late and interested, cannot supply by themselves. Fourth, the drivers of centralization were mixed and local: soil and stream, fear of raids, the prestige of *Ala*, the ambitions and restraints of particular men. There is no single Igbo road to kingship, and there was no Igbo law against taking one.

The wider implication is historiographical. African political forms have for too long been asked to sit on one side or the other of a state/stateless line drawn in 1940. Many of them, Uli included, lived across that line. They invented hybrids because hybrids worked. To recover those inventions is not an exercise in local piety, though piety has its place. It is a way of making Igbo history as various as Igbo communities actually were. The Oluoha of Uli, crowned by men who were not himself, consulting assemblies he did not abolish, fighting when he had to and yielding when he calculated he must, is one such variety. He ought to be in the literature. He has been in Uli all along.

Endnotes

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5. The principal unpublished local compilation is Olisaemeka, *Uli Ancient Kingship*. The printed local history is Okonkwo, *Uli History*. Colonial documentation begins in earnest with National Archives Enugu, CSE 1/1/10, "Intelligence Report on Ihiala District," 1912.
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20. Olisaemeka, *Uli Ancient Kingship*; Okonkwo, *Uli History*. Additional interviews include Ethelbert Onwuka, farmer, Umuagbuchi, May 15, 2026, and Monday Ihebilie, priest, Umuaku, May 15, 2026.
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23. Olisaemeka, *Uli Ancient Kingship*, 5–6; Ikeabanihe, interview.
24. Ignatius Ofordum, interview; Monday Ihebilie, interview.
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27. Olisaemeka, *Uli Ancient Kingship*, 43.
28. Ihebilie, interview.
29. Olisaemeka, *Uli Ancient Kingship*, 44.
30. Ofordum, interview.
31. Ihebilie, interview.
32. Ezejekwe Onyema, retired teacher, interview with the author, Umuaku, March 19, 2026.
33. Olisaemeka, *Uli Ancient Kingship*, 44.
34. Damian Ikeabanihe, interview. The given name appears in field notes as both Demian and Damian; the same informant is intended.
35. Ikeabanihe, interview.
36. Ethelbert Onwuka, interview.
37. Madukazor, interview.
38. National Archives Enugu, CSE 1/1/10, "Intelligence Report on Ihiala District," 1912. Local naming of the conflict as *Agha Ulumba* or *Oyibo Ihiala* is consistent across interviews with Onwuka and Ohajianya.
39. Okonkwo, *Uli History*, 123; Ethelbert Onwuka, interview.
40. Okonkwo, *Uli History*, 111.

41. Onwuejeogwu, *An Igbo Civilization*, 67–89.
42. Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 28–30, 78–82.
43. Reuben Azudiugwu, electrical engineer, interview with the author, Onitsha, June 1, 2026.
44. Okonkwo, *Uli History*, 111.
45. Ethelbert Onwuka, interview; Okonkwo, *Uli History*, 123.
46. Okonkwo, *Uli History*, 126.