

**WOMEN AND WAR: DECONSTRUCTING THE IMPACT OF THE CIVIL WAR  
ON THE YALA WOMEN OF CROSS RIVER STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Nigerian Civil War has undoubtedly reshaped the history of the country. The copious narratives about this war depicted the Igbo as the sole victims. Contrary to these pan-Igbo narratives, the non-Igbo 'minority' groups along the boundary where the first gunshot was fired were victims at both ends- the Federal and Biafra troops. The scarcity of documented records on the impact of the 30 months war on the Yala-speaking women of Cross River State informed the choice of this study using the minority lenses. The study is a bold attempt at filling this lacuna caused by patriarchy and the double minority status of Yala women. The study adopts the Social Inclusion Theory as a theoretical framework of analysis and the historical approach using documented sources validated with oral sources from women of discernible ages at the time of the war and some veterans. Some of the impact observed were fractured relationships (kinship and spousal), physical and psychological abuse, and death. The study concludes that an improved interest in the reconstruction of the civil war events to capture the minority perspective in the civil war narrative is a necessity in the nation-building discourse.

**Keywords:** Civil War, Minority, Veterans, Women, Yala Introduction.

**INTRODUCTION**

Yala refers to a people and their tongue. These people are located in the northern fringes of Cross River State. Yala speaking area is situated between latitude 6°25' - 6°50' north and longitude 8°25' - 8°55' east, covering an area of approximately 7435 sqkm in present-day Cross River State. It has the following non-Yala speaking groups as neighbours to the North-West; Ukelle, the North; Igede (Gabu) and Yache in the North-east; Bekwarra and Nkim in the East; and Nkum and Ekajuk in the South. They also interacted with the Tiv and Igbo, who are closer to the Igede-

Yache and the Ukelle in the present Benue and Ebonyi States. Hence, with the current configuration: Ukelle, Igede (Gabu) and Yache, are found in Yala Local Government Area; Bekwarra communities of Ijibo, Akpakpa, and Abuochiche in the Bekwarra Local Government Area; the Ekajuk, Nkim and Nkum in Ogoja Local Government Area. Its non-contiguous nature is expressive in the Mfom I and II located between Iboko-Okpoma and Yahe. This clarification is necessary since there are other Yala groups in Ikom and Obubra Local Government Areas.<sup>1</sup> Together, the Yala and her proximate neighbours in the northern fringes of Cross River State fall within the food basket of the State, as evident in the fleet of lorries conveying foodstuffs out of the area.<sup>2</sup> The tripolar regional configuration of Nigeria foisted the various 'minority' groups into the spheres of influence of the 'majority' triumvirate groups- Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, and Yoruba in the East, North, and West, respectively. The Yala group was part of the non-Igbo 'minority' group of the then Eastern Region, later South-Eastern, and currently, Cross River State. Although the first canon of the 30-month Civil War in Nigeria exploded in Gakem, present-day Bekwarra Local Government Area, a proximate

## **THE CALABAR HISTORICAL JOURNAL**

Vol. 10, No. 1, June 2021 p10-19 ISSN: 2315-8816

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neighbour to Yala Local Government, the people along that axis- Obudu, Bekwarra, Ogoja, Yala in the then Ogoja Division had their respective share of what started as a police action. The Yala society is patriarchal, and the women constitute a 'minority' not in terms of numerical composition but the socio-cultural socialization. Thus, the Yala women are part of a 'minority' within a 'minority' concerning the civil war. Therefore, this study examines an aspect of the civil war involving Yala women consigned to passivity or no interest by scholars.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopts the Social Inclusion Theory closely knitted with the Theory of Exclusion popularized by Rene Lenior in the 1970s. The kernel of this theory is improving participation in society, irrespective of socio-political and economic stratifications. What matters is the inalienable rights of the human person. The World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 defined an inclusive society as "a society for all," wherein everyone has rights and responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> Such an inclusive society, the United Nations maintains, is equipped with mechanisms that accommodate diversity and facilitate people's economic, political, and social participation without recourse to race, gender, class, generation, and geography.<sup>4</sup> The social inclusion theory is appropriate in this study due to the double-barreled minority politics the Yala women suffer. First, the minority-majority discontent in the then Eastern Region wherein the Yala of Ogoja Province foisted under the hegemonic Igbo; and second, the prevailing patriarchal system in Yala. These undermined the Yala women's narrative of the civil war and consigned it to passivity. The Igbo group have perpetuated the victims' narrative robbing other non-Igbo group considered saboteurs or villains to the Igbo agitation that culminated in the civil war.

