

IGBO, NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR AND THE ISSUE OF ABANDONED PROPERTY IN SOUTHERN KATSINA, 1967-1987

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Abstract

Igbo is one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria that established close contact and relations with the Hausa people in southern Katsina. They were attracted to southern Katsina due to European infrastructure, such as European commercial firms and railways. From the onset, the relationship was cordial, but it became sour with the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967. Many Igbo were compelled to leave the region for their homeland, a reason that undoubtedly made them abandon their properties. Immediately after the war, the Igbo returned to the region significantly to recover their abandoned properties. Using both the primary and secondary sources, the paper discusses the Igbo immigration into southern Katsina, the impact of the Nigerian civil war on the Igbo in the region and the issue of abandoned property, which was one of the contentious issues among the Igbo, especially during the post-war period. This issue has attracted many scholarly discourse, though it was addressed with consideration and humility in southern Katsina. Consequently, traditional institutions' efforts to keep the Igbo properties in their absence are worth reckoning, while others were left under the care of friends and business associates. The paper found that most returning Igbo have successfully recovered, especially their landed properties, while the moveable properties were looted or damaged in transit.

Keywords: Igbo, civil war, abandoned properties, southern Katsina.

Introduction

The paper discusses the immigration of the Igbo to southern Katsina due to its socio-economic potential, attracting many people from diverse ethnic groups. This brought about social and economic interaction that bonded the migrants with the indigenes. Igbo were the second largest migrant group in southern Katsina after the Yoruba. Their zest for commercial pursuit brought them to the region since the colonial period, especially with the arrival of some European firms dedicated to trade on cotton and its allied products, such as United African Company (U.A.C.), John Holt, Societe Commerciante de l' Ouest Africaine (SCOA), British Cotton Growing

Association (BCGA), Peterson Zochonis (P.Z.) and G.B. Olivant (G.B.O.) among others. They established their firms in the region for the procurement and processing of cotton; Igbo and other migrant groups served these firms in the procurement of cotton. The majority of these migrants served as licenced-buying agents for European firms. This opens an avenue for interaction between the migrant groups, especially the region's Igbo and indigenes. Therefore, the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970 abruptly interrupted this mutual interaction. The war forced Igbo and other ethnic groups to exit the region without any preparation. This caused many to abandon their properties, including the landed and moveable properties. The issue of abandoned properties caused by the Nigerian civil war has become a serious topic of discussion in any particular forum. The issue has caused discontent in Nigeria amidst the effort of the country's post-war reintegration process, especially by the Gowon administration. The paper intends to discuss the Igbo migration to southern Katsina, an overview of the civil war and the issue of abandoned properties. The paper will cover the period from 1967, when the war began, to 1987, when Katsina attained the status of a state.

Description of the Study Area

The study area covers the relatively wet southern parts of the Katsina emirate. This region is where the following areas are located: Bakori, Dandume, Danja, Faskari, Funtua, Musawa, Matazu, Kafur, Kankara, Malunfashi and Sabuwa. It is between Latitude 11° 05' north of the Equator and Longitude 7° 08' east of the Greenwich Meridian. The study area is bounded in the north by Dan-Musa, in the East by Kano, in the west by Sokoto and the south by Zaria. The study area is part of the tropical intercontinental north, where the annual rainfall ranges between 50 cm and 100 cm. It enjoys some four months of rainfall and has some eight months of aridity. Also, the relative humidity is always low, about 40 per cent, in January and rises to about 60 per cent in July. Two

principal winds govern the area's climate: the Tropical Maritime air mass (T.M.) and the Continental air mass (T.C.).¹ While the former air mass brings rain to the entire study area during the wet season, the latter brings aridity since it originates from the desert area. It is always cold, dry and dusty, locally known as harmattan wind.² This area's soil is formed under aridity conditions and sand deposition by the wind. The soils are fine sandy loam, relatively easy to cultivate with little leaching; hence, it is generally suitable for cultivating groundnuts, grains and cotton, especially in Funtua and Malumfashi, where cotton ginneries plants were established. Both vegetation and soil are related since they are affected by the climate, geology, and relief of the area. The soil determines, to a large extent, the type of plants that grow, and the soil helps enrich the plant cover. The study area shares some characteristics of Sudani savanna vegetation. The trees are scattered with poor grassland. Some tree species include the shear-butter tree, locust bean and date palms.

