
Migration Wars in the Traditional Igbo Society and the Challenges of National Security: The Abakaliki Experience, 1800-1920

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Abstract: Traditionally, state formation was characterized with wars of different magnitude. The nature, types and causes of the war differed from one state to another. The Igbo nation was one of those areas that witnessed migratory wars arising from state formation, land dispute, slave raiding and boundary crises. Considering the fact that the Igbo history of origin underpins diverse integrations and accounts, one can say that some Igbo sub-groups at different times, fought different wars with one another in search of national homeland. The outcome of these wars underscores the migration and settlement that predated the Igbo nation before the 18th century wars, particularly the Ezza that are scattered all over Nigeria. The continuous movement of these people and many other Igbo sub-groups has led to the intermittent wars that characterized Nigerian state. This manifested in boundary disputes between several Igbo groups with her neighbours such as Ikwo-Nsobo and Osopo of Cross River State, Izzi –Osopo and Yala of Cross River State and Mgbo-Igala of Benue State. Evidences of these wars translated into indigene/settlers' question that tend to decimate Nigeria's nation. Against this background therefore, this paper seeks to interrogate how war of migrations in the traditional Igbo societies have continued to challenge Nigeria's national security. The position of this paper is that, war is a natural phenomenon that can still occur despite migration, but the inability of the National Boundary Adjustment Commission to embark on complete interstate boundary adjustment increases the volume of wars, thus, challenging the Nigeria's national security. Hence, the paper concluded by arguing that wars that challenge Nigeria's national security are man-made and could be avoided if the Nigerian state rises to take up her responsibilities.

Keywords: Igbo Society, Migration, National Security, Traditional, Wars

1. Introduction

Given the various dimensions of the Igbo historical origins, their history and settlement are still uncertain and characterized with wars of different kinds. The wars arose from land dispute, slave raiding to boundary crises. The Abakaliki Igbo is one of such Igbo sub-groups that witnessed that kind of wars. However, given the language similarities and cultural practices abound of all the entire Abakaliki spoken Igbo, there are diverse historical integrations and accounts existing among the Abakaliki historians on the one hand and non Abakaliki historians on the other hand. Prominent among the Abakaliki historians is the view of C. O. Mgbada who maintains that the whole of Abakaliki people are of one father, called Ezekuna. Ezekuna begat four sons

and eight daughters. The four sons were as follow (in order of age) EzzaEzekuna, IkwoNoyo, IzziNnodo and Ezzzamgbo Obanjala [1]. This account seems to be somehow confusing because if Ezekuna, the ancestral father of Ezza begat the other two sons, then one would expect to see Ikwo and Izzi refer to Ezza as their grandfather and nothing more than that. The reason is that, if Ezekuna begat Ezza, Noyoand Nnodo would have appeared to be the grandsons of Ezekuna hence they would have been calling them Noyo Ezekuna and Nnodo Ezekuna respectively. This account has been debunked by this present writer when he asked the following question that if we accept that Ezekuna is the legendary ancestor of the trios; Ezza, Ikwo and Izzi with Ezekuna holding claims of progenitor to Ezza, does it mean Noyo and Nnodo descended from Ezza? This may be an assumption

from those who propounded the theory and does not represent the general opinion on the story told by the people themselves.

Another historical assumption on the origin of Abakaliki speaking Igbo is the one coming from a budding scholar on EkumaEnyi hypothesis. By this, the opinion of I. O. Onuoha and K. J. Ani represent a common agreement among the Abakaliki Igbo speaking groups. Onuoha and Ani maintains that the Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo peoples have long accepted the notion that they originated from one ancestral father called EkumaEnyi [2]. This opinion is held among the Abakaliki Igbo groups who agreed that Ekuma Enyi had three sons namely, Ezekuna, the eldest and founder of Ezza; Nnodo, the founder of the Izzi; and Noyo, the founder of Ikwo group. More often, lines of disagreement have continued to run in terms of seniority between Ikwo and Izzi despite both collectively agreeing that the Ezza is their half brother who they shared paternal father with. This sentiment is only shared by the Izzi version of the historical account as Elizabeth Isichei appeared to have refuted this claim by noting that because of the material prosperity of the Ezza, his brothers-Ikwo and Izzi planned to secretly burn down his house but Ikwo had to reveal the plan to which the Ezza exploited the opportunity and launched a surprising attack on Izzi [3]. This assertion was supported by some other none Abakaliki Igbo historians like Nico Van Steensel, According to him, Enyi got three sons. The oldest was Ezekuna, the second son was Ekuma and the youngest son Noyo [4]. EkumaEnyi's wife Ugbala gave birth to Nnodo. The Izzi descend from Nnodo, the Ezza from Ezekuna and Ikwo from Noyo. Steensel further suggested that the close relationship between Izzi and Ikwo as opposed to Ezza is something explained as if Noyo and Ekuma were from one wife, while Ezekuna was from another wife or rather is said to have been a brother-in-law, who married their sister [4].