### **THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR AND THE "MINORITIES"**

Wars are forms of interactions known to and exploited by man over time. The reasons might be territorial and economic expansionism, vendetta, and self-determination. Okpeh Okpeh argues:

Wars and conflicts are enduring features of human existence throughout the ages. Indeed, as social processes, they have remained critical variables in the nature and character of the emergence, development, and transformation of human society in the sense that they are essential determinants in the processes of state formation, boundary adjustments and consolidation, cultural contacts, interactions, identity definition, social transformation, and commercial intercourse and exchanges.<sup>5</sup> The Nigerian Civil War was prosecuted on the contradictions of identity definition and self-determination by the secessionist Biafrans of then Eastern Nigeria. The immediate cause of the civil war was the declaration of the Republic of Biafra by Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, and the response by General Yakubu Gowon's led Federal Military Government was to maintain the (dis)unity of Nigeria.

The Nigerian Civil War could be illustrated as a contestation of two elephants thumping their feet on the grasses, thereby obstructing the serenity of the vegetation. The choice of the hilly Gakem at the border (as it was at the time) between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the secessionist Republic of Biafra is beyond the purview of this paper. However, Donald Omagu notes that: "the Biafrans understood that their strongest defence

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perimeter would be along Nsukka, Obudu, Gakem, and Nyonya (Nyanya) in Ogoja Province, where they share a border with the North.”<sup>6</sup> Also, the factors that ignited the cannon have been copiously treated by the many pieces of literature churned out on the subject. This study will briefly reappraise some of these factors since they still cast ominous images with incremental potency threatening the country’s unity.

The ethnic intolerance among the hegemonic “majority” groups (Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, and Yoruba) in the contestation for control of the federation immediately after independence brewed mutual suspicion and hostility. Ambrose Mbanefo’s psychological analysis of the Nigerian Civil War provided the psychological factors antecedent to the Civil War, including differences in achievement motive and ideological conflicts, inter-ethnic perceptions, traditional loyalty and ethnic identity, and loss of status.<sup>7</sup> The January 15, 1966 coup and the counter-coup of July 29, 1966 exhibited the divisive role of ethnoreligious bigotry within the political gladiatorial level and the military. The Igbo and their Hausa/Fulani counterparts within the *WAZOBIA* were principal actors in the coups. The Majors of the January coup were mainly Igbo, accused of pursuing an Igbo agenda because the victims mainly were the northern political elite punctuated with a minority politician from the Mid-West. The emergence of an Igboman, General J. T. U. Aguyi-Ironsi as Head of State, the ill-advised promotion of some military officers and the unification decree (Decree No. 34 of May 24, 1966), and levity expressed in handling the coup plotters, were perceived as a deliberate affront to the North. Hence, the counter-coup that ousted Ironsi and reclaimed power lasted several decades.

The genocidal activity in the North targeted the Igbo, and the seeming acquiescence of the Federal Government towards safeguarding the lives and property of fellow Nigerians of Eastern extraction were indicators of disunity. When Ojukwu sounded the home call to all Ndigbo, the ominous cloud had gathered, and the rain of blood and gore followed the declaration of a Biafran Republic in 1967. Providing an insight into the political undercurrent precipitating the Civil War, John St. Jorre reminiscence the Gowon’s federalist desperate need for trump cards against Ojukwu, one of these was the creation of State:

The creation of states was the answer for, in political terms, a profound redistribution of power in the country. It would break the power monopoly of the Ibos[sic] and Hausa/Fulani, bring the underprivileged and under-represented minorities in for the new share-out, offers the five million Eastern minorities a potentially better deal than Ojukwu was giving them, and by reducing Regional power through its sub-division, strengthen the weak central government. It amounted to a radical and daring strategy.<sup>8</sup>

The “minority” status of the non-Igbo people of the Eastern Region meant nothing to the Biafrans. If the non-Igbo “minorities” had mattered in the Biafran discourse in the Igbodominated Eastern Region, their needs and aspirations could have reflected prominently in the reversal of the marginalized status of the people whose agitation for a Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers (COR) State was frustrated before the Willink Commission of inquiry. Some have argued negatively for the “minorities” drawing parallels from great nationalist movements in Britain and France where smaller ethnic groups within those nationalisms are necessarily and inevitably submerged by the greater force and, ultimately, for the common good.<sup>9</sup> Given the number of minorities totaling over 5 million<sup>10</sup> At the time, it was inexcusable to discard these

people. First, the minorities were too numerous to be blithely written off because they host 99% of the petroleum resources, geographically half the size of the entire region, and the primary source of agricultural and fishing resources. Second, the “minorities” had long agitated for their State, the COR State predating the conception of a Biafran Republic. Third, the non-Igbo “minorities” had a commonality of “minority” experiences like other “minorities” in the Northern and Western Regions.<sup>11</sup> Ademonyega strengthened St. Jorre’s position boldly:

...He (Ojukwu) arrogated all power, will, decision, and direction to himself... other Nigerians meant little or nothing to him – he could do without them – as soon as he got all he wanted from them... at the same time, he seemed to have ignored the fact that the Eastern Region did not consist solely of the Ibo people. If the Ibo were prepared to go the whole hog with him, how about the non-Ibo – the Ibibio, Efik, Annang, Ogoja, Ekepeye, Ogoni, Abua, Odual, Ijaw, and Engenni?<sup>12</sup> The provincial reconfiguration of the Eastern Region by Ojukwu into 20 Provinces was a belated recognition of the minority issue in the region. The Igbo-non-Igbo relations since 1945 were one putrefied with the “majority-minority” discontent. The Igbo were desirous of a sphere of influence sustained by the “minorities” consigned to perpetual marginalization. The “minorities” got a reprieve, however transient from a “minority” Angas, General Yakubu Gowon, with the 12 States, one of which, the South East State, had the Yala people and others from Ogoja Province. Economic viability is a paramount basis for self-determination; this Ojukwu discovered in the crude oil and agricultural producing “minority” areas. Ken Saro Wiwa enunciated the reason for Ojukwu’s arrogance in declaring a Republic and plunging a group of people reckoned with contemptuously as huer of wood and drawers of water to the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria. To actualize this brazen exploitation of the “minorities” revenues accruable from oil were confiscated by the Ojukwu-led Eastern Regional Government by the Revenue Collection Edict 11 of 1967, starving the Federal Government of such resources and funds.

The non-Igbo “minorities” foisted into the Eastern Region were excluded from the power game at the centre because of their emasculated political status by the Igbo-dominated political elite. Whether the creation of the 12 states was a wartime strategy against the Biafrans, the point to note is that the minority issues in Nigeria were responsible for the agitation of states in 1957. “Agitation for the creation of states was pioneered by the minorities for self-determination from the dominance of the majorities. However, state creation agitations have more majorities involved and getting their demands realized as against the minorities.”<sup>13</sup> If the concession canvassed by the Igbo-dominated Eastern region was justice, why did their elite scuttle the agitation of a Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers (COR) State in 1957? Ojukwu declared: “Gowon tried to get the minorities to rise against the government in the East, and I had to act swiftly to ensure that this did not happen.”<sup>14</sup> Ojukwu’s declaration explains, too, that the new 20 Provinces created in the East was a grand strategy to keep the “minorities” in the region under servitude and maintain law and order. It was this ethnic nationalistic tendency that guided all the negotiations, propaganda, and narratives during and after the war.