The most predominant peoples are the Fulani and Hausa. However, Yoruba, Igbo, and other tribes occupy some pocket areas. The Fulani are noted for their animal husbandry and engage in seasonal migration with their cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys. The Hausa also engage in animal rearing but are mainly occupied with sedentary agriculture.³

Igbo Immigration to Southern Katsina

Igbo migration to Southern Katsina was similar to other areas in Northern Nigeria. Among the significant factors that warranted this migration was population density, which resulted in unprecedented pressure on agricultural lands in Igboland. The British introduction of taxation

¹ Ayoade, J. O. (2004). Introduction to climatology for the Tropics. Spectrum books. Ibadan, 220-230.

² Udo, R. K. (2001). Geographical regions of Nigeria. Oxford University Press. Ibadan

³ Udo, Geographical regions of Nigeria...35.

further compounded this pressure. However, this compelled them to migrate to other areas of Southern Katsina as there were job opportunities there.⁴ In support of this view, Dike stated that land hunger was the most critical factor conditioning Igbo history in the 19th Century.⁵

Southern Katsina has a railway; therefore, most Igbo migrants came to secure employment in the railway, and some European firms were clerks, drivers, carpenters, Licensed Buying Agents (L.B.A.), and contractors. By the first half of the 20th Century, these firms had established several trading stations in Southern Katsina, especially in Funtua, Bakori, and Malumfashi.⁶ For instance, Mr O.E. Okonkwo, popularly called Okonkwo *Fari*, was a staff member of John Holt from Enugu and was claimed to have been the first Igbo man to arrive in Malumfashi in 1934 following his transfer from Sokoto to Malumfashi as a staff member of John Holt. Others were Mr Zaphania Emedi, a staff member of G.B.O.; Mr Zacchaeus Onyenucheya, a staff member of SCOA; Mr Godwin Ijeoma, who worked with BCGA, and Mr Stephen Mordi, who worked with U.A.C.⁷ Other Igbo migrants who followed after them include Mr Igweoma Prabin, Mr. Onyienya, and Mr. Ilochaenwu, who worked with U.A.C. as their agents in procuring produce, especially cotton and groundnut.⁸ They supply these companies with the farm produce they obtain, especially from Bakori, Dandume, Kankara, Funtua, Malumfashi, and neighbouring villages like Dayi, Makurdi, and Dankanjiba.

⁴ Elegalam, *The Causes and Consequences...*53.

⁵K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), 44.

⁶ These firms include United African Company (U.A.C.), John Holt, Societe Commerciante de l' Ouest Africaine (SCOA), British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA), Peterson Zochonis (P.Z.), and G.B. Oliviant (G.B.O.), among others. For further detail, See J. Shehu, "An Historical Insight into Igbo Entrepreneurship Activities in Katsina Metropolis in the Twentieth Century," in *Bokkos Journal of Historical Studies*, Plateau State University, (2015), 9.

⁷Shehu, "An Historical Insight into Igbo Entrepreneurship...10.

⁸ Interview with Mr. Augustine Gebriel, 70 years old, at his residence behind Funtua Central Market, 2/8/2019.

For instance, in 1929, Chief Michael Mbanusi from Nkwere Orlu of Imo State came to Malumfashi before he moved to Katsina as a contractor and produce agent of the U.A.C. His house was said to be the first point of call for Igbo, mainly produce buyers, coming to Southern Katsina for the first time.⁹ During his stay in Malumfashi, Chief Michael Mbanusi influenced the arrival of many Igbo migrants to the region, such as Mr Mazi Michael Eze from Awukuzu, Mr Fidelis Imoh from Ojoto, Mr Samuel Nwaosa from Obisi, Mr Gabriel Ogbaru from Nimo, and Mr Raphael Offia from Nimo in the present-day Anambra State.¹⁰ Other distinguished Igbo traders in Malumfashi were Mr Okonkwo A. Moses, Alhaji Ibo, Mr Christian Onuora, Mr Benard Okafor and Mr O. E Udegbumam.¹¹ Mr Sunday Ojo, Mr Samuel Aja, Mr Peter Mike, and Mr Okechuku Samuel, among others, were the prominent Igbo produce buyers in Funtua. In Bakori, the popular produce buyers were Mr A.M Okoyo, Mr M.N Udo, and Mr J.O Egbuji, among others. Mr Okoyo was said to have moved from Bakori to the surrounding villages of Funtua in search of cotton, which he transported to BCGA at Funtua using his lorry, which he equally used in the transportation business.¹²

