Uche Uwaezuoke Okonkwo and Ndubuisi M. Mbam. He Was Not Given Fair Hearing: Chief Nwiboko Obodo of Colonial Abakaliki 1893-1959. Enugu: Madonna University Press, 2016, 93, pp. ISBN: 978-978-078-522-9

He Was Not Given Fair Hearing: Chief Nwiboko Obodo of Colonial Abakaliki 1893-1959, is an autobiography which offers readers an in-troduction into the exciting yet frightening legacy of warrant chieftaincyship in Igboland particularly among the Izzi of colonial Abakaliki. The historiography of warrant chieftaincyship on case-by-case basis has not been given a pride of place by historians, and this has not only deepened the dearth of literature in this area of scholarship, but has also led to the emergence of armature and untrained authors, masquerading as historians and churning out self-acclaimed historical works. The attempt to bring back Chief Nwiboko Obodo to the historical promenade from multiple perspectives by the authors is seminal, and could not have come at no other time than now.

The work is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction which tries to look at the coming of colonial rule in Abakaliki, the historical setting of Ishieke clan, the home town of Nwiboko Obodo, the colonial scenario that produced him as well as a reflection on few literature on the area and colonial rule. A streak of insight is also given to the Odozhi Obodo a terror instrument institutionalized by the chief to silence opposition to his rule. Chapter two focuses on the concept of fair hearing in Nigeria's legal system. Since fair hearing is a cardinal principle of justice, and any adjudicatory procedure that sufficiently lacks fair hearing cannot be said to have done justice to that particular case. The contention of the work is that the chief was not given fair hearing, and as a result justice was miscarried in his case. The authors expedited enough space to examine the broader ramifications of fair hearing within the context of the constitution. Case laws were sited to buttress the essential qualities of fair hearing in a case and the Judges' declarations in relation to that from extant case laws. The chapter is an excursion into the world of jurisprudence, with the conclusion that Chief Nwiboko Obodo was not given fair hearing as required by law.

Chapter three focuses on the early history of the Izzi and Abakaliki people. The geography of the place is examined, though in brief; followed by the early history and migration of the group which traces their origin and lineal descent in line of seniority. The authors described the ascendancy struggles that characterized the history of the groups found in the area, particularly the Ezza-Ishieke wars. Comments were also made on aspects of the social history of the people, looking at the village structure, age grade system as well as the socio-political role of the chief priest in Ishieke. Chapter four treats the emergence of Nwiboko Obodo, beginning with his birth in 1893. From the introductory beginning of this chapter, the ancestry of the chief is tracedto Ezzamgbo, but the grandfather migrated to Idebya village in Ishieke where he finally settled. From the accounts in this chapter, the reader is made to understand that Chief Nwiboko was born into some privilege as the father was a wealthy cattle owner and chief. Nwiboko, his son, being a stubborn sort of kid, was always colluding with cattle traders to undermine his business; it was this act that made the father to expel him from his house, but not without a mark of reminder. He cut off half of Nwiboko's ear to remind him of his misdemeanant behaviours. We were told that after this incident, the uncle, Obodo Onyike took him in and nurtured him into his adulthood till the death of his father Onwe Aliobu in 1925. This accounted for his name Nwiboko Obodo instead of Nwibiko Onwe his own father's name. It was after the death of the father that he returned to his home town to inherit the father's wealth and chieftaincy title. As providence would have it, he became prosperous and famed in business and farming which projected him far and above every other person in the clan and ultimately

leading to his emergence as a warrant chief in 1928. The chapter treated his era as warrant chief and the controversies surrounding his rule as well as his maneuvering of all other chiefs in the area to become the most celebrated of all chiefs in Izziland, feared, dreaded and connected with the colonial police and British colonial authorities. The chapter also examines his greed and ravenous disposition to other peoples' wives, farmland, yam barns, and labour. It elucidates how he used his influence and native court in his palace, to imposed taxes, collect and under remit taxes to the colonial administration and generally silenced the society and any form of opposition against him. Though a firm opposition against him emerged which led to his suspension in 1936 by the colonial administration, he was however reinstated by a new colonial administrator Mr. A.T.E. Marsh on March 25, 1939. The chapter also highlighted how on reinstatement, Chief Nwiboko sent selected men from his clan to help in the British war efforts during World War II, and how his power continued to grow to the extent that he could order a court messenger to open the doors of the jail for a detained who hailed him, and nothing was done by the colonial administration even when a petition was sent to the District Office against him.

