# Introduction

B ETWEEN 1750 and 1920, the Igbo peoples of southeastern Nigeria in the historic Bight of Biafra region reconciled their local traditions, gender ideologies, sociopolitical systems, commercial networks, and knowledge systems with the successive Atlantic political economies of the slave trade, "legitimate trade" (or slavery-driven cash crop production), and colonialism in pursuit of individual sociopolitical advancement. The Atlanticization of indigenous political economies (channeling the political and economic forces of the Atlantic world through local institutions) transformed gender identities and regimes, most evident in the emergence of extractive and often violent forms of hegemonic masculinity (*ufiem*).[1] By masculinizing key sociopolitical institutions, Atlanticization enabled men to gradually gain power over women, ushering a shift from precolonial female sociopolitical superiority to male political and economic dominance in the colonial period. The evolving gender regimes, which epitomized hegemonic masculinities, in turn defined how the region participated in Atlantic modes of production and consumption. Lastly, this gendered Atlanticization molded the experiences of Biafra's homeland populations and its diaspora.

More than any other Igbo subethnic group, the Ohafia-Igbo people of the intracoastal Cross River frontier memorialize oral and performative traditions depicting the Bight of Biafra's gendered Atlanticization. Ohafia-Igbo traditions use the dynamic idiom of "cutting a head" (*igbu isi*) to express how African peoples in the region indigenized broad changes in the Atlantic world through shifting local articulations of ufiem. Thus, before the Atlantic slave trade began in force in the 1750s, men accomplished ufiem when they went to war and returned with human head trophies. Retaliatory headhunting had developed among various Bight of Biafra Cross River migrant communities jostling for

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territory in the seventeenth century. Ufiem evolved from male-centered military practices, the complementary male sphere of a dual-sex political economy within which women were agrarian breadwinners and politically superior. Warrior ufiem did not originally grant men direct economic and political power over women. Rather, it guaranteed adult masculinity, security of wealth and life, and usufruct rights over male individuals who had failed to cut a head (or its equivalent) and were consequently categorized as *ujo* (degendered and socially alienated). The ujo suffered enslavement, dispossession, inability to marry, and public ridicule. Alternative institutions of masculinity such as yam cultivation, *dibia* (divination/spirit mediumship), and secret societies would become subordinate to the hegemony of warrior ufiem. Before the 1750s especially, ufiem was a form of distinction among men, and only possible to the extent that matriliny and complementary feminine power and institutions allowed.

However, in the course of the region's Atlantic slave trade between 1750 and 1840, slave captives came to symbolize "heads" (*isi*) cut by warriors to attain ufiem. Men's dominant role in military slave production vested them with a new form of private wealth, which few women possessed. As women came to constitute the majority of those enslaved for domestic purposes in Igboland, the inherent value of the slave as both a symbolic head and alienable property sowed the seed for the gradual perception of wealth as a masculine achievement, inaugurating men's supersession of women as breadwinners. At the same time, male military slave production introduced new political and religious traditions that reified the preexisting dual-sex sociopolitical system.

From the 1840s, as the "legitimate trade" cohered with and facilitated an expanding domestic and sexual slavery system, seemingly disparate forms of property became equated with prestige heads. These heads that warrior-merchants appropriated to achieve ufiem ranged from yams (*Dioscorea* sp.) to plantations, slaves, wives, guns, kerosene lanterns, fez caps, glass beads, and European textiles. This cadre of emergent male elites used the domestication of violence, especially in the form of female captivity (*ike nwami*), to secure their power over women and other dependents.[2] Ohafia-Igbo society elaborately celebrated men and women rich in cross-Atlantic commodities for having performed hegemonic *ogaranya* (wealth/wealthy person) masculinity. As a new form of ufiem, ogaranya hegemony stemmed from

the capacity of wealthy individuals to usurp the political authority of male and female traditional institutions. This revolutionary translation of economic power into patriarchal political advantage set the stage for the indigenization of British colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century.

In many ways, British colonial rule was a patriarchal assault. It replaced indigenous dual-sex political organizations with masculinist political institutions and propagated androcentric religious and education policies that produced modern wage-earning men and domesticated women. Men predominated the nascent colonial ogaranya elite, filling the ranks of warrant chiefs, teachers, pastors, clerks, interpreters, and accountants. In a dramatic reconfiguration of ufiem, academic certificates, modern two-story houses, automobiles, and money came to symbolize heads that conferred ufiem privileges on men. To understand the social workings of colonial state power within African communities, it is less useful to examine colonial state structure and more useful to analyze how African bureaucrats mobilized the colonial state as well as traditional institutions and ideologies to assert their will over others, including preexisting traditional authority holders. Kalu Ezelu (1865–1968), who rose from slavery to warrant chief status, provides a clear picture of this nascent colonial male hegemony. The case studies of Kalu and Udensi Ekea (1820–1890) before him show how Biafra's gender revolution entailed not only the structural marginalization of women but also the emergence of hitherto marginalized males, often ex-slaves, into dominant sociopolitical positions, as well as the subordination of male (and female) elders. Women contested this erosion of power through gender-dissident yam cultivation (deemed a male prerogative), long-distance trade, divination/spirit mediumship, slave ownership, matronship, and the practice of female husbandhood. In so doing, they demonstrated extraordinary wealth and exercised superordinate political power as ogaranya.

Ufiem was a historical motif for domesticating Atlantic political economies, signified through successive heads, through discriminatory and cognitive practices of public dressing (of ufiem) and undressing (of ujo), and through legitimizing social performances (such as the Ohafia war dance), to name a few. Thus, ufiem was generated through performance—what Pierre Bourdieu calls a *habitus*, or what Paulla Ebron describes as "a stylized repetition of acts" (such as military slaving)

or discourses (such as the idiom of cutting a head).[3] Ohafia men and women transformed existing sociopolitical institutions and adapted new ones such as age-grades, secret societies, unilineal systems, divination guilds, schools, churches, colonial political offices, and wage labor to perform dynamic forms of ufiem during the Atlantic Age. Although hegemonic masculinity entailed power politics, ufiem was neither merely patriarchy nor an exclusively male pursuit. Women helped "make men" (through agrarian production that released male labor) and helped define ufiem (through military rituals, celebration of warriors, and discrimination of ujo). More importantly, Ufiem was a social representation of self-advancement and power over others. These "others" changed over time, from only other local men (before and during the slave trade) to other men and women (during legitimate trade and colonialism). The social meanings of ufiem varied over time depending on the sex, age, religion, and sociopolitical status of the performing individual.

Some women performed ufiem. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, female ufiem performance required going to war or participating in slave raids. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, female ufiem meant ogaranya masculinity. Overall, in performing ufiem, women did not become male. Rather, their communities perceived them as superiors over others, including men and women. Society celebrated such ufiem individuals using cognitively masculine material culture and symbols, but the social and political privileges such individuals obtained were not biologically or anatomically male-sex based. Hence, masculinity must be detached from biological sex and studied as a nexus of power politics. Writing a history of ufiem requires bringing the literature on women's sociopolitical power in West Africa into a direct conversation with the nascent field of African masculinity studies. It means that we cannot assume the timeless existence of patriarchy against which women subsequently rebelled. Historicizing ufiem reveals that constructing individual identities for political purposes was an immediate necessity in Atlantic Age West Africa, where the domestication of Atlantic economies transformed the social meanings of boyhood, girlhood, motherhood, fatherhood, sexuality, leisure, work, and domesticity. Sex-distinctive socialization practices, marriage, inheritance, status and wealth symbolization, and social belonging pivoted on changing notions of ufiem among the Ohafia-Igbo.[4] Men

and women of differing economic, religious, and political positions directly and indirectly contributed to these dynamic ufiem conceptions. Slaves and slavers, diviners, hunters, yam farmers, blacksmiths, legitimate traders, rulers, converts, and colonial agents—male and female—espoused ufiem in dynamic, conflicting, subversive, and conciliatory ways. Consequently, individual negotiation of social mobility defined the introduction, adaptation, and gendered uses of sociopolitical institutions in the region.