However, some of these earliest Igbo migrants extended their interests to other independent businesses. Some became dealers in *Gwanjo* (second-hand clothes), motor spare parts, clothing/textile materials, and petroleum products such as fuel oils for heating and electricity generators, automotive gasoline, Liquid Petroleum Gas (L.P.G.), and lubricants.¹³ One Chief, George Egenti, became a cloth material dealer in Funtua town. At the same time, Mr Gabriel

⁹ S. Wycliff, "A History of Igbo Migrant Community In Katsina Metropolis, 1903-2011," (unpublished M.A. Dissertation, A.B.U Zaria, (2016), 109.

¹⁰ U. Dahiru, "A History of Migrant Communities in Malumfashi Town: A Case Study of Yoruba and Igbo 1928- (2011)," (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, 2018),59.

¹¹ Dahiru, "A History of Migrant Communities... 58.

¹² Interview with Mr. Eze Nsekwai, 78, Businessman, Funtua, 12/11/2019.

¹³ Shehu, "An Historical Insight into Igbo Entrepreneurship...11.

Ogbaru and Raphael Offia shifted into the petroleum and kerosene business in Bakori town before they finally moved to Funtua.¹⁴ Igbo were known for hustling in search of convenient locations economically before settling down; this trend was more peculiar among the Igbo youths who developed the habit and intent of frequent change of residence. This was substantiated by one Mr Nwolise Obonno, who claimed that;

Earlier on, most of us travelled directly to Funtua from our villages in the East to participate in different apprenticeships in various trades... we were determined and concentrated. We were not interested in frequent changes in our locations and residences... presently one can understand that some of our youth opted for cities such as Kano or Kaduna first and only came to reside in Funtua, Bakori or Malumfashi when they could not cope in the city... this generation is characterized by young people who want cheap and quick wealth.¹⁵

Obono buttressed the above assertion as he concluded that, “Younger Igbo changes places of residence in search of greener pastures in order to cope with demands and challenges of times, this was express based on Igbo proverb; *anaghi ano ofu ebe ekiri nmanwu* literally means one does not view a masquerade from one spot.”¹⁶

It is also imperative to note that the railway linking eastern and northern Nigeria, completed in 1932, brought a new dimension to Igbo immigration into Southern Katsina.¹⁷ The railway was extended north up to Funtua, completed and put to traffic in 1929.¹⁸ After the completion of these projects, many Igbo were employed in the railway. Because there was no railway in northern Katsina, quite a number of Igbo migrants were attracted to Southern Katsina owing to job and

¹⁴ Whycliff, “A History of Igbo Migrant Community...110.

¹⁵ Interview with Mr. Nwolise Obonno, 63 years, Trader, Bakori, 12/10/2021.

¹⁶ O. Obono, "A Lagos Thing: Rules and Realities in the Nigerian Megacity". *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (2007), 32-37.

¹⁷ A. Bako, *Sabon Gari Kano: A History of Immigrants and Inter- Group Relation in the 20th Century*, (Sokoto: Usman Danfodio press, 2006), 42.

¹⁸ S.Y. Tijjani, “The Development of Baro-Kano Railway as an Aspect of Technology Transfer in Colonial Northern Nigeria,” in *Kano Journal of History*, Vol,1, No.1, (2014), 142.

business opportunities connected to the railway, especially at Funtua, which equally served as a terminal town. Since then, the number of Igbo migrants has kept increasing, especially in the 1960s.

