

## **Significance of Ahiara, the Ahiara Declaration and Its Implications for the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War, 1967-1970**

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijhphr.13/vol12n12044>

Published April 28, 2024

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**Citation:** Okoko C.O., Odinaka O.C., and Eke J.C. (2024) Significance of Ahiara, the Ahiara Declaration and Its Implications for the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War, 1967-1970, *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.20-44,

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**ABSTRACT:** *Ecology always played important roles in historical determinism; and basically, also as landscapes for defense, assaults and as (motivational) totems. Since the 1970s, certain questions have engaged Igbo historians, anthropologists/ethnographers and commentators in recent histories of Igboland nexus the factors that accounted for the significance of Ahiara in Mbaise, for it to have been chosen as historically (ethnically) strategic for the Ahiara Declaration by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu in 1969. The paper undertook to discern the geographical importance of Ahiara vis-à-vis other similarly regarded territorial patches, such as the choice of Perestroika and Glasnot by Mikhail Gorbachev and why the Kenyans have always dominated the Marathon races in Olympiads; and in pronouncements made in ecological environments, such as Ahiara, Arusha in Tanzania, Kenya and Russia. Subsidiary questions raised were: Did Ahiara command a centrality in location in Igboland that it was chosen? Were the Ahiara a martial people that their territory was preferred to those of the Abam, Ngwa and Ohafia, who had evolved celebrated military ethos? Perhaps, the findings were convincing to have compelled Ojukwu to choose Ahiara for his “win-the-war” manifesto. The paper concluded that the choice of Ahiara was, comparatively, apt; and portrayed an essential historicity. But the Ahiara Declaration was made at the twilight of the Republic of Biafra and could not have been, unarguably, useful for the war effort. Oral interviews were conducted while primary sources predominated in writing this paper.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ecology, (historical) determinism, military, ethos, pronouncements, ethnicity declaration.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper will be written in two parts. The first will historicize the ecological factors that make environments or territorial patches useful; and become characteristic in eventual historical outcomes. Consequently, certain questions have been raised regarding what made the Ahiara territory significant in the history of Igboland and in the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War. In sequel, attempts will be made at unearthing why so much importance was attached to the Ahiara Declaration by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu; and the choice of this particular territory for it. The second part will examine the events that led to the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War between 1967 and 1970; and the probable reasons that informed the executors of the war, especially on the Biafran side, to recourse to Ahiara to make the landmark Declaration.

The choice of Ahiara in Mbaise for the Declaration would have been accounted for by several historical factors in addition to the ecological. This entailed, in summation, the interactions of the human elements within and withal the Ahiara territorial patch; the historicity of Ahiara and events, especially in the fight against the imposition of colonial rule by the British; and, finally, of the performance relations (historicality) of all the factors, be it social, political and economic. There was also the impingement of 'universalizing' events on the local 'indigenous' microcosms. Explicitly, the internal events that played out in the historical evolution of the Ahiara microcosm were made dynamic as a result of the external factors in the 'first' globalization, such as slavery, colonialism and decolonization; and, perhaps, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

These abstractizations have been made necessary in order to discern reasons for the choice of Ahiara by the Ojukwu-led Biafran government. The Ahiara territorial patch has a history of vehement resistance to the penetration of the British into Mbaise. Most commentators have imputed several factors, among which is the ecological, as reason that made the Ahiara in the colonial period go into an all out war against the British when most of their neighbours accepted colonialism without resistance.

Much of part one will rehearse Okechi Dominic Azuwike's book chapter titled, "Ahiara in Resistance History (1901-2017): An Ecological Perspective". Azuwike glaringly stated that occurrences in history have not been haphazard but have the "outcomes of a systematic convergence of a multiplicity of factors" (2018, 541-554). The significance of Ahiara and its implications for the Igbo nexus the epoch declaration made in the community are outcomes, equally, of these contiguous events. In essence, great events and the *loci* of their occurrence are a sumtotal of the interplay of the elements within the environment.

As mentioned in the abstract to this paper, ecological patches have always played important roles in historical determinism; and have since become ‘motivational totems’ and/or milestones. Ahiara is one of the ecological niches wherein the ‘conspiracy’ and ‘interplay’ of events has turned it into a totem and psycho-cultural symbolism for the Igbo, therefore, its choice for the epochal ‘Declaration’ during the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War. The historical challenges faced by the Ahiara component of the Igbo would have accounted for their persistent resistance which came to be considered exemplary from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial periods.

### **Ecological Variables**

#### **Events and Ecology**

The ecological variable is that which examines the interactions of people and groups within social and cultural environments; and how it affects them inclusive of the consequences; and the ensuing perceptions about those environments afterwards. Rehearsing R. Mala and R. Hertwig (2017, 151-158), major world events had ecological underpinnings. Notable among these events were slavery, colonization and decolonization; and the fact that Kenya and Ethiopia have dominated the marathon races globally. The First and Second World Wars, the Cold War, Perestroika and Glasnost played out in Europe. Other ecologically underpinned events have been Africa’s underdevelopment nexus neo-colonialism; and the development of the military ethos of the martial communities of the Cross River Igbo, such as the Abam and Ohafia, in pre-coloniality (Charles Okeke Okoko, 2015).

This paper, as mentioned elsewhere, undertakes to examine the ecological variables that underpinned and still underpins the significance of the Ahiara in relations to their socio-political, economic and cultural lives in pre-colonial through to the post-colonial times. Inferentially, ecological factors led to the development of the aforementioned world events and equally led to the survival of some and demise of others. In the words of Azuwike (2018: 541):

It can be asked, what were the ecological or geographical factors that made Perestroika and Glasnost imperative for Russia at the close of the 1980s? What ecological factors conspired to make post-World War II colonization non-fashionable? What ecological factors led to the demise of slavery? What ecological factors made Ahiara resist colonial rule to the extent of going into an all out war with the colonial government when most of her neighbours acquiesced to it?

Similar ecological, geographical and historical factors played comparative roles in the evolution of contiguous Igbo communities, such as the Abam, Edda and Ohafia, who were among the last prong of the migrating Igbo groups towards the Cross River valley. The insecurity that characterized this environment as a result of the slave trade and the need to acquire lands formed the peoples psyche and worth. They consequently evolved a heightened degree of militarism and ethos that became apotheosized by the rest of the Igbo and beyond (Okoko, 2015).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the environment is a profound conditioner for the development of events. However, ecological variables have not always produced events; but that all developments have occurred as a result of the interplays of ecological factors. One can possibly surmise and unarguably too that varieties of developments in history have been inevitably the product of systems that deliberately or inadvertently evolved at specific time periods. As mentioned earlier, ecological or environmental factors have interplayed to anchor historical determinism.