## GENDERED ATLANTICIZATION: SLAVERY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN WEST AFRICA

The Ohafia-Igbo logic of Atlanticization revises chronological conceptions of gender inequalities in West African history, as well as the dominant understanding of the Atlantic slave trade and European imperialism. Atlanticization illuminates how changes in gender identities and regimes in the Bight of Biafra resulted from the intersection of diverse local and external political economies over a 170-year period. Historian Toby Green best describes the process of Atlanticization as preexisting African cultural and economic "patterns" that helped shape the formation of the Atlantic, while becoming radically transformed, as African communities sought to sustain themselves, build alliances, and restructure their societies. Thus, Africa emerges as a place where Atlantic exchanges produced deep historical transformations that were the result not just of European imposition, but of the internal dynamics of African societies as well.[5] *Emergent Masculinities* centers gender in understanding such internal dynamics and patterns. It demonstrates how a cis-Atlantic perspective of the Bight of Biafra's eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century political economies, especially as evident in transformations in social practice and cultural meaning, improves understandings of African slavery, gender, and kinship.

Atlantic history examines the development of political, economic, sociocultural, and demographic networks and exchanges between the peoples bordering the Atlantic Ocean. *Emergent Masculinities* delineates the gendered permutations of these Atlantic networks and exchanges in one African region. Recently, Africanist scholars have sought to reorient Atlantic history as more than a European invention by centering Africans as active agents in circum-Atlantic, transatlantic, and cis-Atlantic historical frameworks. They emphasize the importance

of African culture and systems of knowledge in Atlantic modes of production, exchange, consumption or appropriation, and identity formation. African cultural production was central to contesting European imperial power around the Atlantic rim, and it is pertinent to understanding the emergence of the intellectual world of the modern Atlantic. Hence, Africanists privilege "microhistories" of individuals and local institutions to understand the agency of Africans in articulating larger Atlantic influences within local and diaspora milieus. By placing African and African-descended peoples at the center, Afro-Atlanticists have also sought to extend the thick web of coastal Atlantic Ocean relationships into the West and Central African hinterlands, and beyond the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into the twentieth century.[6]

These perspectives inform the approaches taken in *Emergent Masculinities*, which traces the early modern development of a social identity—ufiem—that served as a palimpsest of Ohafia-Igbo adaptation to rapid sociopolitical transformation during the Atlantic Age. The various Atlanticized iterations of ufiem were rooted in preexisting historical practices and ideologies. Through dynamic ufiem performances, African women and men diffused Atlantic political economies into domestic, social, and political spheres of life. For example, ufiem performance defined Ohafia-Igbo military slave production between 1750 and 1840, which significantly shaped the gender and age structure of the Bight of Biafra's Atlantic slave trade. In places such as Jamaica, Biafran ufiem practices sustained new sexual slavery practices. And within the Biafra region, ufiem transformed slavery into a predominantly female condition. Ufiem performance inaugurated new consumption practices, especially new sartorial regimes that shaped Biafra's preferences for British-supplied textiles, thereby reinforcing the political economy of eighteenth-century British control of the region's slave traffic. Ufiem performance, which by the nineteenth century mainly manifested in the form of ogaranya masculinity, shaped gendered participation in, and control of, the palm produce trade. It also defined the domestication of twentieth-century colonialism. In effect, this Africanist view of the Atlantic Age demands a theorization of the Atlantic system in cis-Atlantic terms.

Some scholars have come to see gender as a fundamental element of African cultural change during the Atlantic Age, in a process whereby Atlantic and local economies became mutually constitutive.[7]

In his study *Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, Ugo Nwokeji argues that the Atlantic slave trade shaped the development of Aro culture and social identity, whereas local conceptions of gender structured Biafra's slave trade.[8] Walter Hawthorne has shown that the sex-distinctive character of Balanta sociopolitical institutions, which shaped the gender and age demography of their external slave trade and domestic slave use, defined adaptation to the Atlantic slave trade in Senegambia.[9] Mariana Candido argues that the Atlantic slave trade rewrote African identities in the slaving domains of the Benguela hinterlands in the Central African region, where women were "key historical agents" in the slave trade, and intermediaries and purveyors of knowledge and culture in Portuguese colonial society.[10]

But beyond the slave trade, the impact of the collective Atlantic modes of production, exchange, and consumption (from slavery to colonialism) on shifts in African gender regimes, as well as on changing notions of masculinity and femininity, has received limited attention. For instance, scholars of Igbo history have identified twentieth-century colonialism as the decisive moment when Igbo women's political power and social privileges witnessed unassailable assault as men emerged in dominant positions of sociopolitical power.[11] But, by treating gender-based sociopolitical changes during the era of the Atlantic slave trade and European colonialism as two unrelated historical processes, it has not been possible to generate a holistic picture of the gendered character of sociopolitical change during the Atlantic Age. This requires linking broad changes in gender construction with changes in economic and political power, and collapsing the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century histories of the Bight of Biafra region into a singular Atlantic Age. The logic for such Atlanticization of the region's history is what John Oriji has called a diachronic approach to African history: accounting for the role of both internal factors such as demographic movements and intergroup relations, and external factors like Atlantic economies to understand sociopolitical transformations in the *longue durée*. Such an approach is critical of the ethnographic present, positing historical change as a result of the interplay between the structural complexity and stratification of African societies on the one hand, and the dynamic politics of individual achievement on the other.[12] It is particularly essential for studying the history of frontier societies, whose commercial and military activities generated zones of

cultural exchange, new commercial hubs, demographic displacements, and intraregional diasporas, as well as protean cultural identities.[13]

From a world systems perspective, the economic systems of the Atlantic slave trade (ca. 1750–1840), "legitimate trade" (1840–90), and colonialism (1890–1960) were distinctive mechanisms of African labor and resource mobilization for Euro-American capitalists.[14] From a West African perspective, Atlanticization entailed continuities and ruptures, including sustained engagement with transatlantic markets and metropoles as sources of gendering commodities; expansion of intraregional trade, kinship networks, and military systems in ways that facilitated gendered redistribution of power; and a revolution in gender regimes. Historian Ade Ajayi understood the importance of such a *longue durée* conception of sociopolitical change in West Africa when he argued, "Colonialism must be seen not as a complete departure from the African past, but as one episode in the continuous flow of African history."[15] Recently Emily Osborn concluded, "Research on colonialism that does not adequately explore the precolonial context cannot unearth the full implications of colonial rule or the meanings it acquired for colonial subjects."[16] Represented in Ohafia-Igbo as the "Heroic Age," the Atlantic Age was an era of dynamic mechanisms of production, buttressed by continuities and transformations in gendered personhood. It was an age punctuated with transitions between times when men cut heads in battle, when men captured slaves, which were equated with heads, and when commercial wealth and academic certificates became heads. These ufiem manifestations capture the Atlantic identities and regimes birthed by slavery and its descendant cultural economies in West Africa.