Meanwhile, Katsinawa's peaceful nature and hospitality made Katsina fondly called "*dakin kara*," meaning "home of hospitality." The hospitable nature of people in Southern Katsina is connective to the settlement of Igbo in the region. Unlike other areas in the north, which periodically experienced ethno-religious crises, the crisis in Southern Katsina was minimal. After the civil war, the area had not recorded any ethno-religious crisis until the 1987 Kafanchan crisis. One Mr Emmanuel Okpara from Anambra state, who sells building materials in Malumfashi Central Market, claimed that the peaceful nature of Malumfashi and other towns in Southern Katsina encouraged many Igbo to establish businesses.¹⁹ Mr. Okechukwu N.J Jinanwa, the current president of the Igbo Community Association (I.C.A.) Malumfashi cherished the way and manner in which traditional rulers played an important role in promoting peace in the town. In Funtua, Mr. Gebriel Anigebo equally shared the same feeling with the above informants. He reiterated that people in Funtua were peace-loving and accommodative. Igbo interacted with them without molestation and sentiment.²⁰ Furthermore, Evidence from oral sources shows that some of the Igbo who came to Southern Katsina after the civil war had sojourned in some cities in Nigeria before arriving in towns such as Funtua, Malumfashi, and Bakori. Some of the sojourn cities were Ibadan, Lagos, and Abeakuta in the west; others include Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Gusau, and Zaria in the

¹⁹Interview with Mr. Emmanuel Okpara, 62, a businessman, at his residence behind Malumfashi Central Market, 2/8/2019.

²⁰ Interview with Mr. Gebriel Anigebo, Trader, 60 years, Funtua, 12/9/2020.

north.²¹ Some of them turned their attention to Southern Katsina on the invitation of their kin or their volition.

Nigerian Civil War: An Overview

Nigeria is home to over 200 million people, with over 250 ethnic groups. Three major ethnicities dominate the country's polity: Hausa-Fulani in the north, Igbo in the southeast and Yoruba in the southwest. Their religious identity further complicates the ethnic configuration of Nigerians. The north is mainly dominated by Muslims, with many Christian minority groups, while the south is populated by Christians, with numerous Muslim groups, as well as pockets of animists. The contestations for power and resources by members of Nigeria's three major ethnicities constituted the wider political conjunctures that led to the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic (1963-66) and, by extension, the onset of the Nigeria-Biafra war (1967-70).²² As Gambo and Omirin aptly noted, the failure of the First Republic and the cause of the war are "ethnic conflict driven by serious cultural differences and the fear of finding one's group shut out of access to state power and resources."²³

The uneasy political climate in Nigeria, beginning with the 15 January 1966 coup, finally culminated in a three-year bloody war that took place from July 1967 to January 1970. Although there were misperceptions about the extent of the conflict from both sides, the war exceeded their expectations. The federal government believed that victory would be possible in a matter of days. It was assumed that the crisis could be quelled in the shortest possible time. Thus, the Federal

²¹ Interview with Alhaji Usman Sani Funtua, 63 years, Businessman, Funtua, 13/8/2021.

²² Ibeanu, Chijioke & Iwuamadi, "Biafra Separatism Causes...43.

²³ Y. L. Gambo & M. M. Umirin, "Ethno religious Conflict and Settlement Pattern in Northern Nigeria," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2012, Doi: 10.5901/mjss.2012.v3n3, 129.

government coded the operation for bringing the secessionists back to Nigeria as a “Police Action.” It announced its expectation that a “Police Action” would bring Biafrans back to the fold in 24 hours. However, the condition became so intense that the Federal Government required the participation of armed forces in order to quell the crisis. The operation was jointly carried out by both the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Police. The latter were to police any town taken by the Nigerian forces. The operation was carried out by One Division of the Nigerian Army (N.A.) at the onset of the war.

The Nigerian Civil War was an intrastate war where the two belligerents were the Federal Government of Nigeria, whose aim was to defend Nigeria's national unity and territorial integrity, and the secessionist Eastern Region of Nigeria christened "The Republic of Biafra," a new polity that seceded from Nigerian federation declaring its independence. However, the country's territorial integrity and political map remained unaltered at the war's end but at a terrific cost. About two million lives were lost, while property worth millions of naira was destroyed.²⁴ Both the parties in the war suffered widespread death and displacement during the thirty-month war. However, the mortality rate was so high against Biafra that there were cries of genocide against the F.G.N. Infants, toddlers, teenagers, pregnant and nursing mothers were not spared in the craze of wanton killing. Many children became orphans, just as most women and some men became widows and widowers. The majority of the Biafran population was displaced, and life became complicated and unbearable.²⁵ The Nigerian Civil War remains an episodic event with a landmark impact on the country's post-independence history. The entire parameter of the Nigerian federation

²⁴ Y.B. Usman, “Actors and Factors in the Study of Contemporary History: The Case of Nigerian Coup D’etat of 15 January 1965” in *History Research* at A.B.U. Vol. 7, (1982/83), 57.

