

IKA LAND UNDER THE FIRST REPUBLIC AND THE NIGERIAN AND BIAFRAN WAR, 1960-1970

Nmeme, Edoghogho Christian; Augustine Uche Igwe, PhD
Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
Email: Memehchristian@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria's First Republic (1960–1966) constituted the nation's initial democratic endeavor, organized under a Westminster-style parliamentary framework. This era was characterized by deep ethnic and regional divisions, electoral malpractices, and political volatility. These systemic deficiencies culminated in the military coup of January 1966, which abruptly ended the First Republic and initiated a prolonged period of military rule. Throughout the First Republic, Nigeria experienced significant political instability driven by ethnic tensions and electoral misconduct. Although Ika land was incorporated into the newly formed Mid-Western Region in 1963, the secession of Biafra in 1967 directly implicated the area in the Nigerian Civil War. Functioning as a strategic link between the West and the East, Ika communities including, Agbor, suffered severe occupation, substantial loss of life, and extensive damage to infrastructure. Against this context, this paper examines the political development of the Ika people during the First Republic. It also analyzes the effects of the Nigerian Civil War on the Ika population. The study adopts a historical research approach, employing qualitative analysis of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. Oral interviews were conducted, and data were obtained from archival records and government documents. Relevant books, articles, reports, newspapers, online resources, and other publications were also reviewed. The paper concludes that the First Republic in Ika land, was a period of political uncertainty, marked by the minority question and the instability that led to the 1966 coup, the dissolution of the republic, and the eventual onset of the Nigerian Civil War, which had adverse effects on socio-economic and political activities in Ika land.

Keywords: First Republic, Ika land, Nigerian Civil War, Sever Occupation, Socio-economic Effects

Introduction

The Ika people, indigenous to present-day Delta and Edo States, found themselves at a critical geographic and political crossroads. During the First Republic and the Nigerian Civil War, Ika land was part of the Mid-Western Region. They suffered heavily as a major battleground between Nigerian federal troops and Biafran forces. Prior to the First Republic, the Ika people were trapped in the Western Region. However, Ika leaders actively supported the push for a separate region, which culminated in the creation of the Mid-Western Region via a 1963 plebiscite. Politically, Ika leaders aligned closely with the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which dominated the Eastern Region and wielded significant influence across the Niger.¹

The military coups of January and July 1966 created instability that spilled into Ika land, leaving the Mid-Western Region in a precarious position as ethnic tensions rose nationally. Due to the fact that Ika language is a West Niger Igbo dialect, many Ika people were often generalized as "Delta Igbo" or linked with the Eastern Region, although they possessed distinct cultural and historical ties to the historic Igbo and that of Benin Kingdom. In August 1967, Biafran troops invaded the Mid-Western Region, occupying Ika land. Agbor, Owa and Umunede became central military bases and strategic strongholds for the Biafran army. After intense fighting, Nigerian federal troops eventually pushed the Biafran forces back across the Niger, liberating Ika land. During this counter-offensive, the Ika people were forced to align with and assist the federal troops to reclaim their territories. The Ika people paid a heavy price for a war they did not initiate. Ika people suffered immense loss of life, displacement, and economic devastation due to the brutal reality of having active front lines and bombings in their communities.²

Nigeria's First Republic (1960–1966) was characterized by a parliamentary system of government, a federal structure heavily dominated by regions, and intense ethnic-based politics that eventually led to the collapse of the democratic process. During the First Republic (1960–1966), local government in Nigeria was not a distinct, autonomous third tier of government as it is today. Instead, it functioned as an extension of the regional governments (the Northern, Eastern, and Western Regions) and was heavily shaped by the preexisting British indirect rule system. Following the Western Region Local Government Law of 1952, the region utilized a mixture of traditional authorities (Obas) and democratically elected councils. Because local government fell entirely under regional legislative jurisdiction, councils often suffered from a lack of autonomy, inadequate funding, and excessive political interference by the ruling regional parties. These weaknesses persisted until the sweeping national local government reforms implemented in 1976.³

Orewa and Adewumi, in their book *Local Government in Nigeria: The Changing Scene Vol. 11*,⁴ noted that since the inception of native authority and subsequent local government, this country did not witness wholesale nationwide structural reform before the 1976 reform. Local government has been left to develop along regional state lines, taking into account the varying cultural and social background of the people.

Adewale Ademoyega, in his book *Why We Struck*,⁵ narrated how inadvertently Agbor was made the headquarters of the Mid-Western State during the Nigerian Civil War on the 18th of September 1967, when Benin was about to be captured by federal troops. What he did not note was that this singular act of moving the headquarters to Agbor made Agbor a target of the federal troops. The civil war impacted the Ika people significantly through physical casualties, displacement, economic hardship, psychological trauma, and a lasting sense of division.

Uwakina Stephen, in his account in his book, *Ika Nation in the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*,⁶ notes that the news of the war recurring in Ika land in early 1966 resulted from the mass migration from the North by persons of Eastern Nigeria extraction due to the pogrom happening in the North. By 1967, the civil war had begun officially, and the Biafran soldiers arrived in Agbor on the 9th of August 1967. Upon their arrival, the Biafran soldiers' presence elicited fear among the people of Ika, as the people did not know what to expect. Schools, markets, farms, and roads were closed down. The war hindered their economic and socioeconomic development, as they witnessed different successive governments under military commandants.

Prelude to the Nigerian Independence in Ika land

In the years preceding Nigeria's independence in 1960, Ika people experienced integration into the Western Region, the rise of local nationalist sentiment, and traditional socio-political adjustments to colonial administrative frameworks. During the 1950s, Ika communities were governed as part of the Western Region, one of Nigeria's three primary political divisions. Consequently, the political and socioeconomic developments surrounding the approaching independence were largely influenced by the dynamics of Western Nigerian politics. Leaders and communities in the area managed their status as minority ethnic groups within a region dominated by the Action Group (AG) under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. During this period, the British system of indirect rule elevated certain Ika traditional leaders. For example, the Obi of Agbor was recognized as a significant traditional authority and secured a seat in the Western House of Chiefs in Ibadan. This arrangement gave Ika people a voice in regional parliamentary affairs prior to independence, even as distinct kingdoms such as Owa, Abavo, and Umunede maintained their separate identities.⁷

The 1950s witnessed considerable socio-cultural advancement, largely driven by the expansion of formal education and missionary efforts in Ika land. Educated elites, civil servants, and returning soldiers who had served in the World Wars emerged as the leading proponents of nationalist ideology. They linked the local Ika population to the broader anti-colonial movements championed by national figures, thereby generating local support for the end of British rule.

