

**SOCIO-POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND POTENTIAL  
ISLAMIC INTERVENTION IN EBIRALAND, 1917-2010**

**BY**

**RAJI, ABDULWAHAB**

**B.A. Hons. Islamic Studies (Ilorin), M. A. Islamic Studies (Ibadan)**

**118855**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in partial fulfilment of the requirement**

**for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**of the**

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

## Abstract

Contemporary conflicts among the predominantly Muslim Ebira people could be traced to both the imposition of Ibrahim Onoruoiza Chogudo as the Attah of Ebiraland on the tribe in 1917 and the perennial clannish struggle in Ebiraland. Whereas studies on these conflicts have focused on Western and traditional procedures in resolving them, little attention has been paid to the Islamic approach which proved effective in resolving conflicts in the classical Islamic period. This study, therefore, investigated the causes and effects with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the resolution strategies adopted and recommending Islamic solutions to the crises.

The study adopted Karl Marx's Conflict Theory of Stratification. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected academics (20), elders (nine) security agents (seven), and youths (14) with their ages ranging between 24-78 years. These respondents were sampled from all the five Local Government Areas in Ebiraland. Additional information was obtained from relevant texts on Ebira history, reports of the panels on the crises and newspaper reports. Supplementary information was sourced from the Qur'an and *Hadith*. Data were subjected to historical and critical analyses.

Conflicts in Ebiraland had four historical phases. The 1917-1956 crisis was based on the imposition of Ibrahim Atta leading to loss of lives and property, Ebira revolution of 1951/52 and relocation of many indigenes. Between 1957 and 1976, there was a bitter political rivalry between Igbirra Tribal Union (ITU) and the Igbirra Progressive Union (IPU). Between 1977 and 1996, clannish clashes and political thuggery took place during masquerade festivals resulting in unprecedented destruction of lives and property. The interval between 1997 and 2010 witnessed *Emani* versus *Ohonwan* and Obehira intra-community re-generational political and clannish conflicts. The 1917-1956 crisis was resolved through the abdication of Ibrahim Atta, leading to further political complications. Islam could intervene in this situation by the adoption of *Shūrah* (Q42:38). The tension of 1957-1976 crisis was doused through the formation of factions of ITU and the unification of one of its factions and IPU/N.P.C (Northern People's Congress), which were short-lived interventions. A more sustaining Islamic solution could be sought in the Prophet's divine trust example. The resolution of 1977-1996 crisis, based on police arrests and suspension of cultural festivals, failed. Possible Islamic interventions could apply in terms of *Tafawwuq* and *Khushū'* (Q3:159, *hadith* No 20698 and 20699 of *Ṣaḥīh* Bukhārī). The 1997-2010 crisis was suspended as a result of the intervention of security agents, the death of key actors and the rotational adoption of the *Ohi* stool. This crisis could benefit from *Shūrah* and forgiveness principle (Q42:40). Many of the interviewees believed that the workability of the Islamic models depends on the people's proper understanding of Islamic teachings under the tutorship of indigenous Islamic scholars.

Leadership tussles and clannish struggles launched Ebiraland into incessant re-generational socio-political crisis which proved resistant to resolutions between 1917-2010. Thus, an Islamic intervention, whose effectiveness rests on the proper understanding of Islamic teachings is considered the most suitable panacea for the crises.

**Key words:** Ebiraland, Political rivalry, Clannish struggles, Masquerade thuggery, Islamic teaching.

**Word count:** 491.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to Almighty Allah for His mercy on me. Also, to my family and as well, to the entire *Ebira Tao* people of *Kogi* Central Senatorial District including those yet unborn who would derive inspirations from this work.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## Acknowledgements

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful.

In the first instance, I thank God Almighty, the Uncaused Cause for His abundant blessings on me in all my undertakings, most especially, for successful completion of this work. The Qur'ān reads "...If you are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you, but if ye show ungratefulness, truly My punishment is terrible indeed." (14:7)

I acknowledge, with deep sense of sincere appreciation, the work of my respectable supervisor, Dr Lafeef O. Abbas who did not only give the work a critical scrutiny but also constructive criticisms with immeasurable patience and painstaking inputs that ensure its success. To Allah alone belongs the reward and I pray, may He reward him abundantly. (Amen)

I also register my profound gratitude to all the lecturers in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of this university including Dr Kamil K. Oloso (Ag. Head of Department), Profs: Sayed H.A. Malik and M. Oloyede Abdulrahamon, Drs: S. A. Shittu, Hafis A. Oladosu, Ibrahim O.Uthman, M.K. Kareem, Mubarak Noibi, K.A.Omofoyewa, I.A.S. Adebolu, J. A. Shittu, Habibah Oladosu, A.O. Akewula, Mr L. A. Ibrahim as well as all the non-teaching staff of the Department for their contributions towards the success of this work. Efforts of Drs: Lamidi (English Department), Awosanmi (Theatre Arts), Oyewo (Language and Communication Arts), Olaniyi Rasheed (Sub Dean, Faculty of Arts), Ayo Hammed (Internal/External Examiner) and Mr. Adegboro, A. M. (Kenneth Dike Library) all of this university are highly appreciated. Am equally indebted to Professor Rahim Musa (External Exerminal). At this juncture, it is very worthy of saying big thanks to Drs: Akin Odebunmi and Mubarak Noibi (former Sub – Dean P. G at the Faculty and Departmental levels respectively). May God be with you all (Amen)

My deepest appreciation goes to my beloved wife, Adewobi Atiyat Kehinde as well as my children Mariam, Abdus-salam, Zainab, Fridaws and Aishat for their understanding, encouragement, endurance and sacrifice during the period of this work. May Allah reward you all (Amen). More importantly, very big thanks goto my caring parents for not only bringing me to this world but also laying very solid foundation for my

career on which I am building upon today. The efforts of the entire members of my family, are, appreciated.

My appreciation goes to the entire lecturers in the department of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language in Federal College of Education, Okene including Alhaji K.S Badmos (the College Chief Imam and Ex-Dean of Arts and Social Sciences), Mal. O.R. Afolabi (Ex-Dean of Languages, Ex-Chairman of Committee of Deans and Directors and the current Director of College Advancement) Mal. A. A. Hameed, (Ex-Head of Islamic Studies Department), Mal. Doma (ISS, HOD), Mal. Nuhu Ogirima, Mal. Shuaib Abdulazeez, Mal. Taofik Tijani (Head of Arabic Language Department), Mal. Sanni Muktar, Sheikh Luqman among others for their understanding and support.

The efforts of Abdulazeez Khadijat Ageetu (Miss), being my research assistant, are sincerely appreciated. I also appreciate the support given by Alhaji Abbullahi Sango, Dr Ijanaku, Dr Ogli Godwin Ejembi, Dr Agali, Mal. Nasiru Sanjo, Alhaji M.A Japa, Mal. Segun, Mal. Tijani Omeiza, Alhaji Hamzat Sadiq (of Arabic Language Department), Mr Adedayo Abdur-rasheed, Mr Muyiwa Adebisi, Shittu Rasheedat (Miss), Mr. Vincent, Alasca, Mr Yinka Adeshina, Adedoyin Esther (Miss) and Ameen Fatimat among others. I say big thanks to my postgraduate colleagues for their contributions towards the successful completion of this work. My profound gratitude goes to Abdus-salam Aishat Opeyemi (Miss) for her immense contributions towards the success recorded in this work. Added to these, to all the interviewees, I say thanks and God bless.

To cap it all, worthy of mentioning are the efforts of late Mal. Yahyah Saleh (Zaria) and late Mal. Raimi Kilani. May Allah grant them paradise (Amen). So also, sincere thanks are given to all who have positively impacted on this work in one way or the other but whose names may have not been mentioned here. To you all, I say THANK YOU and I pray God bless and replenish you abundantly. (Amen).

**RAJI ABDULWAHAB**

## **Certification**

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr. Raji, Abdulwahab in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

---

### **Supervisor**

Dr. Lateef O. Abbas, B. A., M. A. Ph.D  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies,  
University of Ibadan.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Pages</b>
Title page	i
Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgment	iv - v
Certification	vi
Table of contents	vii - viii

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1	Background to the study	1 - 5
1.2	Statement of the problem	5 - 6
1.3	Justification for the study	6
1.4	Objectives of the study	6 - 7
1.5	Research methodology	7
1.6	Significance of the study	8
1.7	Scope and the limitation of the study	8 - 9
	Notes on Chapter One	13

### **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

2.1	Theoretical Framework	11 - 14
2.2	Conflict resolution in Africa	14 - 17
2.3	Conflict resolution in Nigeria	17 - 22
2.4	Ethnography of Ebara people	22 - 25
2.5	Location and geographic features	25 - 28
2.5.1	Population	28 - 29
2.5.2	Climate	29 - 30
2.5.3	Economy	30 - 32
2.5.4	Culture	33 - 34
2.5.5	Religion	34 - 38
2.5.6	Dynamism and social harmony	38 - 40

2.5.7	Festivals in Ebiraland	40 - 44
	Notes on Chapter two	45 - 46

### **CHAPTER THREE: Origin and Historical Development of Ebiraland**

3.1	Introduction	47 - 49
3.2	Development clans	49 - 52
3.3	Cultural festivals	53 - 56
3.4	Economic Factor	57 - 60
3.5	Religious Factor	60 - 61
3.6	Ebiraland and internal security challenges: case studies	61 - 62
3.6.1	The leadership tussle in Ebiraland (1917-1956)	62 - 70
3.6.2	The crises between 1957 and 1976	70 - 78
3.6.3	The crises between 1977 and 1996	79 - 80
3.6.4	The crises between 1997 and 2010	80 - 87
	Notes on Chapter three	88 - 89

### **CHAPTER FOUR: CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

4.1	Introduction	90
4.2	Moves for conflict resolution in Ebiraland	90 - 96
4.3	Islamic approach for crises in Ebiraland	96 - 108
4.3.1	Islamic approach to economic crises in Ebiraland	108 -114
4.3.2	Islamic approach to leadership crises in Ebiraland	114-118
4.3.3	Islamic approach to religious crises in Ebiraland	118-121
4.3.4	Islamic approach to clannish crises in Ebiraland	122-124
	Notes on Chapter Four	125

### **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

5.0	Summary	126- 128
5.1	Conclusion	128-132
	Bibliography	133-139



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

The word “conflict” is derived from the Latin word ‘*confligere*’ which means “to strike together” (Barash and Webel, 2002, p.26). Literally conflict can be used as both a positive and negative notion. Meanwhile, conflict in its traditional sense is synonymous to crisis and violence, regardless of their dimension and intensity. In other words, it usually presents a depressing notion as it is not possible for more than one physical object to occupy the same space without a new position for each of them. It is a natural phenomenon that could occur in any society and relationship. It is derivable from the possession of and pursuit of divergent ideas, goals, claims, interests and aspirations. It is the situation in which two or more beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other but not both. It means a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rival considered as threats to the goal. In the opinion of John (2011), conflict is an advanced form of discontent or intense disagreement over value, in which parties in contention with each other maintain a position unacceptable to the other leading to degeneration and open hostility. In the same view, violence is an excessive unrestricted or unjustifiable force and its concepts often come as a catch-all for every variety of protests, militancy, coercion, destruction of muscle flexing which a given observer happens to fear or condemn. It is also an act of aggression and abuse that cause or intended to cause injury to person(s).

Owens (1981) viewed conflict as the pursuit of incompatible goals such that gain to one side comes at the expense of the other. In the same vein, Katz and Kahn (1978) asserted similarly that conflict denotes four different usages such as:

- i. Antecedent conditions to some overt struggle for scarce resources.
- ii. Affective states, like tension or hostility;
- iii. Cognitive states, such as the perception that some persons or entities act against one’s interest; and
- iv. Conflict behavior, which may be verbal or non-verbal, ranging from passive resistance to active aggression. Conflict exists where there is presence of divergent and incompatible views, attitudes, objectives, activities, values are ventured and pursued in a community

of humans. It is inevitable however conflict is a manageable phenomenon as to minimize its effects on the society.

Contrary to the general view that conflict is nothing but negative in its essence, it is also an opportunity for change. The reason advanced for this is that conflict may be negative or positive depending on the way it is being managed – constructively or destructively. It could only result to violence when it is negatively or destructively managed but if managed otherwise, violence would not be required in achieving the set goal(s) (Jibril, 2010). Week (1992), made submission as follows:

Indeed, conflict can serve as one of the engines of personal development and social evolution, generating opportunities to learn from and adapt to the diversities and differences that are natural and healthy characteristics of our society. Conflict can bring into the open of alternative ways of thinking and behaving. It can challenge us to manage our lives in ways that utilize our differences for mutual growth and benefit.

In fact, conflict is mostly generated by the elites and the poor are incited to take violent actions to pursue their (elites) goal or individual interest. The Marxian theory of Political Economy posits that violence associated with revolutionary movements is inevitable for social change (Semyonov, 1979:162)

Ethnic conflicts are not peculiarly African. For historical and global studies show that violent conflict is a common feature of social life, which occur not only in the period of decay but also in the period of prosperity and growth. It is clearly manifested that, today, the world is almost fragmented into units by crises to such an extent that conflict occurs globally. Since the last century, the frequency of conflicts has been on the rise. Conflicts now come on menacingly defying all conflict management strategies dragging over a lengthy period. When they seem to abate, they leave in their trails records of enormous human, economic, social and environmental losses and, of course, another seed of conflict eruption securely tucked for incubation. Africa is as well witnessing conflicts (of different types and in various forms) continuously, most of which have proved to be strongly resistant to efforts at resolution. On the global scale, conflict occurred in the Middle East, Somalia and Dafur in Sudan. At the national level in Nigeria, inter or intra community conflicts occurred in Jos since 2001, Taraba state, Action Group crisis of 1962, Zango-Kataf crisis in 1992 Jos, Ife/Modakeke crisis of 1999, Tiv crisis in Taraba 2001, Boko-Haram in the recent times among many others. In fact, the country is facing security challenges

of different dimensions making the government to witness pressures from individual citizens or group(s). The groups include the ethnic militias such as Oodua Peoples' Congress, Bakkasi Boys, Egbesu Boys, Niger-Delta Volunteer Forces, Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and so on.

Nnoli (1998) documented the violent conflict within ethnic groups as it occurred among the Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Ondo and Ibadan. On record are: Yoruba versus Dahomy war, Old Oyo versus Fulani in Ilorin just to mention but a few. It was observed by Ajayi and Smith in Amadi (1982) that during the whole of the nineteenth century, the Yoruba country was beset with warfare. It was the scene of invasions from the North by the Fulani jihadists who, early in the century, established a base at Ilorin South of the Niger and other parts of Yorubaland, and from the West by the Dahomey. In recent times, the problems appear to be escalating at an intolerable scale. It was also observed by Olatunji and Adebimpe (2002) that there is virtually no geographical zone of the country that has not had its fair share of ethnic/religious problems in political violence. Thus, the inability of the Nigerian state to address the country's security challenges raises another serious question on the preparedness of Nigeria to attain desired political, social and economic heights by the year 2020. By implication, this poses serious threats to the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state.

Others that have equally succeeded in straining inter-group relationship within groups such as the Ado, Edu and Onitsha versus other Igbo identities in 1991; Ayap and Hausa youths crisis 1992; Uyep and Idomi of Cross River 1992; Aguleri versus Umuleri sub-Igbo group 1993; Wawa and other Igbo ethnic groups in 1993; Itsekiri versus Urhobo in 1999; and Warri communal violence in 1999. Also on record are Gusau crisis in 2001, Jos crisis in 2009, the Almajiri and the Yandaba group recurring ethnic/religious violence in Kano and many more. It on this point that Fanoro (2009) suggests that:

For more than three decades now, Nigeria's national security apparatus and agenda have been under attack and even ridicule... Notorious gangs and persons have been committing crimes against groups and group of individuals... the government seems weak, impotent, baffled and unable to protect the citizens across the country... There have been recurrent ethnic/religious conflicts...

Ebiraland in Kogi Central Senatorial District had enjoyed before now the peaceful atmosphere created and maintained by the ancestor, Ebira<sup>1</sup> (among his children in Okengwe,

Adavi, Eika, Ihima and Eganyi). Ebirameans noble of character. Ebira is today a land of social crises to the extent that salutation is now given to comradeship in violence among the people who in the past, had unity and hospitality as their uncompromisable qualities. New fights ensue everyday. On daily basis, youths pick up arms and annihilate the adversaries of their groups. They develop parochial identity and bigotry. They take delight in fanning the embers of divisiveness and individualism.

Different schools of thoughts exist on the discourse of the crises in Ebiraland. A school argues that Ebiraland is now divided into two disintegrative and integrative camps; that the actors in the crises are now beginning to exploit the crises for their selfish interests. Another school argues that the crises escalate due to the failure to stop both groups from retaliatory actions. However, the conflict in the land is solidly unique owing to its frequency coupled with its lacking ideological focus or political direction and it could not basically fall within ethnic/religious categorisation but rather on clannish basis. As observed by Dahl (1999), the intermittent violence in different parts of Nigeria in which youths are largely involved have brought to fore the level of moral depravity among the youths.

It is important to note that conflicts in Ebiraland have made the one-time hardworking, peace-loving, educated and cultured group to degenerate to a violent life to the point that many people who have known the Ebiraas people of high moral standard for decades, reached the conclusion that things have fallen apart in Kogi Central Senatorial District. Most of the communities in Ebiraland are now desolate as a result of frequent conflicts. One can now see burnt houses and property as part of the outcome of the bitter political and clannish differences. In the words of Onome (1988) in Abdullahi (2008): “Ebira to a man are lawless. Don’t fight an Ebiraman. They are hot tempered. Human life means nothing to them ..... I say never you fight them”. It is worthy of mentioning that the aggressive instinct of the Ebira, remains dormant until it is provoked.

The crises which featured prominently in the available records in Ebira include the leadership tussle of 1917 and 1956, Ebira revolution (1951/52), Igbirra Tribal Union (Pro- Sanni Omolori) and Igbirra Progressive Union (Pro- Ibrahim Atta) crisis (1957 – 1976), masquerade festival and clannish conflicts as well as strange killings (1977-1996), the crisis of National Party of Nigeria versus the Unity Party of Nigeria (1979 - 1983). Added to these are the following: Idozumi versus Idoji (2001), Muslim group versus traditional worshippers, Ohonwan versus

Emani clans conflict in Ihima, Okehi Local Government (2006), April 2007 Gubernatorial Election which resulted to Oziogu and Oziomoye clannish conflict, Ogaminana conflict (2008), Obehira intra-community conflict (2009 - 2010), Adavi-Eba intra – community conflict (1997), Adavi – Eba versus Okengwe conflict, Emani versus Odumi clans conflict (November, 2009) among others.

It is pertinent to say that the sub-ethnic identity among Ebira Tao group dates back to the origin of the settlement known as Ebiraland and the clan identity is increasingly being fostered as the basis for the allocation of political offices and ascension to traditional offices. Surprisingly, the clan-based differences have provided the basis for conflict and violence. And indeed, the explosiveness of violent years in Ebiraland is a noticeable one as conflicts have proved strongly resistant to resolution despite numerous efforts made thus far. It is on this ground that the application of Islamic provisions if properly used, can serve as an alternative to the previous modalities to resolving the crises. This is doubtless due to the universality of the religion with its teachings. More importantly, according to the 2006 national census, Ebiraland has the population which stands at 844,744 and the Muslims are in the majority. Islam was introduced into Ebiraland in 1903 before Christianity in 1918. Islam became prominent due to the influence of the first paramount Chief/Ruler in Ebiraland, Alhaji Ibrahim Attah who reigned between 1917 and 1954. In essence, the Ebiraland is in a state of anarchy.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Studies on ethnic relations in Nigeria have revealed that intra-ethnic differences are with serious violent outcome. Though Ebira is an ethnic group, the Ebira Tao<sup>2</sup> people of Kogi Central Senatorial District can be said to be distinct and marked out by a different language, culture and myth of origin. Meanwhile, all these commonalities have failed to promote intra and inter-ethnic peaceful coexistence in among the people. Records show that there is unrest with its uniqueness owing to its constancy and its lacking of ideological focus, hence the call for the piece of research work. In essence, this work interrogates the following;

- i. Who are the Ebira people?
- ii. What are the characteristics of the conflicts among the people?
- iii. What is the place of colonialism in the conflicts?