The communities of the Cross River Igbo evolved similarly structured systems like the Ahiara in ecologically-determined circumstances. The Perestroika and Glasnost were not necessarily the personal makings of Mikhail Gorbachev but were resultant from the expediency of a policy imperative that best suited Russia's circumstances within the global context (M. Kiruga, 2015). It is also widely believed that the economic successes of the United States of America are owed largely to its fertile soils (National Geographic, 2012).

The East African athletes, especially the Keyans, have won virtually all global marathon races and this has been attributed to their environment. M. Kiruga who won the 2015 Olympics gold medal identified her Kalenji community in the West Rift Valley of Kenya and its high altitude as precursor to her successes (Kiruga, 2015). This would lead to a synthesis that wherever ecological factors converge naturally, or are created outcomes, become predictable, irrespective of the persuasions and in conjunction with the participants within that environmental niche.

### **Traits and Ecology**

Other than the development of events, there have been the metamorphoses of traits which span the activities of living things in adaptation or in rebellion. Therefore, traits akin to peace, violence and resistance have ecological bearings. Comparatively, regarding resistance and warfare which constitute the objective of this paper, variations within the physical environment, on the one hand; and historical challenges, on the other, have caused peoples or groups to acquire certain traits and characteristics (C. Hersketh, 2017). This has raised the pertinent question: Are environmental forces implicated in the production of resistance and in its observed disparities across historical time and geographical space? (<http://muse.jhu.edu/book/57129>; 2022) This then presupposes

interplays between environment/ecology and persons or groups. Although group psychoanalysis is daunting more than the individual, it is still the sumtotal of the individual that make up the group. In essence, individual or group, members of a territorial patch have from time to time undertaken a stock of their past activities; and some found themselves fulfilled while others found themselves lacking. It could also be argued these self-examinations: a catharsis, have accounted for subsequent actions: crises of generativity. These type-responses are replete in history but common among individuals who ‘struck a blow and died’ often without road maps or aims.

On resistance and warfare, Adiele E. Afigbo wrote that to the chagrin of the British, who had felt that the destruction of the famed oracle, Ibiniukpabi and Aro hegemony would have meant the capitulation of the entire Igboland to colonialism, it did not happen. But hardly had the Aro ‘mercantilist’ hegemony been destroyed did other Igbo communities, who, as some commentators held, had prepared themselves against possible Abam attacks, take up arms and resisted the imposition of British administration. According to Michael Crowder (Michael Crowder, 1973: 129):

There is no room ... to detail the numerous expeditions that were sent out to bring the Ibo, Ibibio, Urhobo and many other tribes of southern Nigeria under British rule. But the destruction of the Arochukwu oracle is worthy of note, for it ended one of the most curious and ingenious political systems ever devised by Africans.

Before examining the Ahiara resistance, it is pertinent to attempt same on some militarily disposed Igbo communities, such as the Abam and Ohafia, but the Abam will be used as a case study. This is has become necessary in order to underpin the choice and significance of the Ahiara environmental niche.

### **Militarizing Antecedents**

The analyses of warfare and the motivations for it have occupied anthropologists and ethno-historians for decades without arriving at a consensus opinion in order that convincing conclusions could be drawn. This paper seeks to throw more light on the raging debate by surveying in brief the Abam in the Arochukwu Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. In the book, *Abam: A Historical Study to 1960* an examination of the various forms of warfare in pre-coloniality, such as war as solidarity, war as play, war as human nature and war as politics, was carried out. In essence, these typologies of warfare accounted for the origins and causes of it in traditional societies. It was deduced that the military engagements of the Abam in pre-colonial times keyed into the ‘war as solidarity and play’ concepts (Okoko, 2015).

The two factors that heightened Abam military ethos in the pre-colonial period and corrected the impression created by the earlier extrapolations of, especially by foreign anthropologists, that the Abam were a bloodthirsty people that marched on innocent communities in order to remove any obstacles the Aro encountered in their mercantilist and oracular (**Ibiniukpabi**) activities. Rather, what obtained were commensalist and mutual between the two Igbo communities who were always quick to rise to the defence of the other, especially in events requiring some police work and military dispatches. Moreover, there was a spiritual connection between the two communities that was, and still is, exemplified by virtue of membership in the **Ekpe** secret cult that discharged juridical functions and injunctions; and often enforced by the militarily-disposed Abam. It was, indeed, mutual.

Warfare is one of the well-documented processes or attempts at domination and control by one community or communities; and/or of the quest for exclusivity. It could be physical or psychological. In pre-colonial times, all that was needed was to announce that the Abam were about, for people to be on the run or accept the dictates of the Arochukwu. Included also are the socio-economic and political maneuvers which in political history have been described as circumscriptive. Warfare has been categorized into inter- and intra-group conflicts and homicidals. Some anthropologists and ethno-historians have put the origin of warfare at the hunting and collecting periods of man's existence. In the process, several groups came into contact with others through commerce, diplomacies, conflicts and warfare. Some of these interactions which were at man's developmental stages were obviously intrusions into the other groups' cherished territories.

Yet, available evidence does not portray warfare as having originated exclusively from pristine times but have been woven around events with specific colourations, synonymous and coterminous with historical epochs and history in the shuttles back and forth between families and communities. Rehearsing Marvin Harris (1977: 34):

Ethnographic studies have shown that the resident core of a typical modern hunter-collector band changes from season to season and even from day to day, as families shuttle back and forth between the camps of the husband's and wife's relatives. While people identify with the territory in which they were born, they don't have to defend that territory in order to earn a living.

In the case of the Abam of southeast Nigeria, the need to acquire territories which had become contestable because other groups migrated into the area resulted to wars. At another level, people engaged in wars as a result of the disagreements between influential

individuals who if they mustered sufficient number of persons (relatives and townsmen) that were sympathetic to their cause evolved into war parties.

### **Some Possible Explanations for the Development of Abam Militarism and Warrior Ethos**

As mentioned earlier, when the Abam settled in their present territory, to the northwest of Arochukwu, there was the need for them to acquire land for expansion and farming. There was also the need for the Abam to consolidate their land gains against those who would have encroached into their territory or generally posed a threat. The need to survive in an apparently hostile and thickly forested environment would seem to have led the Abam to initiate series of military campaigns not expansionist in character but often aimed at deterrence.