The final general elections before independence, held in late 1959, served as a crucial precursor. Ika people became deeply involved in intense electoral contests between the Action Group (AG) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). This period heightened the political awareness of the Ika people, who recognized that an independent Nigeria was imminent. As the 1960 independence date approached, a key development for Ika people was the growing demand by minority groups, including the Ika and other Western Igbo populations, for an autonomous region separate from the Yoruba-dominated Western Region. Although this agitation was temporarily set aside to ensure a peaceful transition to independence on October 1, 1960, the underlying discussions directly culminated in the 1963 referendum that successfully established the Mid-Western Region.⁸

Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960 marked a pivotal transition for the Ika people, shifting them from colonial-era integration into a broader national structure. Politically, this liberation enabled the Ika, predominantly situated in modern Delta State, to pursue self-governance within the Mid-Western Region (established in 1963) and to achieve enhanced cultural preservation and local administration. Examining the impact of independence and subsequent developments on Ika communities, such as Agbor, Owa, and Umunede, involves several key themes:

Political Restructuring and Self-Determination- Creation of the Mid-Western Region (1963): Prior to 1960, the Ika were incorporated into the expansive Western Region. Following independence, the Ika actively campaigned for the establishment of the Mid-Western Region in 1963, thereby extricating themselves from Yoruba-dominated governance and aligning more closely with their immediate cultural counterparts in present-day Edo and Delta states.

Cultural Preservation and Identity- Distinct Heritage: Independence fostered a heightened emphasis on unique traditional institutions. The Ika people, comprising eleven distinct clans (including Agbor, Abavo, and Owa) some communities in present day Orhionmwon L.G.A of Edo state, have historically asserted a separate identity from the Igbo. **Traditional Governance:** The post-independence period allowed the Ika to sustain and elevate their traditional monarchical systems, led by their Obis (or the Dein of Agbor), ensuring that customary laws and indigenous governance persisted alongside democratic changes.

Economic and Infrastructural Development-: As part of an independent Nigeria, Ika territory (with Agbor serving as a historic and commercial center) underwent substantial modernization, transitioning from an agrarian foundation to participation in national trade, education, and civil service. **State-Level Representation:** Independence empowered the Ika to advocate for improved representation at state and federal levels, which has spurred development projects, enhanced road networks, and elevated Ika natives to prominent political roles within Delta State.⁹

Ika People Under First Republic 1960-1966

During the First Republic (1960–1966), Ika communities was part of the Western Region until the creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963. From 1954 to 1963, Ika people remained under the Western Region. The political development of Ika people during Nigeria's First Republic in the early 1960s was marked by its integration into the Western Region, the emergence of a distinct minority identity, and its subsequent transition to the Midwestern Region in 1963. The Ika people navigated the prevailing political structures to achieve recognition and representation.¹⁰

In June 1963, Ika people became part of the newly established Mid-Western Region, formed from the Benin and Delta provinces, with its capital in Benin City. The area was actively involved in regional politics, with figures such as Obika Gbenoba (Obi of Agbor) and Edward Anuku recognized as early Ika ministers in the Western Region. Additionally, Ika people produced one of the first female senators in the 1960s, Mrs. Beatrice U. Kerry from Igbodo. Initially, under the Western Region, Ika people were influenced by the Action Group (AG) party. However, the Ika people later participated in the agitation for and eventual formation of the Midwestern Region, which was officially established on August 17, 1963.¹¹

The Mid-Western Region, including Ika people, remained within the Western Region structure until 1963, then transitioned to the new regional framework shortly before the collapse of the First Republic in 1966. Under the suzerainty of the Obi, Ika chiefs were treated as equals in council, leading to challenges in authority. As a minority group in the Western Region, the political focus of Ika elites was largely on ensuring development and securing a distinct administrative identity within the broader Nigerian political landscape, eventually resulting in their inclusion in the new Midwestern Region. This period saw Ika transition from a collection of independent, often isolated, kingdoms into a more unified entity, with Agbor serving as a central hub of political activity. Political and economic relations were heavily influenced by historical ties to Benin.¹²

During the First Republic (1963–1966), the Ika people constituted a minority group that was politically integrated into the Mid-Western Region of Nigeria. Their political system featured a dual governance structure, consisting of newly established democratic councils and deeply entrenched traditional monarchies. **Regional Affiliation:** The Ika people were situated within the Mid-Western Region, which was created in 1963 following its detachment from the larger Western Region. This placed Ika people under the regional administration of the Benin Province.

Below are some of the key features of the Ika people under first republic

Dual Administration (Modern and Traditional): Although democratic party politics functioned at the regional level, local governance was managed by the Ika Federal Native Authority, later re-designated as the Ika Divisional Council. This entity operated alongside ancient, autonomous clan monarchies governed by Obis or the Dein of Agbor.

The Centrality of Agbor: Historically and politically, Agbor emerged as the most influential Ika kingdom. It functioned as the administrative center for the broader Ika district and surrounding areas.

Political Fragmentation: The Ika people did not form a single, unified political entity. Instead, they were organized into 11 independent clans, including Agbor, Owa, Abavo, and Umunede, each managing internal governance autonomously while cooperating through community-based authorities.

Minority Struggles in Regional Politics: Within the wider regional parliament, Ika leaders confronted the political challenge of contending with the dominance of major Nigerian ethnic groups. Ika political leaders primarily aligned with parties that advocated for the protection of minority rights in the Mid-West.

The Ika People and the Issue of Minority Status in the First Republic

During the Nigerian First Republic (1960–1966), the Ika people were non-Yoruba minorities residing within the Western Region, predominantly in the Agbor and Asaba administrative divisions. Their experience was marked by a broader struggle against regional marginalization and ethnic domination.

Context of Marginalization

Yoruba Hegemony: The Ika people, along with groups such as the Edo, Urhobo, and Itsekiri, were profoundly dissatisfied with being governed by the Yoruba-dominated Action Group (AG) that controlled the Western

Region.

Grievances: Minority populations consistently alleged socio-economic neglect, discrimination in resource allocation, and political victimization, leading them to feel like second-class citizens within their own region.

The Mid-West State Movement

Agitation: To escape Yoruba domination, Ika elites and other non-Yoruba groups strongly supported the Mid-West State Movement. This initiative advocated for the creation of a separate region that would unite the minority provinces of Benin and Delta, free from the influence of larger ethnic majorities.

The 1963 Referendum: These agitations culminated in a successful referendum on July 27, 1963, in which over 87% of voters endorsed regional separation.

Creation of the Region: On August 9, 1963, the Mid-Western Region was officially carved out of the Western Region, with Benin City designated as its capital. This development provided the Ika people and neighboring minorities with a stronger voice and localized governance under their own regional premier, Chief Dennis Osadebe.