In fact, analyzing critically the EkumaEnyi hypothesis, one would ask about the sudden inclusion of EkumaEnyi's name in spite of the early submission by Steensel that "Enyi had three sons..."? Steensel supplied the three sons of Enyi as Ezekuna, Ekuma and Noyo. According to him, to say that EkumaEnyi's wife, Ugbala gave birth to Nnodo who begat the Izzi implies that the Izzi is the cousin to Ikwo and Ezza and not a brother. In other words, Ekuma not Nnodo is the brother to Ezza and Ikwo. Steensel while accounting for the origin of the Izzi maintains that the Izzi are usually mentioned together with the Ikwo and the Ezza. According to the custom they have a common ancestor, called Enyi. These sister tribes supply his full name: EnyiNwegu. He had three sons, who became the founders of the Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo tribes. These facts are agreed upon by the oral traditions of each of the three tribes. About the details however is much difference of opinion [4]. This EnyiNwegu theory might not have represented the general opinion of the people themselves but rather Ekuma hence, they accepted to be called "UmuEkumaEnyi".

Whatever these peoples might have agreed upon still lack historical substance, but it could be possible that they

might have also arrived differently at different time to settle and occupy in the areas they are today. By this, the present writer has argued in one of his works that the assumptions of blood consanguinity among the three tribes of old Abakaliki lack serious historical evidences as both tribes have engaged in several wars with each other. According to him, blood bath or war is abhorred among people with the same blood consanguinity [5] as evidences of war now and then tend to refute such assertion of originating from one.

2. Historical Origin, Migration and Settlement of Abakaliki Peoples

As already noted above that state system and formations were the characteristics of war, the Igbo traditional societies to which the Abakaliki sub-groups are members were not exempted from such societies. The areas occupy today by the Abakaliki sub-groups might have been inhabited by other tribes. It could be possible that the Abakaliki groups of Igbo speaking peoples migrated from somewhere, fought and drove the original inhabitants away and settled therein. For C. Ugoh, Orri was traditionally believed to be the originally occupants of Abakaliki territory before the arrival of the four dominant ethnic groups-Ezza, Izzi, Ikwo and the Ngbo [6]. The Orri themselves were said to be a dying and degenerated race protected from the total annihilation by the Ezza in exchange for farming rights [7]. Whatever that means, Ugoh has failed to tell us whether the Orri were the sub-group of Igbo speaking peoples or not but evidences of Ezza migratory wars suggested that Ezekuna, father of Ezza left Afikpo for Onueke many centuries ago. This argument was sustained by Elizabeth Isichei who wrote that the Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo traced their origins from three brothers, whose father came from Afikpo [3].

However, there are other sources which tried to unveil the history of Ezza migration. One of those sources tried to trace the Ezza migration from the Okeigwe area. This source holds that Ezekuna belonged to the massive number of migrant people, who moved from the Okigwe escarpment into the hills and valleys of Afikpo. The source further maintained that rather than Ezekuna settling and living with his fellow trekkers at Afikpo, he proceeded northwards in his journey until he arrived at Onueke, where he finally settled [2]. This account was supported by G. B. G. Chapman who wrote that "it could be possible that Ezekuna was a member of the migratory party which moved from the Aro-Bende border somewhere around 1600. Tradition has it that Afikpo and Edda were founded as a result of that movement and it is possible that Ezekuna was not contented to stop at Afikpo and so moved further north [8]. Whatever variations that exist in Ezza historical accounts, the Ezza seem to be more comfortable with the autochthonous assumption of not coming from anywhere rather than Onueke but it is left to be seen whether other sister tribes hold the same view.