St. Jorre’s treatise on the Civil War mentioned Ogoja, the provincial cradle of the war, passively without mentioning Gakem or indexing Ogoja. This was also the case in Achebe’s *There Was A Country*, where “Ikom, Iyala[Yala], and Mbembe.”<sup>15</sup> Gakem-Bekwarra is a

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Vol. 10, No. 1, June 2021 p10-19 ISSN: 2315-8816

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border community where the first shots of the Civil War were fired. Yala formed part of the route traversed by both the Federal and Biafran troops during the war. The Federal forces marched from Eastern to Western Yalaland, had camped and encountered the Biafrans. The Yala, like others in Ogoja Province, were derogatorily labeled as *Yamiri* by the Hausa/Fulani, probably because of the tripolar regional composition of the country from 1946. Madam Paulina Okache remembered how an Idoma soldier convinced other Federal troops that the Yala people were not *Yamiri* (Igbo) but of the same stock as the Idoma of Benue State.<sup>16</sup> Teacher Idu, from the Yahe family unit of Abachor-Igbeku, Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State, recounted his civil war experience, how he was captured by Federal troops in his village and mistaken for an Igbo because of his physical appearance. He was tied and thrown into a military truck with others. He said:

As the truck was in motion, the soldiers kept throwing overboard civilian captives with hands and feet tied backward. These were left to die a painful death. I kept weeping and speaking in Yala as I struggled close to where the driver was. Unknowingly, an Idoma soldier overheard me, and we kept communicating. That was how I was saved and got recruited into the Nigerian Army to fight the Biafrans.<sup>17</sup>

War activities were about the Igbo. The imposed passivity of the non-Igbo “minorities” distorts the peoples’ past concerning the war. Hence, the war and its impact accorded a pan-Igbo colouration as if the minorities along the borders were not victims. It is also possible that playing the victim was a deliberate strategy to maintain a firm grip over the then Eastern region. This is as continued agitations for realizing a Biafra Republic by the various strands of the secessionist Biafran groups in present-day South-East Nigeria. It is in this light, that attention is turned to the impact of the Nigerian Civil War on the Yala-speaking women of the Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State.

## THE IMPACT OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR ON YALA WOMEN

The Chief of Staff to the Gowon’s Administration, Hassan Kastina, once declared during the heat of the war on the “minority” Ogoja people: “Ogoja should be annihilated because ‘water yam na yam.’”<sup>18</sup> It is the *Yamiri* phenomenon that Hassan Katsina was referring to, and it follows, too, that the Civil War activities of the veterans impacted the whole of Ogoja Province and Yala in particular. St. Jorre captured the general disposition of the “minority” Ogoja people in a war they knew nothing about. The memoirs of an Ogoja man, who might have hailed from any of the communities in the province, instructive:

On hearing that [the declaration of Biafra’s independence], I switched off the radio set and went to the kitchen to tell my illiterate mother that she was no more a Nigerian but a Biafran. When the old woman heard of this, she looked at me with uncomprehending eyes and said: “What do you mean, my son?” to answer her question, I had to tell her the whole story in our language. She sighed and said, “Do you mean that another war like the one the Hausas[sic] and Ibos [sic]were fighting will be fought here amongst us?” I said: “I don’t know, mama.” Well, poor woman, to her, like most peasants in the Eastern

minority areas, what they loathed most was a Hausa-Ibo[sic] war being fought on their land. Otherwise, being Nigerians or Biafrans made no difference.<sup>19</sup>

The choice of women in this study is premised on a twin-pronged but related fact- the “minority” status of Yala, like the whole of Ogoja Province, and the “minority” status of women in a patriarchal society.