- iv. Of what value is Islamic teaching in the resolution process of the conflicts?
- v. Can centralisation and republicanism as regard political administration among the people be situated in this discourse?
- vi. Of what relevance is clannish identity to the constant social upheavals in Ebiraland?
- vii. What are the implications of the Ebira conflicts on their neighbours and the Nigerian state?
- viii. What are the strengths and weaknesses of previous effort at resolution of the conflicts?

### **1.3 Justification of the study**

Researches have been carried out on the topics, Ebira people as a group and Conflicts in Ebiraland. In other words, the field of this research work is not new, so the variable it intends to interrogate as well in the domain of intellectual research and scholarship. On their history and culture for instance, known works include *Ebirah culture* by Ohiare, A., *The sociology of Ebira Tao People* by A.H.Sanni, *Who are the Ebiras?* By Ahmad, E.D. H. Isah's *Historical events of Ebira people*, P.E.Ohida's *prayer guide for Ebira nation and historical belief* and *The Stool of Ebiraland* by Yakubu A.Y. Other works include *Leadership and conflict in Ebiraland* by T.S. Ogido, *Ebira will survive* by Bejehson, *Violence and development in Ebiraland* by M.I. Japah. As a matter of fact, scholarly works on Ebiraland are not scarce.

Meanwhile, none of the existing works has attempted to situate the conflict in the land within the context of Islamic teachings particularly with regards to resolution aspect of the crisis, hence the nobility of this study. In essence, this piece of research situates within the context of Islamic principle for interrogation, the conflicts in Ebiraland and in closing offer an alternative to the tried approaches to resolving the conflict.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

Approaches to peace building are many. They severally take the form of arbitration, adjudication, conciliation and reconciliation, avoidance, compromise, deterrence and mediation. Inquiry is the basis of all of them. Peace cannot last when the cause(s) of an uprising remains

unknown. While there are other modes of inquiry, a work of this nature is doubtless a complement to such. Hence, investigating the cause(s) and consequence of Ebira crisis takes a central position in the thesis of this piece. The dimensions of the conflicts and the previous approaches to resolving them shall be studied in perspectives of their strengths and weaknesses. In essence, the research shall particularly do the following;

- i. Discuss the background to crises in Ebiraland, using a historical approach
- ii. Study the cause and consequences of conflicts in the land
- iii. Identify the nature and dimension of the conflict
- iv. Situate the conflicts in the context of Islamic discourse
- v. Identify possible measures by which peace could be restored in the, adopting Islamic models of conflict resolution.

### **1.5 Research methodology**

The research design and procedure adopted for the achievement of the objective of any research work would be determined by the nature of the problem under study. Owing to the nature this work, the use of a single approach for the study may be inappropriate. In essence, historical approach shall be adopted. Data shall be gathered from primary sources through focus on – group discussion, interviews, stories told by eye witnesses, the survey design method among other. These shall be supplemented by secondary data from libraries, news papers, magazines, journals among others. The application of historical method would be of assistance in appraising the historical events of the conflicts particularly as regard the historical evolution of Ebiraland and the advent of Islam in Ebiraland. This approach seems appropriate for it helps to get the background information needed to have a comprehensive understanding about the extent the conflicts have gone, the efforts made towards the resolution and the Islamic provisions for the resolution of conflict in human society. The appropriateness of interviews could be seen in obtaining information on image of the Ebiraland in the outside world. Group discussion would be organized among a cross section of the indigenes and non-indigenes living in Ebiraland for group discussion to be made about social upheavals in the land with objectivity of purpose.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

This research work is to provide a firm basis for social stability and sustainable development by putting a lasting end to the social unrest in Ebiraland. This study is pertinent so far as it attempts to serve as an academic documentation of Islamic input on conflict resolution in Ebiraland in particular and the world at large. It would be used as the basis for further academic research in the field of conflict resolution as well as an expansion of frontiers of knowledge. This work would also change the misconception that Islam is a religion of violence as it will unveil the tenets of Islamic teachings that promote peace. In fact, the work would have an important role to play in making Ebiralanda better place of living which could only be achieved with the return of permanent peace to the land.

Approaches to peace building are many. They severally take the form of arbitration, adjudication, conciliation and reconciliation, avoidance, compromise, deterrence and mediation. Inquiry is the basis of all of them. Peace cannot last when the cause(s) of a conflict and its extent remains unknown. While there are other modes of inquiry, a work of this nature is doubtless a complement to such. Because investigating the cause(s) and consequences of conflict in Ebiraland takes a central position in the thesis of this piece alongside the extent and attempts at resolving the conflict, this work will serve as a guide to stakeholders in working out peace for the land.

As it situates within the Islamic context, the conflicts in Ebiraland, this piece will provide peace and conflict actors elsewhere an alternative to the known mechanisms of conflict resolution. In other words, it will add to the existing approaches to peace building for the good of humanity now and later. In all, it will add to the existing body of knowledge in humanistic studies and research.

## **1.7 Scope and the limitation of the study**

The research work would be limited to the Ebira Tao, the indigenes of Kogi Central Senatorial District. It will include the entire Ebira nation that lives across the states of Kogi, Nasarawa, Edo and Abuja (FCT). In terms of period, the work will be limited mainly to the last past nine decades or thereabouts. The reason for this is that, information beyond that period could be gotten in written form which could not give room for questioning the resource persons where necessary.



Application of Islamic provisions may face some challenges especially in the area of giving it a religious consideration by the non-Muslims by viewing its application unacceptable only as a means of marginalizing other religious groups in Ebril and without minding its relevance to the society in general, however, adoption of Islamic model in resolving the conflicts shall provide a precedence for similar developments in the future as regard the instrumentality of models from other religions, given the fact that every religion of this century embraces peace building.

UNIVERSITY OF IBA

### Notes on Chapter One

1. It is the name as well as the language of a tribe occupying, most especially, Kogi Central Senatorial District.
2. This refers to the indigenes of Kogi Central Senatorial District excluding Ogori Mangongo Local Government Area. This does not cover the Ebira indigenes in other parts of federation, apart from Kogi state.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Theoretical framework

*The Encyclopaedia of social sciences* defines conflict as a conscious competition whereby the competitors become self-conscious rivals, opponents or enemies (Seligman, 1967). Conflict in this sense may involve the defence of what one already has or the acquisition of what one has not. Acquisition in this sense can be the same as the taking away of that which pertains to another-‘appropriation’. In this case, conflict can ensue when and where a party strives to takewhat two or more (other parties) like to have. This is why Abia (2003) describes conflict as a manifest of clashes between opposing parties.

Conflict is both destructive and creative in human relationship and must involve two parties. It is the means to change, (Burton, 1972) and the means by which our values of welfare, security, justice and opportunities are lost and achieved (Olaniyi, 2009). In other words, conflict robs one and gives to the other, it denies a party for the other to gain. Conflict takes an important position in every phase of our lives.

In another way, conflict can mean a situation in which two or more human beings desire a goal attainable by one or the other, but not both(Adegbulu,2006). Each party will therefore be compelled to mobilise its energy to obtaining the goal at the expense of the other. In all cases, competition characterises conflict and is central to the manifest of confrontation and subtlety that labels conflicts everywhere (Stagner, 1967).

There is, however, variedness of conception on what conflict is and what is not. At present, there are conservatives, there are realists also. The conservatives are those who regard conflicts as inevitable and occasionally desirable while the realists are the reformers who consider conflict as undesirable and wasteful and believed it could be eliminated or substantially reduced by suitable social and political approaches. The teaching of Heraclitus of Ephesus that throughout nature, conflict was the father of all and the king of all represents a conservative personality in conflict studies. Finally, conflict remains a necessary condition of change and dynamism. Its absence may be inferred as a situation of non-interaction among human beings or complete

consensus about the status quo. In essence, conflict is a permanent feature of human relations and coexistence.

Conflicts can take different forms. It sometimes takes the form of personal quarrels, inter-family feuds, inter and intra community, inter-cultural, inter-religious conflict, institutional or organisational feuds (workers against managers, industry versus industry). The remarkable thing about all forms of conflict is that they occur within the social units or structures existent in a nation. Conflict is personal when it occurs between individuals in various units (Nse, 2006). It includes quarrels or misunderstandings between father and son, worker and manager, driver and passenger, husband and wife, friend and friend etc. The scope of this type of conflict is a limited one.

A community conflict is an aggregate of individuals against others and may take the form of inter-family, intra-community (Etim, 2006), where groups of individuals within a community are in conflict with themselves as in the case of Ebiraland in Kogi state, Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra state. It can also be inter-community in which distinct communities like Ife and Modakeke in Osun state, Itsekiri and Urhobo in Delta state, Tiv and Jukun in Taraba state among others.

Another dimension of conflict is when a culture is pitched against the other. That is, a group identified with some definite values against those outside it (Abia, 2003). Similarly, people possessing distinct values and traits within a society may be antagonistic to others without such values. For example, trained medical practitioners may be antagonistic against herbal medical practitioners while people with western education may be antagonistic to core traditionalists in most traditional African societies.

When the Jos crisis surfaced in the city, many people were rightly quick to read religious meaning to the uprising. The same goes for the ongoing Boko-Haram attacks that ravage northern Nigeria. In other words, there are religious conflicts, even though they are often fanned by extra-religious forces. Religious conflicts are those that emanate from religious differences. As a matter of fact, religion has played many roles in conflict escalation. While it is true that religion has been a source of peace, humanitarianism and pacifism, it is also true that religion has been at the centre of many bloody wars (Rourke, 1999). Instances include the crusades, (1095-1291), the Protestant Reformation war (1517), the Thirty Year War (1618-1648), the Sokoto Jihad, (1804) to mention a few.

In all, ethnic conflict is more popular compared with other forms of conflict. It occurs between people of different ethnic groups, tribes or nationalities. It is more prevalent across the world. Examples are the Eket and Ibeno in Akwa Ibom state, the Ogoni and Andoni in Rivers state in Nigeria. The wars in Burundi and Rwanda were caused by mutual hostilities that pitched the Hutu nation against the Tutsis in the two countries.

In conclusion, International conflict is one that involves two or more nations over divergent interests that are mutually antagonistic (Adegbulu, 2006). It occurs because one state or government is unhappy over what another is doing or planning to do (Fisher, 1969) and can be characterised by the above scenarios or a combination of both. Often, most international conflicts are internal but the interests of other states often degenerate them into international crisis.

Theorising about causes of conflict is a sentimental exercise. It involves taking a factor of conflict for explicit interrogation that will threaten the validity of other schools of thought on why conflicts occur. However, a good understanding of the phenomenon requires an instrumentality of diverse explanations as regard conflict, its causes and consequences. The Marxist theory for example views man as the maker of conflict (Nse, 2006). The theory views conflict as a product of economic struggles of man. The theory classifies human beings and the society as the exploiter and the exploited. It sees conflict as a manifest of irreconcilable struggle between the proletariats and the bourgeoisie. It is a scenario presented by a situation whereby the former resist further exploitation by the later. This places therefore political struggle in a prime position in the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie principally to actualise social relations, eliminate the system of capitalist exploitation, attain democratic rights and freedom and preserve peace and national development (Freedman, 1982).

Having succeeded in using the state as an instrument to suppress the proletariats, the bourgeoisie adopts the same machinery to exploit other states and establish dominance over them. This leads to a sort of class structure among the states where some are stronger and others weak. International conflicts and wars therefore occur as one class of states control or attempt to control another and establish an order favourable to its course. Central to the causes of conflict therefore is materialism at every level of human interaction.

The psychoanalytic theory argues that some people are naturally prone to aggression and conflict (Antonio, 2000), and that if such people have the privilege of attaining position of authority, they will be confrontational and abrasive in their relationship with others. Napoleon

Bonaparte of France, Adolf Hitler of Germany, Benito Mussolini of Italy and the Nigeria's General Sanni Abacha are leaders with confrontational personality.

The functional theory holds the view that conflict is a product of structural deficiencies in the society. Thus, conflict becomes a means by which the dissatisfied parties complain or attempt to correct the social malfunctions. In other words, conflict ensues when individuals and government fail to do what is ideal and required of them. (Abia, 2000) Revolutionary wars are on the list of functional deficiency borne conflict. The French revolution.(1789), the Russian revolution(1902) among others are direct examples. The proponent of Judeo-Christian theory argues that conflict is a punishment of God on man for unrighteousness and sins. The theory assigns a divine origin to conflict that is a manifest of God's wrath against man. This theory finds equal grounds among the believers of other religions like Islam, Hinduism, Judaism etc.

In closing, 'linkage' is any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system and is reacted to in another.(Rosenau, 1969). The term is used in political science to relate international variables with domestic politics. It seeks for instance to show that stability and instability in a state are influenced by the coloration of international politics. The reverse case of this scenario is the second point of the theory. That is, stability and disability at national level affects international politics. The Cold War was a direct example here whereby the too weak European power left power vacuum in the international community, and subsequently pitched the United States against Russia, the European survivor the World War II. Another relevant case study here is the case of Iraq, the bringing under a dictator of the oil reserves in the middle-east and the attendant rise in the global oil price. The link between domestic elements and international factors is complex and endless.

## **2.2 Conflict resolution in Africa**

It is natural to disagree before we agree on a common ground on conflicting matters. However, man must find answers to conflicting questions and deal with their cause(s) and consequences. In dealing with conflicting matters, different methods are adopted as different variables come into play. In other words, the means of resolving conflicts take various forms. Adoption of a style of resolution depends greatly on the situation, as in the extent of the conflicts and the personalities involved. In all, the relevance of a third party is apparent. A third party creates an avenue for the conflicting parties to resolve the existing conflict.

Depressing or so the response of many would sound if they are asked what their impression is as regards peace and civil security in Africa. Africa continent has been haunted by conflicts before and after colonialism and much more frequently since the period of decolonization. More depressing is the fact that most of the conflicts have been resistant to efforts at resolution of them. To begin with, the Nigerian state fought thirty months civil war between 1967 and 1970. There was civil war in Sudan between 1958 and 1972. Its scars provoked the very much on-going Dafur crisis, though with a host of other factors. The popular Rwanda 1994 was equally worrying. Conflicts in Africa are not intra-state generally in their character. There are those that transcend national boundaries in extent and dimension. Examples of inter-state conflicts are Ethio-Eritrean war in 1993 and the skirmishes between Nigeria and Cameroon over Bakasi Penninsula. The story is not different everywhere across the continent. There are potential conflicts which centre over trans-boundary water resources like the Nile River and Lake Chad. Many conflicts erupt due to clashes over access to resources which led to disputes fought by African proxies in such countries as Angola and Mozambique. Other conflicts had occurred as a result of unmarked or unacceptable boarder such as the cape of Cameroun-Nigeria, Libya – Chad or because of poor governance and exclusion from power sharing (NIC 2020 Project, 2009). What is common to all the conflicts is that fighting takes place in areas characterized by deep cleavage and it is generated mostly by the elites. History has shown that without outside help, individual countries are usually not up to the task of resolving conflict of major scale that erupt within their borders. Limitations in political, economic and material capacities of individual African state contribute to the problem of conflict resolution in Africa. The initiatives of neighbouring states, however, have limitations because they may not be seen as fair arbiters by one or the other party because of the closeness. As a matter of fact, African states face a lot of problems trying to resolve conflicts without any help from outside their respective country.

Realising the incapability of the individual African state in conflict resolution, they formed themselves into regional and sub-regional organisations. The purpose of this is often clearly defined along the line of preserving peace in the region through political, economic and socio-cultural co-operation. These organizations include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the South African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-governmental Authority on Development Community (IGAD), and the East African Cooperation

(EAC). At the continental level is the African Union. Others include a grouping of over 17 states known as the Community of Sahel Saharan States (CSSS) made up of west, north, east and some north African states, Chad Basin Commission and so on (NIC 2020 Project, 2009).

The apparent factor of proximity set the stage for the trans-border trades which growing intensity daily among African states. This development supports the move by African states towards collectivism and grants them geographical unity. Thus, the need for an institutional structure that will attend to conflicts emanating from their coexistence gains impetus and informs the character of African transnational institutions. It is noted that each region in Africa has countries that are strong economically or militarily and as such other countries with less military and economic power can't be perceived as being pushed around or used. For instance, one cannot speak of ECOWAS without Nigeria or SADC without South Africa. In North Africa, Ethiopia is a prominent power pole. ECOWAS and the A.U. have been the most active in dealing with conflicts in West Africa and Africa generally. Other efforts include the SADC's establishment of a committee of Defence and Security.

The activities of Nigeria in conflict resolution and peacekeeping mission cannot be overemphasized. This is informed by the Organization of African Unity OAU clause of inviolability of African borders, prevention of instability in the continent, and averting internationalization of African disputes and the clause in foreign policy (ch.2, sec.19, Art. D). Instances include that in 1963, Nigeria sent troops to Congo for peace-keeping mission; she was involved in the resolution of the difference between Togo and the Republic of Benin in 1975; she sent troops to Chad and well hosted two-reconciliation conferences in Kano and Lagos respectively to talk to the warring parties (Ogo, 2005).

Furthermore, Nigeria's leadership role in ECOWAS has manifested in different forms. For example, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a military (peace-keeping) arm of ECOWAS is largely made up of the Nigerian military personnels. In addition to these, Nigeria is the largest financier of both ECOWAS and the ECOMOG. At different times, Nigeria sent troops to Darfur in Sudan and played significant roles in the pulling down of apartheid regime in South Africa and the eventual release of Dr. Nelson Mandela. She has contributed to the attainment of independence for Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. (Olayiwola and Egbinola, 2003). Conflict resolution in Africa takes into account the importance of non-African actors – the United Nations Security Council, the United States, the European Union and other actors



from outside the continent. The role of United Nations Security Council in keeping and preserving peace and security across the world is not in exception of conflicts that occur on the African soil. The usual practice is that African leaders identify political substance of occurring conflicts and design the means by which they are resolved. The involvement of non-African actors set to secure the support of major actors from outside the continent in the military campaign aspect of peace-keeping and conflict resolution.

### **Conflict resolution in Nigeria**

Where and when human beings interact, conflict becomes inevitable. However, causes and extent of conflicts vary from place to place. The extent and dimension of conflicts are determined by a number of factors that equally vary everywhere. Instances include that it may be based on disputes over the jurisdiction of some Traditional Rulers and Chiefs as in the case of Ile-Ife/Modakeke skirmishes; the crisis that ensued over the throne of Olu of Warri. The later occasioned a scenario whereby Delta State Government enacted Edict No. 1 of 1999 (Traditional Council and Chief's Edict 1998 vol. 9) and appointed three other traditional rulers of equal status in Warri with the Olu of Warri; two for the Urhobo kingdoms of Okere and Agbassa (Agbarha - Ame) and the third for the Ijaw of Warri. It may also occur as a result of creation of Local Government Councils or States and location of their headquarters as in the case of Ife/Modakeke in Osun state. This is because the creation of state or local government means the availability of more political and administrative positions in the localities (Adeniyi, 2003).

Social structure in Nigeria constitutes another source of conflict because the Nigerian state is segmented into scores of conflicting cultural interests, group values and preferences. Population growth and expansionist tendencies to sustain ethnic bound occupations particularly among the users of the land such as the migration of the Tiv who are well known farmers has been a source of conflict in the territories of their neighbours. Furthermore, the disregard for cultural symbols and pollution of cultural practices is another source of conflict which manifest when a group of immigrants threaten the culture of their host communities in anyway. For example, killing or eating of anything considered as a cultural symbol (which they respect or worship) in a community by immigrants may lead to conflict (Adeniyi, 2003).

Like other people, the Nigerian groups are faced with the problem of access to scarce resources. The Benue state farmers/herdsmen clashes can be situated within this context. As a matter of fact conflicts of that character are traditional to Africa, history documents instances of this in South Africa and elsewhere across the continent. Because most conflicts in Africa are traditional and historical, conflicts in Nigeria have been addressed with traditional model of resolution in which the involved communities and parties allowed the elders to decide on the blames and the rewards of a conflict as in the case of Egba/Ijebu clavage. Westernized model has also been adopted. The later involves the judiciary in the resolution process through arbitration and adjudication. Instances of this include political violence caused by election figures and the notorious clashes between factions of transporters' associations in Nigerian motor parks. However, there are instances when both measures were adopted simultaneously or one after the other.