Identity and Political Alignment

Multi-Layered Affiliation: The Ika people, encompassing clans such as Agbor, Abavo, Owa, and Umunede, occupy a bi-cultural space, sharing historical traditions that trace back to the Igbo and Benin Empire, and their language exhibits similarities with Igbo and Bini dialects.

Political Alliances: During the First Republic, Ika political leaders primarily aligned with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which served as the leading opposition to the AG in the Western Region and championed the creation of the Mid-West Region.¹³

The role of Ika Political Elites during the First Republic

During the Nigerian First Republic (1960–1966), the Ika people were administratively part of the Western Region. Because of this placement, the Ika political elites operated primarily within the regional framework dominated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group. The political structure of this era set the stage for Ika elite participation in the eventual creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963, giving the Ika people a more localized political identity in subsequent republics.

It is important to acknowledge the roles of some Ika political figures in the First Republic and their contributions. First, Obika Gbenoba, the Obi of Agbor, played a crucial role in the political development of Ika people. As discussed previously, he was a leading figure in Ika politics during the First Republic (1960–1966), serving as one of the pioneer political representatives for the region in the Western Regional Government. He and Edward Anuku were recognized as the first two Ika ministers representing the region in the Western Region government. In terms of political leadership and transition, as the Obi of Agbor and a prominent political actor, he operated during the shift from British colonial administration and the restructuring of the Agbor District into the Ika District Council to an independent Nigeria. Balancing traditional and modern roles, his participation in the regional government demonstrated the blending of traditional leadership with the emerging parliamentary system of the First Republic. He navigated complex administrative reforms designed to restructure the Ika District Council, which challenged the traditional authority of the Obi of Agbor through a new council system that granted equal status to other clan heads. His role, alongside others like Edward Anuku, marked the beginning of direct Ika participation in regional and central politics in Nigeria.¹⁴

Second, Edward Anuku contributed significantly to the political development of the Ika nation during Nigeria's First Republic (1960–1966). He was a pioneering figure who served as one of the first two Ika ministers in the Western Region. Key aspects of his role include ministerial representation, providing the Ika people with their earliest high-level executive representation in the Western Regional Government. He engaged in regional advocacy as part of a political leadership that championed the interests of the Midwest area within the larger Western Region. This period was marked by the push for equal standing for non-Yoruba monarchs and leaders, a movement that eventually led to the creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963. Additionally, hailing from the

Owa Kingdom, his appointment helped elevate the political profile of the Owa people and established a foundation for future Ika leaders in state and national politics. Anuku's tenure was historically significant for transitioning Ika political identity from localized traditional administration toward active participation in Nigeria's modern federal structure.¹⁵

Similarly, during Nigeria's First Republic (1960–1966), Mrs. Beatrice U. Kerry from Igbodo was recognized as one of the pioneering female figures in the region's political development. She was identified as a pioneering female legislator or senator from Ika land during the 1960s, contributing to women's representation at a time when women in politics were rare. Under the 1960 Constitution, the Senate was a ceremonial 48-member chamber, with 12 members from each of the three regions nominated by regional premiers. Following Nigeria's independence, Mrs. Kerry was appointed to the Senate in February 1960, serving as part of the initial legislative body alongside other inaugural female members. She was active during the era when Ika was part of the Western Region, contributing to the development and political consciousness of the Ika community in the regional assembly. In the political context of the 1960s, which saw intense political development in the Midwest and Western regions, she played pioneering roles in grassroots mobilization and community advocacy. While the First Republic featured many male political figures like Obika Gbenoba and Edward Anuku from Ika land in the Western Region, Mrs. B.U. Kerry was recognized as a key female exception in that generation of leaders.¹⁶

Ika Under the Mid-Western Region, 1963-1967

The Mid-Western Region of Nigeria was created on August 9, 1963, by Tafawa Balewa's Government as Nigeria's fourth region, emerging from the former Western Region through a democratic referendum. This marked the first instance of Nigerian state creation by constitutional means to address minority rights issues. The voluntary separation of Benin and Delta provinces from the Western Region, driven by local aspirations, established Benin City as its capital and provided a platform for regional development, leading to its later transformation into the Midwestern State, then Bendel State, and eventually Edo and Delta States.¹⁷

The Midwest State traces its origins to the Midwest region. General Gowon renamed the Midwest region to the Midwest State in 1967. On May 27, 1967, the Federal Military Government under General Gowon announced the creation of 12 states, formalized by Decree No. 14 of 1967. The creation of the new states was widely welcomed, especially by minority groups who had long clamored for such changes to relieve them from the constant fear of domination by larger ethnic groups. The Mid-Western region, under the new 12-state structure of the Federation of Nigeria, became the Mid-Western State, covering an area of 15,000 square miles with a population of 2.8 million. It comprised 14 administrative divisions: Aboh, Akoko-Edo, Asaba, Benin East, Benin West, Etsako, Ika, Ishan, Isoko, Owan, Urhobo East, Urhobo West, Warri, and Western Ijaw.¹⁸

The state is geographically well positioned, sharing common boundaries with four of the twelve states and having an 80-mile coastline along the Atlantic Ocean in the southwest and south. Excellent port facilities exist at Sapele, Warri, Koko, and Burutu. The River Niger, a key to the hinterland, flows along the state's eastern border, providing ample river transport, which was enhanced by the completion of the Kainji Dam. The climate is tropical, characterized by two seasons: the dry season from November to April and the rainy season from May to October. The vegetation consists of a mangrove strip along the coast and adjoining areas along creeks and swamps, relieved by a broad zone of deciduous and evergreen forest. The forest zone is succeeded by Savannah toward the Northern border. The region was formed in June 1963 from the Benin and Delta provinces of the Western Region, with its capital in Benin City. It was renamed a province in 1966, and in 1967, when other provinces were divided into several states, it remained territoriality intact, becoming a state.¹⁹

The political evolution of the Ika people under the Midwestern region (1963-1976) was characterized by their integration into this new state carved from the Western Region, solidifying their distinct identity within the region's structure. This later became Bendel State (1976-1991) and then split into Edo and Delta States (1991-present), with Ika communities predominantly in Delta North. This emphasized a unique Igbo-Bini heritage and a striving for recognition, especially for communities like Igbanke, Ute-Oheze, and Owariuzor, among others which were caught in Edo State, showing a continuous push for self-determination and cultural preservation within broader Nigerian political changes. The Ika people, historically part of the Benin Province, became integral to the new region, which aimed to provide a home for diverse groups such as the Ika, Urhobo, Isoko, and others.