Some scholars argue that the gradual reinforcement of patriarchal authority defined the Atlantic Age, in a process whereby successive political economies built on preexisting male-dominated structures. In a study of household-state relations in the Milo River valley of Guinea-Conakry, Osborn argues that Batê men became steadily more dominant in the political realm between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Batê male elites used their households as the building blocks of the state. By exploiting warfare as a mode of statecraft, as well as the commercial networks of the Atlantic slave trade, the wealth patronage of Muslim male merchants, and French colonial chauvinism, Batê male elites increased their power over women.[17] In the same fashion,

Sandra Greene chronicles the cumulative decline in Anlo-Ewe women's rights as a result of Gold Coast regional responses to successive Atlantic political economies.[18] And Edna Bay argues that as the monarchical culture that enabled Dahomean women to exercise choice, influence, and autonomy weakened from the Atlantic slave trade and disappeared after the imposition of French colonial rule, women lost their sociopolitical influence in society. [19]

These scholars affirm that the masculinization of sociopolitical power during the Atlantic Age, whether through consolidation of patriarchy or unprecedented marginalization of women, amounted to a gender transformation in political regimes, economic autonomy, and social identities. Echoing existing scholarship, they emphasize the male-dominated household and lineage as major sites for the domestication of Atlantic political economies of wealth accumulation, and for the oppression of women.[20] They reinforce the need to resituate studies of West African gender and ethnicity formation, political centralization, and expansion of productive economies between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries within a broader Atlantic framework. This framework should focus on ordinary men and women, whose day-to-day experiences amounted to a historical contestation and reinvention of the institutions of production and distribution. However, as the Ohafia-Igbo case shows, gendered Atlanticization also occurred in female-dominated households, matrilineage systems, and dual-sex sociopolitical systems. How did gendered Atlanticization occur differently where women were sociopolitically superior? Moreover, the transformations in West African women's social statuses and identities corresponded to similar upheavals in African masculinities, which has been understudied. What might we learn by examining the historical constructions of masculinities and femininities as mutually constitutive and *longue durée* historical processes predating the twentieth century?

The few studies that have addressed this gap in the history of West African gender formation focus on the colonial period, beginning with an ethnographic baseline of the preexistence of patriarchy, rather than historicize the social production of masculinities and femininities as indeterminate Atlantic Age phenomena beyond twentieth-century colonialism.[21] Thus, Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher's *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* examines how African gender relations, constitutive of a patchwork of patriarchies, defined the constructions

of masculinities within the contexts of the socioeconomic and cultural transformations of colonial and postcolonial Africa. Similarly, Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane's *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* does not examine precolonial African masculinities, and it focuses largely on southern Africa.[22] In this regard, Ifi Amadiume's *Male Daughters and Female Husbands* is exceptional in arguing that precolonial Nnobi women of southeastern Nigeria used cultural practices of female "husband" and female "son" masculinities to distinguish gender from biological sex, develop gender-complementary dual-sex sociopolitical systems, and eventually resist colonial marginalization.[23] However, *Male Daughters and Female Husbands* does not historicize how men constructed their individual gender identities, or how their gender identities changed over time. There is yet no history of Atlantic Age West African masculinities. Robert Morrell's observation twenty years ago still rings true: "The dominance of men in the public record obscures the fact that little is known about masculinity. Men have been treated in essentialist terms."[24]

Extant scholarship on what has been termed "big man masculinity" illustrates the centrality of gender and the utility of a *longue durée* perspective in obtaining a holistic picture of the social changes that took place in West Africa during the Atlantic Age.[25] Sean Stillwell argues that lineage/kinship formation and the emergence of "big men" were the two formative stages in the evolution of African slavery, especially in noncentralized African societies. Kinship units emerged as distinctive corporate groups among early African communities negotiating land-use rights. Lineages integrated natives and newcomers through real or fictive kinship ties, enabling the expansion of labor. The quest to accumulate wealth-in-people increased conflicts over power and resources, promoting "early political centralization in the form of big men," who "aimed to control more people and resources than anyone else did."[26] The development of big men increased the number of captives available. Once captives were turned into slaves, powerful men had access to the largest numbers of them. According to Martin Klein, "The acquisition of slaves in early societies was one way either big men or descent groups increased their numbers and thus, their power."[27] The acquisition of wealth-in-people informed African participation in the Atlantic trade because lineage chiefs, rulers, and big men acquired

more dependents and followers through their access to new trade goods from the Atlantic world.[28]

In his historiography of African slavery, Stillwell further identifies the political ascendancy of big men as instrumental to the abandonment of bilateral kinship and promotion of unilineal forms of descent, in order to provide clearer lines of inheritance and succession. Matrilineal kinship systems ensured that slaves and their descendants belonged only to the matrilineage of a "father" (patriarch), or slave owner, because slave wives and children had no other kinship networks on which to rely. Also, reproduction of patrilineages depended on men acquiring wives or slave wives and producing children and dependents. Within this matrix, "slavery emerged both as a means to address contradictions between the values of accumulation and kinship and as a function of the development of a complex, surplus-producing economy."[29] Slavery permitted the attachment of people to corporate groups who could make none of the claims of free members. Slaves were outsiders, moved into new surroundings, where they were deracinated and overwhelmingly vulnerable.[30] As junior members of kin groups, with fewer rights, slaves enabled big men to expand their rights and claims over people in new ways.

Between 1600 and 1800, the Atlantic "slave trade made African big men that much bigger."[31] Formative kinship practices and big man masculinity became foundational to the transition from low-density slavery (focused on kinship expansion, use of slaves as additional domestic labor units, and securing access to productive resources) to high-density slavery (expansive use of slaves in commercialized productive roles, especially creation of slave-dominated agricultural estates). Most African societies practiced low-density slavery until the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and expansion of commodity production and legitimate trade, which encouraged high-density slavery by transforming slavery into a central productive institution during the nineteenth century. As this book shows, in the Bight of Biafra, the accumulation politics of ogaranya big men most forcefully shaped these transformations.

In nineteenth-century West Africa, slavery and incorporation continued to be understood through idioms and practices of kinship, and the operative language of power was still grounded in the benefits and inequalities of kinship. However, broader political, social, and

economic changes—tied to the expansion of commercialized agriculture and international trade, Muslim and Christian religious influences, and European imperialism—also increasingly shaped slavery and abolition/reincorporation. The big men of this era came in different forms, including *marabouts* that "colonized spirit-lands" and led the peanut revolution in the Gambia, slave-owning merchant-queens and merchant-princes of Biafran coastal states, large-scale slave owners that mediated abolition in southeastern Ghana, Fulani aristocrats of the Sokoto caliphate, Saro evangelists and "male breadwinners" in Yorubaland, "Presbyterian masculinities" of the Gold Coast, colonial male and female warrant chiefs (and a female king) in Igboland, and male migrant laborers and wage earners.[32] In all of these cases, male and female big men consolidated their power by masculinizing specific African means of production and distribution. Largely empowering men and marginalizing women, these sociopolitical changes during the Atlantic Age enabled men, ex-slaves included, to gain political and economic privileges.[33]

## UFIEM: A NARRATIVE OF EMERGENT MALE AND FEMALE MASCULINITIES

*Emergent Masculinities* narrates how Atlanticization enabled men to gradually gain power over women through the masculinization of key institutions during the transition from slavery to colonialism. Before the early nineteenth century, men and women exercised political authority through dual-sex solidarity institutions in Igboland. This book examines how these dual-sex sociopolitical institutions emerged and were sustained. Judith Van Allen and Ifi Amadiume have demonstrated that because the social statuses available to men in patrilineal Igbo societies were greater than those available to women, Igbo women's solidarity politics—assemblies of daughters, assemblies of wives, market associations, and political instruments such as strikes, boycotts, and force—effectively leveraged gender equality and ensured an enduring dual-sex political system.[34] However, unlike the rest of patrilineal Igbo society, Ohafia was matrilineal. How did the constitution and Atlanticization of their dual-sex systems differ from patrilineal Igboland's? How did their transforming dual-sex systems mediate constructions of ufiem?

