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Reflecting on the Nkanu-Igbo Experience and the Military Occupation of Enugu and Environs by the Nigerian Army, 1967-1970

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Abstract

The Nigerian-Biafran Civil War was fiercely fought by both sides involved. Biafra, which had seceded from Nigeria, faced numerous challenges, including the pogrom, the counter-coup d'état that severely weakened its officer corps, and the sporadic outbreaks of sectarian and ethnic cleansing that occurred before the Republic of Biafra was declared on May 30, 1967. Within just three months of the conflict's start, Biafra lost its capital, Enugu. Enugu and its surrounding areas were predominantly inhabited by the Nkanu Igbo people, who found themselves under Nigerian army occupation from September 1967 to January 1970 as the Biafran forces retreated. The occupation of Nkanu Igbo was marked by horrifying and inhumane acts, including the summary execution of suspected Biafran partisans. These crimes against humanity have not received the scholarly attention they deserve. Therefore, the objective of this study is to thoroughly examine the experiences of the Nkanu Igbo during the civil war. By utilizing oral interviews and secondary sources, this paper aims to shed light on the hardships endured by the Nkanu people throughout the war.

Keywords: Nigeria, army, occupation, Enugu, Biafra, civil war, justice, Nkanu-Igbo

Introduction

Nigeria is an amalgam of over 250 ethnic groups. Under the strong arm of the British colonizers, this behemoth appeared to hold the hope of a great nation in the making. Six years after independence the cookies started to crumble. The January 15, 1966 *coup d'état* was bloody. Many prominent politicians and high-ranking military officers lost their lives during the military takeover. Most of the victims of the military putsch came from Northern Region while the majority of the coup plotters hail from Eastern Region. Many commentators who allege that there were ethnic motives in the execution of the coup are also inclined to indict the Igbo, as being the ethnic group of the ring leaders of the coup plotters who had eliminated the political and military leaders from the Northern Region. The Igbo people were stigmatized and became targets of sectarian violence in most Northern Nigeria cities between May to October 1966. The Northern military officers in the Nigerian army openly vowed to avenge the killings of their leaders¹. They defied the military head of state, General Aguiyi-Ironsi. In the words of Major Hassan Kastina, "Coups succeed coups, we will never be at peace again²." On 29 July 1966, the Northern

¹ J. Useni, Why we Killed Ironsi and Installed Gowon, www.vanguard.com, retrieved on July 2, 2017.

² K. Maier, *This House has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*. London: Penguin Group, 2000, p.59.



military officers staged a “revenge coup”. The military head of state, General Aguiyi-Ironsi was murdered. This counter-coup also claimed the lives of 185 Igbo military officers. In addition, about thirty thousand Igbo civilians and Easterners were massacred in Northern Nigeria between May and October 1966.³ The Igbo returned *en masse* to their region, abandoning their jobs, businesses, and properties. After attempts at peace building especially the intervention of the then Ghanaian president Joseph Ankara, both parties - Gowon and Ojukwu came home with different interpretations of the January 1967 Aburi Accord. The inability of the Gowon-led military regime to implement Aburri agreements spurred agitations among the Easterners birthing the subsequent declaration of the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967.

On July 6, 1967, the Nigerian military leader, Lt.Col. Gowon, declared war on the seceding Biafran Republic. The overrunning of Nsukka Division, the border town of Biafra to the North, and the capture of the strategic Opi junction exposed the vulnerability of Enugu, the Biafran capital. Enugu was within the shooting range of the federal forces and the subsequent bombardment was terrifying. The propaganda of the Biafran government which succeeded in some of its aims might not have been sufficient in calming the panic into which the people had been thrown, especially because of the inferior weapons on the side of Biafra. The Biafran leader, Lt. Col. Ojukwu did not embark on systematic retreat of Enugu until it was too late. Rather than Ojukwu sent to the war front, Biafran recruits armed with machetes to confront armored personnel carriers and well-armed, better-fed and motivated federal troops. Many inexperienced Biafran combatants perished at the war front. One would have expected a retreat as a strategy to lure the unwary opponent into an ambush. The consequence of the refusal to retreat was that much of the goods that could have sustained the soldiers for upward of a year were not evacuated. Enugu was abandoned with all its markets and resources for the federal troops to loot.

On the 27th of September, 1967 the federal forces were within the periphery of Enugu, the Biafra capital. Yet, Enugu was not evacuated. The next day, on the 28th of September, the federal troops were within five miles of Enugu and were massively shelling the town. At the University town of Nsukka for instance, the people began to leave in a hurry abandoning valuables and even movable properties because of the urgency of the invasion by enemy forces. Col. Ojukwu had left Enugu on September 26th, barely 48 hours before the federal forces entered Enugu.⁴ On 28th September 1967 Enugu fell to the federal forces. The Biafran troops left behind to defend the capital had neither food nor ammunition to halt the onslaught. It is still a miracle how the Republic held on for more than two years even as the capital became a government on the wheel.⁵

³ Achebe, C. *There was a Country. A Personal History of Biafra*. London: Penguin Group, 2012, 71

⁴ Madiebo, A.A. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980, 75.

⁵ Madiebo, A.A. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980, 175.

Methodology and Sources of Data Collection

This qualitative study is aimed at understanding the lived experiences of Nkanu Igbo who were victims of molestation and violation during the Nigeria-Biafra war. To this end, phenomenology methodology is applied. Although very dominant in nursing sciences and disciplines that place high value on understanding the patient/client experience; the lived experiences in phenomenology make it distinct from other types of qualitative research that also focus on the human experience⁶. It is a sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence – sober in the sense that it must be thoughtful, and as much as possible free from theoretical, prejudicial and temperamental suppositions. This is because the victims' experiences should be examined as they occurred and on their own terms⁷. This makes the phenomenology method apt for this research because "memory is a perpetual actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present and history is a representation of that past."⁸

Data for this research **were derived** through both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated through audio-taped and unstructured interviews with persons who **had** lived through the experience of Nigerian army occupation. It featured open-ended phenomenological questions carefully chosen to elicit information. The study identifies two categories of key actors that constituted the participants in the study. These are, firstly, the *Sarikis* – those installed by the Nigerian army as war chiefs. *Sariki* is the Hausa word for chief. Those appointed as war chiefs were in the main seen as collaborators and most of them spoke the Hausa language fluently. Some were good while some were alleged to have undermined their people, abused their powers and committed heinous crimes. Secondly, more were derived from other seemingly passive actors, particularly, women who experienced the war, and after all, became official breadwinners within and among the various categories of residents in the identified communities. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Secondary sources of information include published books, journals, and unpublished theses. These sources were used to compare and evaluate information collected through other methods. The information was finally subjected to the standard method of interpretation and analysis applicable to the discipline of history.