In 1967, the region became the Mid-Western State when Nigeria was divided into 12 states, retaining its original boundaries. When the Nigeria and Biafra war broke out, the region faced invasion by Biafran forces, leading to the brief declaration of the "Republic of Benin," highlighting the complex ethnic dynamics and political instability of the era, with Ika areas affected. In essence, Ika communities have always been associated with the territories that formed the Mid-Western Region and its successor, Bendel State, making them integral to that historical,

political and geographical area. The political characteristics of the Ika people were shaped by autonomous traditional kingdoms and their representation in the regional legislature, which ultimately contributed to their modern identity in Mid-Western Nigeria.²⁰

In contrast to the centralized political systems found in other parts of Nigeria, the Ika political structure was highly decentralized. It comprised autonomous, independent clans and kingdoms, most notably the Agbor Kingdom, the numerically largest and historically most significant kingdom in Ika ethnography, along with other clans such as Ute-Okpu, Owa, Umunede, Abavo, Akumazi, and Igbo, among others. These kingdoms operated traditional governance systems led by an Obi (or the title of Dien for the king of Agbor). The Obis wielded considerable traditional authority over their domains and were advised by councils of chiefs and elders. Succession was based on primogeniture, a practice historically linked to the Oba of Benin. At the national and regional levels, the Ika people participated in the political framework of the First Republic through the Mid-Western regional government. They were represented in the regional parliament via constituencies that advocated for the infrastructure and developmental needs of the Agbor Division within the broader Mid-Western political landscape.²¹

Politically and ethnically, the Ika people were recognized for their unique identity, which bridged influences from both Benin (Edo) and Igbo lineages. Their political features during this period were closely tied to maintaining this distinct localized independence while navigating the broader ethnic dynamics of the First Republic.

Ika Divisional Council from 1968 to 1970

The Ika Divisional Council was an administrative body that served as the local government authority for the Ika people in the Midwest State (now Delta State) of Nigeria from 1968. The Ika Division was constituted in early 1967 by Brigadier D.A. Ejor, the first Military Governor of the Midwest State, and the administrative structure was operational as a Divisional Council from 1968. It succeeded the Ika Federal Native Authority, which operated from 1952 to 1967. The council was part of a series of administrative reforms aimed at creating a unified "Ika nation" from various precolonial settlements and providing the area with a more suitable identity and administration. The administration aimed to promote political, economic, and cultural unity among the constituent kingdoms, such as Agbor, Umunede, Abavo, and Owa among others. In 1976, a nationwide local government reform led to the Ika Divisional Council being succeeded by the Ika local government council. This reform introduced the local government council as the third tier of government in Nigeria, below the federal and state levels, following nationwide local government reforms that established a uniform system for local government administration.²²

During the First Republic (1960-1966), under civilian rule, this system emphasized regional control, with local governments implementing policies within their autonomous regions. However, it faced political challenges, including intense politicking, funding issues, and personnel shortages, which hampered effectiveness. With the military coup of 1966, the system was abruptly terminated by the first military takeover in January 1966, ending the First Republic and the initial wave of representative local governance. In essence, the Ika district, like other southern areas, experienced a transition to elected local governments aiming for self-governance, but this developmental phase was cut short by national political upheavals.²³

The Role of Ika Traditional Rulers in The First Republic

In Nigeria's political participatory democracy, Ika local chiefs, like other traditional rulers, primarily hold an advisory and non-executive role. However, they exert significant influence at the grassroots level due to their cultural legitimacy and proximity to the people. Their functions are informal and not explicitly defined with formal political power in the Constitution, but they are vital for effective local governance. In the Midwestern Regional House of Chiefs, Ika chiefs, such as the Dein of Agbor and the Obi of Abavo, served as representatives of their people and were part of the legislative body responsible for considering regional laws, particularly those concerning local customs and land matters.

Role of the Ika Chiefs in the Mid-Western Region

Representation: Ika traditional rulers represented the interests and cultural perspectives of the various Ika clans, including Agbor, Owa, Abavo, and Umunede, within the regional government structure.

Advisory and Legislative Input: The House of Chiefs was a non-partisan institution designed to provide a collective voice for pre-colonial authorities. Members discussed and provided input on bills passed by the House of Assembly, ensuring that new laws respected the various traditional practices and social structures of the communities they represented.

Custodians of Custom and Tradition: Beyond legislative duties, their primary function remained the preservation of Ika culture, the arbitration of local disputes such as land matters, and the maintenance of peace and community development within their domains.

Link between Government and People: They acted as a crucial channel of communication, explaining government policies to their local communities and providing feedback to the state administration.

Local Governance: In the precolonial and early post-colonial era, these chiefs had significant powers in native administration and native courts, a system that the British had utilized and which transitioned into the regional governance framework.

The House of Chiefs structure was established throughout Nigeria's post-independence regions, but these have since been replaced by largely ceremonial Councils of Traditional Rulers.

Role of the Ika Chiefs at the Local Government Level

Bridging the Gap: They serve as a crucial link and intermediary between local communities and the formal elected government at local, state, and federal levels, helping to translate government policies into local contexts and communicate community needs back to the authorities.

Conflict Resolution and Peace-building: Traditional rulers are highly effective in mediating disputes within their domains using customary methods. Their involvement helps maintain peace, social cohesion, and stability, which are essential for a stable democratic environment.

Community Mobilization and Development: Ika chiefs spearhead and mobilize resources for local development initiatives, such as building schools, health centers, and roads. Their influence fosters a spirit of collective action and ensures community ownership of projects.

Promoting Law and Order: They work with formal law enforcement agencies and local vigilante groups to enhance community policing and security. Their moral authority helps enforce traditional norms and laws, contributing to a safer environment.

Civic Education and Voter Engagement: Through community meetings and traditional communication channels, they help provide civic education and mobilize citizens for elections, thus enhancing political participation at the local level.

Cultural Custodians and Moral Authority: They are the custodians of Ika culture, customs, and traditions. This role grants them high respect and moral authority, which can be leveraged to advocate for good governance, accountability, and transparency from elected officials.

Advisory Functions: Ika chiefs serve on the Ika South Traditional Rulers Council, which collaborates closely with the local government chairman to address matters pertaining to community development, security, and cultural preservation.²⁴

Despite their considerable influence, the role of Ika chiefs is limited by the absence of a formal constitutional mandate, which can result in tensions with elected officials and political interference. Across Nigeria, there are persistent calls for the establishment of a defined legal framework to formally incorporate traditional institutions into the modern governance structure, thereby enabling them to contribute more effectively to the democratic process. In essence, although they do not exercise direct executive authority in the contemporary democratic context, Ika local chiefs are essential to the operation of participatory democracy in their region, primarily through their influential, advisory, and stabilizing functions at the grassroots level.