However, the historical origin of the people of Ikwo suffers whole lots of negligence from early writers,

particularly, as Igbo historiographers were constrained by lack of valuable information. Thus, those who made efforts were unable to write loud about the Ikwo history like other Igbo sub-groups. This could not be far from lack of interest and career choice demonstrated among the Ikwo people to earlier historians who made strenuous attempts to reach out to the elders of the clan. Like A. E. Afigbo, wrote about his experiences in one of his articles on the attempt to write the history of Ikwo maintains that the people were unwilling to give information and lacked cooperation. According to him “the people were very unwilling to let any information out... even when I visited one of the elder statesmen he hid in his house and told his children to tell me that he was not around.”

Meanwhile, this does not mean that the people have completely lost the memories of their origin, migration and settlement. There are four main variations on Ikwo tradition of origin-the one that identified Ikwo with the other two sons of Enyi, the other tracing Ikwo to an ancestral homeland of Ekpeli, the one linking her to Cross River and another to Agala. Since we had treated Ikwo's close relationships with the other sons of Enyi, there will be no need repeating it here rather; a discussion of the remaining theories will be made. Of all the intriguing aspects of the Ikwo history is that Noyo migrated from nowhere. This assumption is held by every Ikwo man. According to them, Noyo, the legendary ancestor of Ikwo did not migrate from anywhere. He lived in Ekpeli and fought war of expansion. Collaborating with this assertion, Nathan Nkala holds that “the Ikwo people did not migrate from anywhere but had to fight wars of expansion with the people of Cross River and Ezza [9]. Evidences of the present wars between the people of Nsobo of Cross River and Ofenekpa and Echara in Ikwo south-east on the one hand, and the Adadamaof Abi Local Government with the people of Item Amagu in the South of Ikwo local government Area on the other hand tend to support this claim. To this extent, B. N. Amiara holds that the ancestor of Ikwo originated at Nchonuin Ekpeli and settled within that enclave from where every other stock of Ikwo dispersed [10]. In fact, the issue of Ekpeli being the ancestral home of Ikwo has been agreed upon with Umueka in Ekpeli functioning as the custodian of their cultures and traditions.

Another aspect of their history is the Cross River origin which has been completely rejected by the people, according to the proponent of that theory, the people of Ikwo migrated from Cross River Area [8]. This theory has been argued upon by G. B. G. Chapman who maintains that “the Ikwo and her Cross River neighbours speak very different but related languages, and that it would appear that the clan led by Noyo did not reach this division before 1600AD”. This account is much obscured as it has never been supported by any other writer again. Another similar account shares by every Ikwo man today is the issue of Ikwo-Igala account. This theory holds that Noyo, the father of Ikwo was an itinerate man who left Igalato first settle in Ngbo, from where he moved eastwards to settle at Ekpeli in Ikwo. Sustaining this argument, OgahNweke holds that EnyiNwegu was the father

of Ikwo and migrated from Igala (Agala) in the Northern State, bordering Effium in Ishielu Division then [11]. The people supply his name as Agala. However, the account of Agala hypothesis appears to be also acceptable given their philosophy about dead. There is belief that if you die as an Ikwoman when your brother goes to Igala he will see you which in however, reflects in their concept of “*evuranuAgala*”, may you be taking back to your ancestral home Igala. Therefore, Agala is a corruption of Igala in Benue State, hence they have evidences of people answering Agala and Agalagu as a name of a community in Ikwo.

For the Izzi, their history might not be different from other Abakaliki Igbo groups except that in some quarters, it is held that some groups of Izzi people came from heaven. This theory is supported by the fact that they argued that by then, heaven and earth were very close and Enyi came from heaven through a rope. But when the man did something bad, the rope fell down and the man could not climb up to heaven again [4]. This theory is refuted by the elders of Anmegu, the mother town of Izzi who said that EkumaEnyi is the father of Izzi. His tomb can be found in Anmegu. He did not come from any other area, but originated from Anmegu. Where his father Enyi came from they do not know. His tomb is not located. This is suggestive of the fact that the people knew their legendary ancestor came from somewhere but they themselves might have not migrated from anywhere.