²⁵ D. Anthony, “Ours is a War of Survival: Biafra, Nigeria and Arguments about Genocide, 1966-1970” *Journal of Genocide Research* Vol. 16, No.2-3, (2014), 205.

was affected by the war, but the impact was more on southeastern Nigeria as the main theatre of operations. Although no bullets were fired in northern Nigeria, this could not debase the imminent war commitments and inadequacies of the people found within the region as the relationship between the Igbo and the indigenes was affected.

Impact of the Nigerian Civil War on Igbo in Southern Katsina

It is pertinent to note that the Igbo, who were at the centre of the civil war and the second largest migrant group in Southern Katsina after the Yoruba, must be affected by the conflict. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) affected them directly or indirectly in the following ways. It caused a mass exodus of migrant groups out of Southern Katsina and Northern Nigeria to the East via Kano. Many Igbo organized themselves under the assistance of the Igbo Community Union to carry their people to Kano for onward transportation to their homeland. There is no record of any Igbo who stayed back in Southern Katsina during the war. Igbo has left its landed properties such as plots, houses, bakeries, shops, and commercial businesses. Therefore, Igbo people like Mr Emmanuel Ezeala, Mr N. Okwankwo, and Mr Godwin Thomas have houses in Sabon Layi and Bisije in Funtua, while Igbo migrants in Malumfashi such as Mr E. Tochuku, Mr E.N. Sylvester, Mr O. Barnaba were among the Igbo who acquired landed properties in Malumfashi. During most of these Igbo flights, they left their properties behind what was referred to as “abandoned property.” Abandoned properties remained a subject of controversy that has never been fully resolved. Many Igbo have developed discontent about the issue of the property they left as a result of the conflict before and during the civil war in Nigeria. Some thought it was deliberately done to make them suffer economic persecution. Igbo have unsuccessfully struggled to regain their properties after the civil war in some parts of the country. However, it was indicated that, until his death, Odumegu Ojukwu could not regain his abandoned property in Lagos. However, in Southern Katsina, most

Igbo properties were left under the protection of some indigenes, which were later reclaimed successfully by their owners after returning to the region.

Meanwhile, the war had equally caused severe setbacks for Igbo commercial enterprises in Southern Katsina as many were forced to abandon their businesses, which they had begun in Funtua and Malumfashi when they served the European commercial firms in the area. Igbo were the significant suppliers of manufactured goods such as machines, building materials, furniture, and beverages, and professional skilled workers in ironwork, woodwork, electrical installation, plumbing, auto mechanics, and refrigerator repairs lost those critical positions due to the war. Most of their merchandise and personal belongings, such as clothes, foodstuff, and essential goods, were lost or perished. In addition, many such properties were looted or destroyed in transit. Their departure led to the collapse of businesses and vocations in the area. Thus, the commercial vacuum left by the Igbo after Yoruba and some indigenes quickly absorbed their exit.

However, it is rather remarkable that after the war, with the return of Igbo migrants, the commercial horizon of Southern Katsina was once again dominated by Igbo traders. This was possible because the war had taught them lessons and equipped them with skills necessary for survival. Paul Unongo asserted that;

... the Nigerian Civil War taught the Igbo man ingenuity, innovation, and creativity, which the Nigerian nation has not adequately tapped; such skills, innovations, and enterprises have been lost. During the war, the Igbo experimented with all kinds of ideas. They could locally manufacture arms, guns, tanks, bazookas and bombs through its Research and Production Unit (R.A.P.).²⁶

Igbo used its ingenuity to relocate some of its business enterprises from other places in the region to have a solid commercial welcome back and to fill the commercial vacuum in southern Katsina.

²⁶ Unongo cited in Uji Wilfred "The Migrant Factor in the Economic...75.

This helped them to re-establish their commercial dominance in the area. Mr Festus Okgbo was among the Igbo business people who moved to Malumfashi from Katsina town to boost his business in essential goods. In contrast, after the war, Mr. Partick Ojiaka moved to Funtua from Dutsin-ma in central Katsina. Other Igbo caught in this movement were Mr Godwin Mba, Mr Sunday Obiajulu and Mr Emeka Sylvester, who moved to Southern Katsina from Katsina town and partake in the lorry transport business; they used to carry goods from Funtua to Malumfashi, Bakori, Sabuwa and Dandume markets.