Literature Review

Approximately, five decades after the civil war, there has not been a scholarly account of the victims of the Nigerian army occupation of the Nkanu-Biafra territories from the perspectives of non-combatants. However, literature (autobiographical, partly-fictional and critical works) on Nigeria-

⁶ Usher, K & D. Jackson. Phenomenology, in J. Mills & M. Birks, *Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide*, London: Sage Publications Ltd. 2014, 182.

⁷ Usher, K & D. Jackson. Phenomenology, in J. Mills & M. Birks, *Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide....*, 2014, 182-183.

⁸ Bevenser, B. *History, Memory and State Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 74.

Biafra civil war abound. In these ranks of authors are some of the active participants of the war namely: H.M, Njoku, *Tragedy Without Heroes: The Nigeria –Biafra War*, Madiebo's *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*,⁹ G. Onyefuru, *To Save Nigeria: The Revolutionary Coup and the Civil War*,¹⁰ Gbulie, Ben's *The Fall of Biafra*, O. Obasanjo, *Nzeogwu*,¹¹ and O. Obasanjo, *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War*¹² are combatants during the war whose accounts are based on field experiences. Accounts by Achebe, C. *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*,¹³ Odogwu Ben, *No Place to Hide: Crises and Conflicts Inside Biafra*,¹⁴ Uzokwe, A.O. *Surviving in Biafra: The Story of the Nigerian Civil War*,¹⁵ A.Harnet-Sievers, J.O. Ahazeum and S.Emezue, *A Social History of the Nigerian Civil War: Perspectives from Bellow*,¹⁶ A.A. Nwankwo, *The Making of a Nation: Biafra*,¹⁷ Amadi Elechi, *Sunset in Biafra*¹⁸ were on the causes and course of the war as well as their personal observations of events of that period. Novelists who tried to capture the events of the period Adichie, C.N. *Half of a Yellow Sun*¹⁹ and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*²⁰ were merely historical fictionalizations of the civil war, some of which include those cited above. Similarly, foreign authors and journalists who wrote on the Nigeria-Biafra war include J. De St. Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War*,²¹ Cervenka, Z. *A History of the Nigerian War 1967-1970*,²² Michael Gould,*The Biafran War: The Struggle for Modern Nigeria*,²³ Forsyth, F. *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafran Story*,²⁴ Waugh, A. and Cronje, S. *Biafra: Britain's Shame*,²⁵ Rex. Niven, *The War of Nigerian Unity*²⁶ while they offer useful insight into the Nigeria-Biafra crises, they more or less do not have an impressionable focus on the experiences of civilian-victims of the Nigerian Army occupation, especially in the area under examination.

Ojiakor, E.N, "Igbo Women and Politics in Nigeria.1929-1999",²⁷ Ukaogo, V. "Ahia Attaakie and Yakambaya: Interrogating the Moral Dilemma and the

⁹ Madiebo, A.A. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.1980.

¹⁰ G.Onyefuru, *To Save Nigeria: The Revolutionary Coup and the Civil War*. Enugu: Rabboni Publishers, n.d

¹¹ B.Gbulie, *The Fall of Biafra*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978.

¹² O. Obasanjo, *Nzeogwu*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 1987.

¹³ Achebe, C. 2012. *There was a Country. A Personal History of Biafra*.London: Penguin Group.

¹⁴ B. Odogwu, *No Place to Hide: Crises and Conflicts Inside Biafra*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers,1985.

¹⁵ A.O.Uzokwe, *Surviving in Biafra: The Story of the Nigerian Civil War*. New York: Writers Advantage,2003.

¹⁶ A.Harnet-Sievers, J.O. Ahazeum and S.Emezue, *A Social History of the Nigerian Civil War: Perspectives from Bellow*. Enugu: Jemezie Associates,1997.

¹⁷ A.A. Nwankwo, *The Making of a Nation: Biafra*. London: C. Hurst & Company, 1969.

¹⁸ Elechi, A. *Sunset in Biafra*. London: Heinemann.1973.

¹⁹ C.N. Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Lagos: Kachifo Limited, 2006.

²⁰ Ike, *Sunset at Dawn*. Ibadan,University Press PLC,2014.

²¹ J. De St. Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972.

²² Z.Cervenka, *A History of the Nigerian War 1967-1970*. Ibadan: Onibonje Press,1972.

²³ ²³ M. Gould,*The Biafran War: The Struggle for Modern Nigeria*. London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013.

²⁴ Forsyth, F. *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafran Story*. New York: Penguin Book, 1969

²⁵ A.Waugh, and S. Cronje, *Biafra: Britain's Shame*. London: Michael Joseph LTD,1969.

²⁶ R. Niven, *The War of Nigerian Unity*. London: Evans Publishers, 1970.

²⁷ Ojiakor, E.N. "Igbo Women and Politics in Nigeria.1929-1999", PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2008.

