

**THE IGBO IN MODERN NIGERIA; A HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE, 1970-2019**

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Abstract

The study delves into an examination of patterns and trends in Igbo society in the present day Nigeria, with some historical events as illuminating lamp. Of course, historical events effectively influence the nature of Igbo society in the present times. Such events include the European incursion and concomitant changes in socio-political organisation, nationalist movements, naïve post-independence administration, the Nigeria-Biafra war, attempts at post-war reconstruction, fragmentation of the society, which came in form of state creation and local government reforms among others. There is the need to bring to the fore such knowledge as the lack of it would keep emerging generations bereft of ideas on how to solve similar problems when similar situation presents itself. The foregoing inspired the need for this study. The eclectic method of analysis was employed and the discourse was organised in themes to ensure articulated presentation. It was observed that the Igbo passed through a major phase that has been affecting their status in the affairs of Nigeria. That phase is the Nigeria-Biafra war. However, the war appears to have ignited the self-help attribute of the Igbo as they went on to achieve major feats both as individuals and groups.

Key words: Igboland, Nigeria, Biafra, War, Eastern region

Introduction

A study of the nature of the Igbo shows a people of intriguing peculiarity; a people whose history and socio-cultural composition have been subjected to diverse interpretations. The complex nature of the



Igbo may have contributed to the patterns of the relations between the people and other ethnic units of Nigeria. The nature of the Igbo is normally studied in comparison between the eastern Igbo and the western Igbo. Normally the western Igbo tend to link their origin with the old *Bini* Empire while the eastern Igbo tend to maintain traditions of origin that is linked to a common progenitor, *Eri*. The foregoing is not the only area of divergence between the two Igbo groups. There equally appears to be a separate philosophy guiding the people's outlook to life. Each may have been informed by the natural exigencies of the environment. Even the incoming Europeans noticed the diversity hence G.T. Basden (1921: 7-10), an early European Christian missionary observes that the Igbo east of the Niger River tended to be more resourceful and abhorred laziness more than the folks west of the river. The Igbo disdain for laziness (which invariably causes poverty) is succinctly explicated by Victor Uchendu in A.E. Afigbo (1981: 124), "To remind an Igbo that he is *ori mgbe ahia loro*, 'one who eats only when the market holds' is to humiliate him." In like manner, Chinua Achebe (1957) in his novel *Things Fall Apart* depicts the nature of an industrious Igbo character as seen in the pre-colonial times.

The Igbo has mostly continued on the trajectory as established above, albeit some changes in approach. This study goes on to interrogate some of these events that introduced the changes in Igboland that have shaped the society the way it is in the present times. It equally highlights some Igbo individual and group contributions to the changes seen in the history of the society.

The Consequences of a Civil War

The Igbo experienced a very bitter conflict which was the Nigeria-Biafra war that had the eastern Nigeria enclave as the major theatre of warfare. Numerous literatures exist on the account of the war and each tends to highlight or interrogate in details the extent of the damage the war brought to Igboland. In fact, Chinua Achebe's *There Was A Country* depict the war as the manifestation of pent up resentment



against the Igbo over the years. The nature of destruction suffered by the people has gone a long way to determine some physical features of the society especially as regards the modern economic structure. The Igbo were spurred to invest in the areas within their geographical domain basically because of some unfortunate events that had preceded the civil war. The loss of properties outside Igboland, especially in Port Harcourt where the notorious “abandoned property” saga conspicuously played out and the community ties strengthened by the need for security in the aftermath of northern massacres before and during the war made the relocation of at least some part of business activities paramount. This also made the post-civil war industrialisation of the former Eastern Region less restricted to major urban centres like Onitsha, Aba and Nnewi. To avoid clustering industries on definite target areas industries were located at Enugu, Awka, Nsukka, Abakiliki, Ihiala, Ogidi, Okigwe, Afikpo, Ozubulu, Orlu and other Igbo communities which are increasingly urbanising today. (Agajelu, 2020).

The bitter experiences of the civil war and the marginalisation that followed suit may have also dissuaded the average Igbo man from looking unto the government for economic empowerment. The Igbo youths who were hitherto enthusiastic to acquire Western education largely abandoned this quest for private business entrepreneurship. Therefore, instead of economically suppressing the Igbo, the civil war simply fostered private sector growth in many South-East states.

