

The Unsung Heroines Of Biafra, Their Weapons Of Prayer And Other Rituals

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Abstract

The role of women during the Nigerian-Biafran war has not always received positive criticism. A clear example of the negative projection of women's role in the war is the portrayal of Ada in Tony Ubesie's (1973) *Isi Akwu Dara n'ala*. Though a fiction, that was based on a true-life event, it robbed women of any positive contribution in the struggle for Biafra self-determination. This work intends to balance this ugly narrative about Igbo women during the war with other narratives about their resilience, their prayers and other rituals. With the real-life narratives of Mary Chinwe Nnenna and Madam Oriefi Ogbu, the true image of Igbo women as heroines of the war will be addressed. Thus, this discussion is based on counter-memories of the war drawn from a feminist perspective.

Key words: Biafra, war, women, self-determination, prayers, rituals. Heroines

Introduction

On the 30th day of May 1967, Colonel Ojukwu declared the new independent state of Biafra. This declaration was made on the grounds that Easterners were no longer safe in Nigeria. War broke out almost immediately. The war was a one-way carnage of appalling proportions, savagery and horror. The world watched as millions of Biafran children and women suffered and died from the onslaught of bombs, shells, bullets and worst of all hunger, but no coherent plan was ever implemented to end the genocide. In the end – January 1970, Biafra had to surrender. However, as Achebe (2012) succinctly put it, the Igbo have never fully recovered from that war.

Biafra women served in the public sector during the war especially as Red Cross volunteers attending to the wounded and improvising nutritional supplements to alleviate the plight of children suffering from kwashiorkor. However, it seems that their peculiar acts of the heroism are the roles they played in their individual families, among their kith and Kin. They took risks, made sacrifices and fought assiduously to sustain lives that would otherwise have been lost in the war. Some of these children and husbands whose lives were retained through their efforts – the remnants of the Igbo, have lived to contribute and some are still contributing meaningfully to the development and progress of Igbo land, Nigeria and the world at large.

This paper tries to capture the remarkable true-life experience of two Biafran women which to some extent portrays the challenges and contributions of Biafran women during the war, and some weapons wielded by women in the form of prayers and other rituals. The method of data collection is mainly key informant interviews involving two principal participants, Mary Chinwe Nnenna herself and the son of Late Madam Oriefi Ogbu Rev.Fr. U. Onyishi. A few other participants collaborated their narratives and literature were also consulted to check the validity of their stories against documented events. Data was analyzed guided by themes and periodization while presentation is descriptive and narrative.

The paper is divided into three parts main parts. Part 1 contains the experience of Mary Chinwe Nnenna, Part 2, the narrative concerning the war experience of Oriefi Ogbu and part 3, some of the weapons of prayer and other rituals employed by the women of Biafra during the war.

Part 1: Mrs. Mary Chinwe Nnenna



Figure 1: Picture of Mrs. Mary Chinwe Nnenna. Photo credit, Mary Chinwe Nnenna.

Mary Chinwe was born on October 5, 1950 to the family of Matthias and Monica Anike of Amorji Nike village in the present Enugu East local government area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The second of four surviving children of her parents, Mary was from one of the pioneer Christian families in Nike, her parents were the first couple in Amorji Nike to be wedded in a Christian (Roman Catholic) marriage tradition. As was rightly observed by Kalu (1996, p.132), Northeastern Igbo land to which Nike belongs seriously resisted evangelization and westernization and one of the missionaries-Richard put this down to self-sufficiency. Therefore, it was peculiarly due to the personal love that Mary's father had for Christianity and western education that Mary unlike most of her contemporaries was sent to school. In standard three, she was sent by her father to live with the family of a school headmaster at Iva-valley in Enugu metropolis. She was to help with chores within the household and in turn receive education as well other western and Christian oriented training that her father cherished so much.