A people already described as unruly and aggressive, and faced with the challenge of acquisition of territory internalized aggression and graduated into professional warriors. Even when it is argued that land and its acquisition was not a severe problem in the pre-colonial Cross River Igbo area, the need to defend the territory was enhanced by the fact that the Abam were essentially a farming people and practiced shifting cultivation and bush fallowing. They, thus, endeavoured to defend their land: their main resource, against other expanding groups since, again, that these lands were not habited. The Abam were sedentary farmers.

On getting to their present territory, the Abam crossed over and settled on the left bank of the Igwu River, at Amaelu (**Okike Izu**) of course, farther east of the river. The Edda and Ohafia had settled to the northeast, the Afikpo and some other groups to the north, the Bende to the west and Nkalu Nta to southwest. Abam was, thus, hedged in except from the forested and sparsely populated southeast, and it was the only open and free area towards which they could expand. Ovukwu Abam expanded southeast into Aro-Ibibio territory. If this appraisal is correct, the implication is that the Abam warrior ethos was developed as a result of the people's experience.

As mentioned earlier, it was probably after the Aro had seen the military prowess of the Abam that they started enlisting their services. The Aro even established links between the Abam warriors and outsiders, for instance, with the Nike and Akokwa, who the Abam eventually fought for. The Akokwa invited the Abam when their neighbours attacked them. The Abam are said to have played an important role in the founding of Arondizuogu. As Arondizuogu tradition recounts, Izuogu the founder of Arondizuogu had wandered for so long, probably from Arochukwu and looking unkempt, the Ikpaora people mistook him for a mad man and treated him accordingly. An appeal, whether it was made directly or through his Arochukwu kinsmen, to the Abam, was responsible for

the sack of the Ikpaora. Those who were sacked from Ikpaora now inhabit Uturu near Okigwe.

After a period of consolidation in the new settlement, the Abam undertook some military campaigns independently. At times these were mere skirmishes, which involved a handful of warriors. Akokwa and Arondizuogu traditions recount that only a few Abam warriors, at times not exceeding ten, usually fought in those wars. Sometimes, it only entailed spreading the rumour that the Abam were in the bushes (Ndi **Abam abale ofia**) for the people to take to their heels or hiding.

Abam, as a result of these campaigns became a land where young men often listened to the wooden xylophone, **Ikoro**, to learn there was an emergency. Warfare gave young men a chance to prove their courage. It could be inferred that the Abam warrior ethos was developed quite independently of the Aro. The Abam simply reacted to their ecological environment and historical experiences which coincided with Aro commercial expansion. The Aro were quick to appreciate the value of the Abam and hired them for military service. Some Abam warriors (as independent fighters) were also hired as mercenaries by other communities that needed their services. As has been wrongly held, the Abam were not mercenaries to the Arochukwu and always at their beck-and-call, except some Abam warriors who operated individually.

The Abam, unarguably, were a singular source of awe, and were actually held as such in pre-colonial southeastern Nigeria and beyond. The mere mention of the Abam evinced so much terror that most communities willingly surrendered some of their indigenes, most of them preferably criminals, for decapitation, for slavery (who were handed over to the Aro) or simply took to their heels. It is contended in some quarters that this would have presented opportunities for the less brave to embark on warfare and return home with cut heads. Moreover, since human heads were the trophies that the warriors must return home with, to the rhythms, summons and caresses of the specially hewn wooden xylophone, **Okerenkwa** that was beaten only during emergencies or to herald the return of the warriors that excelled in warfare. These heads were eventually kept at the **Agbalankwa**, a museum of sorts where cut human heads were stacked in like-yams style in barns.

Until recently, Abam militarism had constituted its history in the numerous literatures available on Igbo history. Again, Abam history has always been append-aged to that of the Aro and Arochukwu. Yet, the wars which were largely skirmishes always took place periodically. Moreover, all the males in Abam society were not involved in warfare at any one time or even in great numbers. There were no military garrisons in Abam to have underscored the averred always-ready status that have been accorded them. And having attained this military disposition always availed themselves and were always at the beck-and-call of the Aro in the execution of their many pillages and trading activities in pre-



colonial southeastern Nigeria. Rather, the case was that all the descendants of Onyerubi, Egbebu and Ezema, in particular, often went into alliances with each other or formed confederations so as to muster enough warriors to execute warfare. The alliances then constituted the “Abam” (inclusive of the Abam, Edda and Ohafia, among others). Other than the wars or skirmishes, the Abam were subsistence agriculturists.

The military ethos of the Abam, which attained an apotheosis in its history, has been summarized in the lyrics and rhythm of the Abam War Dance: indeed a mnemonic dance. The dance steps that entail the rhythmic twitching of the body towards and around the chest region reminiscently simulate the twitching and spasms of a decapitated human body at the throes of death. Inferentially, the Abam actually engaged in agricultural activities more than they did in warfare; the constancy of the wars in pre-colonial times was often executed by mercenary-hirelings, *albeit* from the Cross River Igbo area; and that the wars were embarked upon periodically. Otherwise, the estimated population of the Abam clan, which was put at twenty-four thousand (24,000) after the 1963 census, could not have sustained the high rate of plundering and destruction associated with them almost two hundred and fifty years ago.

It hurts the ego of the average Abam man if he is not referred to as a warrior whose grandparents terrorized other Igbo and non-Igbo communities. The Abam identity and consciousness have since been denominated by her military past. There is no other myth that could possibly replace her militarism. But valour or not, there must have been other aspects of the people's life and society that gave it sustenance in pre-colonial times. This is incontrovertibly so since the Abam did not engage in warfare for economic and expansionist reasons. They had engaged in warfare during rest periods from agricultural and other economic activities, such as trading and crafts.

As mentioned earlier, the Abam are located in the rain forest and derived savanna vegetation zones. They successfully adapted their economic life to these zones. Both natural and human resources abound in the place. In pre-colonial times, agriculture and human resources formed the basis of Abam economy, and they still do.

However, agriculture was on a subsistence level. There were other economic activities, such as trading, hunting, crafts and Industry. These activities were sustained by the raw materials and surpluses that accrued from the subsistence agriculture that was practiced by the Abam. The products equally sustained the internal trade system. Though the Abam participated in external trade, **the extent cannot be estimated. Suffice it to say that the Aro dominated the external trade in the Cross River Igbo area and beyond with the Abam as security personnels.** Although it has been argued that the cordial relations that existed between the Aro and the Abam was underpinned by the non-interference into each other's businesses.