Role of Ozuitem-Bende Women in the War Economy of Biafra, 1967-1970,²⁸ and O.P. Emerah, "Ukpor Women during the Nigerian Civil War"²⁹ discussed the war economy and how women contributed by engaging in the risky trade called "attack trade". Theses which had appeared on the war are Ugwuanyi, G.C. "The Nigerian Civil War in Nsukka Zone",³⁰ Nnamani, K.J., "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972",³¹ Okoh, L.I. "Impact Assessment of the Nigeria-Biafra Conflict on the Uzo-Uwani Farm Settlement, Enugu State, 1967-1970",³² M.O.Odo, "Nigerian Civil War: Its Aftermath in Nsukka Division",³³ J.O. Madu, "The Aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War on Orba Women in Udenu L.G.A, Enugu State, 1970-1980",³⁴ were case studies on key communities and apart from Madu who focused on Orba women, the effects of the war on Nkanu Igbo, in general, had remained understudied. Other authors have also written on the effects of the civil war on the border communities such as Obudu by Imbua, D.L and Ishamali, I. "Memories of the Nigeria Civil War among the Bette-Bendi of Old Obudu Division", Igede borderland by Odey, M.O "Reflections on the Experiences and Impact of Igede-Borderland Areas during the Nigeria Civil War",³⁵ among others. In the context of this study, the experiences of the victims must be documented in order to understand in certain detail the traumas of the ordinary people as most of the eye-witnesses are growing old. This aging population are the repository of the oral history of the people and efforts should be made to recover their own account of the occupation before they pass away with their knowledge. However, all sources with the potentials of providing information on these gaps were considered relevant and explored.

The Occupation of Enugu and Its Environs

The infuriating, yet unrestrained massacres experienced by the Igbo domiciled in the North and some of the cities in the South-West were the issues that precipitated the Civil War. As the railway linking Enugu to North brought home Igbo refugees with tales of woes, the people felt a sense of revulsion and outrage. The People wanted a peaceful parting of ways through the break up of Nigeria or the outright war to achieve Biafran independence. Unfortunately,

²⁸ Ukaogo, V. "Ahia Attaakie and Yakambaya: Interrogating the Moral Dilemma and the Role of Ozuitem-Bende Women in the War Economy of Biafra, 1967-1970, *Uzu: Journal of History and International Studies*, Vol. 3, No 1, 2012, 1-17.

²⁹ O.P. Emerah, "Ukpor Women during the Nigerian Civil War" B.A Project report submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, September 2003.

³⁰ Ugwuanyi, G.C. "The Nigerian Civil War in Nsukka Zone", M.A thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1998.

³² K.J. Nnamani, "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972" B.A Project submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, UNN, October 2007.

³³ Okoh, L.I. "Impact Assessment of the Nigeria-Biafra Conflict on the Uzo-Uwani Farm Settlement, Enugu State, 1967-1970" B.A project submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2016.

³⁴ M.O.Odo, "Nigerian Civil War: Its Aftermath in Nsukka Division" M.A thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, May 1999.

³⁵ Odey, M.O "Reflections on the Experiences and Impact of Igede-Borderland Areas during the Nigeria Civil War", in Omagu, D.O & Onor, S.O. (eds.), *The Nigerian Civil War: Narratives from some Border Communities*, Lagos: Bahiti & Dalila Publishers, 2016.

nobody envisaged such magnitude of warfare, involving the kind of modern weapons which the Federal forces unleashed on Biafra. The fall of Enugu on the 28th of September 1967 invariably led to its occupation. Thus, since the entire outskirts of Enugu belongs to the Nkanu Igbo, the collapse of Enugu invariably put Nkanuland at risk. The Nigerian army quickly distributed itself to all parts of Enugu and its environment for effective policing and occupation. An observer noted that the people hated the Nigerian army occupation but could not express it openly. The reason adduced was that the people witnessed the offloading of the bodies of those who were killed during the massacres in the North and as such regarded the Nigerian army as an enemy force, which had come to complete the annihilation of the people.³⁶ By January 1968, the last resistance by Biafran BOFF (Biafran Organisation for Freedom Fighters) and Rangers in Akegbe-Ugwu was consequently crushed.

Biafran freedom fighters contributed in no small measure to sustaining the war in the face of excruciating difficulties and pains. These die-hard Biafrans were found among BOFF and Rangers. The BOFF were young boys who could not be enlisted in the **army, but they were** trained to penetrate the enemy line and carry out guerilla attacks while the function of the Rangers was also to carry out sabotage operations against the federal forces. The BOFF and Rangers engaged in the conscription of civilians into the Biafran army. They also eliminated any suspected Biafrans found fraternizing with the enemy forces. On Nkanu, Nnamani averred that Nwankwo Ani of Ogui Nike, Titus Nweke, and Nwanu Okoroafor of Amurri were among those who were killed by BOFF for alleged fraternization with the Nigerian army.³⁷

Some wealthy chiefs who were Biafran sympathizers supported the cause of the war not only **financially** but also **encouraged** the recruitment of young boys to be trained as Biafran soldiers. The issues that inspired Biafra to sustain the war efforts were: to maintain Biafran sovereignty, to prevent the impending genocide of the Igbo, and finally to avenge the Igbo massacres of 1966 in Northern Nigeria. The Biafran propaganda kept on recounting the woes of Igbo massacred in the North claiming that the war was for total annihilation of the Igbo. Therefore, the people were suspicious of the Federal forces even in cases where they had shown kind overtures. Barriers were created along the paths of the Federal army by cutting down trees and digging trenches to impede the movement of the federal forces. In extreme cases, some Federal soldiers who lost their way were ambushed and killed. According to Igwe Edwin Ogbonna:

our people's immediate reaction was to join the Biafran army. Our people reacted further by cutting down trees, thus creating a barrier to the military penetration of the villages. These include major roads such as Ugbawka-Amodu roads. They went further in their resistance, by digging trenches to hinder their vehicular movements on the major

³⁶ HRH Julius Nnaji, Legal practitioner and traditional ruler, C.76 years, Iji-Nike, 28 March, 2015.

Chief Christian Achi Nnaji, *Atu Marienyi vii*, c.86 years, Onuachi Uwani Amakpu Agbani, 31 May 2015.

