

THE ROLE OF OLOKORO WOMEN IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR, 1967-1970

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) commonly referred to as the Nigeria – Biafra war was one of the most tragic events ever recorded in Nigerian history. It brought in its wake a wide range of untoward experiences and consequences to virtually all segments of the society in both sides of the divide. However, the monumental tragedies of the war were greatly felt in Igbo land, the central theatre of the war. Most often war is viewed as a man’s theatre where he is both the actor and the recipient of the act, with the unconscious assumption that either women or children (the most vulnerable group) are usually untouched by the happenings of wars or that their stories do not constitute any direct addition to the events of wars. Yet Igbo women, like in many societies haunted by wars went through horrific experiences during and after the Nigeria - Biafra conflict. Many of them were wives, mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, fiancé, or simply friends to the soldiers. They bore the scares of war long after the soldiers had departed the battle fields either in coffins or abandoned to be eaten by vultures or as battered souls who became the responsibility of these women. Yet their stories seem neglected as accounts are taken of the casualties of wars, except for a few documentations mostly carried out by female writers who must have noticed the existing lacuna. What these women faced and even their roles in the civil war have hardly been captured in existing literature on that national tragedy. The paper therefore, discusses the war and its advent to Olokoro area as well as Olokoro women’s roles in it. These roles include Olokoro women’s contribution to the upkeep of the Biafran soldiers, the maintenance of the war refugees in Olokoro, as red cross and caritas volunteers, at the home front, in war time trade, as farmers and also their experiences with the soldiers, both Nigerian and Biafran.