The need for traditional approach to conflict resolution is supported by many scholars who hold the view that there is need for contextualised approaches to conflict resolution based on the perceived positive impacts it would have on the reconciliatory processes of conflict resolution. To buttress this stand, Smock and Crocker (1995) maintain that adopting foreign approaches to resolve conflicts in Africa might portend an exacerbation of such a conflict rather than resolving it. African conflicts, by nature, often generate from peculiar socio-cultural issues and concerns which may not be totally discernible except by people schooled in customary inflexion and nuances of the group. In the traditional model, there is involvement of the elder's cultural trusteeship and customary practices. This is well known especially in the rural areas where Kings and Chiefs of various designations and status practise their indigenouse culture admirably in resolving and managing conflicts within and between the domains. Those who are dissatisfied with the verdict of these functionaries proceed freely to settle the conflicts in the modern westernized sector of the State Judiciary and other parastatals.

The westernized model of conflict resolution involves the use of the Nigerian Police, the courts from the Magistrate courts to the Supreme Court, as in the Itsekiri – Urhobo land case in Sapele and in most inter-state boundary conflicts. The Ministry of Labour and Productivity is where arbitration in wages-Labour disagreement, disputes and conflicts are referred to.

Mixed procedures and practices which require multiple but simultaneous use of elements from the indigenouse and modern practices is another means of conflict resolution in Nigeria.

Here, the customary and the Sharia Courts in which the Chiefs and Kings who function with legitimate authority co-exist with specialists exercising legitimate authority in one plural legal system. It thus embraces the Magistrate Courts, High Courts and the Court of Appeal, to the Supreme Court. For the purpose of conflict resolution, government panels and commissions of enquiry often are set up and these may include traditional rulers and those with authority under the modern constitution.

In the work of Adeniyi (2003), it is established that sometimes, the panels are separated in terms of personnel composition such as the 1997 His Royal Highness Oba Ashiru Tadeso, Oluwo of Iwo led peace commission, and the 1981 Justice Ibidapo Obe judicial panel, both on the Ife/Modakeke crisis. There are also ad-hoc and informal means of conflict resolution ranging from the intervention of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to the involvement of religious organizations in search of peace and the use of social network and pressures groups.

The post-conflict fund in the World Bank and the resources from other multilateral and unilateral find their way to the Nigerian government and stakeholders. The first of such external commitment was in 2002, having recognised the need to get the sources of violent conflict, analyzed and addressed by conducting a national Strategic Conflict Assessment. This was agreed by donors in December 2001 and supported by President Olusegun Obasanjo. It was led by the National Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the Presidency. To be precise, the Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) process was launched in May 2002 with a national stakeholder workshop. One-fifty participants took part in it. It was for awareness generation from a wide range of Nigerian stakeholders.

After its launching in May 2002, the IPCR and partner planned to undertake two main phases. The first phase involved a desk study of local consultants to identify the causes, actors and dynamics of conflict based on the existing literature and synthesis of information relating to different geo-political zones, while the second phase is to test the findings of the first phase with field work. In essence, the assessment covers:

- i. An analysis of causes, actors and dynamics
- ii. Mapping the existing pre-responses to conflict, and
- iii. Recommending policy options and strategies.

Prior to the start of the Strategic Conflict Assessment research process, training of the stakeholders on conflict assessment methodology was carried, local researchers also participated.

The fieldwork involved the IPCR staff, consultants, and society and donor representatives. Interviews were held with government representatives at all levels with police, the national security service, donors, NGOs, community based organizations, academic institutions, civil society, traditional leaders, media and private sectors. The SCA consolidated report and zones reports were published in one volume in March 2003 and another workshop was launched with a range of stakeholders in Abuja that month (No.11, 2003).

In the heart of most violent conflicts nationwide lies political competition and lack of transparency in the use of annual revenue gotten from oil and gas. This has contributed to the politicization of ethnic and religious divisions as the main fault lies along which violence erupts and it is often manipulated by elites. In fact, the key actors used in violence are the unemployed and disillusioned youth most especially in the urban areas. It is also observed that the resolutions depend on the ability of the centre to manage these centrifugal pressures and that failure to resolve basic issues relating to resource competition will allow current cycle of violent conflict to persist.

The media sometimes heightens tension by giving unethical reports about crisis in Ebiraland. In the past, only civil societies with the support of international donors were involved in local peace-making initiatives and it lacked capacity, strategic vision and engagement. Thus, it is apparent there is a need to unite significant forces to limit violent conflict.

It is also established in No.1( 2003) that at the March 2003 workshop, launching of the published SCA report was done where representatives of Nigerian and donor governments, civil society and the private sectors were present and worked together to formulate a National Action Plan (NAP) for conflict reduction based on the findings of the Strategic Conflict Assessment. The focuses are on six themes namely:

1. Early warning and preventive action
2. Addressing the economic and social causes of conflict
3. Mainstreaming conflict prevention into government and donor programs
4. Improving formal and traditional mediation mechanism
5. The political process and
6. Security sector reform/small arms and light weapon reduction.

Thus, donors are offering support in areas where they have comparative advantage and where plans are fit with their mandate and country strategies. For example DFID was to take lead in security sector reform and USAID on mediation and support to civil society.

In fact, many donors have also made commitment to use SCA as the basis for improving the conflict sensitivity of their strategies and develop programs and responses to conflict in Nigeria. Addressing unemployment among the youths, peace-building television drama series, training editors and journalists on balance and tolerance in reporting, conflict management were integrated into the planned Fadama II projects for wetlands development. All relevant new projects in the Nigeria portfolio are to undergo conflict risk screening as part of social analysis.

It is pertinent to say that, according to Naagbaton, (2007), there are some moves towards resolution of the resource – driven conflict plaguing Niger Delta region in Nigeria. Government deployed military to the region through which many people such as Isaac Jasper, Adako Boro among others were arrested, tried, convicted and detained. Some places in the region such as Umuechemi and Odiin 1990, Idioma and Ogoniland and many more were attacked and razed to the ground. The leaders of environmental rights such as Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others were detained and executed in November 10, 1995. In spite of this, Asari Dokubo remained vocal on the issue of justice and he was arrested in August 2005.

The arrest in the region resulted in the proclamation of Kaiama Declaration December 11, 1998 Ogoni Bill of Rights, Urohobo Economic Submit and Ikwerre Rescue Charter. This eventually led to the cropping up of Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Niger Delta People (MONDP), Martyr Brigade, Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force and the likes taking foreign oil workers hostage, destroying oil facilities, killing the soldiers in the creeks to have the arrested leaders released as well as protecting the rights of the people in the region. Yet Asari Dokubo, one of the leaders in the region, surrendered 3,000 weapons openly at 2<sup>nd</sup> Amphibious Brigade, Boni Camp, Port-Harcourt, Rivers state having participated in a peace negotiation with Olusegun Obasanjo government.

Iyayi (2008) notes it that the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo has entered a military pact with the United States of America, code-named "Operation Focus Relief". The agreement grants concessions to the United State Army to engage in armed mission and offer leadership that no foreign army has undertaken in Nigeria since the country became independent in 1960. With all these, the Federal Government achieved little success in having peace in the

region and this made the government to approach the demand of the region in a people-oriented manner by building hospitals, schools etc. Oil Mineral Producing Area Committee, Niger Delta Development Commission among others were formed to promote environmental sustainability, establishing sustainable partnership for the advancement of human development, improve access to social services in order to promote peace as the foundation of development. The region is thus politically empowered by having the people in the region appointed to the positions of national leadership. Giving of cash grants to state and communities, provision of micro credit facilities to community members and the conveyance of summits on Niger Delta are parts of moves made by the government towards conflict resolution in the area (Obodoekwe, 2005). This finally led to the voluntary surrender of weapons in the region and the amnesty was granted in 2009.

Iyayi (2008) has it that the resolution towards what could be considered the elite-fuelled crises in Jos includes the following: deployment of troop to the area, declaration of six-month state of emergency in 2004 and movement of relief materials to different camps in the area by National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). A student-led civil society, charter of the Inter-faith Mediation Centre and International Peace League based in the University of Jos, jointly organised a workshop on conflict resolution, trust building and youth development at the University of Jos. Banks, Media, Businesses, civil societies in Jos teamed up to launch a non-religious, neutral private-led global fund-raising campaign and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 to save Jos from crisis. Government also established the Judicial Commission of Inquiry to find out the causes of the conflict and the ways-out. In addition to this, and in collaboration with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution and UNDP, Plateau Peace Conference organised workshops and held meetings with religious leaders, traditional rulers and Chairmen of Local Government Areas based on the means of finding lasting solution to the crisis in the area (<http://www.somali press, 2010>)

#### **2.4 Ethnography of Ebirapeople**

The source of information about the origin of Ebira is more in oral tradition with scanty information. Other written works (mostly unpublished) are the works documented by Colonial Administrators which seem useful and reliable in some aspects of Ebira history. On the other hand, these colonial administrators' official, Intelligence and Anthropologists' report on the "Creation of the Ebira Central Chieftdom" appears to be distorted and inaccurate and were

therefore used with great caution in that particular aspect of Ebira history.(National Archive Ibadan, Official report on northern region). More so, most of the records are shrouded in obscurity due to poor documentation or non-availability of sufficient authentic written records and unreliability of some of the oral sources concerning the origin. However, the Ebiraas one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria are found in Kogi, Nassarawa, Edo and Benue States and the Federal Capital territory, Abuja with settlements in many places in Nigeria. Ogido (2004) put it that Ebira originated from the Jukuns in Wukari area of Kwararafa kingdom<sup>1</sup> at unknown date in the remote past.

Ebira as a language evolved from Jukun and Idoma languages owing to the fact that the person regarded as the progenitor of Ebira race is of Jukun stock having an Idoma mother. The validity of the Ebira-Jukun blood-relationship could be established on the ground of evidence of ritual for traditional chief, cultural practices such as the belief in reincarnation with identical burial and naming ceremonies. Both Jukuns and Ebiras are markedly dolichocephalism and light in colour as it applies mostly to the Jukuns of Wukari. Further to these, in the past, Ebiras had the same social life style with the Jukuns for both ensured that pitto or wine was always within the reach in the house for drinking and entertainment. Woman would present the calabash of wine to the husband in a kneeling down position and while the man is drinking, she turns her face to another direction or bends down. In return, man would leave some wine in the calabash which woman receives with humility and gratitude. (Ahmadu, 2004)

Nowadays, in a typical Ebira setting, the cultured Anebira woman maintains the kneeling down position while presenting water or drinks to the husband or any man who is elderly. Indeed, she remains in that position until the elderly man or husband finishes drinking and returns the calabash or container to her<sup>2</sup>. To this effect, MackRow (1954) put it that “some Igbirra customs, though now dying out in part, are stinkingly similar to recorded Jukun customs. This is particularly true in the domestic field”. However, Ebiras’ place in the history of Kwararafa kingdom has underscored the reason for the similarities in some of their cultural practices with groups like the Igala, Idoma, Jukun and Etuno who were also associated with the old Kwararafa kingdom.

It is established that the migration of Ebiras to their present location, Kogi Central Senatorial District, has been occasioned by several factors. The ancestors of Ebira people must have been among those who left the ancient Kwararafa kingdom around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup>

Century due to the wars of ethnic conquest with the Jihadists she was subjected to by the Borno people. Elizabeth Isichel has this to say about the Ebira nation:

In the area which in modern time has become the emirate of Biu, lived about 200,000 people who speak Bura language. They however divided into two district groups: 75% considered themselves Bura (Ebira) and 25% Pabir. The Bura traditionally lived in a large number of small independent villages, averaging 200 inhabitants. The villages in their time were grouped in clans. They were bounded by intermarriage... by diviners, shrines of Bura (Ebira) – widely celebrated...

At the verge of the collapse of Kwararafa kingdom, some people including the Jukuns and Ebiras moved southwards the fertile banks of Rivers Niger and Benue, and the wet savannah lands where pasture and aquatic life was rich and the topography was identical to that of Kwararafa. In addition, the individualistic nature of the Ebiras which makes it difficult for them to be bossed over by outsiders, coupled with being great hunters seems to have made them to be resistant to any form of centralised authority. This could be the reason for their movement to Idah in 1200. According to P.E. Okori in Ogido (2004):

... The ancestors of Igbirra people originally occupied the territory of the south of the River Benue their headquarters being Atagra (Idah) south of Itobe”. As usual, the prevailing situation in Idah made most Ebiras to move out across the Niger to Eganyi where they had temporary settlement. After sometimes, they migrated to Opete under the leadership of a childless man named Upaja around 1750 which was after about a hundred years of their sojourn in Idah. In search for defence, in the year 1863, the Ebira Tao moved to the top of the hill at Okeneba and later came down to the plain ground for the purpose of farming activities and had Okengwe as their settlement. This is the sole reason why Okengwe is referred to them as *Okengwe – Ehi* meaning “Okengwe the ancestral home.

There were five sons of Ebira Itaazi, the father and progenitor of Ebira Tao people who settled in Ebiraland and these were in order of seniority Obaji, Ododo, Ohize, Adanga and Ochiga identified in Eika, Okehi, Adavi, Okengwe, Ihima respectively. These are the ones called Ebira Tao-Ehi and they occupy the present administrative areas of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta. Ibrahim (1999) explains further that as they journeyed from Kwararafa kingdom down to the present Kogi Central Senatorial District, many started dispersing to various places for settlement. This accounted for having Ebira Igu (Kotonkarfe) and Ebira Mozun in Kogi State,



Ebira Umaisha and Ebira Toto (Nassarawa State), Ebira Igarra/Etuno (Edo) Ebira Abaji (FCT, Abuja) and Ebira Tao in Kogi Central Senatorial District being the most numerous with a population of about one million. In addition, Sanni (1993) added that there are communities of Ebira in Bida and Wushish towns, parts of Niger State. These are mostly descendants of the victims of the Jihad – aftermath raids of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century who, probably because they had adopted Islam and because of the geographical inertia, decided to remain where they were rather than returning home after the advent of the British. Among these groups of Ebira, they have the same mother tongue with variations in accent, diction and etymology. While the Ebira in Bida and Wushish towns hardly speak their original mother tongue though, they still refer to themselves as Ebiras.

The Ebira in the Kogi Central Senatorial District had had to ward off the people such as Bassa, Owe, Ijumu, Ogori Magongo, Maga, Osso and Okpela they met in the area. The peace enjoyed by the Ebira Tao in their abode was cut out by the Jihad wars of 1856, 1876 and 1885 tagged “Ajinomoh”<sup>3</sup> meaning “Child stealer” until the year 1901/02 when peace was restored in the land with the coming of the British. Since 1900, a good number of the Ebira Tao have finally settled and founded farming communities in Edo and Western States of Nigeria. (Ogido, 2004)

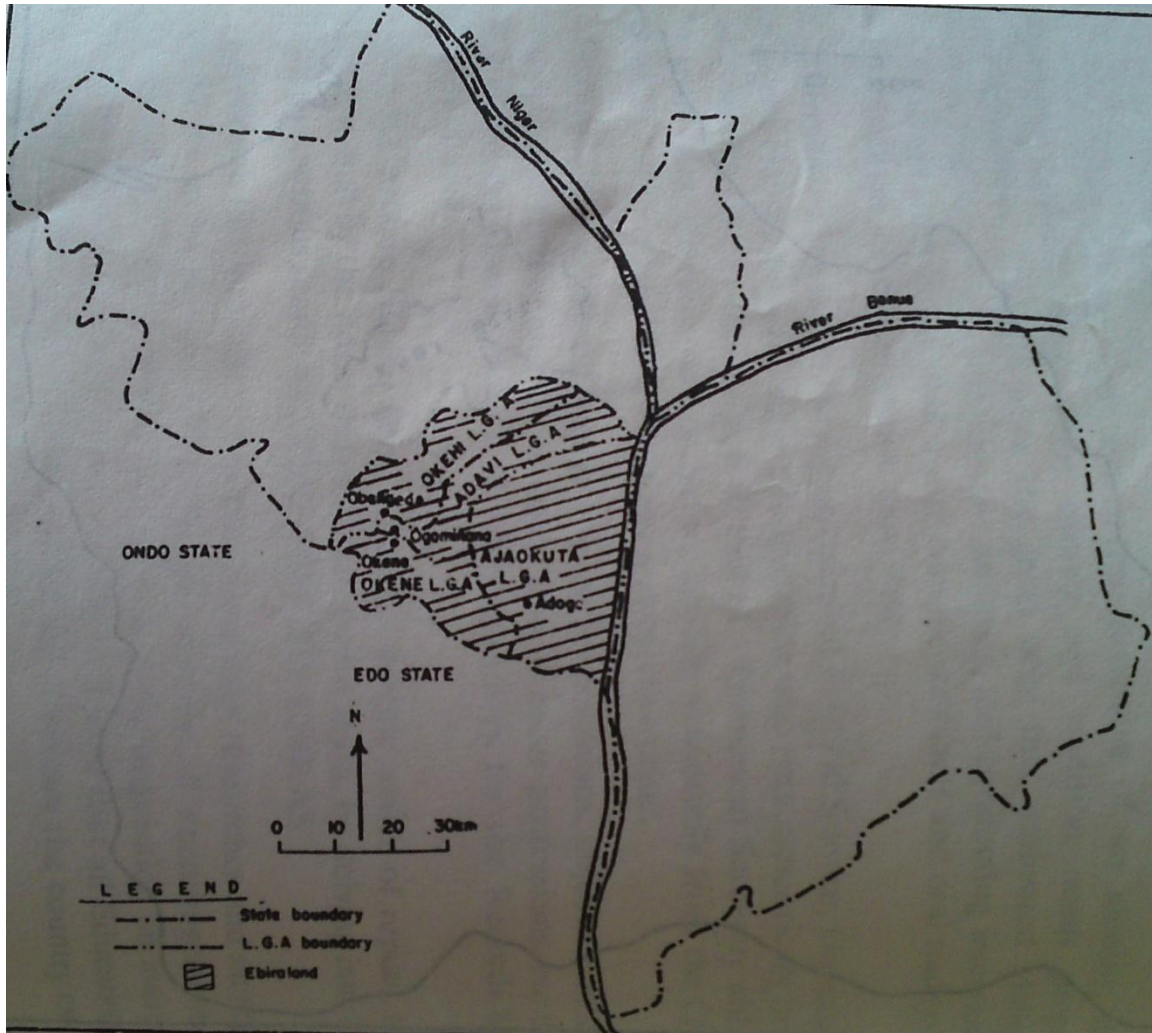
## **2.5 Location and geographic features**

The Ebiras are well known within the socio-political and cultural perimeter of Nigeria. Following the political and social re-organization precipitated by the amalgamation of northern southern Nigeria in 1914 and the eventual independence of Nigeria in 1960, the possibility for wider socio-cultural intercourse became apparent, thereby encouraging cross-cultural movements and exchanges. Ebiraland covers Adavi, Okehi, Okene, Ajaokuta and Ogori/Magongo Local Government Areas of Kogi Central Senatorial District and it is located between latitude 60<sup>0</sup> 08<sup>1</sup> and 60 40<sup>1</sup> East of the Equator. It is relevant to say that the core Ebiras are found in Kogi Central Senatorial District with the exclusion of Ogori/Magongo Local Government Area of the State. The choice of this location is informed by the fact that the Ebiras within this area unlike other Ebira population in other states in Nigeria are the most faithful to Ebira culture and language. Furthermore, the land shares common boundaries to the North with Lokoja, the headquarters of Kogi State, to the East with Rivers Niger and Benue, to the south with Edo and Ondo States and to the West with Kabba Bunu and Ijumu Local Government Areas respectively.