³⁷ Nnamani, K.J. "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972" B.A Project submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, UNN, 2007.

roads. Our people ambushed and killed them in their attempt to cover the pits and remove the obstacles along the roads. This helped in delaying them in their attempt to penetrate major communities. Many villages laid ambushes on numerous track roads, waiting for stray federal soldiers. Our people also joined Rangers. These Rangers helped the Biafran troops in their campaign to prevent the federal troops from occupying an area or help in recapturing lost areas.³⁸

Nkanuland proved difficult to be overrun by the invading Federal forces as the civilians posed a stiff wall of resistance. The Nkanu people were embittered due to the sudden pauperisation of her kith and kin who had lived in the North but returned home as a result of insecurity in the country. As a warlike group in pre-colonial Igboland, they had, with their crude weapons, so eagerly prepared to confront the Federal army invaders, but it turned most unfortunate that the Nigerian side fought with weapons of measured sophistication at that period in history. The occupation of Nkanu Igbo was marked with brutalities. Women were forced into marriages or raped, valuables were looted and abandoned homesteads were destroyed by the Nigerian troops. Their troops in Nkanu Igbo took drastic measures to secure any town they overran. One of such measures was the imposition of pass laws. In war situations, a pass was generally issued to monitor enemy infiltration of the liberated areas. This was because of the collateral damage such could cause the Nigerian troops. Part of Ojukwu's strategies in setting up the Biafran Organisation for Freedom Fighters(BOFF) was to train young boys as spies to operate behind enemy lines and for sabotage operations. The Nigerian soldiers were attacked. They lost some of their members to the guerilla attacks by BOFF or Rangers. It was alleged that the food, water and palmwine they drank were in most cases poisoned by BOFF or Rangers operatives. This happened in Udi, Ozalla and Agbani. The Nigerian soldiers unwittingly tried to succour the boys not knowing they were spies. It took time before the Nigerian soldiers discovered that those haggard, hungry-looking children were in actual sense 'Ojukwu boys' and started shooting them on sight. As Gould, in his book, *The Biafran War: The Struggle for Modern Nigeria* observed that the Federal soldiers would interrogate those 'boy-soldiers' captured and had their mouths slit open and returned to the Biafran side as a deterrent for other recruits.³⁹

To safeguard the so-called liberated areas, movement passes were issued to civilians. Because of the casualties suffered, the Nigerian army had to screen and fish out these die-hard Biafrans. A pass was imposed for their security. The pass law stipulated that every male child within the age of seven years must possess a pass with an attached passport photograph. This pass must have the details of the bearer. It was first

³⁸ Interview with Igwe Edwin Ogbonna, Amurri, October 23,2016.

³⁹ Gould, M. *The Biafran War: The Struggle for Modern Nigeria*. London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd.2013.

issued to males but later adult females possessed it. According to Chief Anthony Nwobodo Agbo, who was appointed the *Sariki* or war chief of Amechi Awkwunanaw during the war by Lt. Col. T.Y Danjuma, he used to issue this movement pass to enable the people to move freely to Enugu town and also to enable the people to access the relief materials.⁴⁰

The Nkanu Igbo utilized passes to aid their movement and secure jobs with the Red Cross. Chief Anthony Agbo is praised today for saving a lot of lives through the issuance of passes. Those issued with passes were safe from Federal forces harassment and could move anywhere within the 'liberated areas'. Nevertheless, the imposition of passes gravely restricted people's movement. This became a big challenge on its own for the Nkanu people. It contributed to the scourge of starvation because, without a pass, those farther inland could not easily return to their homes and farmlands. A pass therefore was a paper issued to an individual as an attestation of his/her loyalty to the federal authority. The pass system endured even after the cessation of hostility under the strict scrutiny of the victorious federal forces. To obtain the pass, people had to be subjected to several rigours. The individual in need of a pass had to subject him/herself to clearance by the *Sariki*. Again, some of these war chiefs abused their positions to the very detriment of the majority of the people. As Chief Edward Onu⁴¹ posited, movements were restricted and only supporters of the federal cause who had passes were allowed to have food and medical aid. The majority of the people who moved farther into the hinterland because of fear of possible reprisals by the Nigerian army could not obtain passes to free them from fear and suspicion.

Collaborators, Saboteurs, and Attempted Annihilation of Freeborn in Nkanu

The instinct to survive, especially in the Biafra War situation led to several forms of betrayals which became adjudged as sabotage. There were several instances of even wives betraying their husbands. It was little wonder that kinsmen betrayed their kith and kin. During this period of intense difficulties, there were several instances of sabotage by those whose cowardly acts contributed to the elimination of their own people. This group of people acted as collaborators and saboteurs against their people. They were regarded as traitors who when faced with difficulties betrayed their people. In Nkanu, they capitalized on their interaction with the occupation forces to settle old scores. The collaborators, as was alleged, helped troops as guides and led them through the various hideouts in the different communities. In order to please their paymasters, they blackmailed previously wealthy Nkanu people before the Nigerian soldiers as Biafran sympathizers.

⁴⁰ Oguejiofor Agbo, c.56years, Amechi Awkwunanaw, 31 May 2016.

⁴¹ K.J Nnamani, "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972" ...104.

These 'enemy' within gained the confidence of the occupation forces and were made war chiefs/Sariki thereby displacing the real chiefs. Some notable collaborators were Peter Mba-Egbo, Daha-Egbo, Ogbuebo from Amankazi Amurri, Boniface Nwobodo, and Simon Ugwu from Amurri. They gave lists of their enemies to the Nigerian military men accusing them falsely of being Biafran soldiers.⁴² Pa Joseph Eze the pre-war chief of Amurri was accused of aiding the Biafran troops. The federal forces executed him. Prominent men suffered the most during this epoch. It was difficult for them to escape both sides. A rich man could be accused by his enemies as a Biafran sympathizer and got killed by the Nigerian side or viewed as a collaborator and killed by the Biafran BOFF. Titus Nweke and Ambrose Nnaji fell into the bad books of the 130 Battalion of Biafran troops stationed at Agbani. Titus Nweke tried to curtail the excesses of the Biafran soldiers. His enemies concocted stories of his aiding the federal forces and was beheaded at Eke Ogbaku by the Biafran troops.⁴³

While some of the *Sarikis* were mischievous, there were others who were praised today for working assiduously for the good of the people. Elder Jack Nnamani and Chief Anthony Agbo wrote their names in the sands of time as they protected their people's property during the occupation. They were said to have effected the release of people incarcerated by the occupation army. It was alleged that Elder Jack Nnamani usually blackmailed the federal forces and they promised the people that no harm would befall them if they returned home. It should be recalled that the dislodgement of Biafran forces and the ferocity of Nigerian Air Force bombardment made the people scamper for safety in dense forests. These places were called *agu* (uninhabited farmlands which were not motorable). People hid in such places to escape executions, rape, and forced marriages. As each community was liberated by the federal forces, they appointed war chiefs with the express order to cajole people out of their hidings to embrace the 'liberators'. In Nkanu, the people viewed such gestures with utmost suspicion. It was an irony that those who later mustered the courage to return from hiding were always harassed at every turn. All wealthy men who sought refuge in Biafran controlled zone were Biafran sympathizers and therefore, their buildings were destroyed by the federal troops.