From the foregoing, it is possible that the Abakaliki Igbo groups had evolved at different time just like other Igbo groups through migration. Their movement to North-Eastern Igbo might not be far from what AdieleAfigbo called quaternary migration. According to him, a development similar to what happened on the western frontier of Igbo expansion happened also to the eastern expansion. Here, the Ohuhu and the Ngwa ran into the Annag-Ibibio who were able to block the route to further eastward expansion and thus forced the advancing Igbo to curve north. It was this development that brought about the settlement by the Igbo of what anthropologists have described as Cross River Igbo land (also Eastern Igboland) and North-Eastern Igboland (or OguUkwu, made up mainly of the Izzi, Ezza and Ikwo) [12]. As it was customary for the Igbo groups to search for more territorial land because of population expansion, the Igbo mounted pressures on their neighbours and forced them out and occupied their areas. Adiele Afigbo contends that the Ezza, Ikwo and Izzi in particular were engaged in a heedless policy of territorial expansion by exploiting to the fullest the numerical disadvantages of their neighbours in the Ogoja and Idoma areas. He further asserted that Rosemary Harris collaborating with above statement has documented for us the development of this pressure in the region of Cross River where the Ikwo appeared to have carried war before them [13]. This policy may not be unconnected with land hence Afigbo reaffirmed that in the movement of people across-borders, it was always territory that was at stake- territory for expansion and settlement by excess and restless populations or for exploitation through cultivation or both. Therefore, the movement of Igbo stock from one area to another especially

in what is today referred to as secondary and tertiary Igbo migration was occasioned by the above factors, hence Afigbo once again opines that “these migrations took the Igbo out of what is the heartland of Igbo culture (the Awka-Orlu-Okigwe highlands) and thus brought West Niger Igbo, and the Northeastern or OguUkwu Igbo (such as the Ezza, the Izzi, the Ikwo) [14].

Again, Ezzamgbo are sparsely treated among the three sons of EnyiNwegu but belong to the Northeastern Igbo groups of Abakaliki. One of her historical accounts holds that Obanjala is their legendary ancestor who migrated from Izzi, and as a grandson of Ekuma, he was allowed to migrate westwards and settled in the present day Ohaukwu, from where they expanded in numbers. This account has continued to pose serious academic challenges as Ngbo themselves claimed different ancestral origin from Ezzamgbo. According to Ngbo themselves, “we believe that we came to our present place today because of the super natural forces of our gods-Ahukwashi and Amufu”. The two gods were male and female respectively who were personified in ElomOkwoji. They were said to have met somewhere and established close relationships to which they decided to settle and name the place Ngbo. Another aspect of Ngbo history of origin reveals that a man called Awoke Odogo who migrated from Ezzamgbo went into hunting till he got to unknown place and decided to process his animal; there he remained until his people started searching for him. When they found him, they shouted “Awoke you have remained there” and the place is called “Ekwashi” meaning the one who went and remained hence, the community became the ancestral home and the oldest community of Ngbo clan. The story continues to reveal that when Awoke Odogo got old, he invited his son “ElomOkwoji to come and occupy the place while he went back to Ezzamgbo. There, ElomOkwoji begat his first son Ezata who is the legendary ancestor of UmuoguduAkpu Community, Okpu the second son begat Umuezeka Community and Uraku the third son fathered Ukwagba Community. Other stories hold that Okpui an Ikwo migrant from Amegu autonomous community who begat Umuezeka clan in Ngbo. Ngbo people were said to be warlike in nature that fought and captured several people to increase her population and became known as NgboOjeOgu. Later, they were mixed up by sparse population from Ezza and formed Ezzamgbo [15]. Whether the people fought migration wars was not known as the people have lost the memories of their present occupation except that they were once engaged in a fierce battle with the Ezillo over a portion of land lying northerly to EguEchara and Igala of Ado local government to increase their population and acquire more territories.

2.1. Conceptualizing National Security: The Nigerian Dimensions

Most wars in the pre-colonial Igbo societies were fought because of the population expansion, land acquisitions, border disputes and human insecurity. Wars occasioned by these factors provoked the movement of people from one place to another and in search of permanent homeland to

which they constitute security threats to her neighbours and the sovereign existence of Nigeria. Threats associating with the Nigerian state are basically explained in the way various components of Nigerian states were formed which hitherto, posed serious challenges to the independent existence of the country. Therefore, national security is defined as the ability of a country to protect itself from the threat of violence or attack. In other words, national security refers to the security of a nation state, including its economy, citizen, and institutions and is regarded as the duty of the government [16].