Nigeria and Biafra War and Its Impact in Ika Land, 1967-1970

Prelude

According to Uwakina's account, by 1900, the British government had formally assumed administration of the Royal Niger Company, whose charter was terminated in 1889 due to significant political developments. During this period, Nigeria existed as three distinct territories: the Oil River Protectorate, administered by Ralph Moore; the Colony of Lagos, administered by William Macgregor; and the Northern Protectorate, under Frederick Lord Lugard as the British High Commissioner. In 1906, the Colony of Lagos was merged with the Oil River Protectorate to form the Southern Protectorate, with Lagos as its headquarters. Subsequently, on January 1, 1914, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated into a single administrative political entity. Lord Lugard, who oversaw this amalgamation, became the first British Governor-General.

This single action sowed the seeds of discord among the major ethnic groups. The political parties that emerged were ethnically and tribal oriented, further creating a gap in the unity of the Nigerian polity. These included the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) for the Eastern Region, later renamed the National Council of Nigerian Citizens after Southern Cameroon opted out of Nigeria; the Northern People's Congress (NPC), representing the political interests of the North; and the Action Group (AG), representing the political interests of the West. The ethnic and tribal politics that arose from the challenge of uniting people of different

cultural and political ideologies, without any deliberate effort to foster unity or build political parties devoid of tribal and ethnic bias, became a weapon wielded against the emerging Nigerian political landscape.²⁵

At independence, the fundamental interrelated issues were largely left unresolved, later culminating in administrative imbalances within Nigeria's political structure. This fanned the flames of mutual suspicion, as fear and aggressive ethno-regionalism infiltrated the Nigerian political space. It was against this backdrop that Awolowo was quoted as saying, "Nigeria is not a nation but a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh, or French; the word Nigeria is a mere distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not."²⁶ This political instability culminated in the ma-guard venturing into politics, hence the 15th January 1966 coup,

The 15th January 1966 coup fundamentally impacted the Ika people by placing them on the geopolitical frontline. Because Ika communities are geographically situated in the western Niger Delta but share linguistic and cultural heritage with the Igbo, the January coup and the ensuing July counter-coup deeply entangled them in the ensuing Nigerian Civil War. The Ika people were affected in three distinct ways:

Regional Reconfiguration: Following the January 1966 coup, the military government under Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi abolished the regional system in May 1966. While this lasted briefly, it set the stage for the creation of states, shifting the Ika people from the former Mid-Western Region into a broader geopolitical space that would eventually become Delta State.

War Displacement: During the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), which directly resulted from the 1966 coups, Ika towns like Agbor served as critical transit and battle corridors. Due to their proximity to the conflict zone, many Ika communities suffered civilian casualties, loss of property, and displacement as Nigerian federal troops advanced toward the East.

Shifting Ethnic Identity: The coups and the war hardened ethnic lines across Nigeria, portraying the initial putsch strictly as an "Igbo coup". As a result, the Ika people—who are non-Igbo Niger-Congo speakers culturally distinct from the core Eastern Igbo but possessing related dialects, faced with the delicate challenge of navigating complex ethnic and national politics during and after the conflict.

The Nigeria and Biafran War (1967-1970) was caused by deep ethnic tensions, political instability, and economic rivalries in post-colonial Nigeria, culminating in the secession of the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region as the Republic of Biafra, following mass massacres of Igbos in the North after two military coups in 1966, which led to the Nigerian government's military action to maintain national unity. The war resulted from a long history of political, economic, and social tensions among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960, and the country comprised several ethnic groups, including the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani. Ademoyega described the Nigerian political crisis as a problem inherited from British interference in Nigeria's political arrangements. When the British arrived in Nigeria, they encountered people of different ethnic groups, whom they welded together for political administrative convenience without any deliberate attempt to unite the heterogeneous groups. Instead, they applied a divide-and-rule policy, creating a time bomb of ethnic rivalry for the future.²⁷

On January 15, 1966, a military coup resulted in the deaths of several political leaders from different ethnic groups, with the major victims being of Northern and Western extraction, while Igbo political leaders were spared; Nnamdi Azikiwe was out of the country, and Michael Okpara was not killed. The coup was labeled an Igbo coup because four of the five major coup plotters were of Igbo extraction, and an Igbo man benefited from the coup as Aguiyi Ironsi became the military head of state. General J.T.U. Ironsi's promulgation of Decree No. 34 of 1966, which abolished the federal system and created a unitary system for the country, led to widespread public outcry and was one of the series of events that led to the Nigerian Civil War. The promotion of twenty-one military officers by General J.T.U. Ironsi, nineteen of whom came from the Eastern Region, fueled considerable tribal and sectional sentiment and was also one of the series of events that led to the civil war.²⁸

The failure of the Ironsi-led military government to bring to justice the majors who plotted and executed the January 15 coup caused significant dissension within the army, especially as the coup was viewed as a form of ethnic cleansing, given that those killed during the coup were from other regions, with the exception of the Eastern Region, from which the coup plotters originated. This led to reprisals against the Igbo in the Northern part of Nigeria, and many Igbo people fled back to their homeland in the Southeast. In May 1967, the southeastern region declared itself the independent state of Biafra under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu.²⁹ Although the immediate cause of the Nigerian Civil War was identified as the secession of Biafra from Nigeria, the underlying causes of the conflict were more complex. Some of these included a personality clash between Ojukwu and Gowon. The Biafran government believed that the Nigerian government was dominated by the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups and that the Igbo people were being marginalized and oppressed.

Conversely, the Nigerian government viewed the secession of Biafra as a threat to national unity and used military force to attempt to prevent it. Several attempts were made to reach an amicable agreement between the two parties, but to no avail. In September 1966, a conference was convened with representatives from each region to discuss the possibility of preparing a new constitution, but the situation continued to deteriorate. Chief Awolowo also led a high-powered delegation to the Eastern Region to persuade Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu to abandon his secession plan, but this also proved unsuccessful.

In early 1967, the Supreme Military Council and other top military officers met at Aburi in Ghana to find ways of reaching a compromise and averting the imminent showdown between the two contending parties. The meeting failed to reach a compromise acceptable to both parties. Other meetings were held in Kampala, Uganda; Niamey, Niger Republic; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. These series of meetings also did not yield fruitful results.²⁴ Apparently, both sides adhered to their positions. The federal government was unwilling to negotiate with the Eastern Region on the issue of secession, and the Eastern Region was determined to secede from the Nigerian Federation. The Commonwealth Secretariat in London also initiated a series of peace meetings between both parties, with no positive outcome. The Nigerian federal government, led by Yakubu Gowon, refused to recognize the secession and launched military action to restore national unity, sparking the brutal civil war.³⁰ The war was inevitable, as both figures, Ojukwu and Gowon, viewed war as the only justifiable means of resolving the conflict. The failure of all reconciliation committees, both domestic and international, indicated that both factions had resolved to settle the issue on the battlefield. The war was fought over control of territory, resources, and political power, marked by a personality clash engulfed with personal conflicts of interest, and fueled by ethnic, religious, and regional tensions.