Hunting which was associated with forest resources was not a major economic activity of the people. It was rather a pastime for age grades that hunted for the celebration of major festivals, such as the **Igba Ekpe** and **Oso** maturity rite, some individuals for the celebration of the new yam festivals, to curtail the boredom of the rest period from agricultural activities, and for retired warriors to relive their military exploits by stalking and killing game (Okoko, 2015: 178-182).

### **The Ahiara in Resistance**

Ahiara is one of the important historical Igbo communities in Mbaise in the present-day (2023) Imo State of Nigeria. Attempts will be made here to situate the resistance of the Ahiara from pre-coloniality to post-coloniality within the context of her physical environment and in events, such as colonialism and in recent clerical/church disagreements.

Resistance against seemingly traumatic events and threats by the Ahiara shares longevity of about one hundred and eighteen (118) years. Ahiara resistance has been broken into three periods, namely, the colonial, immediate post-colonial and contemporary times (Azuwike, 2018: 543). Ahiara resistance during the colonial period was largely caused by the deemed trespasses of the British and their forceful conscription into the British colonial army towards the Aro Expedition between 1901 and 1902. The immediate cause, however, of the strained relations between the Ahiara and the British was the imposition of a road tax by the former. This imposition led to the murder of some colonial personnel who would have felt that they could not be stopped in their colonizing mission; and the declaration of a 'No to White Rule'. Consequently, between 1901 and 1905, beaming from the success of the Aro and Ngwa Expeditions, the British launched the Ahiara Expedition and defeated them in 1905 (Mbaiseonline, 2017). The 'No to White Rule' declaration by the Ahiara in their resistance to the imposition of British rule in the pre-colonial period was the first before the Ojukwu's Ahiara Declaration in 1969 in the post-colonial era.

In the immediate post-colonial period in Nigeria were disparate and distinct fully evolved communities that sought for identification via unbridled ethnic nationalism. Although it could be difficult isolating Ahiara nationalism from that of the entire Igboland, it is recorded variously that they have always resented any forms of dehumanization, therefore, rule by outsiders. This streak among the Ahiara has constantly resonated in later dealings with those outside their ethnic boundaries. Yet, this was, and still is, not peculiar to the Ahiara but to all ethnic sectors within Igboland. There have always existed dichotomies consciously or unconsciously easily noticeable by the activities of those who construe existing circumstances as not appealing and conducive to them; and felt, and still feel, threatened by the possible situation of circumscription by more numerous and belligerent communities. The Ahiara case has been so persistent to be somewhat

uncomfortable that it will not be out of place to suggest that the Ahiara have carried over the misgivings of the colonial period to the post-colonial; when seemingly every non-Ahiara persons or communities are quickly perceived as saboteurs of the Ahiara condominium. In the words of Azuwike (2018: 544):

Ahiara, much in line with her colonial era stance on power relations with “outsiders” was central to that interrogation of nationhood, statehood, [peoplehood] agency for Africa and ethnic groups and the place of African nations (not European created ones) in the post-colonial order.

From available evidence on Ahiara resistance to outsiders, one would make bold to assert that, recourse to their antecedents, the “Ahiara hosted the major articulation of resistance philosophy”, much in line with the contents of the Ahiara Declaration by Ojukwu in 1969. The “No to White Rule” declaration in the colonial period and that of the Ahiara Declaration in 1969 which tended to forestall the eclipse of the Igbo in the Nigerian State during the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War (1967-1970) share a common primordial sentimentality and ecology.

The deductions from analyses, so far, recall previously raised questions, such as: Was the choice of Ahiara for the 1969 civil war declaration a mere geographical happenstance? Was it symbolic of the acknowledged antecedents of the Ahiara colonial resistance credentials? In the opinion of most commentators, given the intellectual power of those who led the Biafran government and the fact that Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was a historian, the colonial resistance credentials of the Ahiara might not have been unknown to them.

Before a possible psychoanalysis of the Ahiara, their resistance instincts recently reared its ugly head in 2012 at the rejection of the Bishopric appointment made by the Catholic papacy in far away Vatican in Rome. This rejection was not because the appointee was not from among the locals as previously held, rather, the Ahiara Catholic establishment kicked against the larger picture of “Anambra imperialism in Church leadership, discriminatory attitudes and hegemonic dominance of other groups leveraging on access to Rome” (C. P. Egege, 2014). The Old Anambra State had produced Bishopric appointees to Isele Uku, Okigwe, Onitsha, Awka, Enugu, Awgu, Minna, Uromi, Benin and Aba since 1990; and this to the Ahiara smacked of internal colonialism. Ahiara resistance to the Bishopric appointee from Awka to their Diocese for more than six years led to the appointee Bishop’s resignation and the eventual acquiescence of the Pope.

Records have proven the Ahiara right and that there should be greater transparency and grassroots involvement of the people in the local Churches’ decision making structure.

Comparatively, the Ahiara Catholic establishment then had “one of the highest concentrations of priests per unit of space in the world at 135 indigenous priests for 520,000 Catholics across about 425 square kilometres territorial space (CatholicHierarchy.org.nd). The Ahiara, indeed, as the Pope would have thought, were eminently qualified statistically, and justifiably too, to have a homegrown bishopric leadership within the Catholic system.

Contextualized to the significance of the Ahiara, this contemporary resistance in Church history is still situated within ecological circumstances; and the Ahiara, over the years, have individually and communally evolved a psyche.

### **Possible Causative Demographic, Geographic and Ecological Factors for Ahiara Resistance**

The most difficult aspect of psychoanalysis is group psychoanalysis consequent on the fact that members of such groups are often inchoate or antithetical to the group’s needs. But certain groups are known to have reacted the same way individuals have acted when faced with similar challenges. However, psychoanalysis whether it is for groups or individuals has always revolved around the need for absolution, make things right and record achievements in life. This presupposes that at certain periods in the lives of individuals or groups that are inclusive of sects and ethnic groups, such as John Chilembwe of the Blantyre region of Tanzania (Okoko, 2016); the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria; and the Ahiara in Mbaise, Imo State of Nigeria, there will always be stocktaking. In the event the individual or group finds his/herself or itself wanting undergoes a catharsis and would ‘strike a blow and die’. Literarily, the ‘die’ connotes the need to show that “we can do it”. But in psychoanalysis, the ‘die’ would mean that those who struck the blow had no plans to ensure success but only to make a mark. For instance, the Argentina nation attacked Britain in spite of being aware of her military disadvantages. The Ahiara fought the British in spite of knowing the implications of failure which was the imposition of colonial rule; and without taking a cue from what happened to the Aro in the British Expedition of 1902. However, with the Bishopric appointment imbroglio, and in spite of the expected outcome of failure or ‘die’, the Ahiara struck a blow and survived.