Almost the whole area is hilly, a continuation of Kukuruku highlands. The land consists of uplands that are under-laid by igneous and metamorphic rocks of a basement complex. The general elevation of the land is about 1,200 feet. However, there are numerous peaks rising above 2,000 feet due to the rocky nature of the land. Two major land surfaces exist – stable land surface and erosion land surface. Hence, there is an extensive high level of erosion surface characterized by steep-sided granite hills. The soil is shallow and stony due to the height of the terrain relative to the sea. The area covers some 3,413.25 square kilometers.<sup>4</sup>

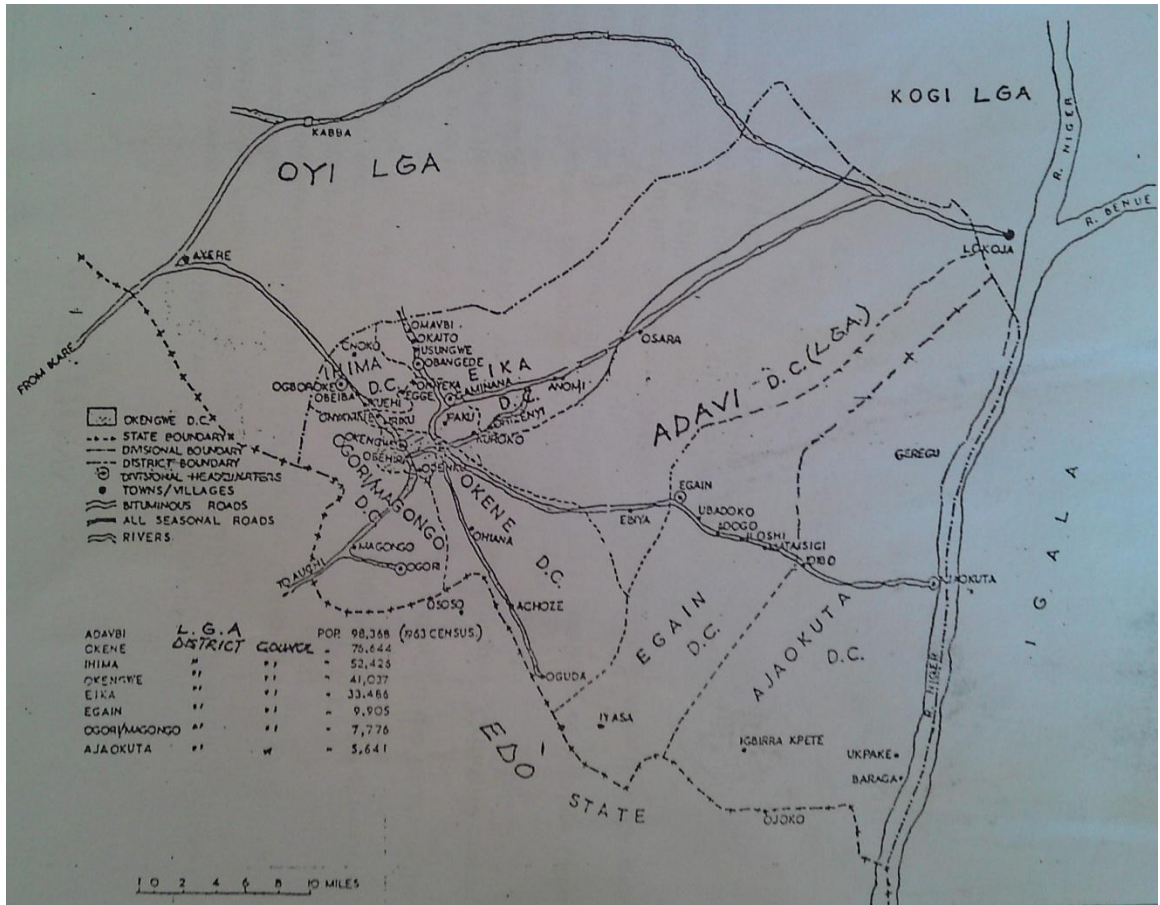
The rocky and stony nature of the land compels the Ebira to farm outside their states in neighboring states like Edo, Ondo, Benue and Ekiti. The vegetation is wooded derived Savannah. In fact, today, in most Nigerian markets, the popular Ebira yams are highly demanded.

UNIVERSITY OF I...



**Map 1:** Location of Ebiraland in Kogi State.

UNI



**Map 2: Political map of Ebiraland.**

**2.5.1 Population**

The Central Senatorial District of Kogi State has relatively high population which works in favour of tax revenue potential of the area. According to the 1991 population census, the Central Senatorial District has 40.1% of the total population of the State (2,147,756). It is relevant to state that the area of study in this District excludes Ogori/Magongo Local Government Area whose inhabitants’ origin could be traced to Ile-Ife. The local government areas in Ebira land contain many towns and villages. In fact, OKene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta have 14, 11 and 14 wards respectively and their census figures in the area based on the 2006 census would be as follows<sup>5</sup>:

<b>NAMES</b>	<b>HEADQUARTERS</b>	<b>COMPONENTS</b>
Okene 320,260	Okene	Okene, Lafia, Obessa, Bariki, Idozumi, Idiche, Ahogede, Iruvcheba, Ahosochi, Idoji, Idogido, Otutu, Idare, Inike, Ageva, Okengwe, Obehira, Odenkw, Ituahi, Idoma, Ubomina, Upayi, Ozuja, Otoi, Ukpogoro, Agassa, Ohiana, Esomi, Ire-apanana, Uhuoze, Osochokodo, Eyinaro, Onyi koko, Ukpogo, Ajoro and Aguda.
Okehi 199,999	Obangede	Kahuni, Uboro, Ohori, Ire-Okovi, Egeze, Okaito, Isungwe, Ohizeyin, Aboze, Oniavi, Ohuepe, Ikuehi, Ohueta, <i>Olaneira</i> , Ebaiko, Ukowa, Oboroke.
Adavi (202,194)	Ogaminana	Iruku, Osoma, Inechi, Onyanuje, Ege, Adaviodu, Iruvuodinomi, Okunchi, Anyioke, Inorere, Iruvcheba, Utovo, Karaworo, Iresuna, Osisi, Ipaku, Idogogo, Anioke, Kuroko, Ibeke, Osara, Atani, Aku, Irepeni, Irapanna, Zango-daji, Sariagi, Itakpe, Abobo, Irewagere and Ganaja.
Ajaokuta 122,321	Adogo	Adogo, Osikoyi, Opopocho, Iruvu sechi, Epaka, Utobobo, Uleyin, Ododo, Geregu, Zachangana, Odonu, Akigi, Okuha-Obavin, Adu, Epin, Iyasa, Inivusechi, Ege, Bedoko, Ogirigiri, Nnosi, Inwojo, Apanko, Ejivata, Ogane and Ubogiri.

### 2.5.2 Climate

Ebiraland has a favourable climate due to its elevation above sea level. The raining season is experienced in the land in late March. And the minimum precipitation occurs towards

the end of the season (September - October) and it is followed immediately by dry season which lasts from November to early March. It is usually a period of high temperature 98<sup>0</sup> in the day and intense heat in the night. Rainfall figures stand at about 47 inches and the annual average temperature is 270<sup>0</sup>C.<sup>6</sup>

### **2.5.3 Economy**

*OhikuAnebiras* (Ebira ancestors) from time immemorial were predominantly farmers, and complemented their farming activities with hunting. They practised subsistence farming at the early part of their existence. This is the reason why they practise polygyny, the practice of having multiple wives at the same time even before the advent of Islam to have enough hands for the farming activities. Their linkages with other communities coupled with the population increase in the 1940s made them to engage in large commercial farming. It is on record that up till early 1970s, over 85% of Anebira were farmers. Their wives, in addition to assisting on the farm and do also engage in collecting firewood for sale and they were known as firewood hawkers (*Omo Onigi*) in Yorubaland. Ohiku Anebira lived on top of hills a characteristic exhibit of a warrior for security reasons against invasions. In most cases, there were caves within their vicinity which usually offered the people refuge in time of war. Realizing the infertility of the hilly area and its relative small in population, large number of them migrated to their neighbouring communities or states in pursuit of their humble occupation, farming. For this purpose, Anebira communities are found in Okpella, Ekpoma, and other western states as farmers. In fact, one can say that agriculture is Ebira's superior culture and some of them are professional blacksmith as well (Bejehson, 2009).

Added to this is that the establishment of Federal College of Education in 1974, the commencement of work at Ajaokuta Steel Complex and Itakpe Iron Ore Mining Project coupled with other government and private establishments ushered in numerous economic activities in Ebiraland. To be precise, trading and commercial activities reached their peak when Ajaokuta Steel Complex was under construction coupled with the establishment of Federal College of Education in the area as there was influx of people from all walks of life into Ebiraland. Due to the incompleteness of the Itakpe and Ajaokuta projects as scheduled and other economic predicaments, most employed Anebira and non-Ebiras were relieved of their jobs or not having

the salary paid as at when due. This has adversely affected the economic activities in the area and investors are no longer attracted due to the area

The Ebira women are hardworking and industrious and this manifest in their achievement in the traditional handcrafts activities. They are known for their traditional cloth-weaving. They are among the best cloth-weaving people in Nigeria up till date. Some used to trek a long distance such as Ankarah (Accra) in Ghana (in the olden days) to sell Ebira cloth (Kitipa) known as Kijipa in Yoruba, Gwado in Hausa language. Mat weaving, bag weaving, bead making and pottery were done by the women to complement farming activities. (See picture below showing Anebira weaver)

UNIVERSITY OF IBR



**Picture 1: *Ebira* Cloth-weaver**

Trading and other commercial activities were at a low level because their economic activities were largely limited to Ebiraland until recent times when a good number of Ebira men and women started doing business within and outside Ebiraland. In summary, Anebirasare uniquely positioned to serve as the “Food Basket” of the Nigerian state and the land is blessed with varieties of mineral resources.



#### 2.5.4 Culture

Culture means the aggregate of what people cherish and adopt as their value system which helps sustain them as a distinct group or sub-group. It is the complex patterns of living that man developed which are passed on from one generation to the next. In fact, every society possesses its culture. It extrapolates a kind of identification aggregate, which is sometimes used to determine people's social behaviour. Le Baron (2006) is of the opinion that culture is the starting point which orients man in particular ways, pointing towards some things and away from others. As observed by Kirby (1997), it embraces all behaviours learned through socialisation rather than that which is governed by instinct. Culture includes norms and values of society, together with behaviour which is governed by series of traditions, shared history and common identity. Obafemi (2011) also has it that culture refers to the pattern of behaviour and thinking shared by people living in a social group learning from one another, under environmental influence and shared across time and space, in distinguishable identifiable way. To the anthropologists, culture is symbolic, shared, learned and adaptive. This implies that man is the product of the culture from which he evolves and the subject of cultural influence cannot be ignored in understanding conflicts in any relationship.

Culture has both material and non-material aspects. The material aspect is expressed in the implements of production, dwelling, household items, clothing, language among others. The non-material aspect of culture embraces the sphere of consciousness and intellectual production such as knowledge, morality, ethics, upbringing and education, religion and the likes. Edofolk.com (2007) argues that in spite of western influence and education, fervent efforts must be put into rediscovery of African traditional cultures because a people's culture is the essence of their existence and identity. The Ebiras, therefore, can best be understood through the study of their cultural heritage, Ebira culture to Ohiare (1999), is the totality of Ebira special ways of responding to various challenges they face as a people and it is a product of history which started building up since about 5,000 years ago when the Ebira began to emerge as a distinct language group.

Ebira culture and tradition are governed by Igbirra Native law and Custom as well as the necessary amendments that were promulgated by the appropriate authorities. Some of them are codified while some are left in convention and oral tradition. In the early days of the native administration, the enabling law on this matter was the Igbirra Native Authority Law, Custom

and Tradition which covers marriage rites, burial ceremonies, religious activities, traditional festivals, the language and a host of others as listed in the schedule to the Igbirra Native Law and Custom (Sanni, 1993). The Ebira non-material culture includes Ebira belief system and value hard-work, honesty, forthrightness, courage and the zeal to serve and answer to the needs of the deprived. These ideas make an average Ebira man detest laziness (Uworo), stealing (Oyi), cheating (Ameri) and other negative traits that tend to devalue the essence of man. Conversely, a hardworking honest and straight-forward person is praised, extolled and held in high esteem because these are the ideals that qualify an Ebira man as a proper Ebira. He who approximates these ideals is called Oonyi Ebira – well behaved or well mannered.

These virtues are inculcated in the younger ones right from the naming ceremony and continues through teaching by example, folklore songs, proverbs, stories by moonlight (Uhwe oiche) and training a child in the occupation pursuit of the parents or apprenticeship in a chosen career, music and songs, communal education and socialization through festivals and social farming (aare onwu). Of relevance is to say that Ebira songs and music are made to extol and cajole, ridicule and condemn, all in an attempt to make individuals live by the tenets and standard of Ebira culture. This aspect seems to be the reason why songs and music are considered as one of the causes of crisis in Ebiraland with reference to the recent intra-community violent crisis in Obehira. Indeed, Ebira culture emphasizes community spirit and this is the reason for having social responsibilities being highly emphasized in marriage, in death and in religious belief system.

It is observed that owing to various contact, interaction and experiences with various cultural groups in the cause of migration, trading and other pursuits, the Ebiras have been exposed to new ideas which have resulted into shedding out the out-modelled aspects of the culture and getting new elements incorporated.

### **2.5.5 Religion**

Similar to African culture, Ebira religious experience in their surroundings leads to their religious reflection (worship). Ebira as one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria believes in the Supreme Being known as Ohomo Irihi. Anebira believes that the Supreme Being is the Creator of the universe and interacts with lower deities being His agents used in the theocratic governance of the universe. Ohomo Irihi, to Anebira, is Omnipresent, Omniscient and

Omnipotent. He is the giver of force, which is the essence of man's activities. To Anebira, there is no place of worship for the Supreme Being as He is Omnipresent. He is approached through the intermediaries- divinities and ancestors (which masquerades represent). Ohida (2008) is of the opinion that Ebira's way of life is rooted in their religion and from time immemorial; Ebira has the trace of godliness, righteousness and the belief in the Supreme Being. This is manifested in analysing the names of the communities or individuals in Ebiraland. For example, Okehi<sup>7</sup> means "God looks from above". Onootu (a name of a man) means "God is always available". It is observed that an average Anebira would never slavishly be submissive to any authority save that of the Supreme Being as enjoined by Holy Scriptures or the divine oracles depending on the belief and faith of individuals.

The concept of God among the Ebiras could be seen in the attributes given to Supreme Being which go as follows:

<i>Ohomorih</i>	The God Almighty.
<i>Okoko Kowukowu</i>	All silent, All seeing.
<i>Ogene mezina</i>	He lies (in space) without any support.
<i>Ogodo godo onu voza ometa</i>	He is so high that nobody's hand can reach Him
<i>Ochici mokareyi</i>	He is silent but judging.
<i>Odu ajini suhuo tenyi</i>	He allows misfortune to occur today, and tomorrow allows the reverse.

The above line describe every the Ebira concept of God. It is therefore established that religion, especially the African Traditional Religion, plays several roles as a means of maintaining peaceful co-existence in Ebiraland until, in the early 1950s when religion, through masquerade, was politicised and the moral teachings of African Traditional Religion were bastardized in the land<sup>8</sup>.

Ohida (2008) stressed further that there is a great belief in re-incarnation and life after death among Anebiras. They worship divinities to serve as intermediaries between man and the Supreme Being (*Ohomorih*) though these gods only serve as agents of the God in the theocratic governance of the universe and they could not be likened with God in any way or form. The various gods they worship include *Ori* (spirit and it is traceable to *Oricha* phenomenon) the god of the dead, *Oluku* (ancestors), Ireba worship, Oracle (*Eva*), the god of Iron (*Ogun*) among others. A study of these gods will show they are imported from other ethnic groups most

especially the Yoruba when the names of these gods (such as *Eva (Ifa)*, *Ogun* etc.) are critically examined. These divinities or deities might have been brought in for the purpose of protection against aggressors and invaders. To Anebira, God is very close to man and He is a great Provider who provides everything including life. Hence, God is called *Ohi*, meaning the King.

The introduction of Islam and Christianity in Ebiraland in the 1903 and 1918 respectively made many Ebiras to get converted to the new faiths most especially Islam (Shuaib, 2003). Having a greater percentage of the Anebira subscribed to Islam may be based on the fact that Islam supports the practice of polygyny which was, by then, highly cherished by the Anebira for the purpose of farming activities and for social recognition. In addition to this, the acceptance of Islam by the first Paramount Chief in the land, late Ibrahim Chogudo Atta (1917 - 1954), was also responsible for high influx of people to the fold of Islam. Christianity was introduced in the land thereafter. However, it is observed that many of the adherents of the new faiths seem to be the pretenders of spiritual excellence up till date, as it is very difficult to ascertain an average Anebira to separate his culture, most especially the Ekuechifestival<sup>9</sup>, from his religion (Islam or Christianity).

The custodians, the committed supporters and the financiers of the traditional festivals have Muslims in majority in the land. Some of the committed supporters of prominent masquerades have personal mosques in their houses/compounds where they observe prayers and, sometimes, even lead people in prayers. A very unique aspect of masquerade festival in the land is that some custodians of masquerades observe prayer (*salat*) before getting themselves masked. Added to this, some masquerades getting themselves unmasked for the observation of prayers (*salat*) and continue the masquerade after the *salat*. It is also noted that some of the supporters of the masquerades, apart from bearing Muslim names, sometimes put on Islamic identities such as turban. Masquerade (*Ekuechi*) itself could, sometimes, wear Quranic headpiece or any other feature of Islamic identities. It was observed that a man showed his level of commitment to the culture of the land by presenting the beautiful cloths he brought from Makkah, during *Hajj*, as a gift to a masquerade, at Kuroko<sup>10</sup>. Further to these, the recitation of a chapter of Glorious Qur'an (*Suratul-Kaf*), in the cassette, by a masquerade at Ebogogo is a good testimony to the fact that the active supporters, participants and sponsors of the cultural festivals, mostly masquerade festivals, in the land are Muslims<sup>11</sup>.

For the purpose of pretence and deceit, some of the so-called *Anebira* Muslims do vacate their communities as to participate actively in the masquerade activities of other communities in the land. Sometimes, some masquerades (*Ekú*) even get themselves turbaned probably just to create an avenue for irrational inter- religious unrest between Muslims and the masqueraders. Other opinions cited have it that having some masquerades turbaned is just to communicate to the people that such masquerades are to be considered as the chiefs of masquerades as the *Ohinoyi* (Paramount Chief) of Ebiraland uses turban. It is also observed that some of the followers of the masquerades say *salamu alaykun* (Islamic greetings) to their friends or any Muslim sighted while following *Ekú* (masquerade). This stand is as well practically shown in picture below:

UNIVERSITY C



**Picture 2:** *Ebirima Masquerade and some of its supporters.*

### **2.5.6 Dynamism of social harmony**

Anebiras are naturally very inquisitive, of questioning mind and having a critical outlook. They have democratic approach to all issues with deep sense of fair-play, justice and rule of law. They are not slavishly submissive to any authority except that of God as enjoined by the Holy Scriptures.

Anebiras are very individualistic and republican in nature as well as being resentful of authoritarianism. On this premise, each clan among Ebira Tao owes no form of central allegiance to another clan. Merietu (2003) put it that the native law governing each clan are of a conventional nature and are not written but very effective in their collective derivation and observance. Temple is considered as the place of taking important decisions because they all share common strong belief in the Supreme Being of the ancestor of the Ebira people whose spirit is represented on earth by the *Ekú* (masquerade). It is reported in the work of Jibril (2010) that the oldest man in the clan is the head of the clan and presides over the affairs of his clan in the traditional setting. In a serious matter cutting across clans, the clan heads constituted the Council of Elders along with powerful individuals with roles to play therein. Should the matter be so serious to defy immediate solution, reference could go to the ancestral temple covering the group through divination and experience of the elders as official priest. If it still defies the solution, reference could be made to Ododo-Obaji temple.

The significance of temple cannot be over emphasised in the land as it is the highest place of authority where laws and vital decisions concerning the entire land are taken as well as being the medium for the masquerade to come out. Lineage temples cover the affairs of a group of clans with one's immediate ancestors to disseminate laws emanating from the ancestral temple and settle matters that may arise within such groups. Masquerades are therefore a major instrument of social control in Ebiraland as they mete out punishments to offenders (Marietu, 2003). Jibril (2010) reports that, they upheld the spirit of togetherness and defended the land against the invaders such as Fulanis and their allies, Etsu Masaba's attack in 1857 and that of Etsu of Bida, Umaru Majigi's attempt in 1875/76. The British entered the land in 1902/03 and considered the administration they met as a loose type which would not be of benefit for their administrative purpose (indirect rule). Thus, Uwudah Adidi was appointed as the first white man's chief for Ebiraland. In 1917, Ibrahim Atta was appointed as the first Paramount Chief in Ebiraland and this imposition of centralised system of governance concentrated power and authority in the hand of a single central authority on an erstwhile republican community (Sanni, 2003).