Aburi Declaration: The failure of General Gowon to implement his own side of the government agreement reached with Ojukwu at the Aburi Accord was another cause of the Civil War, which began on July 6, 1967. This meeting was organized by the Ghanaian head of state, General Ankrah, and held between January 4 and 5, 1967. It was noted in some quarters that at the Aburi Accord, only Ojukwu came prepared, as his demands were meticulous and well-articulated; the other faction thought it was a tea party show. In the end, it was perceived that the federal alliance conceded too much to Ojukwu's demands. Hence, Gowon's failure to implement the Aburi agreement, as it was not accepted by the majority of the Northern elites.³¹

The Nigerian Civil War and Its Impact on Ika Nation

The Nigerian Civil War in Ika land was marked by its position within the strategically volatile Mid-Western Region, setting the stage for the region's invasion in August 1967. Prior to the war, Ika people was part of the Mid-Western Region (created in 1963), which attempted to remain neutral but was caught between the secessionist Biafran Republic and the Nigerian Federal Government.

Having examined some of the salient causes of the war and the eventual outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, it is now pertinent to discuss the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War and its effect on the Ika people and their experience. As noted earlier, the major core causes of the Nigerian Civil War were rooted in the tribal and ethnic bigotry that surrounded the newly gained independence. The ethnic politics and ethnic cleansing were aptly demonstrated with the entry of the Mid-Western Region by the federal forces, who viewed the Biafran sphere of influence from Ugan, situated at the fringe of the Ossiomor River, as the beginning of Igbo land. This marked the beginning of the genocide against the Ika people, as the federal forces had mandated themselves to eliminate the Igbo-speaking tribe from Ugan Eastward.³²

According to Uwakina, the Ika people's first experience of the Nigerian Civil War occurred around August 9, 1967, when the first Biafran troops arrived in Agbor. The first Biafran troops passed through Umunede in the very early hours of the morning, while in the afternoon, four to five locally built armored cars, bearing the inscription "The Rising Star" on their uniform badges, appeared. Their presence brought uneasy calm among the Ika people, as no one knew what to expect. Schools and markets were closed, roads were deserted, and farmers and community dwellers hid in fear of the unknown; confusion set in throughout Ika land. Upon reaching Agbor and Boji-Boji Owa, the Biafran soldiers split into three battalions. One battalion moved toward the Auchu axis, the second moved toward the Sapele area via the Abavo road, and the last battalion moved toward Benin, the capital of the Mid-Western Region, to occupy the regional headquarters and advance to Lagos via Benin. When the liberation military advancement failed, they retreated back to Benin. As long as the Western and Lagos moves were not fulfilled, the Midwestern move remained stillborn, so it was inevitable that the liberation soldiers would fall back to Agbor.³⁴

When it became clear that federal troops would arrive from Benin, through the Auchu axis, and the Warri area, it was evident that the liberation soldiers would be landlocked and cut off from the Eastern forces. Hence, the decision was made to move the Midwestern liberation headquarters to Agbor. As soon as the order was given, Ademoyega, who was in command of the liberation force, sent a message to the 12th Battalion on September 18

that the tactical team should be moved to Agbor. This singular act of moving the military headquarters of the Biafran liberation force to Agbor placed the Ika people in imminent danger of the federal onslaught.

Uwakina noted that on September 29, 1967, the 7th Brigade of the 2nd Division of the federal army arrived at Agbor around 6 p.m. in the evening. The federal troops engaged in battle with the Biafran soldiers, who had already pitched their tents in Agbor. It was stated that the battle was so intense that the federal troops lost more of their men in Agbor than in any other place in the Mid-Western Region, although the Biafran soldiers also lost their lives. The Biafran soldiers retreated to the Eastern part of Ika land, while the federal troops stationed in Agbor became merciless in their treatment of the Ika people. The maltreatment knew no bounds, as chiefs, titled heads, and even religious men were not spared. The king of Agbor at that time, Dein Ikechukwu I, was arrested for his alleged support of Biafran soldiers and taken to Asaba for questioning. The Ika people experienced the worst nightmare on both sides of the divide; both federal and Biafran troops terrorized the Ika people. Even before the arrival of federal troops in Ika land, the Obi of Owa was held hostage by Biafran soldiers. It was upon the arrival of the federal troops and the ensuing battle that the Biafran soldiers retreated, leaving their hostage behind. The 6th Brigade of the federal troops brought back the Obi of Owa, and this encounter placed the Owa people in a favorable position with the federal liberation army, resulting in less brutality for the Owa people at the hands of the federal forces.³⁵

As earlier stated, the federal forces viewed the Biafran sphere of influence as beginning from Ugan on the fringes of the Ossiomor River. Any Ika community within the axis from Ugan was seen as an enemy to be annihilated. Their contact with the Ute-Oheze people occurred on September 25, 1967, when a group of soldiers from the federal forces entered the community and began committing all kinds of atrocities. In retaliation, the Ute-Oheze people captured two of the soldiers among those who had been perpetrating evil in the Igbo community. However, the escaped Nigerian soldiers quickly mobilized, returned, and captured a member of the community named Sito at gunpoint. He was instructed to shout "One Nigeria, One Nigeria" while taking them to the Ogwa (village square), where the captured soldiers were tied. Upon reaching the village square, the federal troops opened fire on the people; many were feared dead, and many were injured.³⁶

According to B.O. Nwokoro, the Ossiomor River marked the beginning of the Ika genocide. The federal forces were determined, from Ugan onward, to eliminate all adult males and females of Ika citizens considered to be Biafran. However, this negative move was averted by the diplomacy carried out by Major Samuel Ogbomudia, assisted by Lieutenant Ighodaro, both citizens of Ighanke who commanded the federal troops that liberated Agbor from the Biafran forces. Nevertheless, he noted that despite these diplomatic maneuvers, the years 1967 and 1968 were regarded as the most gruesome period of killing of the Ika people. This was due to the mere wrongful assumption by the federal troops of conspiracy by the Ika people aligning with the Biafrans to fight the federal forces. This allegation was based on the limited evidence that the Ika people had already begun circulating Biafran currency within the Ika clans. However, it is important to note that the Ika people had no power over the Biafran soldiers' occupation of Ika land and thus had no control whatsoever, including over the currency circulation. Moreover, most of the Biafran liberation soldiers were of Anioma (Delta Igbo) extraction, making it difficult to convince the federal troops that they were not part of the Eastern territory across the Niger. The federal forces believed that the Ika area formed part of the Igbo bloc territory. On this basis, the federal forces found it more convenient to propagate and perpetuate genocide against the Ika people. Nwokoro emphasizes that there were established facts of gory acts committed by the federal forces. In his words, the federal forces unleashed mayhem on the Ika people; innocent people of Ika were killed, many girls and married women were raped by federal troops, and more alarmingly, Ika victims of the federal forces were subjected to uncanny and unholy acts in broad daylight.³⁷