Originally conceived as protection against military attack, national security is now widely understood to non-military dimensions, including economic security, energy security, environmental security, food security, cyber security of states, and many others. It includes in addition to the actions of other nation states, action by violence non-state actors, narcotic cartels, activities of the Multinational Corporations that are considered unacceptable by nation states and also the effects of natural disasters. Strictly speaking, the concept of national security is so ambiguous having evolved from simpler definitions which emphasized freedom from military threat and political coercion. For Walter Lippmann, a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war [17]. It would mean a freedom from foreign dictation and absence of threats to acquired values and the fear that such values will be attacked. Defining national security by Harold Brown, it is the ability for a country to preserve the nation’s physical integrity, and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption from outside and to control its borders [18]. The national security of a state is the whole range of responsibilities for a national government to provide serene environment, security, protection and safety life to the citizens and their resources particularly from both internal and external attacks. Nigeria’s national security dimension is said to have hinged and can be explained from the factors that challenge Nigeria’s national unity such as the current Boko Haram threats, Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Militancy and political instability without looking at other weightier factors like migration wars, border disputes food insecurity, unemployment poverty ratio and structural discrimination, inequalities among Nigerian states and resources control.

2.2. Migration Wars Among the Abakaliki Groups

In the traditional Igbo societies, peoples evolved into clans through wars of different kinds. The history, evolution and origin of Abakaliki Igbo groups have long traditions of migration wars occurring at a different time, at different places. For instance, by the mid 10th century, Ikwo were already fighting migration wars with the people of Okum who were said to have been the original inhabitants of the place the Ikwo people occupy presently. Whether or not the people migrated from somewhere is yet to be known but, it

has been found that the people fought war of expansion with the Okum who were said to have lived side by side with the Ikwo during the pre-colonial era. Evidences of these wars could be found from non-indigenous masquerades existing in Ikwo such as "ItaNgara", "Enya Ogo" "Oyowa", Ukwa-Nkashi" and "Mbembe-solo" among others. More so, there are still evidences of castles and drenches built by Okum during the war for protection that serve as ponds in Ikwo today. Warriors of this Okum group hid inside the castles and covered themselves with grasses to lay ambush against the Ikwo warriors. When they were defeated (Okum), some of them accepted to imbibe the Ikwo culture whereas those who rejected assimilation moved eastwards to live in Obubra Local Government of Cross River State. Today those who accepted to co-habit were said to be the Nkala-oswu people located in "NwodeOdiegi" in Echara Autonomous Community. Again, there were other bands of Ikwo warriors fighting against the EzzaAnmekka in the west, who wanted a movement eastwards up to the Cross River. These Ezza migrants were repelled by Ikwo who had formed strong military garrison against them, and like A. E. Afigbo maintained, one Ezza tradition claims that Ezekuna the founder of Ezza had prophesized that his people would expand until they would be stopped by a big river to the West (the River Niger) by another big river to the North (the Benue River) and still another river in the East (Cross River) [19].

In the southern part of Ikwo, the Item Amegu people waged a devastating attack to drive the Adadama peoples of Abi Local Government Area of Cross River state farther south in order to control and maintain the existing boundary with the people of Ugep. Though, the expansion was averted by natural boundaries of a big river separating Ikwo from the people of Cross River which left a little concentration of Adadama peoples' settlement across their boundary. Up till date, the people are still fighting boundary wars with one another.

Like the Ikwo, whether the Ezza accepted the autochthonenity surrounding their history of origin or is said to have migrated from somewhere remains to be known. However, it is possible that dispersion to other various Ezza areas might have started from Onueke. In fact between 1881 and 1905, Ezza had engaged the Izzi in a very tragic war suspected to have hinged on material progress and wealth. The outcome of that war left both people in permanent enmities till the intervention of the British in 1905. Within those periods, the Izzi were pushed out by more powerful Ezza warriors who have continued to occupy the areas left by the less powerful Izzi people such as Orokeonuoha and the area UmuomeOriozor occupy today. Indeed, it could be understood that while the Ezza general drive for territorial expansion intensified, their warriors moved towards the south where the Izikworo group of villages encountered several oppositions, first with AgalagaOkpaEzea, and then, Agba people who were both disposed of. Then the gallant and indomitable Oshiri posed a stiff resistance to Idembia who wanted an expansion down to the bank of Abonyi River. During the war, J. N. Afoke reported that Oshiri stoutly

resisted Izikworo's attempt to cross the river and bitter war was the outcome [20]. Gradually, the Oshiri were pushed back and the areas they evacuated occupied. Towards the south-west and north-west, the Imoha and Izo villages fanned out like the Izikworo group of villages to encounter Agba, Ntezi and IshiekeIzzi villages. At this time, the Agba people who were earlier driven by Izikworo group of villages were further pushed westwards, while the Ntezi were equally repulsed and the areas they evacuated, occupied. Across Abonyi River, the Oshiri were once more approached and they set on the Ezza whose intention was to take over their lands. After a protracted internecine war, Imoha and Izo Imoha groups of villages crossed Abonyi and the gradual retreat of the Oshiri began till the British intervened in 1905 when the battle field was already at Ego OgijiOboko, two miles from Abonyi River.