It becomes pertinent then to examine the factors that could have compelled the Ahiara to “strike a blow and die” or live, in several circumstances. The resistance history of the Ahiara and their being adept at it is common knowledge. In the words of Azuwike (2018: 545-546):

Exploring the ecological dimension of Ahiara’s resistance history requires doing geography of Ahiara declarations ... [which] reflects a nexus of the temporal and spatial issues

that give rise to the total environment of evolution of the behaviours under consideration.

These factors will be examined considering, first, the scales of Ahiara's resistance campaigns, second, resource constraints and, third, the rurality and quality of the Ahiara population.

### **Scales of Ahiara's Resistance Campaigns**

The scale of Ahiara resistance history has been gauged in a comparative of the external colonialism of the British and the possibility of its substitution with an internal colonialism evidenced by the events in the Ahiara microcosm after the departure of the British. The most virulent resistance in the post-colonial period is represented by the Bishopric saga in the Ahiara Catholic Diocese.

Ahiara resistance history spans three periodic strata. The first is global and universalist against the Europeans represented by the British colonists; the second is national and prebendal, and underpinned by the unbridled ethnicization in Nigeria after the departure of the British; and third, is the regional which is symbolized by the anti-Bishopric appointment of a non-Mbaise cleric by the Papacy at the Vatican in Rome.

In essence, the objects of resistance have changed from the world picture during colonialism to Nigeria in post-coloniality; and finally, to the Mbaise territorial patch. Rehearsing Azuwike's contentions, the three periods and scales of Ahiara resistance are woven around the common theme of territoriality. This translates to the idea of "keeping my own space" against possible intrusions from outsiders (2018: 546). The Ahiara from all indications fought for spatial integrity that became evident when the Whiteman violated the payment of road tolls instituted by the Ahiara; when the British banned the tolls; and the consequent declaration of "No to White rule" before the imposition of colonial rule. The Ahiara Declaration of 1969 was a tacit recognition of the height the Ahiara had attained in resistance history. It bandied about, though on a larger Igboland platform, of the fact and need of a secure and safe homeland that was and, still is, untainted by intrusions and oppression by outsiders. The penchant for resistance by the Ahiara was replicated in post-colonial times when the larger Mbaise did not accept the Bishopric appointee from Rome, ostensibly against what they perceived as Old Anambra or Awka expansionism. For the Ahiara, this was beyond religion or at best, it was a psychophysical and spiritual colonialism.

### **Resource Constraints**

Ahiara environment was poorly endowed with natural resources and infertile soils. When compared to other Igbo communities, such as the Ngwa and Ohaji, Ahiara oil palm economy, although predominant, was rudimentary. The problem of the Ahiara poor soils was compounded in coloniality by an equally poor man-land ratio. This was, however,

characteristic of high population density areas. The Ahiara had, and still have, no major mineral and hydrocarbon resources; and this fact remained economically insignificant since they easily resorted to improvisations for economic survival. Among these were the imposition of road and usage tolls which, as mentioned earlier, the British opposed between 1901 and 1905.

Being greatly constrained by non-abundance of resources, the Ahiara who maintained these roads enroute commercial points imposed usage and passage tolls. The Ahiara would have been influenced into these impositions by the Oguta who placed usage tolls on the Oguta Lake and its Oil Palm Beach (F. K. Ekechi, 1981). The ban by the British of the road toll was construed by the Ahiara as a ban on a legitimate source of income and a blatant exhibit of nonchalance vis-à-vis their peoplehood.

In essence, all the resistances of the Ahiara were against, first, international and, second, local conspiracies underpinned by a heightened and inbuilt innate desire for self-determination.

### **Rurality and Quality of Population**

The Ahiara were not geographically positioned as much as the Oguta and Owerri to have first contact with the Europeans and eventual colonial administrators. They were rather insulated by some distance away from early contact with and influence by visitors. Additionally, the rurality and remoteness enhanced heightened homogeneity of the indigenous population. This blends with the theory that homogenous societies have always tended towards a conservatism that resisted and, still resists, change while urban heterogeneity equally tended to melt away resistance inclinations.

However, rurality does not affect the quality of the homogenous population who although have lived in isolation are enlightened enough about their rights and options; and have learnt over the years to protect them. This argument has stemmed from the fact that excessive impoverishment that goes with lack of enlightenment does not allow resistance to develop. It is common knowledge that in the build-up to the formation of states, men of wealth and voice played important parts. Among the Ahiara, resistance movements have been incited by a few well-off individuals who participated in decision making or in modern delineation by the Ahiara middle class since that would have been enlightened enough and mentally free to be able to identify infractions against their rights as a people; and exercise such resistive judgments to their advantage (Azuwike, 2018: 550-552).

As mentioned earlier, this paper will be written in two parts. The first has historicized the ecological factors that made Ahiara significant in the history of Igboland and the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War. The second will examine the events that led to the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War between 1967 and 1970; and why so much importance was attached to the

Ahiara environment. Additionally, the paper will pay some attention to analyzing the contents of the Ahiara Declaration by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu which, *ipso facto*, is a *desideratum* for the war which number among the forgotten wars of Africa.

The Biafra-Nigeria Civil war which ended fifty three (53) years ago, mediated the first serious global focus on the still on-going debate on how far political considerations should be allowed to undermine the ethos of ethnicity. Maxwell Cohen described the civil war as “government duplicity ...” on the Nigerian side and “the magnificent social dynamism of a youthful generation” on the Biafran side. This characteristic would have excited this ‘youthful generation’ into making the Ahiara Declaration (Nicholas Ibeawuchi Omenka, 2011: 1-8).

### **The Nigeria-Biafra Civil War and the People’s Revolution**

The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates exposed the North as being economically dependent on the South, therefore, the insistence of the British for the merger. Yet, only a few Southern and Northern Government Departments became unified at amalgamation in 1914. Different policies were used for administration in the former divides (that was in the Southern and Northern Protectorates) in the judiciary, health, education and prison’s ministries and departments. Most disconcerting was the emphasis and insistence by Northern leaders on the appreciation and respect of the differences in customs and traditions, languages and religions during the September 12, 1966 Ad hoc Constitutional Conference in Lagos after Nigeria had existed for almost six decades from 1960 when it won independence from Britain.

