

Before the direct contact with Europe, the area of present-day south-eastern Nigeria was inhabited by a dispersed population limited to only village or local consciousness but in 1967 representatives of this region declared the independent state of Biafra with the intention to separate from Nigeria which indicates strong collective consciousness. The bearers of this consciousness consider themselves to be Igbo and the collectivity has features of a nation. Therefore it is the Igbo national consciousness I deal with in this thesis. In the theoretical introduction I situate a nation within the sphere of ideas. The historiographic part of the thesis examines how the Igbo nation came into existence. It deals with traditional culture, trade, missionary activity, education, colonial administration, migration, decolonization and politics in independent Nigeria. The second, semiologic part is based on my research among the Igbos in Prague and focuses on the contemporary means for the inter-subjective maintenance of their national consciousness. I try to explain it using a concept of national symbols which can be understood as narratives supporting the idea of continuity, strengthening of borders and assuring the internal homogeneity as distinguished from the external differences.