From the Benue axis, where the Igala and Effium peoples were already living side by side with each other, the Igala sought the hands of Ezza in friendship to which they accepted and looked forward to peaceful co-existence. However, a portion of land was accepted for Ezza settlement and farming but on the contrary, the intention of the Ezza was to drive the Igala northwards and join the land from where they would expel the Igala to the portion given to them by Effium people and in that way solve their perennial problem of land shortage. Not long they had this thought and war ensued between them, and Igala were beaten, defeated and driven away with the land they evacuated occupied by Ezza. However, the Agba who were conquered with their areas settled by Ezza when the group of Izikworo villages caught them up gave a spirited but short-lived defense of their territory. The Agba who were said to have lived in the main land of EboNdiagu, OchuhuAgba and OriAgba Elu were driven farther southwards by Ezza territory expansionists and the areas they evacuated are now settled by Umuwagu and Ikwate (Idembia) while the Agba fled from their mainland to settle in Ishielu Division. The second Ezza contact with the Agba was sometime around 1850 when the IzoImoha group villages once more met the Agba, this time they were determined to hold on to their land but the Ezza group instead, passed over them to a wide expanse of land then uninhabited which they called Ezzagu.

From the southeast direction, the Ezza war of expansion raged on till Ubomi and Idée were forced to flee with the former fleeing to Cross River area and the latter fled to Itigidi. There was another fierce war with the Ntezi who were defeated in the end and their land appropriated. Other wars fought in this phase, were wars with the non-Igbo speaking groups of Effium, UtoKon, Okpomoro, Ukelle and Amada. Between 1895 and 1896, a joint attack of able-bodied men from twenty one Ezza village groups was launched on Okpoto which finally routed the Okpoto who as a result, lost a substantial part of their land to their Ezza conquerors. In this way, it is safe to say that the Ezza war of expansion were towards the compass-north, south, east, and west. The Abakaliki war of expansion was not limited to only Ikwo and Ezza, there were expansion wars embarked on by the people

of Izzi. Historical records account for Anmegu as the ancestral home of the Izzi, however, a war ensued when the Ezza expansion, settlement and the search for farmland to which Anmegu was attacked began. U. U. Okonkwo and N. M. Mbam posit that though, the attack was repelled, however, it led to the migration of some of the inhabitants who consequently founded additional three mother towns of Ishieke, Enyigba and Ebya [21]. The three towns were located across the Ebonyi-Enyigba River but later relocated to Enyigba-unuphu, a place closer to Anmegu immediately after the war. This statement was affirmed by Ishieke clan who hold that Anmegu is their ancestral home. The foundation of Ishieke clan may have occurred within the second half of the 17th Century AD [22]. The story told by those people has it that MgbomEze migrated after the first Ezza attack on Anmegu to a place called OkpuruEgbu in Orizu at Anmegu. The place was prone to further attacks from the Ezza but those consequent attacks provoked further movement till they settled in west of Ebya from where they became the founder of Ishieke. Towards the end of the 17th century AD, a war broke out between the Ishieke clan and the Ezza, the effects of this war caused Ishieke to migrate to the area of her present settlement. The reason for the war was given as a brawl between one Nworie-an Ezza man and a man from Nike unit of Ishieke clan to which Nworie was killed. The Ezza demanded that the culprit be handed over to them and when the latter did not respond, war ensued between them. During the war, Ishieke clan fought without assistance from other Izzi clans because they considered the war unjust. As a result, the Ezza with their numeric strength wracked havoc on Izzi, defeated and forced them to flee from their houses. Through this war, Ishieke lost eight of their villages to Ezza forces who drove them farther north to NdieborOpheke.

The defeat of Izzi from several wars they went with the Ezza did not come without some dogged efforts to reclaim their losses. Like Okonkwo and Mbam, as Ishieke people retreated from the Ezza, they in turn sacked the Effium and Otobolo peoples further north to as far as Benue State. During these periods war, Izzi were able to defeat the Ezza in what became the second phase of Ishieke war with the Ezza at battle of OgboOgu at Idebya village even though, the effects of that war abound on Izzi who lost several of her land to Ezza like Eke Imoha at Onueke, OswaEffium, OkpuruEffium which were owned by Agalegu group of villages. F. N. Anozie reveals that Utokon in Ogoja were formerly occupying the area now occupied by Nwofe, Izzi [23].