Nonetheless, it would be unfair to aver that it was all gloom for the Igbo who emerged from the war. There were post-war policies which were designed to reintegrate the Igbo into the country and foster a spirit of oneness. Some details of the post-war reconstruction at the theatre of warfare which is Igboland are examined in the next section of this study.

Post-War Reconstruction in Igboland till 1976

After thirty months of intense fighting, the last shots of the Nigeria-Biafra war were fired and the short-lived republic of Biafra capitulated.



By the time the war ended Biafra was a vast smoldering rubble. It has been difficult to place a definite figure of the casualties of the war, especially that of the Igbo. Alexander A. Madiebo (1980: xi) affirmed that in the end, the whole exercise of splitting and re-uniting Nigeria cost the nation over three million lives. Ngozi Ojiakor (2014: 2) believes that over five million lives were lost in the war on both sides, with the Eastern Region particularly the Igbo accounting for 90 percent of whatever figure that was reached. According to Chinua Achebe (2012: 227), the Igbo head count at the end of the war was perhaps three million dead, which was approximately 20 percent of the entire population.

There were other areas of devastation in Igboland at the wake of the war. Apart from the dead, many others were wounded and permanent physical deformity among the Igbo was common. Furthermore, there were cases of massive destruction of Igbo properties, looting, arson and other forms of aggression that were meted out on the people. These acts of aggression led to other heinous social conditions which included permanent dislocation of family ties as some members migrated to unknown places where they sought refuge and never came back. What is more, in the economic realm, the war led to a distasteful situation of massive unemployment among the Igbo people. Both the private and public sectors of the Eastern Region's economy grossly suffered. Major industries were either destroyed or closed down. Essential infrastructures were not spared in the carnage. Hospitals, communication facilities, transportation infrastructure, educational facilities, oil refineries among others were laid to waste. Notable markets across Igboland were destroyed. The Onitsha Main Market, which grew to be acclaimed the largest market in the West African Sub-region, was reduced to rumbles during the hostilities of the war.

Ojiakor (2014: 4) notes that with the economic downturn, the revenue base of the Eastern Region government became adversely affected. Both the internally generated revenue, and that generated from the



export of palm produce were severely affected. In effect, the post-war economy of the Igbo enclave was virtually in comatose. Considering the foregoing, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon set out to attempt a reconstruction of the war-battered Igboland based on the stated spirit of “no victor no vanquished”.

In the immediate aftermath of the Nigeria-Biafra war, the Federal Military Government (FMG) under the leadership of Gowon introduced a policy of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction (the 3Rs). As explicated by Olukunle Ojeleye (2010: 76), the thrust of the 3Rs was to create an atmosphere conducive for resettling those displaced and others who had fled their homes; reunite families and friends; rebuild physical facilities which had suffered some damage during the Nigeria-Biafra war; and place demobilised armed forces personnel in gainful employment in civilian life. Ojeleye further observes that in contrast to other post-civil war policies on the African continent, the 3Rs was multifaceted rather than being explicitly demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration focused. It is claimed that the need for an over arching post-civil war policy in Nigeria, in contrast to an explicitly disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration-focused policy, was informed by the difficulty of the federal government in identifying a Biafran combatant from a Biafran civilian.

The bedrock of the 3Rs policy was the Second National Development Plan 1970–74 (SNDP) for post-war reconstruction which had been under discussion during 1969. In a nationwide broadcast on 11 November 1970, Gowon stated that the plan was “another decisive step in the nation’s forward march to progress and stability” and the choice of a four-year period was anchored on the need to “enable the economy to recover fully from the strains and stresses of the war [whilst] at the same time ... short enough to remind us of the challenge of post-war reconstruction”. About 40 per cent of the total net public sector programme of £780 million was devoted to the reconstruction element of the SNDP. (Ojeleye, 2010: 76)