The collaborator at Oruku Nkanu East Local Government Area was alleged to have presided over the elimination of over thirty young men from that community.⁴⁴ Oruku community witnessed a massive execution on the day the Nigerian army entered the town. Those young men were labeled Biafran collaborators by the federal informants. This

⁴² HRH Julius Nnaji, Legal practitioner and traditional ruler, C.76 years, Iji-Nike, 28 March, 2015.
Chief Christian Achi Nnaji, *Atu Marienyi vii*, c.86 years, Onuachi Uwani Amakpu Agbani, 31 May 2015.
⁴³ HRH Julius Nnaji, Legal practitioner and traditional ruler, C.76 years, Iji-Nike, 28 March, 2015.
Chief Christian Achi Nnaji, *Atu Marienyi vii*, c.86 years, Onuachi Uwani Amakpu Agbani, 31 May 2015.
⁴⁴ HRH Julius Nnaji, Legal practitioner and traditional ruler, C.76 years, Iji-Nike, 28 March, 2015.
Chief Christian Achi Nnaji, *Atu Marienyi vii*, c.86 years, Onuachi Uwani Amakpu Agbani, 31 May 2015.

was similar to what happened at Aba where the Nigerian Soldiers massacred more than two thousand civilians.⁴⁵ In the words of Kanayo Nnamani "Our people were the major cause of the death of most of our own people". In Amurri, Dawa Nwegbo, Ogbuebo, and Peter Nwegbo excelled in directing the federal troops into the community and saw to the elimination of Chigbo-Ogbu a Biafran Ranger from Amankazi Eziokwe Amurri.⁴⁶ They worked with the Nigerian soldiers, collected bribes and gave them information on young girls and newly married women in hiding. An informant narrated a story of a young girl of about 18 years from Umuigbo Amurri whom the Nigerian soldiers forcefully took away from her parents. Her mother wept bitterly that they should leave her daughter who was her only child. The Nigerian soldiers insisted on forcefully taking the girl. Peter Nwegbo, an accomplice threatened the poor woman that he was going to kill her if she refused her daughter being taken away; after all, they were not interested in the mother but the daughter. The embittered mother was lucky because, amid the fracas, a more senior federal officer appeared on the scene and inquired over the reason for the commotion. The woman tearfully narrated the problem to him. The soldier was enraged and asked Peter Nwegbo and his Nigerian soldier accomplice if that was what they usually do. He lambasted them that instead of searching for young men, they were busy conscripting young girls who were the only hope of their aged mothers. Consequently, he ordered that the erring soldier be punished.⁴⁷ The poor mother in the story had the blessings of mother luck on that fateful day. Again, the account relates that not all the Federal soldiers were rapists. Most of the officers conducted themselves well but the rank and file were indeed more despicable.

These people who acted as guides helped the Nigerian army to effectively occupy Nkanuland and its environs. All the recognized chiefs in the Nkanu area ran away as they were afraid of being killed. They were Igwe Chukwuani of Ozalla, Igwe Ofor Nnaji of Obe, and Igwe Nnamani of Agbani among others. Hence, they left their duty posts and in their stead, collaborators and saboteurs were appointed war chiefs or Sariki. However, some of the Sarikis acted in good faith by protecting their various community, encouraging them to come out of their hidings, and arbitrated between their people and federal forces in case of misunderstandings among many other good deeds. The good ones were actually in the minority.

Amechi Awkwunanaw was invaded around November 1967. The invaders set up a camp and launched attacks from there as people fled Amechi Awkwunanaw. It was alleged that their invasion of Amechi Awkwunanaw led to the burning of buildings of prominent men. Such

⁴⁵ Achebe, C. *There was a Country. A Personal History of Biafra*. London: Penguin Group, 2012, 228.

⁴⁶ K.J Nnamani, "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972" ...104

⁴⁷ K.J Nnamani, "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972" ...104.

prominent men included Nnaji Nwobodo, Nwankwo Ugwu Aniede, and Chief Mba among others. Chief Mba was accused of being a Biafran supporter and that his compound was a secret meeting point for Biafrans. It was reported that he fled to Nومه and later died in 1971, shortly after the war. Every household whose head of the family was not accounted for when the Nigerian soldiers visited was alleged to be a Biafran partisan. At times the Nigerian soldiers would leave a message that the owner of the compound should report to the Nigerian army camp at *Eke-Otu*. When after a few days the owner had not surrendered to the occupying force, they planted dynamites around the building and demolished it.

The day they invaded Amechi Awkunanaw, it was only Chief Jonah Agbo's one-storey building that was spared. Chief Jonah Agbo was neither a Nigerian collaborator nor a saboteur. But he was smeared and blackmailed by a descendant of slaves, Nwanyani; that he (Chief Jonah Agbo) was a Biafran sympathizer. Nwanyani and his fellow collaborators were on a vengeful mission to eliminate all prominent Amadi (freeborn) in Amechi Awkwunanaw by branding them as Biafran partisans. Nwanyani alleged that Biafran troops piled up weapons and met regularly at Chief Jonah Agbo's house. However, after the Nigerian troops had planted dynamites around the building, a curious officer wanted to search the building for the alleged weapons but stumbled on a wall picture in the living room which Chief Jonah Agbo had taken with the Emir of Zaria. He inquired whether the owner of the building about to be demolished was in the picture and they pointed at a young man squatting in front of the Emir. He ordered his men to remove the dynamites from around Chief Jonah Agbo's house. That picture spared the building and most likely those associated with the owner of the building. But because they had forcefully broken into the building, the door was left ajar and people looted every item in the house.⁴⁸

On the other hand, people lost years of painstaking acquisitions. On the whole, they burnt fourteen houses on that fateful day at Amechi Awkunanaw. They equally engaged in a killing spree and subjected the remnants to various kinds of punishments. As Achebe in his work *There was a Country...* opined that Nigeria had not succeeded in crushing the spirit of the Igbo people, but it had left them indigent, stripped, and stranded in the wilderness.⁴⁹

Every society has its own cleavages and issues. But these issues should be submerged during such national catastrophes as the Nigeria-Biafra War. Some people felt that they should capitalize on the differences existing in Nkanuland in punishing their former overlords. They thought joining forces with the Northern soldiers would liberate them.