Mary had lived with her guardians and their eight children for about two years before the war broke out in 1967. She was not the only one serving the household as a help in those days, there was also Agnes, but while Agnes decided to return to her family at the outbreak of the war, Mary opted to stay on with her guardian family. Like many others at the time, she believed that the war would be a short-lived affair, not knowing that it was going to span a period of 3 years; and once the war had taken off, it became impossible to cross the line of fire and join her own family at Nike.

a). Leaving Enugu

When the war broke out there was no question of going to their village like many people did because the Mary's guardian family hail from Ngwo which is close to Enugu and therefore under siege and unsafe as well. It was decided that Madam and the children should move to Inyi Achi and take refuge at the house of a family friend, while the master and Mary stay around meanwhile to take care of their property and see how things pan out.

Oga hired a 'tipper' the kind of vehicle that normally tips sand at building sites to take the family to Inyi. That means that there was ample space to take as much of their properties as they wanted but, still in the belief that the war would soon be over, madam saw no need to take much of their properties to Inyi Achi. She simply took her children, their personal effects, food items, cooking utensils and her hand operated sewing machine which turned out to be a life saver to them throughout the duration of the war.

It might be pertinent to narrate that prior to the outbreak of the war; Mary's Madam had been a very industrious and enterprising woman. She was trained in the art of cake baking and the making of other confectioneries like, meat pie, puff puff, make me well, chin chin and so on. She was also an accomplished tailor in her time. Her skills are part of the reasons why Mary's father wanted her to be trained by in her home. He wished her to acquire these skills to be similarly accomplished when she eventually got married; this kind of

arrangement was called domestic training in those days. Therefore, in order to supplement her husband's income for the upkeep of the family, Madam baked Wedding cakes for people, made clothing for others and prepared the above-mentioned snacks which Mary and Agnes sold to school children and colliery workers. Unfortunately, this aspect of their duties tampered seriously with their formal education.

Having ensured the safety of his immediate family, Mary's master and Mary stayed on and were in fact part of the last civilians to leave Enugu when it finally evacuated. According to Mary, when they began to hear shelling telling them "KwarapuKwarapuKwarapu, unudum" as they interpreted the sound made by shelling in those days, the diehards didn't need a soothsayer to tell them that it was time to leave wealth and property behind and run for their dear lives. Actually, by the time they left Enugu for Inyi Achi, no form of vehicular movement was available for civilians; they had to trek all the way from Enugu to Inyi Achi.

b). Life at Inyi Achi

Mary also narrates an unforgettable and heart-breaking incident that took place on their way to Inyi Achi. In one of the villages on their path, they saw some Biafra army recruits, cooking food with tins on hurriedly made fires. By chance, she recognized one of them, a young man from her village by name Alexander who was also a good friend and playmate of her elder brother Anthony who had also joined the army. This chance meeting was so painful because prior to leaving Enugu, Mary had heard of the sudden demise of Alex's mother and was sure that Alex was not aware of the incident. Therefore, while he was so happy to see her, she was crying in her heart. She was also very ill at ease having been advised by her master not to tell Alexander of his mother's death. Fortunately, Alexander survived the war, but lost one eye in combat.

Life at Inyi was relatively easy compared to what they were to experience later in the same *oso agha*, firstly they had a fairly comfortable

accommodation at the family friend's compound, secondly, Oga was still able to feed the family from his savings, though he complained incessantly that it was being depleted at a very fast rate. Thirdly, people could still afford to be generous to one another and the people of Inyi Achi were a very hospitable people; villagers sometimes contributed *abacha*– cooked and sliced cassava to be shared among the refugees.