Men were subjected to uncanny torture, gruesomely murdered, and some were forced to dig their own graves before being buried alive. The retreating soldiers ambushed the federal troops at Igbodo, but when the federal troops reinforced, the Biafran soldiers could not withstand the heat from the federal troop advancement, as the much-expected reinforcement from Enugu failed to materialize. Consequently, the Biafran forces rallied on the youths of Igbodo as shield against the federal might as they retreated to Asaba.

The war left lasting emotional, psychological, and physical scars on the people of Ika land, who were caught between the federal forces and the seceding state. Although no one can state with absolute certainty the total number of lives lost in Ika land during the civil war, it was estimated that around 1,000 Ika people were annihilated. Overall, the Nigerian Civil War brought untold hardship to the Ika people, as millions of naira worth of properties were destroyed, markets and farming were boycotted, and there were tribal rivalries among the different tribes that made up the Mid-Western Region. The Binis viewed the Ikas as non-brothers, as was the case with Ute-Oheze and its Bini neighbors. In Sapele market, the people of Ika were exposed by the indigenes and handed over to the

federal troops as people of Biafran origin. The war revealed among the Ika people how tribally and ethnically polarized the Mid-Western Region was before, during, and after the civil war.³⁸

During the war, Ika people were part of the Mid-Western Region, which was carved out of the Western Region. Unlike the Eastern Region, it was not part of the initial secessionist territory. Following the two coups of 1966 and the subsequent persecution of the Igbo in Northern Nigeria, the atmosphere in the Midwest, which had a significant Igbo-speaking population, including the Ika, became heavily charged. As part of the Midwest, Ika land was in the direct path of the Biafran “Operation Torch” invasion, designed to secure a swift route to Lagos. The war directly entered Ika land when Biafran forces, led by Lieutenant Colonel Victor Banjo, crossed into the Mid-Western Region on August 9, 1967. This invasion forced the area under Biafran occupation before they were later pushed back by federal troops. The period immediately preceding the invasion saw increased anxiety and local preparation for the impending conflict, which ultimately resulted in the occupation of cities like Agbor. During the buildup to the war, the region, including Ika land, was navigating the divide between the federal government’s desire to keep the country united and the East’s push for separation, placing the Ika people in a precarious position.³⁹

The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) had a profound and traumatic impact on the Ika people of the Midwest Region (now parts of Delta State), who were caught between the invading Biafran forces and the subsequent, brutal counter-offensive by the Nigerian Federal Troops. As an Igbo-speaking group west of the River Niger, the Ika people faced unique challenges of identity, suspicion, and severe wartime atrocities. Other impacts of the civil war on the Ika people include: massacre and civilian casualties, the Ika people suffered significantly during the conflict, with many innocent civilians killed, particularly during the federal occupation, and the war involved widespread carnage and displacement, turning many communities into battlegrounds; wartime atrocities and property destruction reports indicate that during the war, villages were ravaged and civilians suffered from atrocities, with the conflict seeing the looting of properties and destruction of local infrastructure, setting back economic growth in the area; being caught between two forces, the Ika people were victimized by both sides, as Biafran forces occupied the region early in the war, leading to subsequent harsh reprisals from the Nigerian federal troops, who suspected minority groups of assisting the rebellion, for example, the Obi of Agbor, Dein Ikechukwu I, was arrested and detained in Asaba.⁴⁰

While the Obi of Owa was held hostage and detained at Ika Grammar School by the Biafran forces; identity struggles and disassociation following the war, to survive and distance themselves from the defeated Biafran side, many people in the Ika and Anioma areas experienced a crisis of identity, leading to a deliberate disassociation from the broader Igbo group, a trend that continues in post-war political discourse; and economic devastation, similar to other regions in the conflict zone, Ika land experienced economic ruin due to the disruption of farming, trade, and destruction of businesses. The war left deep scars on the Ika people, influencing their socio-political identity as a distinct, independent ethnic group within the Midwest, distinct from the Southeast-based Igbo, a position often emphasized to avoid future political marginalization.

Conclusion

During Nigeria's First Republic (1960–1966), the Ika people navigated their position as a distinct and heavily marginalized ethnic minority. Geopolitically situated within the Mid-Western Region, established in 1963, their geographical proximity and linguistic similarities to the Igbo made them especially vulnerable during the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970). The region became a volatile frontline during the Biafran invasion, severely dividing local loyalties.

Political Context in the First Republic

In the independence era, the Ika nation, encompassing kingdoms such as Agbor, Abavo, and Umunede—was primarily located in the Western Region before successfully advocating for the creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963. As a non-Igbo linguistic relative on the western periphery, the Ika suffered the consequences of regional ethnic dominance, enduring inadequate socioeconomic infrastructure and political marginalization. During the early 1960s, a robust cultural and political consciousness prompted the Ika to assert their distinct identity, rejecting external domination and demanding equitable treatment in national affairs.

The Nigerian Civil War and Biafran Invasion

Upon the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, Ika territory became a volatile corridor due to its strategic position adjacent to the Eastern Region. In August 1967, Biafran forces launched a swift invasion, occupying the Mid-West and advancing to Asaba, Agbor, and Benin City. Given that a considerable number of senior Mid-Western military officers were of Ika origin, the initial invasion encountered minimal resistance in certain Ika communities, as some perceived the Biafrans as close kin.

Local Divisions and Civilian Hardship

However, the initial warmth toward Biafran forces quickly dissipated. As federal Nigerian troops counter-attacked to reclaim the Mid-West, the Ika homeland became a major theater of conflict. The occupation and subsequent liberation precipitated widespread displacement, property destruction, and civilian casualties. Internally, the Ika populace was divided:

Some Ika natives initially sympathized with or collaborated with Biafran soldiers.

The majority of the Ika population ultimately supported Nigerian federal troops to safeguard their homeland from being absorbed by the secessionist agenda.

These internal divisions resulted in substantial political and civilian losses as the Ika endeavored to demonstrate their allegiance to the Nigerian state while enduring the violent chaos of the frontlines.