⁴⁸ Oguejiofor Agbo, c.56years, Amechi Awkwunanaw, 31 May 2016.

⁴⁹ Achebe, C. *There was a Country. A Personal History of Biafra*. London: Penguin Group, 2012.

Indeed they were mistaken. The Hausa/ Fulani society proved to be the most stratified society where the nobles lord it over the serfs mercilessly. According to Chief Christian Achi Nnaji of Agbani, the Nigerian army entered Nkanuland through the ex-slaves(ohu) of Nkanu origin who had lived in the North and spoke the Hausa language fluently. They manipulated the Nigerian army of occupation into fighting the Amadi(freeborn). One of the ex-slaves, Nwonovo Obunne of Umuowo Agbani took the invading troops to Agbani Beach where the soldiers looted palm oil and palm kernel holdings. He alleged that all *Amadi* were Biafran partisans and accordingly blackmailed them before the Nigerian army. All prominent *Amadi* (freeborn) were alleged to be against the Nigerian army and most of them were eliminated as a result of the false allegations by the descendants of ex-slaves.⁵⁰

The planned annihilation of prominent Amadi men taking refuge at Akpufu was aborted by BOFF. Those earmarked for execution include Ezekeil Nnamokoh, First Nkanu LGA Secretary, Chief Fidelis Nwatu (FECO) Igwe of Ihuokpara, Chief Emmanuel Nnaji (Ancoto), Igwe of Amagunze and Chief John Igwesi, Igwe of Obuoffia Awkwunanaw. Others to be killed include Chief Nnamani Nwatu, Customary Court Judge, Nnamani Nwonoekwe, Igwe of Akpufu, Nnam Nwannamani, and Nwatu Nwa Judge. Indeed, when the ex-slaves' plot to eliminate the *Amadi* failed, the raging fury of the Federal forces turned against them. The federal troops killed Ogonnia Ogbodo of Akpufu and Mike Nwede Onovo Obunne of Umuowo Agbani. These ex-slaves were butchered by the Nigerian army for attempting to betray them to the Biafran army. The number of Nkanu people butchered by the Nigerian army occupation at Agbani was not less than eighty (80) persons.⁵¹ These people were not killed but "slaughtered" by the federal troops for allegedly aiding a national Igbo cause.

However, it should be noted that the struggle between freeborns and slaves in Nkanu predated the Nigerian Civil War. In traditional Nkanu settings, there were two distinct groups of people-freeborn(*Amadi*) and domestic slaves(*Ohu*). As an agrarian enclave, the wealthy farmers owned a large number of slaves who constituted the labour force in the farmlands. The relationship between the domestic slaves and their freeborn overlords was generally symbiotic. The domestic slaves performed some feudal services to their masters as a token of appreciation for the land granted to them. They, therefore, devoted two of the four-day Igbo week to work for their masters among other obligations.⁵² British colonialism liberated the slaves in 1916 through the abolition of any form of servitude or obligation to their masters.

⁵⁰ HRH Julius Nnaji, Legal practitioner and traditional ruler, C.76 years, Iji-Nike, 28 March, 2015.

Chief Christian Achi Nnaji, *Atu Marienyi vii*, c.86 years, Onuachi Uwani Amakpu Agbani, 31 May 2015.

⁵¹ HRH Julius Nnaji, interview cited..

⁵² Obi-Ani, P. 1999. Abolition and Slave Freeborn Relationship in Nkanu", *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, No.10, 2007, 186-198

However, the *Amadi* continued to discriminate against the descendants of ex-slaves. The British notion of equality of all men and fraternity had been resisted by the *Amadi* in Nkanu. The descendants of ex-slaves saw the devastating civil war as an opportunity to get even with the arrogant *Amadi*. This was not unexpected bearing in mind the segregation suffered by the *Ohu* descendants. Any society with such cleavages is usually prone to saboteurs and collaboration with an invading force. This was exactly what the descendants of ex-slaves did in Nkanu during the war. Unfortunately, this had made the *Amadis* harden their stand against the *Ohu*.

The two groups never intermarried, as their marriage was taboo in Nkanu. It was not a surprise that during the civil war, these former slaves presented themselves as friends of the 'liberators' guiding them into the villages, blackmailing their former masters as Biafran sympathizers and tacitly using the Nigerian soldiers to fight their war against the freeborn (*Amadi*). Thus in Nkanu the ex-slaves and their descendants constituted a stumbling block to the Biafran war effort. They saw an opportunity to overthrow the old order and avenge their second-class status by collaborating with the enemy—the Nigerian army. Wealthy and influential *Amadi* in Nkanu were special targets. As they hid from the invading Nigerian army, they also scampered for cover from vengeful ex-slaves who saw an opportunity to exert a pound of flesh from their former masters- the *Amadi*. The war was nightmarish for the *Amadis* of Nkanu.

The 'Butcher' at Agbani

Wars bring out the worst in man. All the bestialities come to the fore in men. The aggressive instincts in man are resurrected. Wars turn men into cannibals, brutes, and psychopaths. Suddenly an easygoing man becomes a monster overnight. All the repressed prejudices, hatred, and violence are awakened among combatants at war fronts. The Jews to Duiker and Spielvogel⁵³, Davidson⁵⁴, and Arendt⁵⁵ were hounded, and gassed and over six million of them were eliminated in the great Holocaust orchestrated by Adolph Hitler during the Second World War. In 1994 the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi faced genocidal attacks from their neighbours, the Hutu, characterized by torture and utmost cruelty. They ranged from burying people alive in graves they had dug, to cutting and opening wombs of pregnant mothers⁵⁶. The Nigerian-Biafran Civil War enthroned such monstrous human beings as Sergeant Clement Yilda. As Grant and Temperley opined," History is not a censor of morals. Yet it is the duty of the historian to draw attention to any exceptional

⁵³ W.J.Duiker, & J.J Spielvogel, *World History, Vol ii: Fifth Edition*. USA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007, pp704-705.