In reality, the 3Rs came into existence with the formation and empowerment of a commission mandated to fulfill the objectives of the initiative. The commission was established by the Decree No. 41 of 1968 and was named the National Rehabilitation Commission (NRC). Appointed to head the commission at the national level was Timothy Omo-Bare, while Ukpabi Asika was empowered to prosecute the programme in the zone where it was needed most, which was the East-Central State. The NRC in partnership with relief agencies, notably the Nigerian Red Cross Society provided basic needs for the Igbo people. In a collaborative endeavour, the federal and state governments, donor agencies and individuals donated essentials such as food items, healthcare, clothing, money and so on to the commission.(Ojiakor 2014: 6-7)

It is pertinent to note that the post-war reconstruction was not confined on the Igbo enclave of Nigeria only. It is believed in some quarters that the federal government under the leadership of Yakubu Gowon sought to create conditions and environments of genuine openness, cooperation and accommodation aimed at sustaining peaceful and functional inter-ethnic relations within the Nigerian polity. For Gowon, reconciliation and reintegration could only be achieved through restitution in terms of compensating the polity for their losses, as well as through rehabilitation to heal the mental trauma of months of crisis, siege and violence. He was believed to have wanted a stable future for all and sundry and for the Igbo not to see themselves as the vanquished or as spoils of war. According to Ojeleye (2010: 92) Gowon believed that in an environment of co-operation and stability, a better-conciliated social order could be established within the Nigerian state. Therefore, for Gowon, reconciliation meant the reassurance of the citizenship, security, and belonging of all the ethnic groups in a new Nigeria. His political refrain of “no victor, no vanquished” was claimed to have hinged on his perception that genuine reconciliation is a two-way affair in which the Igbo must not expect special privileges and preferential treatment, but as “brothers who have recently rejoined the fold ... do



everything they can to reciprocate the warm reception and friendliness they have received from their fellow Nigerians”.(Ojeleye, 2010: 92) An attempt to further assess the statement as credited to Gowon may show some elements of lack of empathy and contempt on the side of the military Head of States. Nonetheless, that is not the motive of this section of the article.

The federal government’s attempt to reconstruct Igboland after the war has been variously appraised with the results of the effort eliciting mixed reactions. Paul Obi-Ani (1998: 11) believes that the efforts did not yield desired results. This situation may partly be blamed on the insincerity of the government of Gowon and the lack of empathy on the side of the Igbo leaders charged with executing the reconstruction programmes. As Paul Obi-Ani explicates:

...feeling of insecurity and despair prevailed among the Igbo. All of Igboland was studded with innumerable road blocks mounted by the victorious Nigerian Army. The people’s plight was confounded by a variety of other factors. First, the Administrator of East Central State, Mr. Ukpabi Asika, a Federal loyalist and General Gowon’s appointee, did not seem to appreciate the enormity of the plight of the Igbo people.

Ojiakor (2014: 11) further affirms that full integration of the Igbo was not achieved contrary to Gowon’s pledges as the Igbo were discriminated against in all the sectors of the economy such as employment, appointments, capital investment and so on. Gowon’s sincerity at reconstruction of the country is also questioned as his objective of separating the military from the politics of the country could not be met. In fact, the transitional programme to civilian rule initiated by Gowon evaporated with the administration as the military junta was deposed in a military coup that saw General Murtala Muhammad’s ascendance to power in July 1975.



The Political Structure of Igboland since 1976

The political milieu of the Igbo since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970 was in a state of limbo. As could be seen from the previous section of this study, the federal military government of Nigeria appeared to have been expending efforts towards the reconstruction of the war-battered socio-economic milieu of the East-Central State that political relevance of that section of the country appeared immaterial. However, it is believed in some quarters that there is a conspiracy by a coalition of northern and western Nigeria to perpetually keep the Igbo irrelevant in the politics of Nigeria.(Ojukwu, 2008: 187-189) Nonetheless, the established political structure in Nigeria played out and reflected on Igboland.

One of the political events that characterised the post-civil war Nigeria is state creation. Of course, state creation in Igboland pre-dated 1970. Before the war, Rivers State was already created from the existing Eastern Region. This was informed by the desire of the federal military government of Yakubu Gowon to thaw the unity of purpose and resolve of the Eastern Region. Nonetheless, within the first quarter of 1970s, agitation for the creation of more states in Nigeria arose from different quarters of the country. In 1974, Gowon promised to create more states to satisfy the agitators. However, the task of state creation was to be implemented by the Murtala Muhammad administration.