However, they were soon forced by advance of the war to leave Achi and race on the Uturu. One remarkable incident left a lasting impression on Mary's young mind as they journeyed to their new settlement as refugees. Mary recalled that a heavily pregnant woman who was in their group had her baby on this journey. The situation was an exasperating one and quickly degenerated into total chaos for several reasons. Firstly, there was no hospital or birthing facility around, secondly none in their group had any meaningful midwifery experience, thirdly, the requisite materials for birthing a child were not available, lastly, there was no room for privacy as they were on the move, Nevertheless, nature could not be delayed. The lady gave birth to a bouncing baby boy under the most unhygienic conditions and with the help of other married women in the group, who improvised. The new baby was immediately named *Osondu*, which literally means 'the race for life' in respect of the circumstances of his birth. The most appalling aspect of the whole incident was that the exhausted woman had to get up and join the race in spite of the blood still issuing out from her to everybody's knowledge because the attempt to contain the flow with shreds of clotting in the absence of sanitary pads or tissue paper was completely unsuccessful.

c). The Sojourn at Uturu

By this time, things had become quite tough, the savings of the family has been completely depleted and the large family of eleven was beginning to feel the pangs of the hardship occasioned by the war. The master's movement was restricted because of the fear of being conscripted into the army and leaving his large family behind. So, most times he watched helplessly as his children cried

because of hunger. The onus now fell on Mary and Madam to provide sustenance for the family and they rose to the occasion with a robust heart. Despite her numerous skills, Madam could only engage herself in sewing because she had her hand operated machine, baking or confectionery making was out of the question because she had left the requisite equipment at Enugu. Meanwhile it was near impossible to have access to the ingredients needed for such a venture. She therefore, took her sewing machine to the market place at Uturu called Ukwunwangwu every day and mended torn clothing for people in exchange for money or food items. The enterprise was quite lucrative at the period because people hardly made new wears and the few, they managed to cover their nakedness with had suffered tear and wear.

Mary nwa Nike, as she was called in those days did not relent. She was hardworking and innovative as she worked tirelessly to contribute to the survival of the family. She fought tooth and nail to save the family from Biafra's worst enemy -hunger and malnutrition. At Uturu, her major earning came from working for people in their farms, most times from morning to late in the evening. Most times, she is not paid with cash but food items, which she brought home and handed over to madam for the use of the family. On days when she was not so lucky to be employed on a farm, rather than stay idle after doing the house chores, she would go down to Uhuku river, help the native women to peel and soak their cassava for fermentation or to slice, wash and carry home *abacha* as the case may be. In exchange for her labour, she was usually given some cassava or *abacha*. She is also allowed to take the cassava peels. People at first watched her in amazement as she processed the cassava peels and later copied her. She processed the cassava peels by separating the pericarp from the endocarp. She thereafter washes the white pericarp, sliced them to look like the normal *abacha* and it goes to augment the *abacha* she earned from her labour for the day. With the help of ingredients bought by madam, the whole rig-up is turned into a wartime delicacy for the family's dinner or launch for the next day. Sometimes,

the *abacha* is also eaten with coconut for launch; the cassava is also ground and eaten as *akara* (Fried balls that were made with beans at normal times). Mary also recalled that it was at Uturu that she heard for the first time that a country called Tanzania had recognized Biafra. They also got relief materials for the first time, cornmeal, Tanzanian beans and stock fish, which they called ‘*okporokonnu*’. The war raged on and approached Uturu so they left for *Ishieguokpuite*.

d). IshieguOkpuite

According to Mary, they arrived in Ishiegu on the day of their new yam festival. They were refused entry on the charge that they could be saboteurs, so they cried and pleaded at the entrance to the town with their worldly possession on their heads. At length, a handsome young man, an indigene of the town whom they later got to know as Akirika came and after questioning them, prevailed on his people to grant them entry. After they entered, the young man who was educated by the standards of the time and his environment having just graduated from secondary school before the war broke out turned into an activist. He raised funds and used them to buy sleeping mats, which he distributed, to the refugees at the floorless and windowless former teacher’s quarters where they were camped. Akirika also took it upon himself to keep the young among the refugees happy, entertaining them with tales of goings on at the war front and songs he claimed that soldiers sang at the training grounds. Mary vividly remembered one of these songs that goes like this:

Take my bullet when I die
Oh Biafra
Take my bullet when I die
And if I happen to surrender;
And die forever
Take my bullet when I die
Hejeehejee, jaajaja, tuwaituwai.