2.3. The Challenges of National Security

What is key in the movement of people from one place to another is the preservation of their culture. Culture defines peoples' way of life. Their languages, food, traditions, identity and the way they live their lives are all embodied in one's culture. However, changes in one cultural practice do lead to acculturation which does not completely lead to alteration or destruction of one's cultural values. Available

evidences abound where war captives are forced to assimilate the culture of their conquerors thus, abandoning some aspects of their own culture without completely, losing their sense of identities. This is to say that of all the features of man, identity is the most essential attribute of his life because he can forget other aspects of his life but not his identity. Therefore, as people migrated to new places, they migrated with their sense of identities which allow them to evolve into clan and thus, expanded into communities. The situation in the old traditional Abakaliki Igbo groups provided the framework for analytical discussion of how this kind of movement grew to challenge the Nigeria's national security. The migration that took place within these areas where people moved en mass to fight and drive other people away without clearly demarcating the boundaries showed that porous borders constitute one aspect that leads to proliferation of small arms and light weapons". Like John Shagaya writes that "the history of Nigeria... maybe described as one of a continuous encounter with border problematic. Inter tribal skirmishes that turn to all-out wars have their backgrounds from these migration wars [24].

Within the regions of river-Cross River, population expansion of Ikwo into the bank of the River has been considered an infringement by the peoples of Nsobo, Osopo and Adadama of Cross River State. These peoples have been engaging the Ikwo people into intermittent fighting occasioned by land disputes and claims for their mineral deposits. In 1992, the large concentration of sharp sand for molding concrete blocks at Ofenakpa beach together with the fertile swamp land for growing rice at "ebe" have caused several wars between the peoples of Ofenakpa and Nsobo. The same is said of the people of OchenyimIkwo in Ebonyi State with Adadama of Abi Local Government of Cross River State and Azu-Oswa Enyibichiri Alike of Ebonyi State with OsopoEsa of Cross River State respectively. The availability of weapons of different kinds made the regions vulnerable and militaristic. These weapons are used for different kinds of criminalities such as kidnapping, election rigging or stuffing of ballots in box, harassment and intimidation that threaten and challenge the security of the occupants. From the northern side of Abakaliki, the northerly expansion of Izzi up to Yala in Cross River State without border demarcation has provoked war between the Mfuma people of Igbegu in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and Ukelle in Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State. During the war, about twenty-four (24) villages belonging to the people of Mfuma were raided with their houses burnt down and the people maimed and killed without intervention of any kind from the government. The effects of this attacked resulted in the displacement of the twenty-four villages till date. The same war is replicated among the peoples of Ida and Osopo 1 and 2 both in Abakaliki Local Government of Ebonyi State and Obubra Local Government in Cross River State respectively.

In the Northwest of Abakaliki, the Ngbo-Igala conflict has showcased another intermittent wars prosecuted from the movement of people. In a statement issued by ASP George

Okafor, “it is an inter-state crisis and from the available information to us, this crisis has lasted for so many years which comes up once in a while” [25]. The crisis is said to be boundary dispute between the Ukwuagba-Ngbo community in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and Igala in Ado Local Government of Benue State. The crisis has constituted serious threats to the security of people as acquisition of AK47 becomes a sure-way for the desired security needed for peaceful co-existence in the region. Paradoxically, there is no hope that peace can reign in a turbulent region where dangerous weapons like AK47, small and light weapons are in the hands of criminals. However, most criminals that prosecute the crisis are those who got sponsorship from their political masters, ironically the same war profiteers are the once seeking for peace. Evidences of the assertion above can be found when the Ebonyi State Government accused her Cross River counterpart of frustrating the peace initiative jointly sought by the governments. According to Nwafor Polycarp, “in a joint communiqué signed by the deputy governors of Cross River and Ebonyi State, Prof IvaraEsu and Bar. Eric Kelechi Igwe, both parties called on National Boundary Commission to work with both states and jointly initiate action on the resumption of the delineation Ebonyi/Cross River inter-state boundary not later than Monday 27 February, 2017 [26].