Chapter five is the climax of the work; it examined the circumstances leading to the formation of the Odozhi Obodo Society. In its narrative, the chapter figured that the complaint heaved on the District Commissioner in the area by the people on the breakdown of law and order and rising criminality masterminded by a gang named "Ezekpube" and "Udughueze" in the clan and how this had made life not worth living for them. To allay this challenge, the District Commissioner recommended the formation of a vigilante group by the people to restore sanity in the area. It was upon this that the Odozhi Obodo Society was formed by Chief Nwiboko Obodo. The chapter x-rayed the activities of the society formed in 1950, two years after the recommendation of the District Commissioner in 1948, and how the group turned into a gang of murderers and kidnappers working by the directive and command of Chief Nwiboko Obodo. The chapter gave a lucid account of all the murders committed by the Odozhi Obodo and how justice was perverted at the behest of Chief Nwiboko Obodo. It was also indicated that the Odozhi Obodo had fought criminality to a stand-still in the clan through its ruthless application of extrajudicial killings, heavy fines and over-bearing extortions. Because of the structure of the society, Chief Nwiboko Obodo could not effectively monitor their activities. The chapter analyzed how arbitrary killings, disappearances and exile of individuals fleeing from the wrath of Chief Nwiboko Obodo eventually nailed him to the law. The Chief was petitioned for the murder of Nwebonyi Oguenyi, the leader of Ishieke migrants in Oturkpo. This fellow had earlier on fled from the persecution of the Chief, and his murder was placed on the head of Chief Nwiboko Obodo because of the previous encounters he had with him. This led to the involvement of the federal CID unit from Lagos, the Benue police command and Enugu police command in the investigation. Chief Nwiboko Obodo and the arrow heads in his Odozhi Obodo society were arrested and charged with murder.

The trial and investigation proceeded and they were convicted of the murder after many damning facts were revealed against the chief and his gang men. On the 18th day of August, 1958, Nwiboko Obodo and four of his accomplices were sentenced to death by hanging. His appeal was rejected by three sitting Justices of the federal supreme court and on 24 February, 1959, Chief Nwiboko Obodo was put to death by hanging alongside four of his Odozhi Obodo members. The chapter also examined the contributions of Chief Nwiboko Obodo to the development of Isieke society, and found that he was instrumental to the coming of the Catholic Church in the area as well as the development of both secondary and primary education in the community, though he never wanted children from other Ishieke families to prosper more than his own children, and had to dictate where and how they attended school. A

segment of the chapter also looked at the attempted resurgence of Odozhi Obodo in other guise. Here the new name is The Nigeria Reformed Church; this was indicated in a petition written by a lawyer from Ishieke to the Inspector General of Police in 2010, alleging the resurgence of the dreaded society in another guise. Finally, the conclusion of the work tried to rehash key issues raised and discussed by the authors.

Unfortunately, there are some real weaknesses in the work. First the work appears rather rushed and the authors were not well served by their editors, this could easily be seen from the arrangement of the chapters. For example, chapter two on the concept of fair hearing in Nigeria, legal system, should have been about the last chapter of the work. The title of chapter three: Early history of the Izzi and Abakaliki people should have been the chapter two of the work. The chapters were not properly arranged. The second problem is the inchoate grammatical and stylistic problems that riddle across the entire chapter. The third problem seen in the work is the referencing style. The work does not seem to reflect any defined referencing method as used in the humanities; the MLA adopted was not routinely followed, chapters one, three, four and five, adopted end notes, while in chapter two adopted foot note. The oral sources were not properly documented. On the issue of fair hearing, the authors did not adequately demonstrate their position to support the argument that the Chief was not given fair hearing. Also the authors expended much space rehashing the provisions of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on fundamental rights, without reflecting on the provisions of the regional constitution of Eastern Region, where the Chief and his associates were tried, nor did they cite any provisions of the 1953 constitution of Nigeria operational then. They did not cite any colonial edict that vitiated fundamental rights of the colonial people, so their application of the 1979 constitution retroactively is highly questionable and cannot sustain or support any arguments on fair hearing as being canvassed in the work. These issues all suggest that the work was rushed to publication, which is not very helpful in an academic research bearing in mind the seminal nature of the topic. The critiques in this review are not meant to be overly critical, but rather to help improve an important and necessary scholarly contribution. I will be very happy to see in the nearest future a second and updated edition of the work.

Chimee Nkemjika Ihediwa
University of Nigeria