General Muhammad made state creation one of his reform policies as he mounted the saddle of leadership in Nigeria in 1975. On July 29, 1975, the new military Head of States went ahead to appoint a committee on state creation under the chairmanship of Justice Ayo Irikefe of the Supreme Court. Before then, the country was comprised of twelve states. The committee on state creation submitted its report and the recommendations made therein included that the creation of more states would guarantee political stability in Nigeria. General Mohammad's Supreme Military Council accepted the recommendations



of the report from the committee and went ahead to announce the creation of more states in the country. (Ojiakor, 2014: 39-40)

The state creation as implemented by Muhammad went thus: Benue-Plateau state was divided into Benue (Makurdi) and Plateau states; East-Central state divided into Anambra and Imo states; Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) formed from parts of Niger and Plateau states; North-Eastern state divided into Bauchi, Borno, and Gongola (Yola) states; Niger state split from Sokoto and Western state divided into Ogun, Ondo, and Oyo states.(Adeniyi, 2014: 69) In two consecutive times between 1987 and 1991, the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida created additional nine states. In 1987, Akwa Ibom state was split from Cross River while Katsina state was split from Kaduna. In 1991, Abia state was split from Imo; Bendel state was divided into Delta and Edo; Enugu state was split from Anambra; Gongola state was divided into Adamawa and Taraba; Jigawa state was split from Kano; Kebbi state was split from Sokoto; Kogi state was formed from parts of Benue and Kwara; Osun state was split from Oyo and Yobe state was split from Borno. In 1996, General Sani Abacha created additional six states: Bayelsa state was split from Rivers; Ebonyi state was formed from parts of Abia and Enugu; Ekiti state was split from Ondo; Gombe state was split from Bauchi; Nassarawa state was split from Plateau; Zamfara state was split from Sokoto. (Adeniyi, 2014: 69)

There has become the question of the place of the Igbo in the discussed state creation in Nigeria. Of course state creation has been desirous for people of different ethnicity in Nigeria. This is because it had been made a major determinant of resource control and political representation. The South-East geopolitical zone has the smallest number of states in the country. While a zone in the north comprised of seven states, others have six except the South-East which has five states. The implication of this is that other ethnic nationalities enjoy broader representation at the federal government level more than the Igbo. Thus the linchpin of the argument by the Igbo elite and groups on

the marginalisation of the Igbo has hinged centrally on the state deficit in the South-East *vis-à-vis* the other geo-political zones of the federation.(Amanchukwu, Ezedinachi and Orizu, 2018: 166) The structural anomaly in state creation against the Igbo in Nigeria has serious financial implications. In this regard, since the states have been operationalised as the basis for the sharing material and political resources through the federal character principle since 1979, the region with lesser number of states must necessarily lose out in the distribution of resources. (Amanchukwu, Ezedinachi and Orizu, 2018: 166) It therefore appears to be an act of injustice to deny a major ethnic nationality in the country equality in state creation.

There are also the local government administrations within the states. The need for local government administration as an established governmental structure arose since Nigeria became a federal system at the twilight of colonial rule in the 1950s. Generally, local governments are created with the basic aim of bring governance to the grassroots. According to Ozohu-Suleiman and Chima (2015: 182), “in Nigeria, the local government reforms aimed both to accelerate development and to enable the local population participate and hold those in power accountable for their governance roles.”

A popular local government reforms was initiated in Nigeria by the military Head of State, General Murtala Muhammad in 1976. The government appointed the Udoji Reform Commission for the purpose of local government reforms and from the recommendations of the commission a blueprint titled, “Guidelines for Local Government Reform” was designed.(Ojiakor, 2014: 40-41) The number of local government areas in Nigeria have undergone increments over the years under different administrations. Presently the total number is placed at 774 with 95 located within the Igbo States of the South-East geopolitical zone.