Moreover, a centre for agriculture was opened in Katsina Emirate to provide abundant commercial farm produce, especially cotton and maize, which were produced in large quantities. Some Igbo traders who specialized in this type of business were forced to abandon it due to the economic consequences of the war. The federal government banned the flow of food to the eastern region as a strategy of war.²⁷ Starvation was considered fair and one of the primary weapons of war, as articulated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Nigerian Minister of Finance, who asserted, "I do not see why we should feed our enemies fat for them to fight harder."²⁸ Due to the dissipation of resources, the Igbo traders lost income and the supply of essential commodities to the region. This has affected the supply of essential commodities such as clothes, roofing sheets, and other building materials, which were in high demand among the indigenes. One informant lamented that essential commodities such as palm oil and other food condiments were scarce during and immediately after the war in Southern Katsina.²⁹ This was due to the Igbo monopoly on such trade.

Igbo Abandoned Property in Southern Katsina

²⁷ Odey, *The Economic Consequences of Nigerian Civil War...*261.

²⁸ Odey, *"The Economic Consequences of Nigerian Civil War...*264.

²⁹ Interview with Alhaji Babangida Abubakar, 63 years, Businessman, Dutsin-Ma Central Motor Park, 20/7/2022.

The Nigerian Civil War had undoubtedly posed many challenges to the Igbo people in the north. One of the significant challenges was the issue of the properties that had been abandoned during the conflict. It was only some of the fortunate fleeing Igbo warned of the October 1966 riots that either arranged for the safe removal of their valuable commercial and personal belongings to the south or their indefinite safekeeping. At the same time, others sold off their properties at prices way down their actual market values.³⁰ These types of property were termed “Abandoned Property.” The issue of abandoned property featured prominently in the discussions of the post-war peace process, which led Gowon’s regime to set up Abandoned Properties Committees (A.P.C.) in various States of the Federation to protect the properties left behind by the Igbo from being vandalized.³¹

After the war, the Igbo returned to southern Katsina to recover their properties. As such, reclaiming these properties in the area was in two ways. Firstly, indigenes willingly returned some of these properties to their rightful owners, who were given them purposely for safekeeping before the Igbo migrants exited their homeland. Secondly, the formal way of reclaiming the property from the government-designated committees followed some laid-down procedures.³² Some Igbo with influential business associates could reclaim their properties relatively quickly, while others faced difficulties, primarily through the A.P.C.³³ Each claimant wrote an application letter to recover his claimed property, which required processing and clearance before the properties could be returned.³⁴ The majority of the Igbo in Southern Katsina left their properties under the care of their

³⁰ S. Magaji, “Diaspora Communities in Northern Nigeria: The Case of Igbo Migrants in Gusau in the 20th Century,” unpublished B.A Project, 2002, 76.

³¹ Magaji, “Diaspora Communities in Northern...”,78.

³² Interview with Alhaji Usman Umar, civil servant, 58 years, Funtua, 12/4/2021.

³³ Anthony “I Need to Get to Kano148.

³⁴ Interview with Alhaji Umaru Mani, 74 years, farmer, Funtua, 12/8/2021.

Indigenous friends, business associates and caretakers, a reason why the majority were able to recover their properties after the war. Meanwhile, some of the fortunate Igbo who were warned in advance of the conflict could arrange for the safe removal of valuable commercial and personal belongings to the south, sell off some of such properties, or arrange for their safekeeping. One Mr P.N. Emerah, popularly called "Ezeaner" in Funtua, left his hotel called Victory Hotel, plots and houses at Funtua to Alhaji Mamman Shata for safekeeping and successfully recovered them after the war.³⁵ While some of the Igbo who delayed their return allowed for theft and loss of such property. However, those who quickly returned could collect and disburse most of their property and immediately move back to their homeland due to the fear of the outbreak of another conflict. One Mrs M.U Oditia, who owned a bakery at Funtua, left the bakery under the care of Alhaji Dodo Hamida Mai-biredi of BCGA Ward (one of her business associates). On her return in 1972, she had successfully reclaimed her bakery and immediately sold it out to him at the cost of Five Hundred Pounds £500 on 29 July 1972.³⁶ Seeing this positive development, quite several Igbo decided to return to Southern Katsina to recover their abandoned properties, as represented in the table below;

Table 1. Some Igbo who recovered their Properties in Southern Katsina after the Civil War.