Intermarriage was encouraged among clans and sometimes the first son of the daughter is retained by the grandfather to live with him and maintain peaceful co-existence between inlaws. Anebiras practise polygyny for they are aggararians with enough provisions for their families.

However, in recent times with modernity, many Anebiras practise polygyny without making adequate provisions for the maintenance of family as Ebira custom demands. The existence of poor parental care in the land has had negative implications on the child upbringing which is manifested in the availability of youths easily used by political elites to fuel crises in the land. In fact, clannish consideration is now given to marriage with its ugly effect on intermarriage between the members of some clans is now common. This is doubtless a manifest of the fact that the new system of administration is not fitting into their established and known way of life. As a matter of fact, the clannish rivalry has gone to the extent that Anebira prefers being reckoned with on clannish basis instead of trying to forge a common force, as the new system suggests.

Seeing the loophole in the land, it is alleged that the politicians with selfish desires have maximally used the opportunity of clannish identity to cause incessant crisis in the land for their political achievements. This development has provoked many to start writing on the crisis. Prayers, seminars, conferences, meetings are being organised at different times. In fact, the government at all levels, individuals, communities, religious organisations, governmental organisations, among others, are not resting on their oars in finding lasting peace in Ebiraland<sup>13</sup>.

### **2.5.7 Festivals in Ebiraland**

Nigeria comprises of over 250 ethnic groups with diverse cultures. She remains one of the most interesting countries of the world due to different ethnic groups it possesses. This is the reason why the tourist sector of the economy is seen to be growing day by day. Examples of traditional festivals that attract the tourists include: - The boat regatta, Egungun festival, the Durba, yam festival etc. In Ebiraland, there are traditional festivals of Ekwechi, Eche-ane, Ebe, Echahana, Iyahana, and Echori which form the bedrock of the culture. They are arranged and spread out throughout the year. This marks the basis of people's annual calendar of cultural activities in the land. Generally, all the festivals in Ebiraland have objectives as well as rules and regulations which form the unwritten laws of the people. These festivals are under the control of traditional leadership hierarchy in each of the administrative areas or units. It is in these traditional leaders that the unwritten traditional rules of arbitration in case of any breach and conflict are vested (Jibril, 2010).

The objectives of the festivals in Ebiraland centre on the need to provide entertainment and relaxation for farmers and others engaged in various occupations at a given period in a year.



They are to promote unity among individuals and communities and offer forum for re-union, intermarriage and exchange of visits to people in different locations. They are avenues for the display of mutual respect and a sense of oneness among Anebiras. Abdullahi (2008) put it that the people who constituted top leadership of the festivals and the Eku priest (the *Ohireba*) were, in the olden days, people of high integrity whose dedication to their chosen field was not compromised in any way. They strictly adhered to the rules and regulations guiding the festivals as handed over to them by the ancestors to maintain the rich flavour and originality of the culture. Sanctions and punishments would be given to the non-conformists in the olden days. The leadership cadre of the *Ohireba* held social and cultural position because they constituted some form of courts to maintain order and arbitration. Their district supervision and adherence to the rules and regulation of the festivals ensured justice and fair play. Thus, chaos was reduced during the festival period.

However, the advent of western influence has turned the festival to be a curse in the land. The rules, rituals and necessary ceremonies to be performed before the outing of new masquerade are being jettisoned. In the olden days, old people, little children. Males and females were honourably treated, and the strangers were accorded their social status as guests. It is observed that *Eche-ane*, one of the festivals lost its flavour some decades ago when youths became the dominant group in masquerade festival and the importance attached to guarantors, compound, clan and purpose before it could come out is almost now in extinction. This has made the value system to be shifted from honour to a thing to shy over.

The significance of *Ekuechi* festival to *Anebira* cannot be overemphasized. It is known to be an annual commemorative anniversary of the great work of *Ododo* and *Obaji* which brings the *Anebira* within and outside the country together, at least, once annually. It is staged to escort the ancestral spirits back to their abode. It is done with the display of *Ikede* singer and dancers who mount the rostrums at different locations to sing proverbial and melodious songs. It also involves night masquerade (such as *Ekuechi*) which is solely viewed by males while females are completely exempted. The culture and tradition of *Anebira* is complete without *Ododo* and *Obaji*, the two brothers who introduced the worshiping of the dead and the return of the dead through masquerade. It was reported that the brothers conceived through sheer deceit the idea of forming a masquerade essentially for night outing during which women were locked up inside their rooms while the men-folk had a field day enjoying the festival dishes and delicacies

prepared by women for the masquerades whom they believed to be the dead re-incarnated (Ohida, 2008).

Another important festival which is paramount to Anebira is the Eche-ane meaning “Festival for women”. This festival involves the usual singing and dancing and also the presence of masquerades in the day times unlike the Ekuechi which is night masquerade and could not be seen by women. In fact, Eche-ane is open to both males and females. It is of great relevance to point out here that there is special women society called Onoku in Ebiraland. Members of this society are traditionally allowed to participate in all cultural festivals, even Ekuechi (night masquerade) which should not be seen by women. They keep the secrets of the masquerades only to be discussed with the high-ranking traditional chiefs should the situation demand. Membership of this group is by birth (which must be from any of the families handling masquerade festivals) or by ones personal desires having satisfied the requirements of the society such as women society. Owing to the great spiritual importance attached to this special traditional women society, Ekuechi masquerades in general have their Onokus. In the present times, this society is so traditionally powerful and recognised to the extent of, having masquerades of theirs in the land<sup>14</sup>. See picture below:

UNIVERSITY



**Picture 3:** *The Onuku (woman) attached to a masquerade in Epiraland (Okene)*

Ohida (2008) notes it that, in time past, before any masquerade's outing, guarantor(s) of known identity was required so as to guarantee violence-free festival of a particular masquerade. This, by implication is a pointer to the fact that masquerade festival in the area has some elements of unrest attached to it from the time immemorial. In spite of this, some of these masquerades such as Achewure sing philosophical songs and dance for fancy, some move about to forecast future, offer prayers and solutions to various problems plaguing individual's mind on consultation, while majority hold sizeable canes and move about the streets begging for money. They flog those who mock them and sometimes cane themselves just to test their prowess and superiority. This festival was originally handled by the farmers (elders) who would come home for relaxation and merry when they have no much work to do on the farm. It is also observed that this festival has spiritual, social, economic and cultural relevance in Epiraland.

The hijack of the custodianship of masquerades by hooligans, drivers and students from farmers resulted to non-adherence to the rules and regulations guiding the outing of masquerades. The use of whips, big sticks, cutlasses, charms and guns was introduced to replace small canes used by the masquerades under the custodianship of the farmers. This has turned these festivals to be a curse in the land as the period of festival is now used to revenge or avenge the wrongs done in the past. Thus, the uncurbed activities of masquerades are today being used for the expression of politically-motivated crises in the land. The period of Eche-ane is more or less the period of violence in the land in which loss of lives and properties would be recorded. It is established that Ebira culture discourages violence as the adage says “Ochi ana si si ukonkono, oniri ukonkono oo zi” (The stick used to pick the millipede goes with the millipede) <sup>15</sup>. This implies that the person championing evil against another may also be consumed by the evil. To be precise, the festival is no longer a joyous moment owing to the bastardization of the whole system. <sup>16</sup>

Other festivals in Ebiraland include Eche-ebe, another night masquerade festival peculiar to Okengwe and Okene which is better described as a minor Ekuechi. Echori festival (yam festival) is peculiar to only Ihima and Eganyi communities in the land. Also, Echehana is the festival that marks the harvest of yams from farms and it is known as the pounded yam eating festival among Anebiras. These festivals would not be done at the same time in all the communities in Ebiraland in order to create room for exchange of visits between or among friends from various communities in the land.

UNIVET

## Notes on Chapter Two

1. This is located in the present Taraba, Adamawa and part of Bauchi State.
2. This is one of personal observations of the researcher as regards the degree of respect an average cultured Anebira woman has for her husband as well as any elderly man. This practice is, till today, common most especially in the remote villages and only among the cultured Anebira women living in towns in Ebiraland.
3. This is a borrowed Yoruba word which its correct pronunciation is “Ajnilomo” meaning “Child stealer” which is corruptly pronounced as “Ajionomoh”. It shows the influence of Yoruba Language on Ebira owing to the age-long contact between the Yorubas and Ebira people.
4. The fact is sourced from the work of Isah H. (2005) titled “The historical events of Ebira people
5. This is found on [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) it was retrieved on 13/7/2010.
6. The fact is also sourced from the work of Isah H. (2005) titled “The Historical Events of Ebira People”
7. This is the name of one of the Local Government Areas in Kogi Central Senatorial District having its headquarters at Obangede. It also means “God looks from above”
8. This is the submission of Pa Salihu Epo Yusuf (67) in an interview conducted on October 26, 2010 in his residence, No 8, Orietesu street, Okene.
9. This is the most cherished culture of Ebira Tao people. The fact is conceived out of personal interaction of the researcher with Anebiras in a focus-group-discussion held at Otite. Those present were: Uncle Dele Photo (54), Pa Lawal Ada (67), Abdulazeez Khadijat (24), Ayodele Funmike, a Yoruba (22) and Omeiza Tijani (35).
- 10 This is gotten from interviews granted by Abdus-Salam O. Safiyyah (25) on 03/07/2013 at F.C.E, Okene
- 11 This fact is sourced from an interview granted by both Ahmad Itopa Daud (28) and Ibrahim Kamaldeen (33) on 12/07/2011 in their residences, W2/161, Agassa
- 12 The fact is also sourced from an interview with Dr. Ijanaku (60) in his office on 2/12/2010. Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State.

- 13 This is part of personal observations of the researcher being one of the inhabitants of the land for decades as a student and latter a lecturer in Federal College of Education, Okene.
- 14 This is the fact gotten from Mallam Idris A. Musa (36) in an interview granted the researcher on 18<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011, in his residence at PDR/OGES/Oganinana, Kogi state. He lives in the midst of the custodians of masquerades in the area.
- 15 This is sourced from “100 Ebara Proverbs” vol.1, authored by S.S Sanusi in the year 2009.
- 16 This is gotten from an interview conducted with Dr Ijanaku (60) in his office on 10/ 10/2011 at Federal College of Education, Okene.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## CHAPTER THREE

### ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONFLICT IN EBIRALAND

#### 3.1 Introduction

Observations have shown that intra-ethnic differences and sub-ethnic identities are mobilized as ethnic and inter-ethnic differences with implications of violent outcomes in Nigeria. The factors militating against peaceful co-existence characterizing the contemporary Nigeria as a country, Ebiraland inclusive, are summed up in the opinion of Bassey (2007:1) as follows:

Conflict is very often the result of interaction of political, economic and social instability, frequently stemming from bad governance, failed economic policies and inappropriate development programmes which have exacerbated ethnic and religious difference...

The achievement of desired level of internal security in the country is elusive as it is being observed by Ogunlesi (2011) when he put it as follows:

Nigeria is a country under siege. During the military era, the blockaders operated in uniform, from the corridors of power. Democracy only succeeded in accomplishing a reshuffling of the prime characters in that siege scenario, replacing the military with militant groups. The Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Arewa People's Congress (APC), and a flurry of shadowy groups in the NigerDelta such as NDPVF, MEND etc.

Abubakar (2005) argues that:

.....some of the major problems confronting the nation have been identified to include political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitation, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crime. These problems individually and collectively constitute threats to the peace, security and development of the country .....

There is increasing rate of poverty in Ebiraland. Thus, like elsewhere disturbed by socio-political convulsion in the country, Ebiraland as well has been engulfed in series of aggressive outburst borne out of idleness and frustration. However, conflicts in Ebiraland also clannish in their character. In the words of Japa (2010), he observed as follows:

Kogi Central Senatorial District, otherwise known as Ebiraland is currently beset with the ugly incidence of violence of varying degrees and that an average Anebira is despised, looked at as a potential vandal or violent. It is seen that Ebira is fractured into so many divides. If not clan versus clan, it is political party versus political party or factions in the same political party, one gang versus another gang, and village versus village or masquerade group versus another masquerade group.



As “*ebira*” simply means “character”, does it mean that whatever character (good or bad) Anebira exhibits signifies the name “Ebira”?

It is obvious that beyond this theatre of misunderstanding is the unleashing of violence on account of trivial issues such as touch light flashed on somebody, football match, boy friend/girl friend among others. Suleiman (2006) captures the scenario of the crisis-ridden area thus:

In all these, it was a full-scale war with its horrendous features, its frightening effects which enveloped the concerned groups. The rattle guns, the blitz on hard-earned magnificent buildings of the opponents: the palls of smoke in staccato spots, in designated area, the cremation of precious lives who were shot dead, the ricocheting bullets that slew the innocent, the weeping, the gnashing of teeth and fleeing of people from their homes have contributed to be the sights in each of these wars. Others who had nowhere to flee to make mountains and hills top their abodes. Those who had guts to remain indoors did so under fear. *Ebiras* became refugees and hostages in their own homes.

Some view the upheavals in Ebiraland as the occurrences which have began for long because Ebira antecedents were known, in history, as the foot-line soldiers of the ancient kwarafara kingdom and the departure of *Ebira* warriors from their Main Stream Army led to the collapse of that kingdom. Further to this, it is on record that *Ebira* people (in their present abode) rebuffed the Jihadists invasion, and in unmistakable terms asserted their political independence and cultural integrity. Though, all these wars were only the attempts made to defend the land against external threat (Japa, 2007).

It is established that an average *Anebira* is naturally individualistic, aggressive, radical, proud, warlike and considers formal apology for any wrong done as a means of rendering himself or herself inferior before anybody. The strong feeling of superiority coupled with other like traits in *Anebira* is seen as the foundation of the incessant uprisings in *Ebiraland* upon which other factors causing the crisis are laid. Thus, the spirit of forgiveness (which is one of the means



of reconciliation in African setting), not even for the sake of common interest, is lacked among *Anebiras* dwelling in *Ebiraland* of Kogi Central Senatorial.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, every individual gets angry once in a while with variation in individual manifestation. Despite the fact that every individual's anger differs, the work of the adrenalin remains the same in every human being only that all human beings are controlled by mental picture that they develop of themselves. To feel angry is one thing and it is yet another thing to be constructive and rather not be destructive. The work of Jubril (2009) indicated that *Ebira* people claim to have a stubborn streak in them in wherever place they find themselves and in essence, the outrage that *Anebira* tends to proudly portray to people is uncalled for. Humans have the ability to be aggressive, this capability remains idle until stimulated by necessity or encouraged by success, and several human and environmental factors combine to bring about aggressive behaviour among people. It is noted that the *Ebiras* have an abrasive temperament which gives them spur of the moment urge to "fight it out" on every conceivable issue where there is a disagreement of views. In buttressing this, it is indicated in the submission of Ahmadu (2004) that despite *Ebira's* due respect for elders, *Anebiras* are not easily submissive to any authority, they pay more attention to their clans and they are fearsome, warlike, arrogant, hard-going, determined, somewhat suspicious and proud to the extent of looking upon some fellow *Ebiras* as of "low castes". All these create the basis for other factors- political, leadership, economic, clannish and social among others leading to constant unrest in *Ebiraland*. In fact, typical *Anebira* has republican life-style and violent conflicts in the land lack constructiveness.

### **3.2 Development of Clans**

Generally, clan denotes group of families that often share the same name, and as such ensure the uplift of its status. It is a group of families related through a common ancestor or marriage. *Encyclopaedia Americana* (2000) defines clan as several types of groups that claim descent from a common ancestor. Clan is kingship group of fundamental importance in the structure of many societies. Membership of a clan is socially defined in terms of actual or purported descent from a common ancestor. Clan membership may be useful in ensuring mutual support and defence over the transmission of property rights and the mode of residence after marriage. Through exogamy, a clan may increase its number and consolidate alliances through bounds. Some clans express their unity in terms of possession of value system which may

represent their ancestral being or common origin of members and, as such, is often an object of reverence. Jibril (2009) is of the view that clan is a group of people who act together because they have the same interests or aims. *New Age Encyclopaedia* (1980) provides more insight on the concept of clan by looking at it as a group whose main characteristic is descent from a common ancestor. Members may or may not be closely related biologically, but each member considers all other members his relatives. Descent is either patrilineal or matrilineal and most clans are exogamous, that is marriage within the group is forbidden.

Tenuhe (2005) submitted that the leader of Ebira group was believed to have settled at Opete while his five sons settled in groups around Opete. These areas of settlement include Eika, Okehi, Adavi, Okengwe and Ihima. The grand children of Ataji Ebira define the clan in Ebiraland while his great-grand children constitute the sub-clans. According to Japa (2007), in Ebiraland, the main clans are themselves made up of a group of sub-clans and they are as follows:

Okene/Okengwe: Okovi-Asuwe, Adobe, Ogu, Ehebe, Omavi, Ure, Omoye, Ozuka.

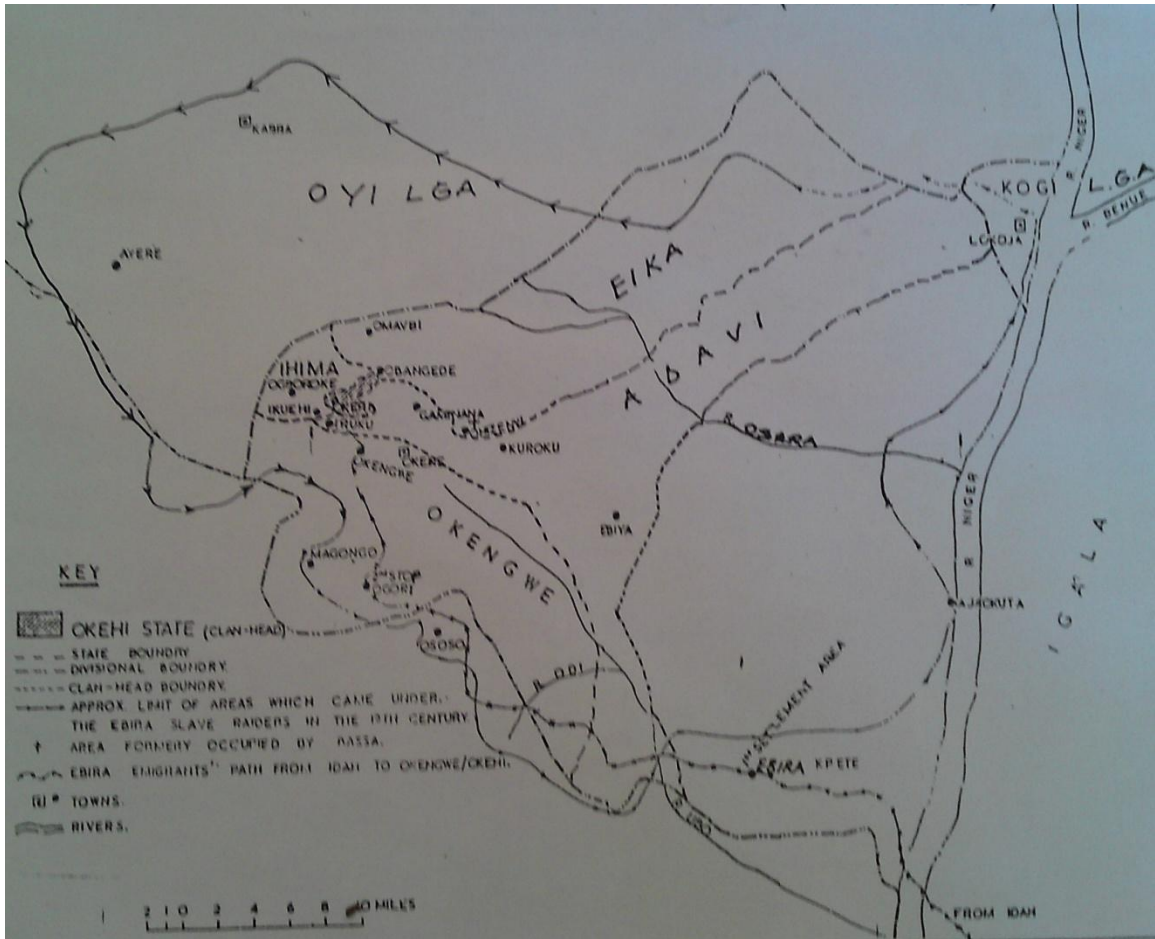
Adavi: Upopuvete, Uka, Adeika, Aniku, Uhami.