In a recall, the 1964 Federal elections marked a shift in party alliances. The disagreements between the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) and the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) occupied the front burner. The NCNC complained bitterly over the results of the 1962 census while the NPC, spearheaded by the Sarduana of Sokoto, complained about the insincerity of the NCNC which in all colourations was an Igbo-dominated party; and dubbed so. The Sarduana stated that should the NPC fail to win majority seats in the Federal elections, it will not go into any form of coalition with the NCNC, insisting that after all, “the Igbo have never been true friends of the North and will never be” (Richard L. Sklar, 1963: 178-182). Instead, the Sarduana sought for and went into alliance with the Northern Nigeria Democratic Party (NNDP), metamorphosing as the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) to contest the 1964 Federal elections. The NNA coalesced with the Niger Delta Congress and the Dynamic Party led by Chike Obi while the NCNC and Action Group (AG) formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and portrayed the NNA as feudalistic and oriented towards Hausa/Fulani hegemony. The NNA regarded the UPGA as self-seeking and corrupt and bent on monopolizing state positions (Emmanuel Amoko, 1966: 81). Accusations and counter-

accusations led to boycotts of the Federal elections which made President Nnamdi Azikiwe to ask Tafawa Balewa, the then Prime Minister to form a national government that will conduct elections in places where boycotts occurred; and also requested for a constitutional review vis-à-vis regulative and constitutive rules (Committee on Foreign Affairs...; 1968: 53).

The results of the belated/boycotted elections in the Eastern and Midwestern regions on February 1965 was 197 seats for the NNA and 198 seats for UPGA into the Federal Legislature; and the October 11, 1965 Western Region elections gave the UNDP power caused widespread anger resulting to incidents of arson, murder and instability. The mayhem in the Midwest and western Region led to their being described as the wild, wild, west. The NPC-led Federal government declared a state of emergency. Leaders of the AG were arrested by the police for unlawfully forming an interim executive council but released after a retraction of the declaration. The situation became so intractable that the army intervened and took over power on January 15, 1966.

The foregoing have been the remote causes of the civil war whereas the immediate causes were the pogrom/genocide against Easterners and the renege by Yakubu Gowon on the Aburi Accord. Evenso, the July 1966 counter coup *d'état* was targeted against the Igbo. On July 29, 1966, a group of Northern Nigeria army personnel kidnapped and murdered Major-General J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi and further moves were made to exterminate all Eastern Nigeria army officers at Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ikeja; and at Kaduna, Zaria and Kano. About two hundred army officers of eastern Nigeria extraction were killed. It was again extended to the Eastern Nigeria civilians living in the North. The pogrom during which over fifty thousand Easterners were killed jolted the conscience and aroused the indignation of the Igbo. The army hitherto the most united institution in Nigeria became divided by suspicion and hatred in addition to discriminatory promotions in the rank and file. Between January 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967 at the Pedusa Lodge, Accra, Ghana, under the Chairmanship of General Ankrah of Ghana, the Aburi Accord which defined powers and functions of the Federal Military Government vis-à-vis constitutional provisions, other safeguards, reorganization and control of the Nigerian Army, the police, diplomatic and consular services. Moreover, it was agreed that the Ad hoc Committee on Constitutional Review should resume sitting. The renege on the Aburi Accord by the Nigerian-side military led to the declaration of the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967 (Nigerian Crisis: Aburi, 1967).

## **Sequel to the Declaration of War and the Ahiara Declaration on May 29, 1969**

### **The Ahiara Declaration, 1969**

#### **Introduction**



The ecological perspective to the Ahiara's resistances was underpinned by physical resource constraints, rurality and human development needs. Like the Ahiara, the rest of the Igbo were subjected to layered scales of political reality, which became perverse after independence in 1960. The Ahiara ecological environment was an embodiment of these resistance enhancing factors, perhaps, reasons enough for its choice for the 1969 Declaration by Lieutenant Colonel C. O. Ojukwu.

In the preamble to the declaration, Ojukwu said: I thank you all for your absolute commitment to the cause for which our youth are making daily supreme sacrifices, and a cause for which we all have been dispossessed, blockaded, bombarded, starved and massacred. I salute you for your tenacity of purpose and amazing steadfastness even under siege. This preamble statement in the Ahiara Declaration would have stemmed from the erroneous and misleading impression that Biafra depended on a number of sources, for instance, for its arms (C. O. Ojukwu, 1969: 4). Such assumptions as Nehe Nwankwo stated, "Failed to recognize the cardinal principle of revolutionary or [the] peoples war" which is that "no determined people, fighting for freedom, can be subdued by mere force of arms". "The native will of Biafra will triumph over the foreign arms of Nigeria", (Nehe O. Nwankwo, 1969: 14-120). The Ahiara Declaration was a tacit acceptance of the character of the Biafran people who were not only revolutionary but also operated on the principles of self-reliance, innovation and premeditated 'hit-and-run' tactic.

The Biafrans regarded intrusions into the Eastern Region that had, and still have, the Igbo in majority as an aggression rather than as the Nigerians claimed, for the maintenance of its territorial integrity. This notion was underpinned by the illogicality of the fact that Gowon's regime had no constitutional jurisdiction over the Eastern Region since they were neither represented in the Nigerian government nor protected by it. Moreover, how could a government which allowed its alleged citizens to be freely slaughtered on a genocidal scale, arrogate to itself the right to represent them. Certain factors would have accounted for the need of the Declaration; yet, these constituted the greatest obstacles to any peaceful settlement of the Nigeria-Biafra imbroglio. Among the factors were (Ojukwu, 1969:4):

- i. The false notion that the crisis was an external affair of Nigeria rather than an increasingly international problem;
- ii. The never-ending hope of Nigeria and its many foreign supporters in the so-called concept of "quick-kill". The impossibility of "military victory" as a solution to a political problem must be accepted by Nigeria and her "friends" before meaningful negotiations can begin; and

iii. The idealistic hope by some misinformed observers that there must be a settlement based on the “one Nigeria” principle. The many contradictions within the Nigerian Federation and the deep feeling of hostility on both sides ought to have been recognized. Biafrans were not opposed to “one Nigeria”, had the Gowon regime so desired. Consequently, Biafrans demanded the right to self-determination within a framework outside of the Nigeria that was granted flag independence in 1960.

The Ahiara Declaration by General C. O Ojukwu on May 29, 1969 has been described variously as a commitment and/or a manifesto. It was a masterpiece crafted around subheadings that was vitiated by the timing of its presentation. However, it portrayed an effort that ought not to have been taken for granted but paled into insignificance nexus Nigeria’s failed ‘quick-kill’ approach.