Contributions of the Igbo to Nigerian Political and Socio-economic Life since 1970

The Igbo have obviously contributed immensely to nation-building in Nigeria. At the turn of independence the Igbo piloted most of the affairs in the nation's civil service. They occupied top positions in politics and the armed forces. The Nigeria-Biafra war revised this trend, but the people were able to come back and have continued to inscribe laudable marks in the sands of Nigerian political and socio-economic milieu. Worthy of discussion are the contributions of the first Executive Vice President of Nigeria, Sir Alex Ekwueme towards nation-building in Nigeria.

On 1st October, 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and his running mate, Dr. Alex Ekwueme were sworn in as the first Executive President and Vice-President respectively of the Federal Republic of Nigeria by the Chief Justice of the Federation at an open-air ceremony at the Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos. After the swearing in, the Second Republic kicked off and Ekwueme went on to contribute in no small measure to the developmental initiatives of the administration. Commenting on Ekwueme's stewardship as a Vice President, Ekpu (2018) goes thus:

When Ekwueme was the Vice President to President Shehu Shagari he was known to be a loyal deputy, one who would not stab his boss at the back under any circumstance. He was faithful to the president and faithful to propriety. He was a deep middle-roader, neither a radical of the left nor of the right.

Nwankwor (2014: 32) goes on to assert that indeed there are no records of moral indictment on Ekwueme as a high portfolio sociopolitical leader. Such testimonials abound of a man whom many prefer to refer to as a quintessential gentleman.

Ekwueme was very conspicuous on the road to Nigerian Fourth Republic. He displayed uncommon vision and political sagacity during the 1994/1995 constitutional conference when he championed the



restructuring of the country into six geo-political zones. In advocating for six geopolitical zones, the former Vice President took cognisance of the skewed structure as well as the content and character of the polity. In his words:

We had three regions, the North, the East and the West. The drawbacks at that structure was that the north was bigger than the other two regions put together, which meant that in a parliamentary system if all the other MPs vote together, they would always produce the Prime Minister, which meant that some parts of the country would consider themselves second class citizens if they could not aspire to the highest office in the land.

This initiative was aimed at giving every section of the country a sense of belonging and it proved to be one of the most important decisions reached at the conference. Sir Ekwueme went on to suggest that there should be one Nigerian Army with six command structures.(Umahi, 2017)

Ekwueme played a pivotal role in the return of the Nigeria to civilian rule after many years of military dictatorship. While General Sani Abacha's dictatorial overtures were affecting the socio-political landscape of Nigeria adversely, it has been reported that Ekwueme refused to be cowed. (Umahi, 2017) According to Umahi (2017), "Particularly incensed by the disdain with which the junta treated civilians, Ekwueme mobilised patriots of like minds to try to find a way out of the cage, as it were." Ekwueme himself said:

When Abacha came, what really triggered me was his modus operandi. He came and it was clear that he didn't have any regard for the civilian population. He thought everything was to be accomplished by force of arms. We organised first as civil society, nine of us, to try and really appreciate that, if we didn't



extricate ourselves from the military, we would remain slaves to them forever.

Of course, this declaration by Ekwueme greatly spurred the group that came together to ensure that democracy and the concomitant civility returned to Nigeria. The efforts of Ekwueme led to the formation of the famous G34, which later metamorphosed into the first ruling political party of Nigerian Fourth Republic, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). (Umahi, 2017)

Nnewi, the industrial hub of Igboland, has the promises of incubating a sustainable science and technology-based economy for Nigeria. Commenting on the industrial prospect of Nnewi, Iyatse (2020) asserts “It is not only in fabrication and engineering Nnewi has made an indelible mark. Today, it is almost synonymous with full-scale industrial activities. From food, body care, building material to automobile market, Nnewi brands stand tall.” Popular large-scale enterprises found in Nnewi include Cutix Plc, Chicason Group, Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Company, Tummy Tummy Foods Industries Limited, Intercontinental Feed Mills, Ngobros Industries, Ibeto Group among others. Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing (IVM) is known to be the country’s sole vehicle manufacturing company. It therefore places Nigeria among the vehicle manufacturing countries in the world.

The Igbo has also contributed in no small measure toward other socio-economic spheres of Nigeria. Over the years, the people of the southeastern enclave are known to make up the crux of the Nigerian national team in football. Such big names in football as Christian Chukwu, Chidi Nwanu, Sam Okwaraji, Kanu Nwankwo, Austin Okocha, Emma Okocha, Emmanuel Amueke, Mikel Obi, Kelechi Iheanacho and many others were either from the region or products of the region.