Akirika would march with them around the refugee camp in formation carrying sticks in place of guns, pretending to be Biafra soldiers, singing the above song and other similar ones. Akirika later joined the Biafra army voluntarily, but was killed shortly afterwards at the war front. Mary could not hold her tears as she recalled the sorrow of the refugees as the remains of Akirika was brought home by soldiers and buried amidst gun salute.

IshieguOkpuite indigenes were not mainly farmers so it was difficult to get opportunities to work on people's farms, as was the case in Uturu. Therefore, the major source of sustenance for the family here was the proceeds from Madam's sewing enterprise. However, Mary not being the type of girl to sit still and while away time forayed into the bushes of Ishiegu. Sometimes she goes in the company of her master to gather snails, a type of mushroom called *Iboro* and edible termites. Some of these things when gathered, were sold while the rest were used to garnish the meals of the family and keep kwashiorkor at bay. One other highlight of their stay at Ishiegu was that they had access to salt which was a scarce commodity then. This accessibility came from their ability to buy *Nnuokua* kind of solid salt that is scraped into food with knife at a relatively reasonable price from traders who come from Okposhi and Uburn in the present Ebonyi, state.

The approach of war once more necessitated their movement away from Ishiegu. Mary's guardian family left Ishiegu for a place She referred to as Afikpo road. They stayed in this place for 2 days only and had to leave because there was no means of sustenance. They moved on to Umunze where they stayed till the end of the war.

e). Life as refugees at Umunze

The family went to Umunze through Umuawalhite. After setting up camp, means of sustenance became a major challenge. Occasionally, refugees queued up to get relief materials from distribution points but it hardly made any impact on a large family like that of Mary's guardians. Meanwhile, at a point, the

queuing up for relief materials became a very dangerous exercise as bombers would arrive at the precise time that relief materials were being distributed as if on a tip-off and rain bombs on the innocent, hungry civilians. Then, fighter jets would swoop down like hawks and finish off the bomb victims that might still be alive with bullets. Many people therefore kept away from these queues because of fear. In fact, Mary's guardian gave an express instruction that members of his household should not go to get the relief materials. However, Mary would sneak out severally to go without his knowledge, whenever the family was at the verge of starvation. Mary recalled with a shudder an incident that occurred on one occasion, when the bullet from a fighter killed a child carried by this mother on her back while she was fleeing to a shelter. When the child fell off, the mother let out a horrific wail, but had no option than to allow herself to be dragged to safety.

Queuing up for relief materials in dangerous times was not the only daring action or risk Mary undertook for the sake of her guardian family during the war. She recalled an occasion when they were baking a little precious cassava, they got for *garri* in the open and an air raid began. As soon as the suspicious enemy fighter came into view, every other person took cover and Mary's master called to her crying and shivering from his hiding, but Mary would not budge. She decided that she would rather die than allow the precious *garri* she suffered so much to get to go to waste in the furnace. She stayed on until she got the *garri* down from the fire. This and other similar incidents led to Mary being referred to as a daredevil, her master would often be heard warning his children and others not to try to imitate her because she is not a human being.