Eika: Image, Iyewe, Avasa, Eyire, Epoto, Auchi, Iheme, Agin, Ubobo, Uhuodo,

Eganyi: Eheda, Omoko, Esagu, Ede, Ogu.

Ihima: Emani, Ure, Ohueta, Odumi, Ohonwa, Oha<sup>4</sup>.

UNIVERSITY



Map 3: Five independent Ebira Clan-head.

Clans play significant roles in the socio-political life of Ebira people for it was the basis of authority and social relationship in Ebira traditional community before and during the colonial period. As an individual in a community of people, Ebira Opetes live in various compounds of extended families. The father of a compound, a patriarch is by practice the head and spiritual leader of the compound. A compound forms the most important administrative unit in the land as the living room of Adaba serves as the nerve centre, the meeting point, for important activities among the dwellers of the compound. The eldest person in a clan holds the land of the clan in trust for the members and as well, being the spiritual leader, he is the custodian of any heirloom of the clan. The clan head lives among his people and he is venerated by the members of the clan to such an extent that his word is the final. Indeed, whoever defers his instructions is feared to incur the wrath of the ancestors. (Ogido, 2004)

It is hereby noted that the political system of Ebiras (republican) revolved around the clan as the symbol of authority and instrument of social control before the colonial era. This was on the basis that the clan was relevant in the choice of leadership, appointment into certain positions, contracting marriage and, most importantly, in land acquisition. To Ahmadu (2004), land can only be owned by a clan or abara and controlled by the elder because in the past, lands were acquired through bitter wars and the customary gifts for occupying any piece of land by a non-member of the clan are kola-nuts and a hoe. Many clans with no able-bodied ones to fight for land had no land and they became frustrated with time and in most cases, were looked upon as “inferior”, hence another kindling factor of conflict in the land.

Despite the fact that before the advent of British, Ebiras ruled themselves independently in clans and clans paid allegiance to only their traditional chiefs. They upheld the spirit of cooperation and togetherness and also defended Ebiraland. According to Micheal Meason’s foundation of Bida kingdom in Ohida (2008):

A notable exception of the list of the Bida conquests was the Igbiras of Okene. While the trading towns of their fellow Igbiras to the north had fallen to Bida and Nassarawa and their inhabitants taken as slaves, the Ebiras of Okene area largely resisted conquest. Their salvation was in part due to the range of small steep-sided and stony hills in which they had made their homes. Here they conducted a defence so successful that they became virtually immovable by the otherwise irresistible forces of Bida. Although a number of attempts were made to penetrate their defences and capture their defences, these people on the whole managed to maintain their independence to a remarkable degree throughout the whole country.

However, clan consciousness in Ebiraland has been doing more harm than good as an average Anebira is proud and he would not like to be bossed by anybody for any reason. In other words, the clannish system has entrenched individualism. An average Anebiras is a prince on his own. The imposition of Ibrahim Chogudo, as the Paramount Chief, by the colonial government on the people in 1917 accounts for the reoccurring leadership wrangling in the land till date. In fact, over decades, clan-based differences have provided the basis for incessant conflict violence in all areas of life of the people be it economic, social, political, religion among others.

### 3.3 Cultural festival

Culture, in general terms, is the aggregate of what people cherish and adopt as their value-system which helps sustain them as a distinct group. It has to do with customs and beliefs, arts, dressing and social organization of a particular group. Nigeria comprises over 250 ethnic groups with diverse cultures and festivals. Examples include: The Arugungu festival, Egungun festival, Eyo festival, Olojo festival, the Durba festival, Yam festival, the boat regatta among others.

In Ebiraland, a hardworking, honest and straight-forward person is praised, extolled and held in high esteem. These values are inculcated in the younger ones from infancy in such functions as naming ceremonies, folklore songs, proverbs and stories by moonlight. It also includes training a child in occupational pursuit of the parents or apprenticeship in a chosen carer and through festivals. Ebira culture is a product of history which started building up from the very earlier times when the Ebira began to emerge as a distinct language group. The main culture of Ebiras is good conduct. Anebira believes in the principles of equity, fair-play and justice. They are people identified with democratic principles, hospitality and cooperation.

A notable feature of the social life of Ebira people is the celebration of cultural festivals characterized by displays of masquerades. Ebira cultural festivals were initiated by their forefathers to promote unity, wisdom, guidance and entertainment. Ohiare (1999) is of the view that, the festival originated after the establishment of Ekuoba by Ododo. Before then, they had no outstanding festival as such owing, perhaps, to the fact that Ebiras were wandering about in search of permanent settlements. It is at the festivals that masquerades and the Ikede play their roles as agents of social change and control in the land. They sing in praise of achievers and condemn those whose activities are considered inimical to the peace, progress and development of the land. The festivals continued playing the same traditional social functions that were ingrained by Ebira culture and tradition, even during the colonial era, until politicization of clan identities was introduced. Due to the fact that the cultural institution was controlled largely by farmers, rural folks and spiritually and economically powerful women, the festivals were arranged, in the past, to coincide with the period when farming activities were at low ebb (Ahmad, 2004). Masquerade institution was clearly identified with specific households or individuals who were to be held responsible for any violence during the festival.

The most remarkable and prominent Ebira festivals are Ekuechi, Eche-ane, Echahana and Iyahana (in order of importance). Ekuechi is a night masquerade which could only be seen by men. It is for the remembrance of the death of Ebiragreat ancestor and it is generally celebrated between November and December every year. Echene is the woman masquerade while Echahana festival is the pounded yam eating festival. Some festivals in Ebiraland are the handiworks of some important personalities. For instance, Ahmadu (2004) submitted that Ebe festival was instituted around 1890 by Atta Omadivi to mark his coronation while Ekuotu festival was instituted in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by one un-named Otu to mark his coronation. Apart from normal outing of masquerades during cultural festivals, because masquerades are considered as the representatives of the ancestors' spirits on earth, a masquerade could also evolve following the death of powerful clan elders or clan chiefs. Indeed, an average Anebira values his culture (masquerade festivals inclusive) more than his new faith- Islam or Christianity. However, the highly-prized Ebira cultural festivals hitherto which used to be peaceful and entertaining are now debased owing to the introduction of clannish factor into the cultural institutions (festivals). Thus, Ebira cultural festivals especially the masquerade is, today, an important instrument commonly used to ignite crises in the land. Masquerade festivals constitute another source of conflict, though of manageable dimension. In essence, masquerades are identified with specific household or individuals who were to be held responsible for any violence during the festival. By extension, masquerades and traditional singers also became divided along party lines behind the same or different masquerades between Igbirra Tribal Union and Igbirra Progressive Union in the 1950s.

For instance, in the second half of 1976, the cordial relationship between Achewuru and Arijenu (a supporting masquerade) of Omoye and Oguclans respectively residing at Idoji and Okevere and Avokuta of Oguand Omoye clans respectively residing at Okeneba became ent sour. This was made possible as masquerades introduced abusive songs at both individual and clannish levels during the festival. Since then, in order to protect these masquerades' interests, their supporters and fans formed clubs to register their interests. To ensure the protection of the leading masquerades against arrests for violent crimes, the followers created supporting masquerades that were not backed by guarantors who could be liable for offences of masquerades. For example, the Avokuta members founded Idu masquerade while the Arijenu group founded Agugu a masquerade. It is right to say that the increasing trend of the masquerade

violence is due to the institution of masquerade being controlled by young gangs who unleash terror and foment troubles in Ebiraland<sup>2</sup>.

Another factor responsible for using festivals to cause violence is the hijack of custodianship of the masquerades by the youths from the elders as against the existing rules of the game in the times past. Thus, the uncurbed masquerades' activities are, today, being used for the expression of politically motivated crises in the land. All these ugly happenings in cultural festivals are what Suleiman (2007) refers to as cultural nuisance. Indeed, Ebira cultural festivals, these days, cannot be celebrated without social upheavals stirred up by various groups in possession of arms.

All of that are not new to the people in the area however. For instance, the impression of Okene Local Government Area Youth Council on some specific masquerade institution is aptly painted as follows:

- i. That Eche-ane has always been characterised by violence which becomes aggravated every succeeding year.
- ii. That majority of people within outside Ebiral and are dissatisfied with the modes of celebrating Eche-ane.
- iii. That Eche-ane has lost its original values, importance and cultural glory.
- iv. That the present way of celebration is not in tune with the modern civilisation.
- v. That Eche-ane now has adverse effects on our socio-economic life, and has diverted our children's attention from their educational pursuits.
- vi. That the unfortunate incidences that mark the festival have tended to reinforce negative impressions about Ebira people thereby resulting into a serious damage to Ebira reputation.
- vii. That the festival period is today marked with a sense of insecurity and apprehension in the mind of natives and non-natives.
- viii. That Eche-ane is no longer an instrument of unity and entertainment but a source of warfare, communal disorder, murder, stealing, loss of friends and job opportunities outside the land.
- ix. That there is no amount of effort that can make it retain its cultural value and less prone to violence except a radical approach is taken.

- x. In attempting to find realistic solutions to the problems of Eche-ane, there is the need for every concerned person to rise above the sentimental and emotional values.

Significant percentage of the participants- supporters, custodians and financiers of traditional festivals claim to be Muslims and are identified with Islam by actively participating in Islamic activities (most especially Islamic festivals). This may be due to the fact that separation of traditional culture from Islam is a very difficult task for many Anebira Muslims. To support this fact, the recitation of a chapter of Glorious Qur'an (*Suratul-Kah*), in the cassette, by a masquerade Achuchu at Ebogogo is a real testimony to the fact that many active participants and sponsors of the cultural festivals in the land are Muslims<sup>3</sup>. In relation to this, an Ebira man returned from Makkah (*Hajj*) with a gift of beautiful cloth for Ehu masquerade at Kuroko, a town in Ebiraland<sup>4</sup>.

In spite of the fact that Federal College of Education (Okene) Authority prohibits the outing of masquerade on campus, the Ebira students always defy such instructions by staging masquerade festivals on campus. It is also observed that during the celebration, some Ebira Muslim female students usually get their Islamic identities (especially *hijab*) heavily adjusted (or not using at all) for the avoidance of being challenged by the conscious Muslims. However, no violence-free is associated with such outing on campus.<sup>5</sup>

The inability of the majority of Anebira Muslims to separate traditional culture from Islam could be traced to the mildness of some scholars about Islamic monotheism. Some of the people feel that, as demanded by the hard-hearted nature of Anebiras, outright condemnation of the anti-Islamic cultural festivals is required<sup>6</sup>. The use of persuasion, in preaching might result from their commitment to winning many souls to Islam. However, in spite of the great importance attached to traditional festivals in Ebiraland, Otite community has never given room for the celebration of any traditional festival owing to the usual ugly outcome of the celebration. This accounts for having relative peace in Otite community. The reason for not having the cultural festivals celebrated in the area is the concerted efforts and commitment of the Chief Imam of Eika- Adagu, Alhaji Abdulkadiri Lawal. Another probable reason is that the place is populated with non-indigenes members of staff and students of Federal College of Education, Okene and the enlightened Ebiras who have travelled far and near before returning home for settlement<sup>7</sup>.



### 3.4 Economic factor

The Ebirasin general are hard-working for they frown at laziness and joblessness in any form. The land is blessed with both human and economic resources needed as the main ingredients for economic prosperity in any society. Men are predominantly peasant farmers while Ebira women among them are known for their traditional cloth-weaving and one of the best cloth-weaving people in Nigeria till date. They are very industrious and this accounts for their achievements in the traditional handcrafts activities - mat weaving, bag weaving and pottery to complement farming activities. During the Ebira uprising of 1911/12, many Ebiras from all walks of life took part in revolution. Many able-bodied Ebiras left their farm works, from far and near, to take part in the revolution at the expense of their daily breads. Naturally, everyone wanted to take an active part in order to put an end to autocracy but the aftermath of this was detrimental to general progress as people refused to go back to their farms at the end of the revolution. Since however, the people started taking politics to mean a job to make a living and for other reasons. The District Officer, Mr Turner seemed to be overawed at this trend and then remarked by saying "Irresponsible local politics is becoming the primary addiction of almost every able-bodied Igbirra citizen, to the detriment of the proper cause that ought to be followed in the running of their daily lives".<sup>8</sup> The fact that the land is hilly, thus, giving rise to acute soil erosion in which the rich top soil is washed away by running water. Farming becomes a difficult task because the land is not all that fertile coupled with the fact the part of the land suitable for agriculture has been used for the establishment of Federal College of Education and abandoned Iron and Steel Industry at Otite, Ajaokuta and Abobo respectively. This has created unemployment in some clans due to shortage of arable land. Anebiras working in these companies lost their jobs hen they were abandoned. Therefore, unemployment is widespread. Per capital income is low and the high rate of inflation is not addressed. More so, the land is facing the challenges of poor health status, poor state of infrastructures, high rate of illiteracy and low technological development, among others. All these have negatively affected the security of lives and property in the area as well as socio-economic development of the land in particular and the country at large.

Poverty, according to Coates and Silburn (1970), serves as a feedback mechanism. This implies that those that are trapped in the cycle remain there to sustain the system. To Lewis (1962), poverty is a form of culture which some groups have accepted as part of life. This view is

supported by the stand of Gaus (1967) in Haralambos and Heald (1980) who maintained that poverty is a necessity. He argued that certain menial jobs would be left unattended to if the poor class does not exist. In fact, the ruling class derived both its origin and wealth from the state around which it gravitates, using every available means to ensure power and access. This shows that poverty performs specific functions in the society in respect of stability. Hamza (1998) has it that inadequate access to employment opportunities and poor access to education, health, sanitation, water service and assets such as land are the factors responsible for poverty in the society. He also identifies other causative factors that have led the nation to this chronic state of poverty to include bad governance.

The incident and magnitude of poverty have increased drastically in Ebiraland especially with the ugly situation in Iron Ore Mining Company, Itakpe and Ajaokuta Steel Complex both located in Ebiraland which have resulted to job insecurity. Tenuche (2003) submitted that violence in Ebiraland was at their lowest ebb between 1980 and 1985 when installation of machines and equipment at the Ajaokuta steel project was at its peak and provided employment to a large number of youths of Ebiraland. Thus, an adage says “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop”. This is technically true of Ebiraland as poverty ravaging the land is part of the violence-igniting factors in the land. Indeed, anger, among youths, is usually occasioned by the high level of unemployment. It is established that perpetrators of violence are mostly the unemployed and the hungry youths who out of desperation, constitute themselves into groups called “*Aduvusu*” (I’m ready to die) or “*Ozomateyisu*” (one cannot hide from death).

It is therefore relevant to note the significance of the opinion of Agagu (2003) that poverty alleviation programmes could not work well in many societies not because there is fault in the content, but because the strategy adopted is faulty. This is the case in the land because the attempts to tackle economic problems are always unethically politicised at the implementation stage. The large pool of unemployed, able-bodied and hungry young men is thus exploited for political gains by some elites in the land.

Owing to the level of poverty in the land, many Anebiras have migrated and migration continues to wherever fertile land could be gotten for farming. Of relevance is to note that the active age to which the unemployed belong has several implications on the society. The able-bodied unemployed youths would not only be available for easy mobilization in period of unrest but also participate in other social vices. Poverty, just like illiteracy, is a grave disease and the

root of very many crimes which people commit in the society. As a hungry man is said to be an angry man, the same applies to a poor person who can go to any length to get his wants satisfied.

Of all indicators of poverty, hunger is a threat to security anywhere. In view of this, Japa (2007) submits that youth violence is a common feature of a state of high unemployment, high level of poverty and idleness. This, of course, provides fertile recruitment ground for thugs and other miscreants used by politicians for the purpose of achieving their selfish political goals. Indeed, many youths have seen politics as the veritable means of becoming rich over night. This has made them to abandon weaving, farming, schooling or being in workshop with their parents to the extent that youths could hardly be controlled by their parents. To Caprio and Caprio (1968) in Onekata (1999):

Parents have traditionally felt threatened by their offspring as they emerge into the teen years. It is these years that young people suddenly begin to view the older generation as narrow, dogmatic, and absurd in their behaviours. No longer are parents regarded as fountain of wisdom and it is therefore not surprising that they see their parents' behaviour as out modelled.

Overpopulation, the situation in which the available resources are too small to take care of the needs of a people is a factor which must be discussed *viz a viz* conflict in Ebira land. The practice of polygyny is not new among Anebiras, but in the past, husband would be proud of having wives and lived with them in the same house for the benefit of man especially on the farm. The children were adequately cared for, at least feeding, based on the then level of civilization. In the recent times, it is the other way round as in most cases, Anebiras mostly-Muslims, Christians and African Traditional Religion worshippers practise polygyny without considering the moral and financial demands of the practice. The residential pattern in many polygynious setting is such a type in which the wives are not under the same roof, probably for the avoidance of bitter rivalry. This has adverse effects on the child upbringing as it majorly creates conducive atmosphere for rearing children with poor parental control. Some children of such a polygynious family dishonour or disrespect their fathers as there is little or no provision for their proper upbringing. Thus the frustrated youths from such families are therefore prone to violence and get themselves readily available as willing instruments for perpetuating violence in the pursuit of elites' selfish interest.

The age-long crises in Ebiraland have even worsened by the level of joblessness because the government as well as individuals including indigenes consider Kogi Central Senatorial District as uncondusive for any viable economic activities. Thus, establishment of industry, of any type, capable of creating employments for the inhabitants, are rarely found in the land. This has seriously aggravated the problem of getting employment in general and fuelled violence. This has created more fertile ground for the recruitment of unemployed able-bodied youths for perpetuation of social unrests in the area.

Sanni (1993) also pointed out that Ebiras of *Kogi* Central Senatorial District are greatly disadvantaged despite the rugged hills surrounding them are blessed with rich iron ore and other mineral resources. It is not wrong to say therefore that the worrying high rate of joblessness among the able-bodied young men makes them very vulnerable for elite mobilization for violence, in Ebiraland, especially during elections.

### **3.5 Religious factor**

Religion, according to *Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary of Current English* (1874), is the belief in the existence of supernatural ruling power, the Creator and Controller of the universe, who has given to man spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death. It is the belief in a Divine Being worthy of obedience and worship. Religion, to *Al-Qaradawy* (1995), is a state of divine origin leading sound-minded people, by their own choice, to what is good to them in this life and the hereafter. The human needs for religion in general and in Islam in particular has to do with the very essence of life, the purpose of existence and the natural disposition of mankind. To Durkheim (1954), religious purpose is to preserve the society. It deals with man-man and man-god/God relationship for the purpose of achieving certain goals such as maintenance of peace in the society. Prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, peace reigned among the adherents of African Traditional religion because it was believed that everybody worshipped one God irrespective of the way and manners adopted. With the coming of Islam and Christianity, meeting the indigenous religion, the adherents have been at loggerheads with one another which always result to breach of peace or any form of violence.

The age-long togetherness and peaceful co-existence that have been thriving among the people began to suffer resistance at the introduction of Islam in Ebiraland in 1903. Even within the Muslim community, there have been skirmishes at different times. Example was the conflict that

ensued over Imamship in Okenne in 1956. There were two contestants for the post of Imamship of Okene central mosque namely; Alhaji Ahmed Rufai and Alhaji Musa Galadima. The denial of the most qualified candidate, Alhaji Ahmad Rufai to the post of Imamship was based on his being of the same clan with the Paramount Chief of Ebiraland, Muhammed Sanni Omolori. The reason advanced by the Muslim community was that they did it to avoid the concentration of power in his family/clan so the power would not be abusively used as experienced during the reign of Ibrahim Atta (1917-1954)<sup>10</sup>.