The Igbo may also have launched the Nigerian movie industry on the global landscape. Of course, they played a pivotal role in the

development of Nollywood. The roles of renowned film makers such as Amaka Igwe and Kenneth Nnebue ensured the establishment and popularity of Nollywood across the globe. Musical acts such as P-Square, Phyno, and Flavour effectively make their mark in an environment where Yoruba influence dominates the Nigerian music world.

Overview of Select Eminent Igbo Personalities since 1970

Even though the contributions of some eminent Igbo people have been mentioned in the previous section, it is important that we go further to highlight some of the personage whose inputs have been inscribed in the sands of time and whose efforts have indeed impacted not just the Igbo but Africa at large. Some developed pan-Igbo or pan-African political thoughts, some made their marks in sports while some others have contributed enormously in the academia.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe

Dr. Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, fondly known as Zik was born in the northern Nigerian Hausa town of Zungeru on November 16, 1904. Zik himself believed that his birth was associated with a myth. Some believe that the myth foretold his greatness. A star, the Comet, was said to have appeared on the sky on the day he was born.(Orij, 2013: 68) Zik was the first President of an independent Nigeria. Before he emerged as President, Zik contributed effectively to Nigerian nationalism, decolonisation of Africa and the Pan-Africanist movement. He was instrumental to the formation of early political associations and parties in Nigeria. These included the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC).

An important figure in the history of politics in Nigeria, Azikiwe had broad interest outside that realm. He served as Chancellor of the University of Nigeria Nsukka from 1961 to 1966. He was also the president of several sports organisations for football, boxing. And table tennis.



Sir Francis Akanu Ibiam

Sir Akanu Ibiam was a statesman, educationist, medical missionary and the Governor of Eastern Region from October 1960 to 1966, when the military took over the government. Ibiam was born in Uwana, Afikpo, Ebonyi State on November 29, 1906. He rose to become the first Nigerian Principal of the Hope Waddell training Institution (HWTI), Calabar, in 1958. He is known for his advocacy against injustice, inequitable distribution of the nation's resources, tribalism and enthronement of mediocrity over meritocracy in the civil service and national appointments. Akanu Ibiam died on July 1, 1995 and stadium, airport and tertiary institutions have been named after him.(Awa, 2020)

Dr. Michael Okpara

Michael Iheonukara Okpara, known as M.I. Power on the political scene was the Premier of Eastern Region of Nigeria during the first Republic (1959-1966). Aside being an advocate of what he termed "pragmatic socialism" he also strongly believed that investing in agriculture is key to Nigeria's development. At the age of 39, he was Nigeria's youngest Premier. M.I. Okpara was born on December 25, 1920 at Ohuhu in Umuahia, Abia State. He died on December 17, 1984 in his village, Umuegwu Okpuala, Abia State. Streets, roads, squares and tertiary institutions were named after him.(Awa, 2020)

Chief Sam Mbakwe

Chief Samuel Onunaka Mbakwe, Dee Sam, as he was fondly called, was sworn in as Governor of Imo State on Monday 1st October, 1979. The Imo State that Chief Mbakwe governed was composed of the present Imo State, Abia State and Afikpo area of Ebonyi State. Mbakwe, as a renowned lawyer is known for his efforts to fight the obnoxious abandoned property saga in Rivers State after the Nigeria-Biafra war. This endeared him to the entire Igbo people hence his election in an Igbo state as a state governor during the Second Republic, Nigeria.



Chief C.C. Onoh

Christian Onoh, popularly known as C.C. Onoh was a businessman and a lawyer who became Governor of Anambra State in 1983 at the end of the Nigerian Second Republic. He was also the father-in-law of the former Biafran leaders, General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. Onoh was born on 27 April 1927 in Enugu Ngwo. He rose to be the first indigenous Chairman of the Board of Nigeria Coal Corporation. During the Nigeria-Biafra war, Onoh was appointed the Administrator of Enugu Capital Territory. He died after active service as a politician and statesman on 5 May, 2009 at the age of 82.(Agajelu, 2020)

Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe

Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe was a nationalist, politician, statesman and government minister in the First Republic Nigeria. After his educational surgeon in the United States of America, Mbadiwe came back to Nigeria and was elected into the Eastern Region House of Assembly in 1951. Since then, he made a lot of impact on the Nigerian political scene hence his reappointments into important federal ministries over the years. He was the founder of the renowned newspaper, *Daily Telegraph*.(Lynch, 2012).