### **FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS (KINSHIP AND SPOUSAL)**

Mothers are naturally attached to their sons. The birth of a son is a treasured gift to the mother, whose place in marriage is consolidated and secured. This explains the fanfare that heralds the nativity of a son to every family irrespective of the professed creed, educational and economic background of the family involved. This bond that starts from the cradle to the grave, Sigmund Freud describes as Oedipus Complex. The Oedipus Complex derives from the Greek Literature Sophocles’ King Oedipus. This psycho-analytical evaluation of the relationship between children and parents of the opposite sex- while the love between the child with the parent of the opposite sex is so vital to the point hatred for the parent of the same sex borne out of jealousy, in the classical case of Oedipus incest and regicide were committed.<sup>20</sup>

*Lehu jer’ene ni-* war does not recognize relations. Everyone runs to safety. Since the Civil War took the Yala people unawares, family ties were easily broken because everyone responded to that event primarily as individuals- parents were split from children and husbands from wives and vice versa. Families lost their loved ones completely (death) or by installment (maimed) to bullets and bombs. The mother to the Emeritus Catholic Archbishop of Calabar Archdiocese, Most Rev. Dr. J. Edra Ukpo, lost one of her children at Okpoma during one of the bombardments. During the Civil War, both Federal and secessionist troops attacked the civilian population consisting mainly of women and children (the more vulnerable) on either side to emasculate the other through rape (women/girls), pillage, and outright killing. The war exposed women to psychological trauma as a consequence of crashed or failed relationships with their conscripted husbands/lovers who got killed or maimed, or separated by death or infirmities. These women were, in some cases, “conscripted” by the veterans from their families/spouses to satisfy the sexual orgies of the troops. Some civilians took advantage of the war to forcefully or treacherously get girls/women they had unsuccessfully wooed or merely fancied before and during the war. Some women played along with the veterans to spare their families/communities the pangs of the war.

The Civil War took the Yala people unawares. The people have neither involved the politics at the centre nor envisaged that the “police action” earlier thought about staving off the brewing crisis at Gakem would escalate into war. This was akin to the case of World War I, perceived to end before Christmas (from August to December) 1914, but rather lasted for four years. In the case of the Nigerian Civil War, it raged for two and a half years. At the time of the war, those women/girls who were either married or had an intimate relationship with the opposite sex were separated. Their separation was physical through death from the heavy artillery fire, emotional separation through deformity, impotence/infertility, and divorce.

Some of the women who were married before the war had to hurry back home because of the hostilities in their cities of residence. Thus, the impact of distance and the need for



security led some women into extra-marital relationships that, in most cases, resulted in breeding children out of wedlock. In other instances, while the female partners remained faithful to their vows of fidelity, their male spouses became promiscuous and ended up in polygamous relationships. An ex-police officer who fought on the side of the Federal troops gave an explanation for liaison between soldiers and the women: “When you sorry [empathize with] them[girls/women] them go stay with you. No soldier who was matured wen go se him no get girl or woman wen stay with am during war even wen him thing[manhood] no de work...”<sup>21</sup> The vulnerability of these women, whose war agonies were of epic proportions, were rather manipulated by the troops who had either killed or frightened the husbands and fathers of these defenseless women. Also, some civilian strongmen helped themselves with some of the vulnerable women at the expense of their earlier relationships.

### **PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSES**

Granted that women (and children) are the most vulnerable in times of crisis, the Yala women suffered physical and psychological abuses from the men around them during and after the war. When the war broke out, Madam Paulina Okache recollects how she and other people, especially women and children, had to run as fast and far as their legs could take them. In her case, she fled Okuku through Abachor-Igbeku to Woda for safety.<sup>22</sup> Safety has to do with being free from the rampaging twin barrels (the gun and the phallus) in the possession of the troops. These barrels could destroy the life and integrity of the Yala woman, thereby plunging her into physical and psychological trauma. This gendered violence had caused some women to either become unmarried or single parents. The use of brute force on the vulnerable is characteristic of war, where some troops negate the rules of engagement by violating women and girls. This is a war crime. Indeed, prohibitions against wartime sexual violence enumerated in the Geneva Conventions or the Protocols to the Geneva Conventions predate CEDAW and other modern human rights instruments or provisions that specifically address gender discrimination.<sup>23</sup> Women and girls were objectified and used by some troops and even civilians to relieve the tension of battle, devalue the opponent's assest to prove their gender superiority (machismo) over the women. An informant in denial of troops raping women stated:

You know there is nowhere you don't have radical [base] men. Soldiers had intimacy with women to show gratitude rather than force[rape]. These women were attracted to the soldiers because of the ration[food] the latter got. ‘wen you give somebody food for one week, no be sidon she go sidon?’ Women were so surplus because of war, many men were killed leaving only women. ‘When man and woman de, e just de like lion and goat.’ I never witnessed any forced relationship.<sup>24</sup>

This account captures, to a significant extent vulnerable girls/women scamper to safety under the Federal troops and, in some cases, rebels during war. The informant accepted the presence of base fellows everywhere but denied that women were bullied and raped countless times. The relationship between a lion and a goat in the lion's den allegorizes what transpired between the troops and some girls/women. Another informant, who was 12 years old at the time of the war, recounts:

What caused the war that led to the shots at Gakem, I didn't know. As a primary school child, as a routine chore, I usually sold firewood for my late grandmother, at the Okuku Market before I go to school at St. Joseph Primary School, Okuku. That fateful day in 1967, I was in a band of similar children when the armored car moved with the sound of a pig and soldiers marching along. There was commotion back home following the random shots at Gakem that we had been killed. My late father, a hunter from Imaje, had threatened to deal with his mother if he couldn't find his only daughter as he set out in search of me.<sup>25</sup>

This poor child, in her innocence, was exposed to the gore of war, a war that never concerned her or her people save for the fact that she and her people were Eastern regional "minorities" in the eyes of the Igbo hegemony, whose disregard for the 12 State reconfiguration by Gowon was legendary. War is not an experience for children. On sexual harassment, Madam Anthonia Odey recalls:

You see, in those days, school children used to be adults. During the Civil War, the soldiers captured attractive girls/women and forcefully made them mistresses, and later, some became wives. At the time, we all felt that girls grabbed and carried shoulder high by the soldiers were being killed, so we stopped going to either school or the markets.<sup>26</sup>

The insecurity of lives and properties resulted in hunger, diseases, and death. The economies of families were adversely affected by the war as women could not carry out their daily economic activities like farming and trading for sustainable livelihood. As effective home managers, women were plunged into broken homes as family ties were severed, food insecurity heightened as the Civil War disrupted farming and other economic activities, hence, the heavy impact of the triple tragedy of hunger, disease, and death. Also, the girl-child, a vulnerable member of society, was denied formal education because of the fear of being captured by the soldiers or killed. So many had to drop out of school and never attended school afterward or continued much later.

However, the Civil War was not entirely catastrophic to the Yala women. Some were lucky to have escaped the misery of domestic violence and poverty. During the war, some daring women befriended the soldiers and made a brisk business from selling locally brewed beer, *yeje* (Yala) or *brukutu* (Hausa). These women started a female entrepreneurial class that comprised economically empowered women who exercised freedom over their sexuality. Also, those who ended up as legally married wives of the soldiers settled and had children who became successful later in life.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Yala people, like other Ogoja "minorities" of the then Eastern Region, were taken unawares with the outbreak of the war. At the beginning, they were accused of sabotage by both the Biafran and Federal troops and thus suffered a double tragedy. The pan-Igbo narratives of the war that excluded the impact of the war on the Yala people (nay Ogoja) have been debunked in this study. There is every need for a more national narrative that will reflect the overall composition of the country- "majority" and "minority" groups. Put differently,



scholars from the “minority” groups should see the pan-Igbo narratives as a wake-up call to articulate the events that precipitated the war and its impact on their land and people. When the scintilla of perspectives is harnessed, a more comprehensive narrative will evolve and the lessons of the war will be appreciated as the search for national integration continues.