Madam Benedette on her part still mended clothing for people with her portable sewing machine in exchange for money and food items. In fact, she erected a make shift shade at NkwoUmunze for this purpose. Remarkably, it was at Umunze that Mary first exhibited a penchant and capacity for trading which was a blessing to her guardian family during the war and subsequently to her own family. Her trading venture ensured that they lived in relative affluence (in terms

of basic necessities) till the end of the war. A while after they arrived at Umunze, Mary discovered a group of young women though older than herself, who were engaged in serious trading activities and joined them. Together, they went to AforAgbenu- a major market in the axis, owelleIzukalla and Ujalli markets. At these markets, they bought *Oha*, *Ube* and other items, which they resold at NkwoUmunze at a profit. Mary's trading was made much easier because she would drop her wares with her Madam who already owned a stall at NkwoUmunze to sell as she does her cloth mending work and move on to other markets. Mary also told of the enterprising and energetic Agbenu women of those days. Even the old among them could be seen carrying large baskets of *ogilispice*, coconuts and so on to distant markets. They have a reputation for astute bargaining and some of them are quite rich as the *aji ego* around their waist bears testimony.

f). End of the war

According to Mary, it was at Umunze that they heard that Biafra had surrendered and that the war had ended. The news was heralded with mixed feelings because, they were unhappy that Biafra lost the war and inwardly trembled at what the consequences might be, while at the same time relieved that they had come near the end of the kind of suffering, hunger and death that the war period represented. They set off for the journey back to Enugu and on their, a memorable and heart-breaking incident occurred. The vehicle that they boarded needed to refuel, so that driver turned into a gas station at Agu Awka to buy fuel. While they waited for their turn to buy fuel, they saw some Northerners in another vehicle-which looked like a family comprising of a man, a woman and children. The children were rejoicing and singing a song she reproduced as follows:

Dr. Azikiwe Yangudu
Dr. Okpala Yangudu
Munchi Calabar

Munchi Enugu
Clear Igbo, Yakari.

They understood this to be a song of victory celebrating that the Igbo had been thoroughly defeated. Mary recalls that her master cried openly on this occasion and the whole family including herself joined in. That particular scene brought home to them the import of defeat in a brutal way and somehow foretold what the future held for the Igbo in Nigeria in spite of Gen. Yakubu Gowon's "no Victor, no Vanquished" speech.

g). Back at Enugu

After the war, Mary's master went back to his teaching job and retired after a meritorious service. Her Madam also went back to her business though she had to start from scratch because all the properties they left at Enugu were vandalized. Mary finished her training in sewing and making of confectionaries and went back to her people where she got married almost immediately to Mr. Aloysius Agbo of Amorji Nike in 1972.

Remarkably, before Mary left her guardian family, her master called his family including some members of his extended family together and in their presence thanked her. He prayed that God should reward her abundantly reiterating that God used Mary and his wife to save his life and that of his children during the war. According to one of his sons who searched for, and met up with Mary several years later (in the early 90's), their father had beseeched them on his deathbed to seek out 'Mary nwa Nike' whenever they are able to, and appreciate her. He had insisted that she helped to save their lives during the war through her fearlessness, selfless service and industry.

Part 2: Madam Oriefi Ogbu



Figure 2: picture of late Madam Oriefi Ogbu. Photo credit, Rev. Fr. U. Onyishi (son).

Late Madam Oriefi Ogbu hailed from Abakwuru, Ede Oballa in the present Nsukka local government area of Enugu state, Nigeria. Her exact date of birth is not known. As a maiden, she was betrothed and subsequently married to Ugwu Onyishi of Orihe village in the same town of Ede Oballa. As soon as they got married, Oriefi's husband took her to live with him at Nimbo in Uzouwani where he worked as a palace official to Chief Akonweze of Nimbo. Within a few years, the couple were blessed with 3 children, two males and a female.

a) The war and her husband's illness: a double dilemma.

The outbreak of the Nigeria- Biafra war met Oriefi's husband on a sick bed. At the time, her last baby- Uchenna was rarely a year old. After managing the illness in Uzouwani for a while without success, the sick man was moved to Bishop Shanahan hospital Nsukka and his family had to move up to Nsukka so the wife, Oriefi can take care of him in the hospital. When Nsukka became too dangerous because of the war, Oriefi at the persuasive request of her sick husband had to relocate with their children to their village in Ede Oballa from where she came to Bishop Shanahan hospital occasionally to see her husband.