⁵⁴ Susanna Davidson, *The Holocaust*, America,Usborne Publishing Ltd, 2008, p. 36.

⁵⁵ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, London:Harcourt Brace & Company, 1976, pp 4-10.

⁵⁶ M. Mandani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*. New Jersey: Princeton Press,2001, p.6 .

event or departure from ordinary standards”⁵⁷. These were found in the Nigeria-Biafra war. Yilda’s atrocities had been mystified among the Nkanu Igbo where he reigned as a tyrant that tormented the people during the civil war. Most informants characterized Sergeant Yilda as a bloodthirsty monster, lacking human compassion and most likely devoid of good education or any redeeming features.

The battle to defend Enugu became a national obligation for the indigenes of Enugu environs as the Biafran forces were not equipped to repel the incessant bombing of Enugu. The civilians posed a formidable wall of resistance against the Nigerian invasion. They were determined to defend their communities to halt the alleged annihilation of Igbo. Biafran partisans with the help of the civilians impeded the speedy over-running of Biafra. This move irked the invaders and prompted them to unleash such magnitude of terror against the civilians. Like every conquered territory, the people were subjected to horrifying treatment. Miscreants were imposed on the people as war chiefs (Sariki) while the traditional chiefs were either in hiding or killed among other evils. The Nigerian soldiers in most cases exhibited highhandedness. This negates the GENEVA Convention of 1948, articles 52-56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of Protocol 1 which protects civilian objects while the basic rule concerning civilians as contained in Articles 48-51 were flouted with impunity during the civil war⁵⁸. As Gbulie noted, “the unprovoked excesses of the federal troops who in reaping the harvest of victory had become adept at using their military muscle as an apparatus of oppression”⁵⁹ fuelled Biafran resistance.

Sgt. Yilda was infamously designated *ogbummadu* (killer of men) because of the number of people he terminated their lives. Most of his victims were said to be those he coveted their wives. He was a sadist whose activities during the occupation of Nkanu remained the most horrifying experience of the people in the hands of the occupation forces. He killed many with a machete mostly which prompted the nickname *ogbummadu*. He forcefully snatched people’s wives at gunpoint⁶⁰. He was not the only soldier who killed spouses to take their wives but his excesses were out of the ordinary. Any young man who was a Biafran soldier automatically deserved to be shot on sight. He never spared women and children. Yilda and his fellow soldiers confiscated wares in the markets, especially palmwine. The Nigerian soldiers extremely added to the starvation of the people. They looted people’s houses before burning them; they took away wares from people’s stalls in the market before destroying them, livestock was one of their most prized booty. They used those things to

⁵⁷ A.J.Grant, and H. Temperly, H, *Europe in the Ninetenth and Twentieth Centuries (1789-1950) Tenth Edition*. U.K: Longman Group Limited,1982, pp.449-450.

⁵⁸ Ihediwa N.C & Alozie, B.C. in Omagu,D.O & Onor, S.O. (eds.) .*The Nigerian Civil War: Narratives from some Border Communitie.*, Lagos: Bahiti & Dalila Publishers, 2016, 199.

⁵⁹ B. Gbulie, *The Fall of Biafra*, Enugu:Fourth Dimension Publishers,1979, p.258.

⁶⁰ Interview with Chief Raphel Nwanigwe, c. 67 years, retired teacher, interviewed at Ozalla Nkanu West, 31 March,2015.

entice the women who willingly followed them in the face of excruciating difficulties. Informants gave instances of how they located the markets tucked into dense forests, assembled all the beautiful women, and took them to their camps. They were hostile and crude to the people. It was also alleged that the Nigerian soldiers mixed *garri* with urine and forced it down the throat of the old and sick Biafrans who had been abandoned by their relatives who had been in a hurry to escape to safety. Sergeant. Yilda slaughtered people as if they were goats. Chief Francis Ujam⁶¹ described him as a gallant soldier but very stupid and bereft of any intelligence. Through his lopsided judgments, he eliminated scores of people. He issued execution judgments on the people suspected to be Biafran spies. He became a useful tool in the hands of the collaborators. Sgt. Yilda seems to have a kind of Hitler prejudice against the Nkanu Igbo that his exploits in the area were part of the horrors of the war. He concentrated his activities farther inland of Nkanu like Agbani., Amagunze, Ugbawka, and Nara among other towns.

Yilda was a victim of his own beastly nature. In a polarized society such as Nkanu, some ex-slaves capitalized on their closeness to the army of occupation to falsely accuse their former masters of being Biafran sympathizers. Without any credible evidence, Sergeant Yilda condemned these men to death. It was the nature of execution that petrified the Nkanu people. Sergeant Yilda subjected his victims to a horrifying death. He slaughtered his victims through the slashing of the throat or by cutting the private part at a public square⁶². In short, he terrorized the Nkanu people through his callous, crude, and dastardly method of using a sharp knife to kill his victims. Nobody brought to Yilda's torture chambers survived or escaped his brutal death method. Hundreds perished at Yilda's hands.

Yilda was last heard in the Dimka-led coup that eliminated Murtala Mohammed, then successor of Gowon in 1976. He escaped being captured and prosecuted by the military tribunal that executed fellow coup plotters. Whichever way he ended, soldiers like Sgt. Yilda exceeded the so-called Code of Conduct during the war. Sgt. Yilda's crude conduct was not an isolated incident during the war. It was widespread throughout the occupied Biafran enclaves. According to John de St. Jorre:

.... there was widespread looting, raping and a callous indifference to the fate of the Ibos by many of the Federal soldiers; this was particularly pronounced in the Southern part of the enclave which was occupied by the poorly-disciplined 3rd Marine Commando Division. Whether this was acceptable as the natural aftermath of war or not depends on one's standards of judging the crisis; worse things happened in defeated Germany in 1945. But such behaviour in the enclave was an undeniable fact, did contravene Gowon's Code of Conduct, and generally

⁶¹ Interview with Chief Francis Ujam, c.86 years, Akegbu-Ugwu, 28 March, 2015.

