**Background of Study**

Aninri is one of the seventeen local Government areas in Enugu State. It has its administrative headquarters located in Ndeaboh and it is located on latitude 6.03°N and on longitude 7.35°E on the Nigeria map. During the colonial period, all the communities that make up Aninri today were under Awgu Division – a creation of the British for administrative convenience.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Following the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, British interest in the Niger district protectorate was globally recognized. Igboland and indeed other parts of the African continent became part of the British Empire when the London Gazette announced that her Britannic Majesty had taken the so-called ‘Niger Districts’ under her ‘gracious protection’.[[2]](#endnote-2) This is because geographically, Igboland lay more or less at the centre of the Niger District. However, the actual move to occupy Igboland did not begin until the 20th century[[3]](#endnote-3) and in Aninri, effective occupation did not begin until 1907 when the first British patrol visited the area then under Awgu Division.[[4]](#endnote-4) Although, the successful bombardment of Aro and its oracle in 1902 helped to open up Igbo hinterland to the British, the expedition did little or nothing to bring the Aninri people to surrender to the imperialists. The eventual conquest of Aninri communities by the British came after series of punitive wars aimed at subjugating the people.

The people of Aninri were threatened by the twentieth century British encroachment which caused them to respond accordingly. Aninri response to the British assault varied from place to place and from community to community. It has been noted that between 1907 and 1919 virtually all the village groups in former Awgu Division had been “visited” by the British forces stationed at both Udi and Okigwe garrisons.[[5]](#endnote-5) The aim of the so-called ‘visit’ was to entrench the presence of the British in the area. The forceful penetration of the British threw the people of Aninri into confusion, suspicion and resistance. This move of subjugation notwithstanding, the people of Aninri reacted and resisted every perceived attempt by the Whiteman to colonize them. In doing this, Aninri people employed various patterns of resistance against the British. No one pattern was really used consistently rather, the people applied a particular strategy depending on the peculiar situation they found themselves. They were those that responded through open military confrontation, those that sought metaphysical intervention and those that adopted none-violent civil disobedience.[[6]](#endnote-6) The resistance continued in full scale until 1919 when it was overpowered due to the British superior military power.

**Aims and Objectives/Purpose of Study**

This research is motivated by the desire to analyze the distinctiveness of resistance among the various communities in Aninri that came in contact with the British during colonialism. This is because the war of resistance was not fought on a common front but each community in Aninri fought against the British to keep their sovereignty. Thus, each community used the most effective way to prosecute the war. This work also argues that contrary to the assertion by some scholars that the British used treaties to bring Igboland under its rule, the people of Aninri were rather coerced through war in order to be brought under British rule. Furthermore, this work seeks to show the gravity of resistance manifested by various Aninri communities in the face of British invasion. Suffice to state here that in more than one way, the present work seeks to bring to light the untold stories of indigenous resistance to British rule in Aninri.

**Scope of Study**

The choice of 1907 as a starting date for this research is informed by the fact that it was the year British colonial troops first put their boots on Aninri soil. Although this was not the actual conquest mission but it was all the same to serve as the prelude to the imminent conquest and colonization of the people. By placing their boots on Aninri soil, the stage was set for indigenous authority to be compromised by the military might of the British. The year 1960 was also chosen as the terminal date because it was the year Nigeria was officially granted independence and Aninri officially ceased to be part of the British colony. More so, until 1960 the Anglo-Aninri relation was characterized by acrimony, distrust and intermittent warfare. This research mainly covers those communities that make up the present day Aninri local Government Area as at the time of colonial rule. More so, the name Aninri which literary means “land of food” only refers to the Area where the villages of Oduma, Nenwe, Ndeaboh, Okpanku and Mpu are located; these communities where formerly under the Old Awgu Division in Onitsha Province.

**Methodology**

A qualitative methodology which is based on narrative description was also adopted in this work. The aim is to examine and inquire into the content of various interviews, reports, records and oral histories that form the bedrock of the colonial history of Aninri people. The theme of this work follows a symmetrical pattern- it begins with the geographical location of the people, through the nature and pattern of resistance against British and ends with the eventual eclipse of British rule in 1960. Various research activities will be employed in this work like interviews and archival explorations as well as consulting full length books. The study population consists of the Igbo speaking people of Aninri. Indigenes from the five communities will be interviewed in Igbo, English and perhaps the combination of both as deemed fit.

**Expected Outcome**

This research will serve as a source material to future researchers in this area of Igbo history. More so, as a historical Endeavour, this work will bring about a modest growth in Igbo studies. It is also expected to project a better image of the people of Aninri; and would serve as a welcome addition to the existing literature on the colonial history of Igboland. This work will be of help to students who may wish to carry out further investigations into the untold stories of colonial rule in Igboland. This work is also significant because it is both a fresh interpretation and indigenous explanation of Aninri history.

**Endnotes**

1. C. C. Uwakwe, “Aninri under British Colonial Rule, 1907-1960. *M.A Thesis, History and International studies, University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2015, 1.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. A. E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture,* (Nsukka: University Press Ltd, 1981), 284. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. A. E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History*. . . [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. C. C. Uwakwe, “Aninri under British Colonial Rule… [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. N. A. E. EP. 9616. C.S.E. 1/85/4896, Intelligence Report on the people of Lenwe, Awgu Division by V. K. Johnson (ADO), 1932. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. L. O. Okoye, “Awgu and the British, 1907-1960: A Study in Indigenous Resistance”, *M.A Thesis, History and International Studies, University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1997,* 47-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)