Notably, the minority non-Igbo speaking groups in the then Eastern Nigeria have rights as Nigerians as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (as amended). The continued agitation by both the Raph Uwazurike-led Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Nnamdi Kanu-led Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) groups for the realization of a Biafra Republic without recourse to the sensibilities of these non-Igbo groups foisted into the then Igbo-dominated Eastern Region from 1945-1967 smacks ignorance of history and exposed the expansionist tendencies of the Igbo group because of the oil-rich Niger Delta region.

There is a need to establish a Civil War Museum in Gakem, the cradle of the Civil War to preserve and transmit relics and memories of the war. This historical edifice will serve scholars and the general public interested in perspectives of the minority Ogoja Province can be collected, stored, and consulted to balance the war narratives. The establishment of the Umudike War Museum in Abia State is in furtherance of majority-minority politics. Hence, the Yala nay Ogoja narratives of the Civil War need to be preserved and interrogated too. The intelligentsias, veterans, and victims from the Old Ogoja Province should demonstrate interest in interrogating the Nigerian Civil War from a minority, non-Igbo perspective through conferences and symposia. thus, an inside-out perspective is critical in ventilating their civil war experiences.

<sup>1</sup> See P. O. Odey. “Yala and Her Neighbours in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” *Benue Valley Journal of Humanities* Volume 13, Number 1&2, January-December, 2014, 165-166.

<sup>2</sup> P. O. Odey. “From the mound to the square: the impact of the New Yam Festival on the Ogoja People,” *African Identities*, 2020, 2. DOI: 10.1080/14725843.2020.1850233.

<sup>3</sup>United Nations. “Department of Economic and Social Affairs” un.org. Accessed March 4, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations...

<sup>5</sup> O. O. Okpeh. “Post-Civil War Reconstruction in West Africa: A Comparative Study of Nigeria and Liberia.” In *War and Peace in Africa* edited by Toyin Falola and C. N. Raphael. (Durham: Carolina Academic Press; 2010), 325.

<sup>6</sup> D. O. Omagu. *A Neglected History: The Bekwarra People of Cross River State and the Nigerian Civil War*. (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, 2016), p.77.

<sup>7</sup> A. C. Mbanefo. “A Psychological Analysis of the Nigerian Civil War: Future Implications for Unity and Nationhood.” In *The Civil War Years: Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence*. Zaria, March 1983, p. 12-17

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<sup>8</sup> J. de St. Jorre. *The Nigerian Civil War*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton; 1979), 107.

<sup>9</sup> J. de St. Jorre. 116.

<sup>10</sup> J. de St. Jorre. 116.

<sup>11</sup> J. de St. Jorre. 116-117.

<sup>12</sup> A. Ademoyega. *Why we struck the Story of the First Nigerian Coup*. (Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited; 1981), 177.

<sup>13</sup> P. O. Odey. "The Minority Question in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Experience, 1957-2014" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, 2021) 140.

<sup>14</sup> J. de St. Jorre. 144.

<sup>15</sup> C. Achebe. *There Was A Country. A Personal History of Biafra*. (London: Penguin Groups; 2012), 150.

<sup>16</sup> P. Okache, 68, Farmer, interviewed at Okuku-Yala, February 2, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> T. Idu, 74, Ex-serviceman, interviewed at Ayieko, Abachor-Igbeku, July 3, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> J. A. Aboh. "The Impact of the Nigerian Civil War on Ogoja in Upper Cross River Region" M.A Thesis, History and International Studies, University of Calabar, October 2003, 41. <sup>19</sup> John de St. Jorre. 143.

<sup>20</sup> P. O. Odey. "Women as Preys and Predators: Reflections on The Yala Women Experience" *Port Harcourt Journal of History & Diplomatic Studies (PJHDS)* Volume 5, Number 4, December, 2018, 324.

<sup>21</sup> O. Akobi, 68, Ex-Police Officer, interviewed at Okuku-Yala, March 2, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> P. Okache.

<sup>23</sup> P. O. Odey. "Weaponizing Rape: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Experience" (forthcoming)

<sup>24</sup> O. Akobi.

<sup>25</sup> A. A. Odey. 62, trader, interviewed at Okuku, December 25, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> A. A. Odey.