⁶² Christian Achi Nnaji...interview cited

contradicted what the federal government had been saying about the situation from Lagos.⁶³

Why is Justice Delayed?

Wars create monstrous situations. The worst in man unfolds. Soldiers in the heat of battle may have become mentally deranged without their superiors taking note of their health deterioration. As long as their aggressive tendencies are directed at the opposing forces, little or no action is taken until it is too late. Those scenarios resonated during the Nigerian-Biafran civil war. Many soldiers particularly from the Nigerian occupation forces behaved outrageously towards the Biafran partisans and civil population without any official reprimand. The Nkanu Igbo were brutalized, tortured, and most alleged Biafran partisans slaughtered in the most barbaric form by Sergeant Yilda. These victims of the occupation army have not received justice almost fifty years after the cessation of hostilities.

The victorious Nigerian army received accolades at the end of the war in January 1970 while some of their Biafran counterparts were detained in solitary confinement for more than a decade for alleged sadistic behavior. Despite General Yakubu Gowon's diplomatic posturing of "no victor no vanquished" proclamation and the supposed effusion of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, the Nkanu Igbo had a raw deal after the war. The "butcher" at Agbani, Sergeant Yilda continued to serve in the Nigerian army as if nothing happened. There was no military board of inquiry on the atrocious behavior of Nigerian soldiers. The Nkanu Igbo had no platform to ventilate their grievances and seek justice. The Gowon regime did not apologize for the horrendous havoc perpetrated by his soldiers. Nearly fifty years after the war, the Nkanu Igbo are still awaiting justice.

The so-called 3Rs(reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction)⁶⁴ of public utilities like schools, hospitals, postal offices, and private properties never received federal or state government attention in Nkanu. It was through the people's self-help efforts and doggedness that schools were rehabilitated and hospitals restored in the area. At the Agbani railway station(beach), the Nigerian army looted the palm oil and palm kernel holdings. Nonetheless, the people did not receive any compensation after the war. How the owners picked up the pieces of their lives did not worry the Gowon military government? After all, the Nkanu Igbo had been vanquished. The looting of Enugu, which halted the military campaign against Biafra for over a month, deserves official query. Who were the beneficiaries of the loot? Did the Gowon military government uncover those behind the looting of Enugu, and what punishment did the government give them? In the spirit of reconciliation, the military regime ought to have paid compensation. Unfortunately, the vanquished Nkanu Igbo did not receive

⁶³ De St. Jorre, J. *The Nigerian Civil War*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1972, 405.

⁶⁴ Obi-Ani, P. *Post-Civil War Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland: 1970-1983*. Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers, 2009, 205

any compensation to restart their vandalized businesses, their destroyed homes, and the psychological traumas they passed through at the hands of occupation forces. It is not too late to atone for such criminal negligence by a government that boasted of not knowing what to do with petrodollars. Compensation could be in the form of monuments, industries to assuage the people that suffered from the deliberate government policies to stagnate and retard them at the end of the war.

What about war crimes committed against Nkanu Igbo? The Nigerian government should set up a panel of inquiry to investigate the alleged barbaric slashing of the throat and private parts of Biafran partisans by Seagant Yilda at Agbani during the war. The nature of the killing of over eighty (80) able-bodied Nkanu Igbo on alleged sympathy for Biafra was horrendous, wicked, and inhuman. Those involved in this crime should be unraveled, and punished if they are still alive or condemned posthumously. An inquiry should be able to account one by one for the names of the victims of this heinous crime and a cenotaph built with their names inscribed on it. The Nigerian army and government should tender an apology to the families of the victims of naked brute power exercised by its officials. Reconciliation would remain a smokescreen unless an effort is made for genuine atonement.

The current wave of agitation for the actualization of Biafra is an indictment of the post-war reconciliation accomplishments in Nigeria. The Igbo have been discriminated against in employment in the civil service, armed forces, and public corporations since the end of the **Biafran War. The policy of quota system has been used to deny them admission into colleges and universities.** As many Igbo people drifted into the private sector of the Nigerian economy, their businesses were the target of incessant vandalization and riots outside their region of origin. Politically, the rest of Nigerians are afraid of entrusting them with the highest political office in Nigeria, not because they lack competence but fear of Igbo retribution. This fear is germane due to years of discrimination against the Igbo. But this fear can only be allayed by entrusting and abolishing discriminatory practices in public institutions. It is less likely that the nationhood of Nigeria will be meaningfully realized unless merit and justice are seen to be done, beginning from the point of the war. The historian's perspective of development has always considered that 'telling the truth about the past is believed to be highly instrumental in reaching the goal of social peace and the restoration of civic trust in wounded nations because a society cannot reconcile itself on the grounds of divided memory'⁶⁵. The injustice of occupation forces in Nkanu Igbo should be the starting point. Let us start with apologies and monuments, also recognizing the various atrocities across the length and breadth of Igboland as a token of reconciliation.

⁶⁵ Bevenger, B. *History, Memory and State Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice ... 10*

Conclusion

The Nigerian army's occupation of Enugu environs was reminiscent of the evils of war. The soldiers rampaged the area thoroughly, raping women with impunity and looting the lifetime treasures of the people. The civil population became willing tools in the hands of the occupation army. The Nkanu Igbo blackmailed perceived enemies before the federal troops who wasted no time in executing many people on trumped-up charges of supporting the Biafran war effort. To some of these Igbo turncoats, the federal occupation would never end. The likes of Sergeant Yilda became cruelty personified. The little power some of the federal troops wielded was overtly abused to the detriment of the hapless civilians. The war created monsters like Yilda who slashed the throats of his Nkanu victims with relish. To many Nkanu Igbo, the war stole the humanity of the Nigerian soldiers and set many families more than half a century back.

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