Other Igbo personage who laid their marks in different spheres of life are: Michael Okpala popularly known as Power Mike who was a household name in the world of wrestling as a retired undefeated World Heavyweight wrestling champion (interview); Dr. Ezekiel Izuogu, who became the first indigenous automobile designer in Nigeria; Sam Okwaraji, who died playing for the Nigerian national football team.

It is equally important to highlight a couple of the Igbo people that made early but indelible mark in the academia.

Chinua Achebe

A proud recipient of numerous local and international honors, awards (including professorial positions), and widely acknowledged as the king of African literature, Albert Chinualumogu Achebe, the fifth child of his

parents, was born in colonial Nigeria at Ikenga village in Ogidi town of eastern Nigeria on November 16, 1930. (Njoku, 2013: 249-250) Professor Achebe was known to have contributed immensely in the launching of the rather under studied Igbo people to the world. Conceived in the colonial context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when very little was preserved in writing by the Africans on Igbo social life and customs, Achebe's trilogy—*Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964)—have particularly served scholars of all disciplines as a rare intellectual resource material. The plot of these works was primarily intended to shed light on different aspects of Igbo/African social institutions and practices as well as highlight the nature of conflicts that threatened the indigenous society as it came under alien intrusion.(Njoku, 2013: 249-250)

K.O. Dike

Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike was a trailblazer in defense of African culture and historical studies. His African-centered orientation contributed to the development of historical consciousness of Africa, and the popularisation of the use of oral sources and material culture in African historical method. He played a critical role in the rise of modern African historiography. He was also the first indigenous Vice Chancellor of a Nigerian university, the University of Ibadan. Dike was born in Awka in present-day Anambra state, Nigeria, on December 17, 1917.(Chuku, 2012: 138).

Other Igbo people who had been influential in the academia and are worth mentioning in this study include Flora Nwapa, Helen Chukwuma, Adiele Afigbo, Pius Okigbo, Ben Nwabuezu, Chimamanda Adichie, Sam Ekeh, Philip Emeagwali among others.



Conclusion

It is no mean feat that the Igbo were able to dust off the rubbles of war within a decade after they were forced into what could be described as war of attrition. As could be seen in the study, the federal government post-war policies did not help to ameliorate the plight of the people; instead in some instances it appeared to have exacerbated it. Even though the Igbo lost some admirable traits which they were known for in the pre-civil war years,(Ota, 2016: 520) they went on to imbibe a culture of self-help, which could be said to be responsible for their speedy growth since the mid-1970s.

Pedestrian observation would leave one without doubt that the federal government presence is conspicuously lacking in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Certain factors that enable socio-economic growth and development, such as basic infrastructure, have not been adequately provided by the governments (both at the federal, state and local levels). However, the zeal to survive against all odds appears to be the driving force for the enterprising nature of the Igbo. As could be deduced from the study, the Igbo seem not to be obscured in almost all aspect of the Nigerian national life even after they were virtually subdued after the civil war. Many Igbo people have contributed in the political development of the country through initiating ideas that strengthened the political fabrics of the rather fragile federation. A good example is the idea of spreading the country into six geopolitical zones in an effort to ensure broad representation of the people especially the minority ethnic groups. The Igbo have conspicuously contributed to the socio-economic growth and development of the country. This could be seen in the number of Igbo people in the private sector of the country's economy. The people have shown to be creative and innovative, which goes on to enhance the industrial economy of the country. The people's penchant for western education has also ensured qualitative population and a relative high index in human development and capacity building. However, these feats may have their short-comings as they could probably generate contempt and hatred from other ethnic nationalities



that share nationhood with the Igbo. The attitude of the rest of Nigeria to the Igbo before, during and after the civil war may be a pointer towards this direction.

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