Typical Anebiras love their culture dearly. That is why the crises between Muslim groups and masquerade groups in Ebiraland could be tagged both intra or inter-religious violent conflict as the casualties recorded were always Muslims, at least by names. This is based on the fact that many custodians of masquerades and their supporters, in most cases, bear Muslim names or even identify themselves with Islam. There have also been many intra-group religious violent conflicts among the masquerade groups since 1970s due to the introduction of clannish consciousness to masquerade festival.

### **3.6 Ebiraland and internal security challenges: case studies**

Ebiraland enjoyed relative peace until the arrival of the colonial masters who imposed Paramount Chief on the people in 1917. Therefore, conflicts in Ebiraland could be grouped into four historical phases: 1917-1956, 1957-1976, 1977-1996 and 1997-2010. The people take delight in fanning the embers of divisiveness and individualism. Notable among the conflicts in the land was the leadership tussle between 1917 and 1956; Arinmoh crisis in 1924 and Ebara revolution in 1951, Igbirra Tribal Union (Pro- Sanni Omolori) and Igbirra Progressive Union (Pro- Ibrahim Atta) crisis between 1957 – 1976), masquerade festival and clannish conflicts as well as strange killings (1977-1996), the crisis of defunct National Party of Nigeria versus the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (1979 - 1983). Others are Idozumi versus Idoji (2001), Muslim group versus traditional worshippers, Ohonwan versus Emani clans conflict in Ihima, Okehi Local Government (2006), April 2007 Gubernatorial Election which resulted to Oziogu and Oziomoye clannish conflict, Ogaminana conflict (2008), Obehira intra-community conflict (2009 - 2010), Adavi-Eba intra – community conflict (1997), Adavi – Eba versus Okengwe conflict, Emani versus Odumi clans conflict (November, 2009) among others. It is therefore right to say

that the conflicts in the land are based on clannish identity, cultural festival, religious factor, economic factors and leadership struggle, as explained in the paragraphs above.

### 3.6.1 The leadership tussles in the land (1917-1956)

Leadership is as old as the society itself. From the primitive age to the modern time, leadership has been a drive behind violence and peace. It is an impulse propelled by the desire of people to evolve along the phenomena of advancement through social groupings where leading voices are sought out to meet the desires of many others. Leadership is a personality-environment relationship in which a person is placed in the environment in which his will, feeling and insight direct and control others in the pursuit of a common cause. The relationship involves the leader, the led, the situation within which the relationship occurs and the task(s) with which the interacting individuals are confronted.

*Longman Dictionary* defines a leader as a person who directs or controls a team, organization, country and so on. He who gives direction and controls must, as of necessity, be ennobled with attributes not too common with ordinary citizens. It implies that he possesses extra-ordinary insights into the issues of life that accredit him for the onerous task of leadership. (John Maxwell, 2008) Leader is an agent of reconciliation who is committed to reconciling desperate and contradictory forces. Some leaders emerge through ascription (some examples are monarchs, kings, castle leader etc), some emerge through achievement criteria while some can be circumstantially bestowed. In modern politics, open competitive elections are the mechanisms through which political leaders emerge.

In Ebiraland leadership by coercion often met vehemently with resistance, even with the last drop of Anebira's blood until such authority is pulled down. Indeed, the people lack a single nomenclature such as Oba, Obi, Emir among others. As Micheal Asaju (1996) observes "...at present, the Igbirras have no recognized families or ruling houses and so, every male Igbirra is a potential supreme head of the people". They operate a segmentary system of polity which recognizes the autonomy and rights of each clan-group, later known as districts as political units. The segmentary polity of people had made them to have a strong sense of autonomy such that it was (and still is) repulsive and unacceptable to be under a centralised authority. Thus, Ebiras are republicans traditionally when it comes to politics, yet they are obedient to constituted authority when it emerges in accordance with the laws of the land (Ahmadu, 2004). They are also

responsive to peaceful co-existence in the land as the independent state/clan heads always come together to discuss issues of common concerns among themselves.(Ahmadu,2004)

In traditional administration of Ebira Tao, each clan has the eldest male in the clan as the clan chief while each clan is completely independent and none is subordinate to the other. Their clannish administrative system however does not stop them from having common grounds on issues that affect the entire Ebira nation. This inter-clan relation tells of why the land has been able to resist with collective strength external aggression from the Jihadists and the Nupe invaders in the nineteenth century.

However, the land found itself in the mess of leadership on the arrival of the colonial masters who recognized the need for a Chief at the helm of affairs of the entire local people. This development was informed by the British indirect rule system. It was alleged that the British Government did this by manoeuvring people of the land through the imposition of the candidate of his choice, Ibrahim Chugodo as against the choice of the majority of the Ebiras who was Ozigizigi of Okengwe (Ahmadu, 2004). The colonial masters created unfortunate situations through the various policies made in attempts to disunite the people so as to exploit them conveniently. The colonial policy of indirect rule brought about the establishment of paramount rulership with considerable power. In this case, some clannish heads were robbed of their power and offices. This occasioned the imposition of Atta Omadivi as the first Warrant Chief of Ebira by the Colonial master in 1902. This finally led to the subsequent imposition and installation of Ibrahim Onoruoiza Chogudo as the exclusive paramount ruler in Ebiraland by the British government in November 11, 1917. He was ranked a third class chief in the then Northern Region (Sanni, 1993). It was alleged that the imposition of Ibrahim Onoruoiza Chogudo was due to his being an assessment scribe under the district officer in the district in colonial period. For this, there were great “manoeuvres” on the side of Ibrahim. Furthermore, Ahmadu (2004) has it that the Resident of Kabba, Capt. Byng-Hall’s backing was expressed in his letter to the Resident of Ilorin on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1917 which reads as follows:

I have found him of great use in dealing with Igbirra, who all trust him’ and he has to my knowledge refused bribes several times, and has been instrumental in bringing extortion cases and other intrigues to light. If you approve, I am of the opinion that this would be the most satisfactory solution of the difficult.

To buttress the essence of creating Central Political Leadership in Ebiraland by the Colonial Masters, Sanni (1974) summed up his view by saying:

In keeping with their royal charter and empire-building mission at the time, the colonial overlords had their own yardsticks of representation. Where no single traditional ruler was available to represent people on their own mandate, Lugard, in his dual mandate, invariably imposed one by conferring such makeshift traditional titles as warrant chiefs. We had such warrant chiefs in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Therefore, with the centralized authority, leadership issue became a subject of heated polemics in Ebiraland. Of Anebiras, the most contentious is the succession to the paramount throne. More than any other factors, this has precipitated the chains of conflict and violence as there is absence of centralized leadership organization of all Anebiras as well as the modality of succession to the throne. Indeed, the arrival of the Colonial Masters to the land in 1902/1903 is, till today, considered to be a curse as it marks the genesis of violent leadership wrangling in the Ebiraland. To this effect, the submission gotten in the interview goes thus:

The first of the seeds of enmity sewn by the colonial masters is disunity among Ebiras and it continues growing fast till date. He observed further that Ebira crises are all political which began with introduction of centralized system of administration which was done with the imposition of Ibrahim Chogudo as the first Paramount Chief of Ebiraland in 1917 on people who are purely republican. Indeed, other factors- economic, clannish, religion among others are instruments used for the pursuance of the political goal.<sup>11</sup>

The change in the structure of the traditional authority in Ebiraland by Colonial Masters therefore played a role in fostering identity politics in Ebiraland. According to Vanghan (1991):

In the pursuit of their imperial interest, the British colonial administrators manipulated traditional authority and even invented new ones in most so called “pagan” communities where a hierarchical command of administration was not in existence. The end result of this is the emergence of ruler as key instruments in the advancement of colonial objectives in Nigeria. This was more pronounced where centralized traditional structures were forced on erstwhile republican communities because originally, Ebiras have no central dynasty but clannish and age grade leadership.



The outcome of it all was that the people were not happy since some forms of royal hierarchy, which were alien to Anebiras, were instituted. This was also coupled with the fact that Ibrahim was too young a man at 25 to occupy the seat of leadership of the entire Ebiraland<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, it is established that every Anebira knows that the Epira Central Chiefdom was purely of British creation and hence refers to it as “*OhinoyiOibo*” meaning “A White man’s chief”. In support of Epira’s view on such an imposition, an adage says “*Izi eku vee chi, di irahu o yi ye?*” Translated as (How can the night masquerade perform without the night knowing?) This implies that it is impossible for something to happen and the person directly involved or in charge would claim ignorance. In essence, the installation of Atta by colonial masters set another precipitation for future conflicts in the land. In other words, some current conflicts in the land can be described as a manifest of the injustice perpetrated by the British during colonialism. Thus, his administration was therefore met with stiff resistance and opposition from many of elders in the land particularly his coevals that were contestants including Pa Arudi and Pa Ozigizigi with him among them. Ogido (2004) has it that the concentration of absolute power and authority in the hand of a young man over the elders eroded leadership structure and roles, based on the known practice, gerontocracy in Epira Opete.

In present Ebiraland, common people had little or no privilege, no erection of house without full consent of the regime; zinc-roof houses were owned basically by the relatives or friends of Atta. Landed property used by elders was forcibly seized by the regime. Some Anebiras later went on self-exile while some were made to go on exile because of the purported high-handedness of the new Paramount Chief. Instances of this include the Ezi-ogu clan which was victimised for its involvement in Oibo Arimo crisis to such an extent that some of its members left the land for Idoiri for resettlement. Their leaders such as Okino and Ichimiri who died in 1936 and 1948 respectively were not allowed, by the regime, to be given normal traditional burial (Ahmadu, 2004). To buttress the excesses of the regime, Igbirra Native Administrative Committee reads “About the year 1928, announced publicly that the Government had given to the native committee the possession of all lands in the Division and that all land products were to be sent to him for transmission to the Government”<sup>12</sup>.

Many instances manifest further excesses of the colonial palace authority. For instance, while the Anebras front side of the palace were not privileged to receive western education, a study of trends in the palace of Atta will show in the end that as soon as the authority of Atta was

instituted, eastern education was introduced in the land by the colonial government but not for all. For example, Mr. Abdul-Azeez Atta who was born in 1920 graduated in 1947-1948 in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (from Oxford University, London), Madam Judith S. Atta was the first female graduate of Ebiraland in 1969 while the first graduate outside Atta's family, Alhaji I.A. Obaro was in 1958. He had his Bachelor of Science from the University of Ibadan (Ahmadu, 2004). Oral sources say the first primary school in Ebiraland was established by Atta in his palace in 1917 purposely for Atta's children only while the first public school (Native Authority Primary School) was established in 1927. The brilliant students outside the ruling family were forcefully sent by Atta to work in his farm after primary school education. Those who were not forced out of the school were diplomatically discouraged from receiving higher education which was done by conscripting them into the Native Authority Civil Service. It was alleged that Atta did not allow Native Authority to give scholarships to children of common people in Ebiraland and admission to secondary school was also with Atta's approval<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, admission into the Native Authority Elementary School, Okene, was through the regime. This implies that the admission was regime- oriented. To this effect, the official documents read thus:

The school enjoys the whole-hearted support of the Atta of Igbirra. Possible there is disadvantage because I am sure that an impression exists among the people of Okene generally that entry to this school is restricted to the "official" classes. Whether people would come without the chief's assistance, I am not prepared to say, but the fact remains that the only avenue of entry to this school at present leads through the Attah's palace.<sup>14</sup>

Ahmadu (2004) says the first generation of the learned in Ebiraland are found among one hundred and forty-seven children of Atta. Among them are Alhaji Abdulazeez Atta (Secretary to Federal Government of Nigeria between 1967-1975), Alhaji Aliyu Atta (Former Inspector General of Police), Alhaji Adamu Atta (The First Executive Governor of Kwara State), Alhaji Abdulmalik Atta (The First High Commissioner to London in the 40s), Dr Muaz Atta (Retired Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kogi State) and many more. For fear of retaliation based on autocratic rulership of their father, Ibrahim Atta from Anebiras, most of the Attah's children do not build house or have investments in Okene in spite of their economic bouyance within and outside the country.

In spite of the serious infrastructural developments witnessed during this epoch, Ibrahim Atta's regime (1917- 1954) was full of great violation of political freedom in the land. Forced

labour was used by Atta in the building of Okene Central Mosque (which started in 1947 and commissioned by Sheik Niyas of Senegal in 1955), Okene Dispensary (1920) and Okene Water Works (1935- 1937) Okene Post office (1948) Okene Maternity (1951) among others. The submission of Sanni (1974) reads “It was the age of one-man rule, a period in which to openly and publicly question authority was regarded as heresy; a period in which self-help labour directed towards public projects was not voluntarily given”.

In 1943, tax was raised from 10k to 90k and women were to pay 4k. Ohiare (1950) emphasized this by saying “It is only in *Igbira* division today that women are taxed heavily irrespective of the fact that they have practically no means of earning money. Whoever resented the payment of this tax would receive social disgrace and naked tax persecution. For this reason, many went on self-banishment from Ebiraland. Notable among them are Ozigizigi of Obehira who fled to Ogale, and later to Auchi. Added to this class of tax-fleeing local leaders was Pa Okpata of Ihima who fled to Idi Mongoro area of Mushin Lagos. All these earned the land the first serious civil disobedience as Pa Arinmoh from Ihima engineered anti-tax agitation crusades against the regime in 1924. In the spirit of resenting repressive rule in the land, he organised Obangede people to resist the payment of tax. Thus, as far back as 1924, people especially from Ihima and Obangede refused to pay tax to Atta. Indeed, this is abhor able and it was one of the many social evils against which Igbira Tribal Union (ITU), as well, fought ruthlessly”. (See picture below)

UNINVE



Ibrahim Onoruoiza Chogudo (Atta of Ebiraland) who reigned between 1917 and 1954. as Atta of Igbiraland.

◆ Source: *Palace of Atta of Igbiraland*

All these widened the scope of hatred among common people especially the ex-students of Roman Catholic Missionary School against Atta. Thus, many Anebiras left for Southern part of Nigeria for studies and returned home with radical western ideas and biased mind against

Atta. Some of these students founded the Igbirra Tribal Union with liberation and socialism orientation. The union was formally organized in 1945 against Igbira Progressive Union which emanated from Igbirra Royal Union, the defunct Northern People's Congress which was essentially conservative with capitalist instinct.

However, despite the fact that it was alleged that Alhaji Ibrahim Onoruoiza Chogudo ruled (1917-1954) tyrannically, the development recorded during his reign in the land was far better than his counterparts in other parts of Nigeria as at that time. It is in the opinion of a school of thought that the installation of Atta as a paramount chief assisted in uniting the five Ebira independent clans into a strong, prosperous and a very viable state. While another school of thought has it that Atta's achievements were, indeed, basically recorded through communal efforts in which forced labour was introduced.

On the basis of the existing tyrannical rule in the land, Igbirra Tribal Union (ITU) was formed mostly by the anti-Atta members of the land so as to avenge the wrongs done to them by the regime. The aims of ITU include the followings namely:

- i. To end autocracy and to replace it with democracy
- ii. To abrogate women's taxation and to adjust or reduce man's flat rate tax from 9/- to 7/6 (90k-75k) and to restore the traditional institutions the Atta's regime cancelled-decentralisation and thereby giving the District some sorts of autonomy, just as pre-British Ebiraland.
- iii. To unfold the ways of higher education to the children of the common people who had been secluded from it.
- iv. To unite the Ebiras so that development and advancement of the Division might be accelerated.
- v. To abolish or minimise all the social injustices prevalent in the Atta's regime. To put the wishes and aspirations of the populace to the appropriate authorities.

The abolition of women's taxation harnessed the support of Ebira women for Ebira Tribal Union. For the essence of challenging the autocratic style of the regime, Igbirra Ilupeju Society in Lagos was formed by the enlightened Ebiras with western radical ideas in the late 1940s<sup>15</sup>. Ahmadu (2004) has it that the Society therefor sent a memorandum to the Ebirra Native Authority suggesting some reforms. These include the end of autocracy, the appointment of qualified persons into appropriate offices, to discontinue as a matter of urgency the appointment

of the Chief's son or relatives as heads of Departments. There came riot on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 1951 as members of ITU started singing annoying song against the regime as the party had won. This was, indeed, the very first time the people gave mandate to the people of their choice. The riot cost the land, especially the members of ITU, the destruction of their houses and other valuable properties from the hands of pro-Atta. The tension to revenge was doused by the anti-riot police drafted from Lokoja. After the enquiry, the regime paid for the damage done during the riot (Ahmadu,2004)

All the Atta's attempts to subdue his perceived enemies only aggravated the chaotic situation in the land as went from bad to worse. This thereby strengthened Ebira in general and ITU in particular to such an extent that ITU held its meeting publicly after the 1951/52 riot. The revolution in the land was at its peak in 1952 as Igbirra Tribal Union and Igbirra Progressive Union have Burma Boys and Cow Boys respectively as their youth wings to fight the cause of revolution which involved 80% of Ebiras from all walks of life in 1950s. According to Sanni (1993), all these finally led to the dethronement of Alhaji Ibrahim Atta on 30th June, 1954. He was exiled to Dekina. After pleas made on his behalf, he was allowed to stay in **Lokoja** where he died on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1964 and was finally buried in Okene.

### **3.6.2. The crises between 1957 and 1976**

The dethronement of Alhaji Ibrahim Atta doused the tension of leadership tussle as the land remained with no royal family or succession models. For two years after Atta's resignation as the Paramount Chief of Ebiraland, the elected Native Authority ruled the land. Indeed, the appointment/election of new Paramount Chief, Alhaji Muhammed Sanni Omolori in 1956, by majority of the Ebiras, was based on his being the leader of Igbirra Tribal Union who suffered most in the hands of Ibrahim Chogudo. Alhaji Muhammed Sanni Omolori, was imprisoned and later exiled by Atta's regime. Due to his ugly experiences, he was a leader who spearheaded the mass uprising against the leadership of Atta. Owing to these reasons among others, Muhammed Sanni Omolori was installed as Paramount Chief in 1956 and the title of the stool was changed from Atta of Ebiraland to Ohinoyi of Ebiraland.



**Picture 5: Alhaji Muhammed Sanni Omolori (*Ohinoyi of Ebiraland*) who reigned between 1956 and 1996.**

It is therefore relevant to note that the installation of the new Paramount Chief made the traditional belief among the people in the powers of chief priest and masquerades as representatives of the ancestors on earth to be demystified after the revolution against the Atta. This change in traditional authority and, in culture and belief system weakened the traditional authority. Furthermore, the children of Atta who occupied powerful positions in both public and private sectors seemed to maintain a strong and sustain opposition to the rulership of Ohinoyi. In essence, the Ebiraland revolution accordingly transferred power to nationalist leaders and politicians

in Ebiraland. The revolution of 1951/2 which was looked upon as the saviour of Ebiraland failed in creating an enabling atmosphere for better understanding among the people in the area.

In fact, the split within the then revolution hierarchy polarised the people along clannish and religious sentiments. As the people of the land later basically belonged to Igbirra Tribal Union (Pro- Sanni Omolori) and Igbirra Progressive Union (Pro- Ibrahim Atta), the same age-long bitter political rivalry between pro-Atta and Pro-Sanni Omolori continued after Atta's resignation from office. By extension, masquerades and traditional singers also became divided along party lines between Igbirra Tribal Union and Igbirra Progressive Union in the 1950s. This earned the land general unrest involving the destruction of lives and properties as witnessed due to the bitter political rivalry between Igbirra Tribal Union (Pro- Sanni Omolori) and Igbirra Progressive Union (Pro- Ibrahim Atta).

After the election of Ohinoyi, there came the problem of unhealthy rivalry among the people. This led to the introduction of religious sentiments in I.T.U, the only supporting political party of the new Ohinoyi. The ITU members who felt dissatisfied over the situation in the party as it was also alleged that Ohinoyi proposed to return to Chief-in-Council so as to get executive power which was abrogated in 1952. This development factionised the Union into - ITU 1 and ITU 2. The split of the party into ITU 1 (Ohikere's ITU and mostly of Christians) and ITU 2 (mostly of Muslims, the young leaders of the Union and pro-Ohinoyi) made the ITU 1 to be alleged of attempting the dethronement of the Ohinoyi. This was used by the pro-Ohinoyi to gain overwhelming sympathy of the masses as majority of the people did not wish the dethronement of Ohinoyi<sup>16</sup>. The allegation was later proved wrong by Ohikere, though he made it publicly known that he would never wish the Ohinoyi good for the role he played which made him to lose in the election. As the central chieftdom has become the main attraction of the political campaigns and manoeuvres, there was general unrest both in the ITU hierarchy and in the Division. This was because the split of the ITU has placed Local Government Authority in the hands of people who later became power drunk in the land.