Post-War Reconciliation and Legacy

Following the conclusion of the civil war in 1970, the Ika people found themselves integrated into the newly restructured Mid-Western State (later renamed Bendel State in 1976 and ultimately Delta State in 1991). The conflict left profound historical scars and triggered enduring socio-political debates regarding Ika self-determination. Post-war narratives have predominantly focused on portraying the Ika as distinct ethnic minorities who suffered collateral damage, while underscoring their permanent alignment with Nigeria's multi-ethnic framework

Endnotes

1. F.A Onyekepeze, *Toward the growth of Ika nation*, https://web.facebook.com/ikaweeklynnews/posts/towards-the-growth-of-ika-into-a-nation-as-was-observed-before-agbor-kingdom-embr/3165823146797268/?_rdc=1&_rdr#_a Accessed, 09/01/2026
2. G.C SOKOH, An Historical Analysis of the Changing Role of Traditional Rulers In Governance In Nigeria, *In Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 23, Issue 1, 2018
1. J.O. Aghahowa, E.E.M Ukebor. The British Colonial Economic Policies And Nigeria Under Development. *In The Nigeria Journal Of Politics And Public Policy* 1999, Vol3 No1 And 2, 157
2. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen And the Subject: Contemporary Africa And the Legacy Of Late Colonialism*, Friction University Press. 2013, 67
3. Adewale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck; The story of the First Nigerian Coup*, Ibadan, Evans brothers publishers, 1981, 1
3. Uwakina Stephen Chucks, *Ika Nation In the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970*, Cee Emmy Iyke Vent, Agbor, 2023, 86-87
4. G. Oka Orewa, *Local Government In Nigeria: The Changing Scene*, Vol 11, Benin, Ethiope publishers, 1992, 2
5. F.A Onyekepeze, *Toward the growth of Ika nation* Accessed, 09/01/2026
6. F.A Onyekepeze, *Toward the growth of Ika nation* Accessed, 09/01/2026
7. Interview, Monday Onuwa, Agbor, 70+, Rtd Civil servant, direct 20/01/2026
8. Ehiwarior Maxwel, Agbor, 63, Driver, direct, 20/01/2026
9. Interview, Nwonkoro Basil, Agbor 70+, Rtd Civil servant, direct 20/01/2026
10. S.O Ogbemudia, Forward to the Mid-Western State Of Nigeria, Two-Year Reconstruction And Rehabilitation Programme 1968-70, 1
11. Kern B ,*Intelligent Report On Igbanke*, NAI/AGBDIST/1285/91 1935
12. Denton H.C.B, *Intelligence Report On The Igbodo Village Group*, NAI/AGBDIST/6752/200, 1935,
13. Ediabonya, “*Military Rule and Development in Nigeria: 1991-1999*. Project Work submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin. 2007 56
14. S.O Ogbemudia, Forward to the Mid-Western State Of Nigeria
15. L. Adamolekun, “The Idea of a Local Government as a Third Tier of Government”, in Adamoleun, and Rowland, (ed) *The New Local Government System in Nigeria*, Ibadan Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Limite, 1979, 45
16. A. E. Gboyega, O. Oyediran, *Soldiers and Oil The Political Transformation of Nigeria*, routledge pub 1978, 34
17. Ediabonya, “*Military Rule and Development in Nigeria: 1991-1999*.”
18. Interview, Nwonkoro Basil, 70+ Agbor, Rtd Civil servant,
19. Adewale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck; The story of the First Nigerian Coup*, Ibadan, Evans brothers publishers, 1981, 1.
20. Uwakina Stephen Chucks, *Ika Nation In the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970*, Cee Emmy Iyke Vent, Agbor, 2023, 86-87
21. T.D. West, “The Nigerian Federalism And The Virus Of Disunity”, *The Nigerian Guardian*, January 2nd 1994, 5

22. Waidi Adebayo, *The Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War)* <https://waidigbenro.wordpress.com/2023/02/25/the-nigerian-civil-war-the-biafran-war/,2023>, Accessed 20/01/2026
23. Wikipedia, *Nigerian Civil War*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War#:~:text=The%20conflict%20emerged%20from%20political,and%20independent%20country%20of%20Biafra.&text=Clockwise%20from%20top%20left,being%20unloaded%20from%20a%20helicopter, Accessed, 20/01/2026
24. Udylyciouz, *Learn about The History and causes of Nigerian Civil War*, <https://steemit.com/steem4nigeria/@udylyciouz/learn-about-the-history-and-causes-of-nigerian-civil-war#:~:text=The%20governor%20of%20Eastern%20region,January%204th%20and%205th%201967>, Accessed 20/01/2026.
25. Iken Ogboi, N.O Basil, Et al, *The History Of Agbor; Its Culture and Tradition*, Benin, Ethiope Pub, 2007, 349.
26. Uwakina Stephen Chucks, *Ika Nation In the Nigerian Civil War*
27. Udylyciouz, *Learn about The History and causes of Nigerian Civil War*
28. Adewale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck; The story of the First Nigerian Coup*, 1981, 235.
29. Interview, Mr Melekwe, Ute-Oheze, 70+, farmer, Direct, 20/09/2025.
30. Adewale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck*;
31. Iken Ogboi, N.O Basil, Et al, *The History Of Agbor*, 2007, 349
32. Uwakina Stephen Chucks, *Ika Nation In the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970*, 2023, 182
33. Uwakina Stephen Chucks, *Ika Nation In the Nigerian Civil War*, 2023 185.
34. Iken Ogboi, N.O Basil, Et al, *The History Of Agbor*, 2007, 349
35. Iken Ogboi, N.O Basil, Et al, *The History Of Agbor*, 2007, 350
36. Adenrele Awotona, "Approaches to post-war reconstruction and development: Lesson from Africa, Habitat International", Elsevier Ltd, Kosovo, Volume 16, Issue 4, 1992, 79-98,
37. Daniel Olisa Iweze, Uchenna Anyanwu, "Post-Nigerian Civil War Community Reconstruction Strategies In (Anioma) Western Igboland, 1970-1991", *Brazilian Journal of African Studies | Porto Alegre | v. 5, n. 10*, 2020, 127.
38. Daniel Olisa IWEZE, "Critique of 1967 Invasion of Mid-Western Region by Biafran Forces", *Admiralty Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, AJMR, Ibuza*, Vol;1, No1, 2024, 141.
39. Tusayi Takosole Zik, Sani Kasimu, Et Al, "Local Government Reforms And The Changing Roles Of Traditional Institutions In Nigeria", *In Aksu Journal Of Management Sciences (Aksujomas)* Volume 8, Issues 1 & 2, 2023, 44.
40. Interview, Eweriebor joel, Agbor, 68, Rtd Public Servant, Direct, 20/03/2026