#### **The Declaration, May 29, 1969**

In the words of Ojukwu (1969: 4):

Fellow countrymen and women, for nearly two years, we have been engaged in a war which threatens our people with total destruction. Our enemy has been unrelenting in his fury and has fought our defenseless people with a vast array of military hardware of ... sophistication unknown to Africa.

The concerted effort at defeating Biafra in a “quick-kill” was illogical and a misperception. It was conceived by Nigeria as a rebellion, whereas to the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region, now Biafra, it was a people’s revolution. Throughout history, revolutions have been fought often without commensurate ammunitions but with sustained will for self-determination. Personifying Nigeria (Ojukwu, 1969: 4):

For two years, we have withstood his assaults with nothing other than our stout hearts and bare hands. We have frustrated his diabolical intentions and have beaten his wicked mentors in their calculations and innovations.

If it were foretold that the war would last for three years, the Nigeria-led regime in Lagos would have laughed in contempt. The ill-equipped and rag-tag Biafran army withstood the well-equipped Nigerian army although at great costs to themselves.

Strategically guerrilla style, Ojukwu recounted Biafra’s efforts in the various war sectors they had confrontations with the Nigerian army and wherein were recorded great successes. Being the gateway into Biafra, the Onitsha sector was the bloodiest.

Confrontations took place in the Awka, Okigwe enroute to Umuahia, and the Ikot Ekpene, Azumiri and Aba sectors. The events at the Owerri-Port Harcourt sectors are common knowledge. In the spirit of the revolution, the Biafran airforce and navy were evolved to counter Nigerian onslaughts and to make the operations of the Nigerian Air Force difficult. For instance, three control towers in the airports at Port Harcourt, Enugu and Benin were put out of action. A fuel supplies point to Nigeria Air Force at Ugheli was disabled. The performance of Biafra in containing Nigeria was brilliant. What possibly passed as Nigeria's achievements in the Declaration were "the number of civilians and civilian targets their cowardly raids have destroyed" (Ojukwu, 1969: 7).

In spite of concerted international media blackout, economic and territorial blockades, and the unrelenting onslaughts that were fuelled by foreign supplies of arms to Nigeria, the people of Biafra regardless of trauma, hunger and deprivations of all sorts, stuck to the revolution. Biafrans looked forward to freedom, victory and to the future's time of envisaged plenty vis-à-vis the Igbo resilience, industry and adaptability. Other than the deaths at the pogroms, the calculated killings of entire male populations in Biafran communities became a sport for Nigerian soldiers. For instance, during a wedding ceremony at Uturu near Okigwe, Nigerian soldiers posed as participants with concealed guns and shot into the crowd and killed so many.

Yet, kwashiorkor killed more people, especially children, than those deaths that resulted from the actual fighting in the battlefields. Compared to the first and second World Wars, the Whites did not blockade their fellow Whites. Allowances were made or humanitarian corridors created to allow in basic necessities of life since there were women, children and non-combatants. All well known conventions, such as the Geneva Convention, were neglected in the Biafra-Nigeria case. In the words of Emezue (2000, 64):

Contrary to conventions governing the conduct of wars, especially civil conflicts, the Nigerian military, especially the Air force pursued a policy of indiscriminate bombardment of non-military targets, including markets, Churches and refugee camps. These were places where non-combatants especially women and children often converged and concentrated and so most of the victims were women and children.

Nine months into the civil war from April 1968, the premeditated bombardments of civilian populations had reached alarming dimensions. Counting, about fifty villages were bombarded and several deaths were recorded. For instance, at Aba 279 were killed; Port Harcourt 272; Umuahia 214; Owerri 146, Awgu 165 and Nومه 105 (Ojukwu, 1969). The most dastardly of the attacks on civilians took place on an **Afor** market day at

Ozu Abam in August 1968 during which about 350 indigenes and those who came to trade from other communities lost their lives (Okoko, 1908). It was, indeed, unarguably a premeditated genocide that was aided by mercenary Whites.

Intended to excite the Biafrans through the Declaration, Ojukwu raised pertinent questions. Does the fact that the defenseless women and children being killed in Biafra were black make a difference to an aspect of humanity? Globally, the Biafran revolution epitomized the old-age struggle of the Blacks for their full stature as humans.

In as much as the stage of the war was in Nigeria, it was a fight against racism, Arab-Muslim expansionism and neo-imperialism which in this instance were perpetrated in the guise of helping Nigeria crush the infidels. In the words of Ojukwu (1969: 11):

Our struggle is not a mere resistance - that will be purely negative. It is a positive commitment to build a healthy, dynamic and progressive state, such as would be the pride of Blackman the world over.

Some disinterested commentators have argued that Ojukwu used concerted propaganda to incite the Igbo into fighting his personal war as epitomized by the Ahiara Declaration. Certain events, such as Ojukwu's mother having been burnt to death in Northern Nigeria; and being overlorded by a considered junior officer - Yakubu Gowon, Ojukwu, accounted for the assumption that he engaged in a war of revenge (Harold Hanbury, 1968: 16). Good enough reasons as they seem, the more than three million Easterners who lost their lives in the, especially, 1966 pogrom would be additional reasons for warfare. As mentioned elsewhere, the Consultative Assembly and Advisory Committee of Chiefs and Elders in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria mandated Ojukwu on May 26, 1967 to declare the Republic of Biafra. It was not Ojukwu's war.

Ojukwu elevated the Biafran revolution to a fight against racial prejudice which all along portrayed the African as culturally, morally, spiritually, intellectually and physically inferior - the 'sambo' personality. Biafra loosing the war was the Blackman's loss. According to Nehe Nwankwo (Ojukwu, 1969: 18):

Biafra will not betray the Black man. No matter what the odds, we will fight with all our might until Black men everywhere can, with pride, point to this Republic, standing dignified and defiant, as an example of African nationalism, triumphant over its many age old enemies.

The British meddled in the political affairs of Nigeria, paternalized and foisted leadership on the Hausa/Fulani feudal and aristocratic leaders who were glaringly unprepared in all

its ramifications (in education and economy) for independence. According to the last British colonial Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir James Robertson, the Northerners were, and perhaps would still be, more manageable than the ungovernable Southerners who were easily symbolized as the Igbo and Yoruba; and that the North would serve as an easier gateway into an independent Nigeria in a neo-colonialism.