As chapter 1 demonstrates, ufiem emerged in part as a male response to female dominance. The propensity of Ohafia-Igbo men to

fight external wars and undertake long-distance slaving expeditions across Igbo and Ibibio lands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided a cathartic release from the realities of domestic female sociopolitical dominance.[35] Originally one of the patrilineal Mben groups of seventeenth-century migrants to the Cross River borderland (between the Biafran coast and its hinterland), the Ohafia adopted the matrilineal kinship and inheritance practices of the aboriginal Ekoi and Ibibio. In response to the privations of their bellicose frontier settlement and, subsequently, the demands of regional slaving, the Ohafia developed a mutually constitutive dual-sex economy of female-dominated agriculture and male-centered militarism. Ohafia women's dominance in agrarian food production and distribution through domestic and regional trade enabled them to emerge as breadwinners, mediate the transfer of landed estates, and maintain powerful political institutions. These institutions offered women privileged political, religious, and economic social statuses but also released male labor for military pursuits. Through intermarriages that strengthened kinship ties with matrilineal non-Igbo ethnic communities in the Cross River borderlands, Ohafia women expanded their society's farmlands, made Ohafia into the only matrilineal society in Igboland, and forced male warriors to raid slaves from distant territories beyond their kinship zone. Real and fictive kinship constructions defined the peripheral zones of military slaving to include Ibibioland in the second half of the seventeenth century and the Igbo heartland in the eighteenth century. Women's economic power reinforced matrifocal religious and matriarchal political practices. Between the eighteenth century and the second half of the nineteenth century, the *ikpirikpe* female court under the control of female kings coexisted with the *akpan* male court under the control of male kings. Whereas the female court exercised political jurisdiction over women and men, the male court governed only men. The female court was the most powerful societal political institution. It maintained its superiority through constant public marches, spectacular trials, and ritual ostracism and boycotts, as well as by combining in one institution the powers of a litigant, arbiter, and enforcer. Consequently, lineage reproduction, breadwinner status, political policing, and deification as a matrilineage ancestress became the measure of Ohafia-Igbo hegemonic femininity before the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 2 argues that Atlantic slave production furnished men with institutions and sites of sociopolitical authority to counterpoise Ohafia-Igbo women's sociocultural salience. From the mid-eighteenth century, the Atlantic slave trade began to redefine the heroic ethos of ufiem, as captives became equated with heads. The increased role of Ohafia-Igbo warriors in regional slaving within the Biafran hinterland, which was linked to the rise and expansion of the neighboring Aro people, inaugurated a surge in the Bight of Biafra's slave exports beginning in the 1740s. Ohafia-Igbo prominence in military slaving also coincided with Bonny's superseding of Old Calabar as the region's major slave port, as well as an increase in Euro-American demand for slaves from the Bight of Biafra. The Ohafia-Aro slaving dynamic was rooted in fictive kinship practices (*ukwuzi*) and mobilization of secret societies, age-grades, divination guilds, and deities. The economic gains of regional slave production enabled Ohafia-Igbo merchant-warriors to strengthen preexisting institutions of male-centered political authority and introduce new ones such as *okonko* and *ite odo* secret societies. These institutions enabled merchant-warriors to impose their will over vulnerable individuals, including enslaved and adopted persons, dependent women, children, and ujo. Merchant-warriors' new economic gains were manifest in their public displays and practical uses of captives, European textiles, and Dane guns instead of human head trophies, symbolizing a new form of ufiem. This new ufiem edified violent military slaving through popular war dances, secret society celebrations, deification of merchant-warriors, definition of certain social spaces as exclusively masculine, and human sacrifice. In so doing, merchant-warriors counterbalanced the sociocultural superiority of women but did not yet gain political hegemony over them. Subaltern resistance against merchant-warriors' exploitations ranged from mocking the propensity of merchant-warriors to "play with human heads and slaves," to slaves and other vulnerable persons seeking refuge (ukwuzi) within religious shrines. Although deities guaranteed physical protection, they transformed their asylum seekers into spiritual slaves. Hence, military distinction through community defense and slave production defined Ohafia-Igbo hegemonic masculinity before the mid-nineteenth century.[36]

Chapter 3 shows that the economic impact of military slaving in the Bight of Biafra is best understood through a bifocal assessment of (a) its

role in empowering ogaranya masculinities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and (b) the centrality of enslaved women to Biafra's export trade and domestic slavery during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The chapter posits Atlanticization as a critical revision of the female marginality thesis, which assumes that enslaved women were not important in Biafra's slavery systems. The demography of Biafran captives was primarily a product of local gendered practices of production. Ohafia's long-distance, guerrilla-style kidnapping raids and its martial ethos that epitomized cutting off male heads and capturing women and children ensured that most Biafran captives were women and children. For every male, two female slaves were generated. Biafra's 55:45 export ratio of female to male slaves was inverted in other parts of West and Central Africa, such as Upper Guinea with a ratio of 25:75.[37] Euro-American perception of Biafran adult male captives as rebellious and suicidal also encouraged a greater demand for children and women, famed for their reproductive abilities in the Americas.[38] The majority of the Bight of Biafra's slave exports in the eighteenth century went to the British territories of Jamaica and Virginia. Enslaved Igbo women's reproductive lives defined racial slavery in both places.[39] Gwendolyn Hall observed that Virginia planters sought Igbo female slaves for their productive ability.[40] Captain Hugh Crow noted in 1830 that Igbo women were "preferred in the West India colonies for their fidelity and utility as domestic servants, particularly if taken young, as they become the most industrious of any of the tribes taken to the colonies."[41] Biafra's captive demography, American planter demands, and higher male mortality during the middle passage meant that more enslaved women disembarked in Virginia (1716–50) and Jamaica (1776–1807).