S/No.	Name	Location	Property
1.	Mr. Moses A. Okonkwo	Malumfashi	House, plot of land
2.	Mr. Clement Okonkwo	^^	House
3.	Mr. Christian Onuora	^^	Shop
4.	Late Mr. Benard Okafar	^^	Shop

³⁵ Interview with Malam Abdullahi Usman Funtua, civil servant, 54 years, Funtua, 12/5/2022.

³⁶ The bread's name was later changed to "Dodo bread" when the production was taken over by the children of Alhaji Dodo Funtua. Interview with Alhaji Akilu Ama, 54 years, civil servant, Funtua, 20/2/2021.

5.	Mr. Stephen Mordi	''	Shop
6.	Mr. Vincent Francis	''	Plot of Land
7.	Mr. Henry Uzoeri	''	Plot of land
8.	Mr. E. O Ezeaner	Funtua	House, shop, hotel
9.	Mr. N.T Ephraim	''	Shop
10.	Mrs. Gloria Ezeaner	''	Shop
11.	Mr. Okafor Okeke	''	House, shop
12.	Mr. Emeka Justine	Kankara	Shop
13.	Mr. Calipso Enuma	''	Filling station
14.	Mr. Agada Azike	''	Shop, plot of land
15	Mr. Bernard Godwin	''	Bakery
16	Mr. Oliver Andrew	Bakori	Shop
	Mr. Mordi Ozinna	''	Shop
	Mr. Fransis Obiora		House

Source: D. Umar, "History of Igbo and Yoruba Inter-group relations in Malumfashi...124, Field Work 2022,

The above table shows some of the Igbo that were able to recover their properties in Southern Katsina. Most of the properties recovered were landed properties. Some of the Igbo who lost their lives during the disturbances had their properties reclaimed by their relatives after undergoing some rigorous investigations. One informant confirmed that in some instances, some claimants took the matter before the court in trying to recover these properties. In contrast, others were usually resolved at the district head offices without taking the issue to court, especially when some influential figures within the community stood in for the claimant to rectify his claim. Those whose relations could not claim their property lost them to the *Katsinawa* and the state government.

Conclusion

The paper indicated that the relationship between the Igbo and their host was cordial, laden with social and commercial interactions until the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War. Nigeria's civil war was an episodic and catastrophic phenomenon that affected Nigeria's social, economic, and political history. As part of its effect was the issue of properties indiscriminately left behind by the Igbo during the war, efforts were made to recover such properties in different parts of Nigeria with relative difficulties. However, reclaiming these properties in the north was done in two ways. Firstly, some of these properties were willingly returned by the indigenes to their rightful owners, who were given purposely for safekeeping before the Igbo migrants exited their homeland. Secondly, the formal way of reclaiming property from government-designated committees was based on the procedures laid down, especially for landed properties. As mentioned in the paper, Igbo have faced relative difficulties in reclaiming their properties in other parts of Nigeria, but what was obtainable in Southern Katsina was in contrast to that, as the majority of the Igbo that claimed their abandoned properties have successfully recovered them, this has attracted Igbo to return to the region in earnest. Another important aspect discussed in the paper was Igbo returning to southern Katsina after the war. Igbo people have made a stringent effort to return to southern Katsina to re-establish their regional commercial dominance.

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Interview with Mr. Clifford Okri, 65 years, Jabiri, Funtua, Mechanic, 29/1/2022.

Interview with Mr. Emmanuel Okpara, 62 years, a businessman, at his residence behind Malumfashi Central Market, 2/8/2019.

Interview with Mr. Eze Nsekwei, 78 years, Businessman, Funtua, 12/11/2019.

Interview with Mr. Gebriel Anigebo, Trader, 60 years, Funtua, 12/9/2020.

Interview with Mr. Okechukwu N.J Jinanwa, 48 years, Dakinkawa Malumfashi, 10 August 2019.

Interview with Alhaji Babangida Abubakar, 63 years, Businessman, Dutsin-Ma Central Motor Park, 20/7/2022.

Interview with Alhaji Usman Umar, civil servant, 58 years, Funtua, 12/4/2021.

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