Nigeria was already diseased and ambulatory before the granting of independence as a corrupt, decadent and obviously putrefying society. These were obvious to both the British who technically disengaged for neo-colonialism and the Nigerian political elite who wanted political independence more than any other thing, even more than a stable economy. At independence, therefore, anarchy and injustice reigned supreme. To the outgoing British colonial masters, the disruption of its neo-colonial estate for any reason and by any individual or group was worthy of being quelled perforce. In the Declaration, Ojukwu (1969: 16-17) surmised that:

The Blackman [must remain] inferior and servile to the white, ... must accept his political, social and economic systems and ideological ready-made from Europe, America or Soviet Union [USSR], ... must accept a federation or con-federation or unitary government ... [which] suits the interests of his masters; ... must accept inept and unimaginative leadership because the contrary would hurt the interest of the master race; ... must accept economic exploitation by alien commercial firms and companies because the Whites benefit from it. Beyond the confines of his State, [the black man] must accept regional and continental organizations which provide a front for the manipulation of the imperialist powers; [being] organizations which are, therefore, unable to respond to African problems in a truly African manner. For Africans to [ask] for true independence is to ask for anathematization and total liquidation.

The most important concepts in the Declaration were the emancipation of the Biafran peoples as would-be representatives of the Blackman and, especially, of the economic development and growth of the Biafran State where all property would belong to the people; and the consequent evolution, in victory, of a society that will not be torn by class consciousness and antagonisms. The Biafran motto would be: "Each according to his ability ... to each ability according to his product" (Nwankwo, 1969:18). The Biafran revolutionary principles, summarily contained in the Ahiara Declaration were (Ojukwu, 1969:35-39:

- i. Belief in the sanctity of human life and dignity of the human person;
- ii. Detest of genocidal attempts in order to destroy a people;
- iii. Placing high premium on patriotism - love and devotion to fatherland;
- iv. All Biafrans to be bound in brotherhood by geography, trade, inter-marriage and culture;
- v. Biafrans must demand for their civic rights while recognizing the rights of others and be prepared to defend them; and
- vi. Upholding the principle of accountability in the legislature, civil service, judiciary, police, and the armed forces and in businesses and other walks of life.

The Ahiara Declaration streamlined the functions and practices of leadership as servanthood; be an embodiment of social justice; all property belongs to the community and that Biafrans must avoid undue attachments to money and it; and the evolution of a just and egalitarian society. Described as the 'People's Revolution', new talents will be discovered and developed; and progressive foreign ideas and skills will be used "so long as they do not destroy the identity of our culture or detract from the sovereignty of Biafra. The people's representatives will never be allowed to pay lipservice to the primacy of the people. Biafran leaders would be those who will not spend so much time amassing wealth, contriving to ever remain in power/office and who will not kill, loot, throw acid and do anything to remain in power. The will of the people must mean much to them.<sup>48</sup> The Biafran Revolution, through the Declaration, was described as the Peoples Revolution. Who were the people expecting in a victorious Biafra? They were, according to Ojukwu (1969: 35-39):

- i. People who would be prepared, in worst case scenarios, gave up their lives in defense of Biafra;
- ii. Expected to be their brothers' keepers, not cause distress and hardship to them;
- iii. Honourable persons who must at all times keep to promises, oaths and be trusted;
- iv. Persons of truth, not cheats, receive or give bribes;
- v. Responsible in the discharge of his/her duties, keeps secrets entrusted to them, minds his/her own business and does not show-off;
- vi. Persons who will be courageous, law-abiding and freedom loving; and
- vii. Persons with progressive inclinations, industrious, resourceful and inventive. They must not fold their arms for government to do everything. They must help themselves.

Rehearsing Nwankwo (1969: 19) Finally, the Biafran project would be more successful if the State pursues "an active policy of self-reliance in putting its economic house in order. But it cannot do this unless it takes control of the mainsprings of the economy - the means of production, distribution and exchange. These are what Biafra must do.

In summation of the Ahiara Declaration, Ojukwu (1969: 66) said:

We in Biafra are convinced that the Black man can never come into his own until he is able to build modern States based on indigenous African technologies, to enjoy true independence, to be able to make his mark in the arts and sciences and to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Whiteman on a basis of equality. When he achieves this, he will have brought a new dimension into international affairs.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Historically deterministic, ecological patches always played important roles in the evolution of societies and the establishment of milestones or reminisces significant about them. In other words, the milestones or reminisces became 'motivational totems'. Pre-colonial and post-colonial Ahiara was and, still is, one of the ecological niches wherein the 'conspiracy' and 'interplay' of events turned it into a totem and psycho-cultural symbol for the Igbo. This, therefore, accounted largely for its choice for the epochal 'Declaration' during the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War.

The paper painstakingly historicized the ecological variables that made Ahiara, among other global territorial patches, significant in the history of Igboland. These variables impacted on the psychosoma of the average Ahiara persons; and as historicized: on Russia and the Perestroika event, the Tanzanians and Kenyans nexus the Marathon races in global athletics; and on the Abam in the development of a high military ethos. The consideration of the variables espoused in the contents of the Ahiara Declaration by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu equally surmised the reasons that led to the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War between 1967 and 1970.

In essence, the choice of Ahiara in Mbaise for the Declaration was accounted for by the historical events that characterized Ahiara and its peoples which were made possible by its ecology and economic well-being. The Ahiara environment was not particularly fertile to have supported a vibrant sustainable economy; and, therefore, always sought for other means of sustenance, such as placing road 'passage' tolls, other than agriculture. It was considered an affront to their persons and economy when the British ordered for the removal of the Ahiara-installed tollgates, seemingly brimming from their successes in the Arochukwu expedition. The British colonial authority was mistaken when it thought that the whole of Igboland would capitulate at the conquest of the Aro who prevented them from gaining access to the hinterland communities. As stated variously in Igbo history, hardly had one community fallen to the British colonizing onslaught did another rise up in arms. The Ahiara was one such Igbo community.

Conclusively, it were the interactions of the human elements within and withal the Ahiara territorial patch; the historicity of Ahiara and events in the pre-colonial and colonial periods; and the performance (historicality) relations of all the factors, be it social, political and economic. The Ahiara territorial patch had a history of vehement resistance to the penetration into, and imposition of colonial rule on, the Mbaise. The defeat of the Ahiara by the British created a secluded Ahiara psyche and society, who, and which, sought for means and ways, ever since, to “strike a blow and die”. To redeem its colonial glory in a generativity; and the eventual catharsis portrayed in their action in rejecting a non-Ahiara indigene as a Bishopric candidate to the Mbaise Diocese by the Papacy in Rome, in post-coloniality.

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