In spite of all efforts expended to save the life of Oriefi's husband, he did not survive the illness. As soon as he died, Ugwu Onyishi was taken to his home in Ede Oballa, and given as fitting a burial as the exigencies of the war could allow. Soon after the burial of Oriefi's husband, Ede Oballa was besieged and sacked by the Nigerian army. She had no option than to join the race for safety that took her to UkwuInyi where she lived with her children as refugees till the end of the war.

b) Her Heroic Act

The event that carved Oriefi Ogbu out as a true heroine took place during the 'oso agha' that took them to Ukwuinyi in those days. The refugees moved in groups for safety and encouragement. As they journeyed to safety, silence and stealth was of paramount value to avoid detection and massacre by Nigerian soldiers. Actually, it was a crime for anybody to make the slightest noise. Unfortunately, Oriefi's last child-Uchenna, a mere baby at that time, was restive with discomfort and hunger and continued to cry intermittently. The group risked capture severally and at a point mandated Oriefi to either abandon her child and continue with her two older children as part of the group or be ostracized from the group as his crying was putting the rest of the group in danger.

Oriefi could not bring herself to abandon her dear child Uchenna. She opted to die with him. She rather pleaded with the group to take her two older children to safety while she blazed her own trail with her restive child and embrace their fate. The group accepted this arrangement and Oriefi separated from the group with her last baby. Fortunately, God in His infinity mercy preserved Oriefi and her child and they later found their way alone to Ukwuinyi where they joined the other refugees. This heroine refused to let go of her child even at her own peril and it became a legend among those who knew her, told first by her companions during the war, and retold by others.

c) After the War

At the end of the war, Oriefi moved back to Uzouwani with her three children where she lived a respectful life trading in grains. She single-handedly brought up her children to the best of her ability till she fell ill and died on June 5th, 1985 when her last child Uchenna was at the brink of completing his secondary school education. In 2010, Uchenna who had become a Catholic priest in conjunction with his siblings gave their mother Oriefi Ogbu a resounding and befitting 25 years memorial service in commemoration of her exemplary and heroic mother hood.

Part 3: The Women of Biafra, their Weapon of prayer and other rituals

Mbiti (1969) noted that Africans are notoriously religious. We strongly believe that when all else has failed, God or the gods as the case may be can never fail. In situations of helplessness, we believe that God will fight for us. This faith in the numinous is expressed in Igbo proverbs such as *efinenweroOdudu, chi yanachuluyaijiji* which expressed unwavering faith in the deliverance power of God. Therefore, instead of wallowing in self-pity and despair during the war. Women of Biafra in certain communities channeled their energy towards appeals to the gods for help and succor. Their rituals and songs at once served as weapon against despair as they raised the faith of their communities and pointed them towards divine salvation in their hour of trouble. Mrs Mary Chinwe Nnenna narrated examples of these rituals as follows:

a) Umunze Women War Ritual

Throughout the duration of the Nigerian-Biafra war, the women of Umunze came out in their numbers on every eke market day to perform a ritual beseeching the gods of their land to rise up to the atrocities meted out to Biafra's people and to grant Biafra victory in the war. Very early in the morning on eke days, All the married women assemble in front of the shrine of the principal deity of the town, dressed in war-like attire and carrying sticks of various sizes. Their leader also held memorabilia from the shrine that signifies the power of the deity.

With their wrappers tied tightly around their waists, these women would set off at a trot and move round the whole town and back to the shrine to return the memorabilia and disperse for the day. As they moved round the town, they sang songs of lamentation, beseeching their gods to grant Biafra victory over the Nigerian army. Mary Chinwe remembered one of these songs and rendered it as follows.