Between 1700 and 1750, 57 percent of Africans sent to Virginia originated in the Bight of Biafra. During the 1716–30 and 1741–50 eras, Biafran-Africans constituted 62 and 75 percent respectively, of slave imports in Virginia. More than 60 percent of Biafran captives were "Igbo" whereas "Ibibio" people made up the majority of the rest. Through natural reproduction, the charter generation of Biafran slaves in eighteenth-century Virginia contributed to the source of the internal slave trade in the North American mainland. This entailed the movement of almost a million slaves from the Upper South to the Lower South between 1800 and 1860, double the number of African slaves sent

to North America. Their cultural principles, what Douglas Chambers calls "Igboesque creolisms," shaped Virginia's Afro-Creole culture.[42] In Jamaica, British planters received twice as many "Igbo" as any other ethnohistorical group, and possibly four times as many as the number from the Gold Coast. A few scholars have examined the cultural repercussions of the "Igbo" presence in Jamaica. Chambers examines this in the *obeah* (dibia) practice, diet, and language, whereas Laura Smalligan and Michael Mullin excavate the long-lasting Igbo "cultural charter" of individualistic entrepreneurship and "*connu*" or *jonkonnu* (dance form) protest tradition in the urbanizing environment of late eighteenth-century Jamaica.[43] Sasha Turner has recently argued that the "Ebo/Eboe" labels of Biafran female captives in Jamaica provide a window into planter constructions of femininity for the purposes of maintaining slavery: "For the purposes of reproduction, young women identified as Ebo were considered the most fecund, real or imagined," and this informed Jamaican planters' inclination to allow them "every chance of breeding," even forcing them into mating unions.[44]

Chapter 3 uses the relative predominance of enslaved Igbo women in Jamaica's overall slave trade, and the significance of enslaved women to labor, reproduction, and the construction of patriarchy in Jamaica, to reassess the centrality of enslaved women within the Biafran hinterland, where more female slaves than male slaves were retained for domestic agrarian production, commercial accumulation, lineage reproduction, and elite polygyny. This cross-Atlantic feminist conception of gendered slavery acknowledges the distinctions between the racialized chattel slavery of Jamaica and the dynamic kinship slavery of Igboland, but it emphasizes fundamental similarities in sexual uses of enslaved women by, first, redefining what constituted slave work (besides manual labor) to include sex work (slave-wives, concubinage, lineage reproduction) and then theorizing those sexual uses as instrumental to male ascendancy. One of the most important repercussions of the Atlantic slave trade in the Bight of Biafra was the introduction of gender inequality and the exponential increase in the demand for women within domestic economies. The rise in women's productive burdens paralleled a massive increase in male ownership of enslaved women. By the early nineteenth century, Ohafia warrior masculinity had become dependent on ike nwami; the Ohafia matrilineal system encouraged female captivity. Female captives not sold in the Biafran

domestic markets at Itu, Asan, Bende, and Uzuakoli were retained within Ohafia as wives and uterine sisters (*nwannediya*) and incorporated through the matrilineages. In her examination of a similar trend among the Kpuawala of Sierra Leone, Mariane Ferme showed that by transforming slaves into kin, matrilineages concealed the legacy of slavery.[45] The increased role of men in reproducing matrilineages thus enabled them to compete with free women, who were traditionally the reproducers of the lineage. This elicited women's discriminatory ritual practices and discourses that sought to distinguish freeborn women from slave-wives. Slaving also enabled merchant-warriors to reinforce patrilineage as a more important method of private property transfer, in the process making father-son relationships unprecedentedly popular. Illustrative case studies of these emergent ogaranya masculinities, people who used the acquisition of slave-wives to masculinize social notions of individual wealth, include Udensi Ekea of Ohafia, Ananaba of Obegu, Okoro Udozuka of Arochukwu, Naomi of Oguta, and Omu Okwei of Ossomari. They demonstrate the widespread importance of enslaved women to Biafra's domestic slavery practices.

Chapter 4 further examines the economic as well as the political consequences of the Atlanticization of the Bight of Biafra's production and exchange systems beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, arguing that it enabled hitherto marginalized male slaves to achieve unprecedented political and economic power. The nineteenth-century expansion of trade in nonhuman commodities bolstered male-dominated individual appropriation (through leases, rents, and purchases) of land for oil palm and yam plantations. This relatively small increase in the commercialized uses of land through high-density slavery significantly empowered a cadre of ogaranya individuals and inaugurated changes in land tenure. As individual property ownership increased, so did the transmission of property beyond the control of matrilineages. Whereas military slaving had enabled men to leverage sociocultural equality with women, legitimate trade produced male breadwinners, such that the economic gains of men's dominance in long-distance trade increasingly outweighed women's domestic agrarian production. The biography of Kalu Ezelu provides a colorful perspective into these changes. It captures how postabolition emancipation channeled free and captive female labor into domestic production and dispossessed the traditional slave-owning male elite of

their wealth-in-slaves, enabling male ex-slaves, who were the first to embrace Christianity, Western education, and colonial collaboration, to emerge as ogaranya. Such ogaranya individuals invested in domestic economies of palm produce production and relied disproportionately on female slaves for sex, for labor, and to produce children. Although legitimate trade enabled some small-scale farmers to participate in the international economic system, male ogaranya individuals, who mobilized the labor of many slaves and dependents, became the leading producers and marketers of palm oil. The 1931 court case *Kalu Idika v. Eme Ado* provides several additional narratives of nineteenth-century ex-slave ogaranya individuals who used slave girls and slave-wives to establish new households, repopulate dwindling matrilineages, and purchase lineage integration and rights to political offices. Ogaranya individuals dramatized their nascent economic power by acquiring slave-wives, erecting modern two-story houses, and adorning themselves with expensive European goods. Following British political enforcement of abolition, emergent ogaranya took action to hold on to their new privileged status and mask slavery: redefining their slaves into dependent kin and domestic servants, transforming slave-wives into concubines, and allying with Christian missions and co-opting British colonial chauvinism to adopt marginalized persons—especially abandoned twins and other outcasts—into their pool of dependents.

Chapter 5 argues that in contrast to male social mobility and consolidation of political authority, the Atlanticization of indigenous political systems through the imposition of the warrant chief system ushered in a decline in women's political power at the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, the ex-slave Kalu Ezelu's ownership of twelve wives, thirty-four concubines, and fifty slaves positioned him to collaborate with the British and become the most powerful political leader in Ohafia-Igbo society, armed with unprecedented authority. Kalu Ezelu exemplifies the ascendancy of other opportunistic ex-slaves like Eme Ado and Okoro Idika in colonial Ohafia. The British reconciled preexisting male indigenous political institutions with the warrant chief system but completely marginalized female institutions. Furthermore, Christian missionary education also functioned to "domesticate" and subordinate women to wage-earning men. Such women would seek to subvert Presbyterian education policies intended to domesticate them into "good Christian wives" for the new African educated male elite.

In the process, they emerged as matrons who created home-run industries that became alternatives to missionary establishments. Most women were, however, alienated from colonial and missionary structures of social mobility. In seeking alternative avenues of wealth accumulation, Ohafia women like Unyang Uka and Otuwe Agwu turned to long-standing practices, including yam cultivation, trade, divination, slave ownership, and female husbandhood, thereby redefining gendered spaces, roles, and opportunities. Women's ogaranya politics simultaneously subverted imperial social engineering and reinforced the social perception of wealth as masculine. Society employed masculine cultural rituals such as war dances and sartorial symbols to celebrate female ogaranya. And the women dramatized their status as did preexisting and contemporary male ogaranya individuals, through the erection of modern two-story houses, redistribution of slaves and dependents to kin, elite polygyny, and displays of Atlantic commodities. They challenged the sexual and gender regulation that underpinned the European colonial repertoire of power, and they contributed to changing practices of ufiem. Their life histories encourage us to reexamine similar cases of rebellious female ascendancy under colonial rule, including the example of the lone female warrant chief and king Ahebi Ugbabe, as a product of the ideological and structural shifts that characterized Atlanticization in the Bight of Biafra.