3. The National Boundary Commission

The role of the National Boundary Commission established under the law of federal republic of Nigeria is to ensure and carry out boundary demarcations or adjustments. The establishment of the Commission was followed with a Repeal of Act, Cap. 238, L. F. N. to acquire, hold or dispose of any property, movable or immovable, for the purpose of carrying out any of its function under this act [27]. Boundaries are physical attributes of natural features such as rivers, hills or mountains, however, Nigeria’s boundaries were artificially created and have thus, posed serious challenges that culminated into inter communal, tribal and state wars. As a creation of British imperialism, Nigeria’s inchoate boundaries became a national issue with the establishment of National Boundary Commission premised to embark on perceptible delineation of states and their component units. Rather, there appeared to be little or no success associated with the establishment of the Commission as border disputes have taken the centre stage in Abakaliki and its environs.

In Abakaliki Local Government, there have been intermittent boundary crises between OfiojiIzzi and her neighbouring Ijutun-Idoru. With the communities of Ofioji-Okpuitumo, Abakaliki Local Government of Ebonyi State and Ijutun-Idoru of Obubra Council Area of Cross River State engaging in serious military confrontations, the Ebonyi State Government called on the National Boundary Commission to forestall peace within the area. Till now, the area has remained volatile and constituted a theatre for hostilities. Several peace talks initiated by the state

governments of Ebonyi and Cross River were truncated by war profiteers while the community youths are conscripted without training and thrown into the battlefield to lay ambush and carry occasional attacks on the enemy’s territory. As part of peace building process, the National Boundary Commission were called on to carry out a conspicuous delineation of the disputed territory without result thereby leaving people to suspect and doubt the neutrality and competence of the commission with the both communities threatening to drive each other way. This off course, has presented Nigeria in bad light as there is virtually no community that does not possess arms. In doing this, the National Security Institute become ill-informed in arriving at a better policy that can lead to the preservation of Nigeria’s state and the security of her citizenry so as to avoid war and eliminate every issue that causes war.

4. Conclusion

History is a reflection of the past memories in a way that showcased as if past events are taking place immediately. To that extent, the migration wars that took place within the Northeastern Igboland are one of such events that need historical documentations, however, the Igbo historians appeared to have completely neglected the Abakaliki histories particularly the migration wars that occurred between 1800-1920, except the research documentations from Prof U. C. Anyanwu. Unfortunately, Anyanwu’s historical records concentrated much on Ezza clan rather than the entire Abakaliki. Therefore, this study attempted a historical examination on some aspects of wars that occurred in Abakaliki Igbo sub-groups during the pre-colonial Igbo society.

Most importantly, the history of Northeastern Igbo groups can be traced from diverse accounts some of which appeal to the reality of autochthoneity of not coming from anywhere whilst others hinge on mythical assumptions of EnyiNwegu, Ekuma, Ezekuna, Aro-Bende and heaven as their ancestral fathers and homes. Those that appeared real traced the histories of Abakaliki Igbo groups individually from different ancestral fathers whereas others which appeared uncertain hold that the peoples share the same blood consanguinity with one another. This assertion has been contested by the present author in another paper where he argued that war among brothers is abhorred by Igbo cultures and traditions. Their traditions hold that whenever two brothers of the same blood consanguinities engage in blood bath, the gods of that land together with the land itself will be appeased, purified and sanctified if not, it will attract calamities to the entire lineages of the people. Contrarily, the evidences of several wars that had occurred among the Abakaliki Igbo sub-groups tend to justify this argument that Abakaliki people might have arrived differently at where they are today at different times or might have been existing much earlier in their present areas before population expansion provoked migration wars. Abakaliki Igbo sub-groups engaged in numerous migration wars arising from land struggle and population expansions.

Prominent among these Igbo groups were the Ezza whose population expansions are extended into various Igbo sub-groups except Ikwo who possessed the same military powers with them. Today Ezza colonies are found in many parts of Abakaliki and beyond. The acrimony associating with the establishment of these extended territories outside their domain have ignited wars of different kinds, sometimes with the invaders and at other time, with other people who were considered to be militarily weak. It is this process of occasionally fighting that earned Abakaliki regions the theatre of war.

Beside this, there is a common feature of language similarity found in their dialects, with their cultural norms, values and traditions appearing the same. This may not be far from the years of existed inter-group relationships that tend to support EnyiNweguas their legendary ancestor. However, each of the groups while not denying that they might have originated from one ancestral father, also claimed to have come to live in where they are found because of the natural influences like population expansion, inter-group wars, land scarcity and quest for more adaptive places. Therefore, the varieties that exist in their history of origins don't completely make them enemies; there are still a degree of cooperation and relationships premised on intermarriage system that exist among them.

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