UmunwanyiUmunze, omeren'iwe, omeren'iwe (x2)
Gowongburunwaebunafo, gbuonwanyin'afome.
Gowonemegoihe ana nasonso
Kwa mberedeonwu
Onwunwa ji kwe
Olololo
Kwa mberedeonwu
Onwunwa ji kwe

b) Nike women war ritual

Mary Chinwe Nnenna also narrated that when she came back to her home in Nike after the war, in the process of narrating her war experiences to the people, she was surprised to hear from them that women of Nike also performed a ritual similar to that of Umunze women during the war. She was told that the women assembled before the shrine of the Chief deity of the town, Anike NwaAwuwa every afor day bearing dried palm fronds. Unlike the women of Umunze, Nike women leave their homes on second cockcrow with their dried palm fronds and move to the shrine of Anike NwaAwuwa. The dried palm fronds, which signify the pathetic state of affairs and the need of help by the Biafra nation, are then dropped at the shrine at the end of the rituals and the women go back to their homes. As the women march from their homes to the shrine on each afor day, they chant a plea for help from Anike NwaAwuwa in their loudest voices, So that soon after the second cock crow on every afor day, the air is rent with a cacophony of women's voices chanting:

Hoyee!!! Hoyee!!!

Umu Anike kwaochuo!!!

However, it might be pertinent to note here that this type of ritual by Nike women is not peculiar to the period of the Nigerian – Biafra war. A custom that dates back to time immemorial among successive generations, it is their way of crying out to the deity- Anike in events of calamity be it war, famine, draught, epidemic or any other natural disaster. Nevertheless, the details of the campaign differ depending on the problem on hand. For instance, in the case of draught, the chant will include the word ‘kuru mii kpwoewo’ which literally means, “water should be please poured on the frog”. In the case of poor crop yield, or famine, the women pound empty mortars in their homes to the chant of “HoyeeHoyee” before marching to the shrine of Anike nwaAwuwa (Nnamani, 1999; Ejim, 2017).

c) Umuogenechior

The Christians were not left out in the win the war prayer campaign as this song composed and sang by Umuogene Catholic choir Umunze in the war time which appeals for divine deliverance and fortitude for the people of Biafra and recalled by Mary Chinwe Nnenna shows:

Verse 1

*Unubundi no n’enuwa
Welunuanya ne nee Jeson’enuobe
Ka Ogbasaraunuakaa, iji wee naraunu.
Chukwu, nekweihendiBritiannandiRussian’eme n’ obodoanyi,
Ha n’egbusisihe nine n’ekume, ma-ewu ma-okuko, ma mmadu,
Ka ha were buruaku be anyinaan’obodo ha.
OoChineke, ooChineke
Chinekennaokwaina-afu (x 2)*

Verse 2

Mgbeanyi ga age be onwunandu,

Refrain

Nye anyi obi ike

Verse 3

Mgbeanyig’anona kwashiorkor

Refrain

Nye anyi obi ikenandidi

Verse 4

Mgbendiuro ga-ana anyiiheinyereanyi

Refrain

Biko nye anyi obi ikenandidinkeanyi ga ejimerieonwunwandia;

Verse3

A ha giChinekena-adianyimmamgbe nine.

Ma kwuraas' o fu okwu n' obimgadiri,

Ma kwuraas' ofuokwun' obimgadiri,

Oodinwenum.

Conclusion

In addition to their industry and forbearance, their spiritual resilience of Biafran women enabled them resort to their religious resources not only to seek divine help, but to lift the people's spirits, give them hope, and serve as a salve to their numerous wounds. This is indeed an important aspect of the war because it is common knowledge that wars are fought on many fronts and not just that of physical combat. They did not all abandon their families; they did not all thrive on the spoils of the war and say di "*gbakwaaoku*". In as much as a few might have derailed as is wont to be the case among humans, a majority gallantly took up the responsibilities that the exigencies of the unjustly fought war thrust upon them and did justice to it. These women were indeed the unsung heroines of Biafra.

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