FIGURE I.1. Ohafia war dance

Atlantic history demands methodological pluralism. Focused on the perspectives of diverse historical actors, Atlantic history requires multiple historical modes beyond the European written document. This is both challenging and encouraging for historians of non-Muslim, non-coastal, and noncentralized West African societies where few written sources exist for the pre-twentieth-century period. Because European historical actors were resident on the coasts of West Africa, they left few records of inland societies. This dearth of written sources is reflected in how this book is organized. Chapters 1 and 2 rely heavily on oral traditions of migrations, lineage organizations, military expeditions, merchant-warriors, and political institutions (age-grades and secret societies), combined with analyses of memorializing rituals and material culture.[46] Although oral traditions may be limited in providing specific historical dates and details, they offer culturally situated explanations and patterns of social change. They emphasize intergroup cultural accommodation and distinctive practices, including reciprocal language and religious borrowings, real and fictive kinship and lineage alliances, shifts in unilineal descent systems, migrations, trade, the growth or adaptation of new sociopolitical institutions and practices, and the indigenization of new systems of production.[47] While such oral traditions might center on singular culture heroes or acclaim a heroic group, such as warriors, mercantile diasporas, or a professional caste, they nonetheless preserve local understandings of society-wide social transformations, and the sociopolitical differentiations they engendered.

It is imperative to discuss the makeup of Ohafia traditions and how I use them. There are three major forms of traditions: (1) oral traditions of migration, lineage constitution, and adaptation of political institutions; (2) Ohafia military traditions preserved in the performative war songs; and (3) gendered rituals and memorialization ceremonies. I use these traditions as indigenous historical discourses. The internal dissonance among the traditions reflects distinctions in how men and women recollect the past. These traditions recall the past from common knowledge, but as cumulative interpretations of history, they capture the subjective experiences of groups, such as merchant-warriors, ujo, and women, instead of specific individuals. For instance, the narratives

show that all male individuals began life as ujo and had to work their way up to ufiem status. No respondent owned up to an ancestor being an ujo, but everybody could describe the life of an ujo. The narratives also provide explanations of intergroup relations, such as with the Aro and neighboring non-Igbo groups. I conducted 251 audio- and video-recorded oral interview sessions with 192 individuals and groups in twenty-four Ohafia villages between 2010 and 2015. I interviewed male patrilineage elders, female heads of matrilineages, leaders of traditional male and female courts, members of dibia divination guilds and secret societies (okonko, akpan, ite odo), leading performers of the Ohafia war songs and war dance, descendants of renowned male and female warriors and merchants, priests of deities, and local historians. Respondents began by tracing their bilateral descent, and occasionally performing lineage-memorializing libations to ancestors, before offering a generally consistent history of Ohafia migration from the West Niger to Ibeku and to their present location. Then they provided origin traditions of sociopolitical institutions and gave family narratives of ufiem accomplishments, going as far back as they could recall heroic ancestors and their deeds.

Whereas men's historical narratives emphasized Ohafia's military tradition in the contexts of migration, settlement, defensive headhunting, and slaving, my female respondents emphasized the centrality of the matrilineage to women's economic and religious salience, as well as the resilience of their political institution of ikpirikpe. Especially during group interviews with the female courts, women embraced the interviews to project a widely held view that until colonialism, their political institutions were more powerful. They point to persistent political rituals, and they reenact censorious songs and dances, which they still use to "teach men lessons when necessary."[48] Ohafia women's lamentation of the decline of female power is palpable. Women's emphasis on persistent cultural practices encouraged me to examine gender-specific rituals as evidence of self-representation and historical memorialization. Women's rituals such as *uzo iyi* (virginity testing) and *ije akpaka* (ritual declaration of war) are still performed annually. Whereas the former commemorates merchant-warriors' marriage of slave women in the past, the latter reminds society that women had made it possible for men to achieve martial heroism. Other ritual practices including *ibo ezi* (strike and boycott) and *ikpo mgbogho* (social

ostracism) are effective political instruments that women continue to use to enforce public morality. During my ten-month continuous residence in Ohafia between 2011 and 2012, I witnessed seven incidents of *ibo ezi* and two incidents of *ikpo mgbogho.* Such women's theaters are only matched by men's war-dance performances at funerals, new-yam festivals, and age-grade retirement ceremonies. These social dramas are often sites for the projection of gendered ethnic and historic visions: how women and men view the past informs the social meanings they bring to present-day cultural performances, and these reenactments, what Jan Vansina called the "practical uses of traditions," are ways for men and women to redefine their history and their place within it.[49] Ohafia women's rituals are simultaneously contemporary enactments of female power and authority as well as gendered memorialization of the past. They center women in Ohafia history, as "culture producers and social actors."[50] These practices elucidate women's vision of Ohafia social identity as matrilineal and culturally oriented toward non-Igbo ethnic communities.

The worldview of Ohafia women constitutes a critical lens for reevaluating masculinist narratives. Ohafia women's rituals encouraged me to ask questions about the precolonial dual-sex political systems. They prompted questions about the meaning of *history* when some male respondents—the same who affirmed that women were breadwinners, owners and transmitters of land, and in control of more effective political institutions than men before colonial rule—also asserted, "our women didn't have much role to play in the history of Ohafia."[51] For men, *history* was preserved in the heroic narratives of Ohafia masculinist military traditions of headhunting and military slaving. For women, the subjective meanings of *history* are enshrouded in how Ohafia became matrilineal, how women determined the dominant kinship affiliation between Ohafia and its multiethnic neighbors, and how the age-grade political system of the bilateral Ibibio enabled Ohafia women to establish powerful female courts, and ancestral matriarchs, whose *ududu* (pot monuments) they continue to consecrate. For Ohafia women, there is a clear link between the decline in the political salience of matrilineages and the emergence of ogaranya men like Kalu. In fact, the female court of Elu Ohafia identified the reign of ex-slave-turned-warrant-chief Kalu (1911–27) as the decisive moment when women's political power declined precipitously.

Individuals like Kalu embodied the structural, economic, religious, and political transformations that weakened Ohafia matrilineages, undermined women's position as breadwinners, and marginalized women's solidary political institutions.

Nonetheless, both men and women privilege lineage narratives as a lens into Ohafia-Igbo Atlanticization, and their narratives suggest that lineages were gendered practices. It was people's practices that constituted lineages, continued to give lineage its meaning, and ushered in significant changes in lineage ideologies over time.[52] In fact, oral traditions posit the political economies of matrilineages and patrilineages as mutually constitutive. According to one such tradition, pioneer Ohafia settlers originally established two matrilineages, Umu-Aka and Umu-Okochi, which they subsequently expanded through patrilineage-centered military slaving and matrilineage-centered acquisition of "foreign" slave-wives.[53] Indigenous wives belonged to different matrilineages but "foreign wives" belonged to a husband's matrilineage. The acquisition of dependents, slave-wives (*aluru alu*), war captives (*ohu ofia*), people bought with money (*ohu mgbere*), pawns, and resident-strangers (*nwa nbina*) therefore was a means that families lacking female children used to integrate women, who sustained matrilineages.[54]

Men also recollect histories through rituals and songs and dances. Ohafia military traditions are preserved in their narrative war songs and war dance, hitherto extensively studied by Chukwuma Azuonye and John McCall.[55] I make use of the fifty war-song narratives collected by Azuonye in the 1970s. He categorized Ohafia war songs into battle songs, invocative war songs, and narrative war songs, and demonstrated that narrative war songs are legitimate historical traditions, in contrast to the first two categories, which allude to historical events and heroic exploits but were primarily used in the military expeditions and rituals of the "heroic age." The narrative war songs were composed by trained oral historians performing in the "conventions of an established bardic tradition" and "historical oratory," comparable to the Mande griot tradition. [56] But whereas the griots emphasized long chronicle and epic poetry, Ohafia-tradition singers emphasized episodic and lyrical narratives.[57] Unlike the griot, Ohafia-tradition singers did not belong to a caste. Yet the Ohafia-tradition singer was "an Orator-Historian." He apprenticed and trained with established tradition singers. His profession

is borne out in his name: *onye-oku-aka* (he that evokes the past). His memory as "a tape-recording mechanism" is celebrated. His historical oratory includes subjective commentary on culture and society. He functions as a moralist and a custodian of cultural values. The tradition singer must "sing what Ohafia people as a whole will accept." Thus, singing traditions required participatory audience acclamation and legitimization.[58]

The histories they recollect include traditions about the origins and migrations of founding ancestors and ancestresses and their settlements; the lives and careers of the ancestors in defending and prospering the land; and the origins and significance of customs (such as headhunting and fictive kinship), beliefs (such as ududu veneration), and sociopolitical institutions.[59] The narratives describe Ohafia warriors as headhunters *and* slave catchers.[60] However, Ohafia respondents insist that their ancestors were not slave-dealers like the Aro but rather were contracted to fight various wars across Igboland and Ibibioland, to protect the Aro diaspora and their interests. In the narratives of these wars, Ohafia warriors are represented as heroes in the quest for military glory, whereas their Aro companions are represented as preoccupied with tethering captives. In the narratives, an unexpected hero often emerged, because he had been an ujo, who thus came to achieve ufiem through military distinction.

There are methodological challenges with the narrative war songs. First, the heroic formula of the narratives personifies the collective through singular culture-heroes.[61] The most popular example of this personification is the tradition of Elibe Aja examined in chapter 2, which narrates the mutual violation of fictive kinship between the Ohafia and the Aro as they sought the economic gains of the slave trade.[62] Second, the heroic formula euphemistically masks the unsavory past of military slaving. In the tradition of Amoogu, which chronicles Ohafia wars against the Niike of northern Igboland, the Niike are represented as "the wild cow roaming about in the forest," which Ohafia warriors sought to subdue and tether. Unable to defeat the Niike, Ohafia warriors allied with them to terrorize their neighbors. The narrative shifts emphasis from Ohafia's extensive slave raids in northern Igboland to its mythic relations with the Niike. Third, although they describe Ohafia military slaving, the narratives use various cultural logics to justify them. A prime example is in Ohafia traditions of the Ora Expeditions,

which paved the way for the establishment of Aro-Ndi-Izuogu. The traditions justify the destruction of Ora communities and enslavement of its inhabitants with the narrative that Ohafia had a kinship obligation to defend Izuogu (the putative founder of Aro-Ndi-Izuogu), when Ora people dishonored him.[63] Through a chronological reconstruction of Aro-Ndi-Izuogu patrilineages, Nwokeji places the Ohafia destruction of Ora and the establishment of Aro-Ndi-Izuogu around 1700–1740. This tradition captures the strategic importance of the Aro diaspora settlement of Aro-Ndi-Izuogu to the expansion of Biafra's slave trade in the mid-eighteenth century.[64]

The second Ohafia-Igbo male performative tradition is the war dance—a highly masculinized pageantry of military weapons and battle trophies as well as a dance drama in which the lead dancer carries a headdress bearing human skulls. Dressed in leopard caps, eagle feathers, ram's mane, loincloth, leopard skins, and yellow palm frond and carrying machetes and ropes, dancers reenact typical battle scenes and situations, including the march of warriors to battle, field operations, and victorious return from expeditions. Drawing and swinging their machetes, cutting the imaginary head of their enemy and stowing it in the pouches hanging from their waists, and subduing captives and tethering them with ropes, the warrior-dancers bring history alive.[65] In the eighteenth century, warriors who returned from expeditions with human head trophies and captives were celebrated with the war dance. Thus the dance incorporated slaving into the cognitive terrain of "cutting a head." In the nineteenth century, the war dance was performed at the funerals of merchant-warriors and used to celebrate the emergence of male and female ogaranya individuals, equating their wealth with heads. In the twentieth century, the war dance honored Ohafia ufiem, who returned home with evidence of success in trade or academic endeavors, such as automobiles and university diplomas. It is still used to celebrate instances of figuratively cutting a head, such as civil service retirement or election to political office, and is performed at the coronation of male kings to legitimize their assumption of office. Thus the war dance has appended new forms of ufiem to past forms as a comprehensive record of the heroic deeds of ancestors, which the orator-historian incorporates into his lore.[66]

Whereas chapters 1 and 2 thus privilege the above oral traditions, chapters 3, 4, and 5 reconcile African oral histories with European

Atlantic archives. Reflecting Atlantic history's predilection for multiple scales of analysis, as well as existing debates in the historiography of slavery in the Bight of Biafra, chapter 3 is a regional and comparative history of the Bight of Biafra's economic transformation as a result of the Atlantic slave trade, as evident in new forms of ufiem. Accordingly, Ohafia case studies are mapped onto broader regional testimonies and amplified with a transatlantic Jamaican lens. I use the Eighteenth Century Collections Online of British parliamentary papers on the Atlantic slave trade and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database to situate Ohafia regional slaving within the Bight of Biafra–British slave trade. More specifically, I examine how the age and sex demography of Ohafia military slaving preserved in the oral traditions of military expeditions and oral histories of merchant-warriors are reflected in the database and in eighteenth-century testimonies of British slave traders in the Bight of Biafra. This reconciliation provides a rationale for analyzing the Ohafia case in comparative perspective. The documents I collected from archival holdings in Europe and Nigeria in 2012 and 2014–15 are most useful in chapters 4 and 5. Documents found in the British National Archives in Kew, England; the National Library of Scotland; and the Nigerian National Archives in Enugu and Ibadan are valuable in reconstructing the sociopolitical changes in Ohafia and the Bight of Biafra region between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They include correspondence between British consuls, European shipmasters, and Biafran peoples spanning from the 1840s to 1900; reports on Ohafia origins, institutions, and cultural practices generated by British colonial officials between 1900 and 1935; native court cases between 1908 and 1919; correspondence and journals of the Church of Scotland missionaries, who were active in the Ohafia region between the 1890s and 1940s; and the autobiography of ex-slave Kalu Ezelu.

These archival documents provide limited perspectives. The Foreign Office correspondents (FO84 and FO2) focus on commercial interactions between Europeans and African peoples in the coastal communities of Calabar, Bonny, and Opobo. Located 9 miles east of the Cross River, the frontier Ohafia-Igbo were actively engaged in trade up the Cross River to Calabar and Bonny in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because alongside other Cross River peoples, they were suppliers of yams, palm oil, and palm kernel to the coast; and

one of the three major Biafran hinterland-coastal trade routes passed through Ohafia.[67] While oral histories are still needed to place Ohafia individuals within these intercoastal trading economies, the Foreign Office records help contextualize the regional systems and implications of Ohafia's changing economic practices. The documents show that the environment in which Africans participated in "legitimate commerce" was one of piracy, bullying, draconian capitalism, British gunboat diplomacy, an unreliable coastal-to-hinterland "trust system," fluctuations in the value and price of European commodities, monetization schemes that forced Africans into losing accrued wealth, and British consulate bigotry. Against this background, we can appreciate that those Africans who attained success in trade and went further to perform ogaranya masculinity did so only with the greatest ingenuity, tenacity of purpose, and agency.

Missionaries left more informative records than traders because their desire to convert Africans made them interested in local cultures; their hostility to traditional religious practices did not prevent them from making detailed descriptions of those "barbarous" customs and traditions. The writings of Mary Slessor, Robert Collins, and A. K. Mincher are consistent with a broader regional tradition of missionary records and shed light on the dialectical spread of Christianity and British imperial influence from Calabar through Ibibio land, to the Cross River Igbo territories of Arochukwu and Ohafia.[68] They capture the impact of Christian missionary evangelism on gendered socialization, indigenous institutions such as dibia, and changes in lineage practices. They document Ohafia social experiences of epidemics (1890s and 1919), the Aro expedition (1901–2), and adaptation of age-grade institutions to modernization schemes (1902–17). Because missionaries intervened in domestic and public disputes, which were often gendered, their journals and letters express the anxieties of Ohafia-Igbo men and women over ongoing sociopolitical transformations. The records and registers of the Ohafia Girls Training School (founded 1922) elucidate the domesticity focus of missionary education for women in contrast to the technical and literary education provided to men.[69]

At the turn of the twentieth century, British colonial officials and ethnographers generated field notes that extensively documented the peoples of southeastern Nigeria, their cultural practices, and the changes occasioned by European rule. As part of the consolidation of

colonial rule, colonial officials and missionaries were instructed to collect genealogical records and ethnographic data of the peoples of the Bight of Biafra. The call was answered with gazetteers, census reports, and annual reports, as well as ethnographies by colonial anthropologists such as Amaury Talbot, Northcote Thomas, G. T. Basden, and C. K. Meek.[70] Some colonial ethnographers represented the region's history as invariable and barbaric, and they espoused a biased view of Igbo peoples as docile and unproductive, particularly women. However, their firsthand accounts of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sociopolitical practices remain indispensable. Few colonial anthropologists disagreed with British officials, in principle and in their accounts of the origins and salience of cultural traditions and institutions.[71]

Following the Igbo Women's War of 1929, British colonial officials also began to collect intelligence reports on the sociopolitical organizations and cultural practices of the peoples of southeastern Nigeria. Expressing frustration with the biased tone of the intelligence reports on the Ohafia-Igbo, Ogbu Kalu lamented, "It would appear that the effort to collate reliable data after the Women's Riot failed in this culture zone."[72] Nonetheless, the intelligence reports, annual reports, and court records provide historical and ethnographic descriptions of Ohafia sociopolitical institutions, economic activities, and traditional religious practices as they existed before and during the first three decades of the twentieth century. They contain critical European commentaries on Ohafia kinship systems and residential arrangements, Ohafia military slaving and headhunting, and the activities of exclusively male secret societies. They account for the establishment of colonial courts, the institution of forced labor and taxation, the warrant chief system, and the establishment of Christian missions and schools. The court records indicate a preponderance of gendered disputes, especially between 1908 and 1919, over land and property inheritance, matrilocal versus patrilocal residence, and divorce proceedings. They also show a rise in political leadership disputes among various emergent male ogaranya who sought to use the colonial institutions to translate their economic wealth into political authority.[73]

In order to provide alternative voices to European written records and present the historical experiences of marginalized social groups such as women, Africanists have, since the 1960s, legitimized oral history as a critical practice. Whereas David Henige defines oral history

as a methodology by which peoples' traditions and memories of the past are understood as valid historical texts, Paul Thompson insists that "neither oral nor written evidence can be said to be generally superior; it depends on the context."[74] Since the 1990s, some Africanist scholars have insisted that oral testimonies could stand by themselves as authoritative accounts of lived experience, unmediated, and that various forms of oral communication including rumor, gossip, idioms, proverbs, folklore, and jokes are valid historical sources because they evince *how* Africans represent their historical experiences, beyond the framework of colonial institutions.[75] Yet oral histories, like European written records, must be critically evaluated; we must take into consideration the political investments of the narrators and the corroborative evidence of other sources, as well as the valuable subjectivities implicit in oral testimonials. As Ruth Finnegan and Barbara Cooper argue, oral histories, because of their performative nature before participatory audiences, enable us to explore the social production of memory, self, and subjectivity.[76] Doing oral history is a conscious reconciliation of the historian's quest for what really happened based on the assumption that written documents embody objective facts with a patient and tedious exploration of how people understand what has transpired. I examine the oral testimonies about Ohafia male and female husbands, dibias, merchants, slave owners, and colonial agents as subjective African discourses of nineteenth- and twentieth-century experiences of Atlantic political economies. The testimonies are tendentious and teleological because my research collaborators seek to establish the life histories of their ancestors within a positive metanarrative of ufiem accomplishment. Beyond family recollections, however, the stories of such individuals as Eche Iyi-Oke, Udensi Ekea, Agbai Nnate, Aru Otta, Kalu Uwaoma, Nkacha Emetu, Ucha Onum, Sarah Olugu, Grace Anya, Unyang Uka, and Otuwe Agwu, among others, are popularly known and recalled from different perspectives. Moreover, they reflect other known historical actors in the region such as Ananaba, Udozuka, Naomi, Okwei, and Ahebi.

Given the limitations of human memory, and the selective retrospection and conscious masking or silencing of unsavory histories (especially of slavery) implicit in oral testimonies, gendered performative histories are alternative ways of speaking about the past.[77] Similarly, such idioms as "cutting a head" (igbu ishi), "we eat through the mother,"

and "father's penis scatters, mother's womb gathers" are "word histories" and "artifacts of the past" that make up the language with which people memorialize historical change.[78] Embodying shifting meanings of power, they capture what Fallou Ngom has described as the social, political, and cultural forces that have once shaped or still influence a given community.[79] Such idioms, as E. J. Alagoa has demonstrated, are used to validate historical memories and demonstrate the relevance of accounts of the past to present concerns.[80] And men and women use them differently. Lastly, African archaeologists have come to define material culture as a system of ideas and symbols that express the unspeakable past and convey socially acceptable cognitive meanings.[81] The past and persistent uses and reinterpretations of Ohafia material culture such as ududu (ancestral pots), *nkwa* (sculptural representations), *ikoro* (war drum), war-dance regalia, *jooji* cloth, and dibia commemorative artifacts embody and articulate the dynamic social meanings of ufiem borne out in the life histories examined here. Collectively, these diverse local historical memories give flesh to the Atlantic archives. The centrality of Ohafia worldview as evident in the ufiem concept, and analyses of rituals, idioms, and material culture, in my historical assessment of gendered Atlanticization reflect my preference for an emic rather than an etic interpretation of historical experiences. As various African feminist scholars have shown, respondents' stories and worldviews are theoretical interpretations in themselves, and should be centered in order to make history a collaborative exploration of subjectivities.[82]