In 1958, the then existing political situation in the land led to the unification of ITU 1 and IPU to form (NPC), the Northern People Congress. In spite of the reunification, ITU2 (the pro-Ohinoyi faction) won the local election. The civil servants were, subjected to serious hardship from the hands of some of members of Native Authority. Indeed, Native Authority became terror with impunity to such an extent that they nicknamed themselves "*Opokitipo*" (people who can do



things by force and get away with it). These excesses of the members of Native Authority attracted the removal of two of its Executive Councillors- Alhaji Kokori and Alhaji Badamasiyu by the Regional Government. Thereafter, the Regional Government replaced the sacked Executive Councillors with its nominees. (Ahmadu 2004) For the purpose of gaining the support of the masses the more, the pro-Ohioyi members of ITU attributed the expulsion of the two Councillors as anti-Ohinoyi members of ITU1's plan towards the dethronement of the Ohinoyi.

More so, there were cases of gross mistrust and ill-feeling in the new integrated party, NPC, as each side wanted to wield influence or be in control in Ebirapolitics. This was clearly manifested in 1959 Federal election as there was no political harmony in the party. As a Regional Party, it had a Minister, Ohikere who was alleged of giving serious backing to the youth's wing of ITU/NPC (Cowboy) to torture the political opponents in the land. With this, the Cowboy caused serious upheavals in the land with impunity as well. It was so serious to the extent that some opponents such as Alhaji Kokori and Alhaji Badamasiyu were innocently jailed. They however came out triumphant at the end of their jail term. Seeing the then ugly political situation, *Avasaraki* (a masquerade) warned against the use of force by the Ohikere's group in attempt to achieve his political goal in the land. In contrary to masquerade's view, Ohikere was of the belief that with power, nothing was impossible. At the end, Ohikere saw sense in the advice of the masquerade as he failed to win the election.<sup>17</sup>

This political wrangling in the Division attracted the presence of the late Prime Minister, Sir Tafawa Balewa for reconciliation. His intervention yielded no positive result as the ITU2 rejected the idea of consensus candidate advanced, by Sir Tafawa Balewa, for the people in the Division. Federal government intervention in the local politics of Ebiras therefore came to an end as the Regional Election of 1961 was won by ITU2 members- Alhaji Kokori and Alhaji L.A Lawal. This brought the party into full power which was later, as usual, abusively used as they won all the posts at local, regional and federal government level. The appeal, made by the Provincial Commissioner in 1962 for all the local parties in the Division to merge under the umbrella of NPC, was fruitless as there also existed within the NPC factions as well.

In another dimension, the age-long togetherness and peaceful co-existence which have been reigning among the adherents of Islam in Ebiraland since the advent of the faith, (1903 or thereabouts) broke after the installation of Alhaji Sanni Omolori as Ohinoyi of Ebiraland in 1956. This was as a result of the introduction of clannish and political factors in religious (Islam) circle

in Ebiraland. This came up in the process of appointing the Imam of Okene Central Mosque between two contestants- Alhaji Ahmed Rufai and Alhaji Musa Galadima.



**Picture 9: Okene Central Mosque (The First Central Mosque in *Ebiraland*)**

UNI



*Picture 6: Alhaji Musa Galadima, The Chief Imam of Ebiraland  
(1956 till date)*

Alhaji Ahmed Rufai was a pro-Atta, Igbirra Tribal Union (masses-oriented party). He was the Deputy Imam of Sheikh Yahaya Tajudeen (Chief Imam who died on the 17th of June, 1956) at Okene Central Mosque who was expected to be the Imam after the demise of Sheikh Yahaya

Tajudeen. Owing to the abuse of power experienced in the land during the reign of Ibrahim Chogudo Atta which was attributed to the concentration of power in his family as he had his eldest son, Abdul Malik, as his Wakil (Prime Minister), Alhaji Ahmad Rufai was denied the post of Imamship despite his being the most qualified candidate (Islamically). The reason advanced by the Muslim community in Ebiraland (for appointing Alhaji Musa Galadima as the Imam) was that the Paramount Chief of Ebiraland, Muhammed Sanni Omolori and Alhaji Ahmad Rufai were from the same clan (*Omani*) and to be precise, of the same parents. The people were therefore of the opinion that there was a very strong need to balance the power equation so as give room for check and balances in the land for the avoidance of any form of abuse of power<sup>18</sup>.

In addition, the attempt made to make Alhaji Ahmad Rufai, relevant in the Muslim community was a failure as he rejected the offer of being the Deputy Imam. He considered the acceptance of such a post, for whatever reason, as a big insult on his personality. At the end, with the intervention of emissaries from Northern Nigeria including Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, Saudi Arabia and Guinea, a student of Alhaji Ahmadu Rufai named Abdulraheem Aliyu was appointed as the Deputy Imam. However, this bitter Imamship rivalry took an escalating turn as serious attack was launched during a Friday Jumat prayer (1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1960) at Okene Central Mosque in which bottles and other dangerous missiles were freely used. This caused physical injury against some individuals in the mosque. The alleged leader of the attacking group, Alhaji Ahmad Rufai, was subsequently found guilty by the court of law and duly convicted with a fine. Indeed, his younger brother, Alhaji Sanni Omolori paid the fine from his private pocket. The tension in the Muslim community was finally doused as Alhaji Ahmad Rufai established a factional Central Mosque at his private residence at Idoji for Jumat prayers and other religious activities.<sup>19</sup>

UN



**Picture 8:** *Factional Central Mosque at Idoji in Okene.*

A separate I'd pray ground was also established. His supporters thereby vacated the Centre Mosque and withdrew to his factional mosque for the performance of any religious activities. Thus, relative peace thereby gradually returned to the Muslim community in particular and the entire land in general. Notwithstanding, till the death of Alhaji Rufai (Oct.4, 1991), he never forgave those who stood against his candidature as Imam and he did not accept the leadership of Imam Galadima<sup>20</sup>.



**Picture 7:** *Alhaji Sheikh Ahmadu Rufai (d. 1991)*

In another dimension, after the death of Abdulraheem Aliyu, the Deputy Imam, Agada, a sub-clan from Ogu clan wanted to nominate Alhaji Lawal while the remaining four sub-clans of Ogu headed by Idris King of Ede sub-clan of Agada presented the present Deputy Imam, Alhaji Salihu Abere. This incident testifies to the great importance attached to clannish identity, even, in religious circle in Ebiraland.

### 3.6.3 The crises between 1977 and 1996

It is established that the crises in the land have successfully lingered through generations. In the Second Republic, another dimension ensued in the politics of Ebiraland with the increased political mobilization. The contest for power between Adamu Atta (son of Ibrahim Atta) and Obatemi Usman for a seat into the Constituent Assembly (1977) in Obatemi finally lost to Adamu Atta was not without violence. Thus, clannish sentiments were introduced in which Oziogu (a clan) accused the Aniku sub-clan of Adavi, to which Atta belonged, of occupying almost all sensitive public offices in Ebiraland. Since the beginning of the Second Republic politics in 1979, zoning of public offices along clannish lines was therefore increasingly entrenched in the politics of Ebiraland. In buttressing this point, in the (2003) political dispensation, the chairmanship position was zoned to Adieka sub-clan while Ezuka clan produced chairman in 1999 (Ahmadu, 2004).

Among several others, those crimes that were very important in term of capturing national attention include the violent conflict between members of National Party of Nigeria and the Unity Party of Nigeria between 1979 and 1983. It presented a scenario whereby the youths in the area had unhindered access to ammunition which were abusively used at will. More significantly, the gruesome murder of women who had parts of their bodies removed created another dimension to the violence in the land in 1986 (Tenuche, 2009). It was during this period that the land also witnessed strange killings which followed the use of masquerade festival and clannish identity to fuel political rivalry. Indeed, the deadly crime defied any known solution were these strange killings that engulfed the land between 1980 and 1990. A school of thought was of the belief that the act was organized by the anti-Sanni Omolori group of individuals. This was mainly to cause further social disaffection and possible civil unrest against the authority of the Paramount Ruler. This earned the community very terrible experiences. The situation was calmed down due to some factors namely: suspension of cultural festivals, imposition of curfew, police arrests and intervention of Okene Youths Council. However, total deviance to the agreed resolution sponsored by the politicians generated the worst violence in the subsequent years as the ban on cultural festival was lifted on the political influence.

However, Ebira highly-prized cultural festival, hitherto peaceful and entertaining have been debased, adulterated and bastardized owing to introduction of the clannish factor into the cultural institutions. As Sanni Omolori attempted, on several occasions during his regime, to

abolish the masquerade festival in the land due the violence that always attached to the celebration, the very influential members of anti-Sanni Omolori's regime did not allow him to succeed. This was done by sponsoring masquerades during the cultural festival to create serious instability in the land. In relation to this, the factional members of Islamic sect, MuslimMujitamia launched in 1978 called Haqqah brothers, launched an attack on traditional practices in the land in the mid-nineties. This was considered as the reaction to the molestation received by the Muslim brothers and sisters from the masquerades. This led to Muslim group versus masquerade group Asere crisis in Ebiraland. Haqqah brothers were led by Late Mallam Abdulazeez Sadiq Baba and many brothers including Salawudeen and Abdullahi among others were killed in 1993.

In retaliation, in 1994, the custodian of a masquerade was slaughtered by Haqqah brothers and this eventually led to the mass killing of innocent Muslim brothers owing to counter-reaction of the masquerade groups in Ebiraland. Indeed, many Muslim brothers such as Dr. Musa Yaro, Salihu Abere among others were arrested. Also, worthy of mentioning is the activities of Shaykh Ahmad Rufai in attacking a masquerade in the 1980s at Kuroko for having its mask attached with Quranic verses. He, as well, delegated power to his students to get the masquerade with Quranic verses written on its mask arrested in Adavi-Eba. In fact, in this encounter, only the mask was gotten while the person in the mask escaped the arrest.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, it is established that in spite of the opposition's attempts to destabilise the entire system, the reign of Sanni Omolori as Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, was relatively peaceful compared with his predecessor.

#### **3.6.4 1997-2010 crises in Ebiraland**

There came the reappearance of age-long leadership crisis after the demise of Alhaji Sanni Omolori because the ideal structure and succession model to the Ohinoyi stool had not evolved in Ebiraland. The land had no acceptable method(s) of selecting candidates to occupy the throne of Ohinoyi because there was no historical royal family. Thus, a 17-man committee was inaugurated by the then Military Administrator of Kogi State, Col. B.L. Afakriya on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1997 to work out modalities for ascension to the throne. The committee's recommendations submitted to the state government were that: The stool of Ohinoyiship should be rotational among the five traditional districts namely: Adavi, Okengwe, Ihima, Eika and



Eganyin; appointment of more first class chiefs in the Central Senatorial District be approved and the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland is the acceptable title to the stool etc. (Ahmadu, 2004).

The committee which involved Ebira Area Traditional Council chaired by Ohindase Stephen Bello screened only three out of twenty seven contestants and the rotational order to the Ohinoyi stool was recommended. This was rejected by government for the government upheld the reports of colonial administration which submitted that the Atta title was only an exotic title adopted by Omadivi, and that there was no ruling house prior to the advent of colonial rule. It was also alledged that the rejection of the committee's report was done only to favour the government's candidate, Ado Ibrahim. This finally led to the appointment of Alhaji Ado Ibrahim (the son of ex-Atta of Ebiraland) as the new Ohinoyi by the Military Administrator of Kogi State, Col. B.L.A. Afakriya on 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1997. This made some concerned Ebiras including the applicants for Ohinoyi vacant stool to challenge the appointment of Ohinoyi via suit No Hc/6/98, Alhaji M.J. Ibrahim Ohida and five others versus Kogi State Military Administrator and twelve others. To the plaintiffs, the seat of Ohinoyi remains vacant while the seat of Attawhich is not the chieftaincy title in Ebiraland is occupied by Ado Ibrahim. This was premised on the fact that he was installed as Atta of Ebiraland not as Ohinoyi. By implication, the overall consequence is the weakening of the traditional authority of the Ohinoyi, precisely, as he does not enjoy the overwhelming support of his subjects. For this, reconciliation committee, headed by HRM Oba Michael Olobayo, the Obaro of Kabba was set up in 1999. However, for no known reason to the people of the land, Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Audu hurriedly gave the new Ohinoyi his staff of office on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1999. This was done at Egbe High Court suspended its earlier injunction without the knowledge of the plaintiffs (Ahmadu, 2004). The case is, up till date, in the Supreme Court awaiting final ruling.

Politics is about discourse, dispassionate evaluation of issues, negotiation, persuasion, compromise and consensus, balanced choices, unity, the right to dissent, and deference to majority opinion. Bad politics is about dictatorship, duplicity, intolerance, terrorism, influence peddling, usurpation, electoral fraud, cover-up, misuse of political power, corruption. The political experience in Ebiraland is characterised more by the latter than the former, as deep seated personal and clannish rivalries often dictated political action. Sadly, the concept of teamwork, the old saying that there is strength and safety in number, does not appeal to the leaders. The concept of the "master mind alliance" derived from the thinking of Thomas Alva

Edison that from a pool of talents come great intentions does not excite the thinking of the leaders in the land. Every one of them, in an attempt to enact the fantasy of supremacy goes it alone as long as he can mobilize touts and thugs around him to tighten the noose around the necks of the perceived enemies. They fail to realise that they ought to harness each other's brain to develop the land. As it is very rampant in African communities, the crisis of leadership in Ebiraland today is borne out of selfishness, greed, exploitation and an attempt by the people to stay at top and perpetually subjugate others to themselves.

The dawn of party politics which brought about bitter rivalry between Igbira Tribal Union and Northern People's Congress spilled over to the second republic where National Party of Nigeria and United Party of Nigeria became rivals. The same scenario was played out where Social Democratic Party and National Republican Convention squared it up with one another. This was the period (1999) when violent conflict in the land assumed a terrifying dimension with the onset of democratization. In recent times, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and the emergence of Action Congress (AC) created the room for the emergence of political thugs. Therefore, maiming, killing and burning of houses of political opponents became the striking features of this period (Japa, 2007).

In relation to the political situation in the area, many Anebiras had envisaged the likely problems that might crop up in Ebiraland 2013 local government election in which sects in Islam might be used, as usual, for political campaign. Ogu and Omoye are the two famous clans controlling the political field of Okene. Ogu clan dominating Peoples Democratic Party is occupied with Tijaniyyah group headed by Alhaji Lawal while Sheikh Lukman Galadima, the leader of Izala group is from Omoye clan with dominant membership in Action Congress). It is hereby noted that political achievement would likely be done with the introduction of clannish and religious factors which would eventually lead to intra-religious crisis among Muslims in Ebiraland. However, with prayers and serious orientations in the land, the election was considered as free and fair as no case of violence was, in relation to election, recorded before, during and after the period of election. In another related development, intra-religious crisis took a surprising dimension at Okene in November, 2010 when the mosque that was being used (for religious activities) by both Izalah Muslim group and Tabliq Jama was bulldozed by the owners of the land who were predominantly Tijaniyyah group. The crisis was based on the fact that the Izalah group was alleged to always attack Sufists and their practices while preachings in that

very mosque. And in fact, it was gathered that the impatience of the Izalah group in addressing this issue fuelled this ugly incidence<sup>23</sup>. The community leaders and Islamic scholars' intervention was a fruitless exercise as the prevention of the crisis was impossible.

More importantly, the period also witnessed many other serious inter or intra-community/clannish crises in the land. These crises include Obehira Intra-community Crisis, Emani versus Ohonwan crisis, Idozumi and Idoji crisis and Ogaminana crisis. Peaceful co-existence at Obehira, a town which is situated along Abuja express way in Ebiraland is of great benefits not only to the inhabitants of the area but also to the nation at large. The area experienced serious unrest in the year 2009 and it lingered till the year 2010. Generally, Japa (2007) identified the activities of local musicians and masquerades as the sources of crises in Ebiraland, in the recent times. He was of the view that the Ebira highly-prized cultural festival (masquerade), hitherto peaceful and entertaining, are not only debased but also bastardized owing to introduction of clannish factor into the cultural institution (festivals). In the recent times, most of the crises in the land are traceable to the unruly activities of some masquerades by venturing on clannish-inciting songs capable of generating crisis. The reason for this is that clannish attachment has a significant implication in Ebira settings.

In another saga, Okovi clan in Obehira has two sub-clans with different masquerades. Ehebea sub-clan has a night masquerade called Sementi while Eyire a sub-clan has Erenouhi masquerade. The politicisation of masquerades turned them to be the sources of serious mayhem in Obehira in 2009/2010 as Ehebe supported Action Congress while Erenuobi supported Peoples Democratic Party. Clannish-inciting songs sung by Cementimasquerade and Irenuohi masquerade, against one another clans, was the crisis-igniting factor of the year in the community. Added to this, Dio a local musician and another local musician called "Fashion" actively participated in singing the like songs which finally led to loss of lives and properties, especially, of members including the innocents of the concerned clans in the area<sup>24</sup>.

The crisis paved the way for the uninterrupted illegal access to ammunitions which were being aggressively and abusively used even after the crisis as guns used during the crisis were not retrieved from the perpetrators. This was so serious to the extent that many got relocated and vowed never to return to the land for any reason. As the general outcome of any warring zone, the economic activities in the area were completely paralysed and educational activities of the

area were adversely affected as there was no freedom of movement in the area for months. The good name of the land became soiled as the people in the area were portrayed as violent people.

To get over the security challenges in the area, government applied minimal force in a bid to ensure that conflicting parties drop their arms and end the hostilities against one another in the area. Curfew was imposed, as the land is on the Abuja express road, any vehicle passing would be thoroughly checked for security reasons. Thus, the efforts of the respected elders whose pleas were accepted by the warring parties also assisted in dousing the tension in the area. More importantly, the death of the actors, Ehebe and Erenuobi in the crisis weakened the strength of the members to forge ahead with the fight. Thus, the members of the conflicting groups were conditionally compelled to lay down arms in the absence of sponsorship. This finally gave room for gradual restoration of peace in the land.

Ihima is one of the towns in Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi Central Senatorial District. The town comprises many prominent clans among which are the Emani and Ohonwa. In the year 2006, there emerged a serious violent conflict between Emani and Ohonwa which could be considered as a manifestation of a cleavage, an age long bitter political and clannish rivalry between the two clans in Ihima. This was ignited by the uncurbed activities of local musicians and masquerades churning out derogatory songs against other clans. To be precise, this led to serious destruction of lives and property worth millions of Naira in the area. The unrest was serious and lasted for months with its negative effect felt in all facets of life in the area. Inter-marriage between the conflicting clans was seriously discouraged and even crushed. Many dwellers therein relocated to distant lands and vowed never to return to the land for avoidance of having any contact with the perceived enemies or seeing their hard-earned belongings that were destroyed during the crisis.

However, the crisis was laid to rest due with the deployment of security agents by the state government to the area. The conflicting clans were compelled to get themselves submissive to resolution on the basis of the fall of their actors. More importantly, having identified masquerades as a crisis-igniting instrument, banning of masquerades was appropriately adopted by the state government for the purpose of maintaining peace in the area. As observed that the people are republican in nature but at the same time, there is serious need for centralized administration in line with modern civilization, Ohi stool district head, was adopted, on

rotational basis among clans in Ihima. This helped in dousing the tension regarding the leadership crises in the area<sup>25</sup>.

In January, 2001, conflict erupted between the youth of Idozumi and Idoji. The violent conflict erupted from a beauty contest tagged “Miss Okene” which was organised by the youths under the umbrella of the cultural union in the area. The beauty contest was held at Dabras hotel and championed by the youth leaders of different streets in the town as they were the coordinators of cultural activities in the area. The declaration of the winner in the contest was seriously contested by gangs of two streets namely: Idozumi and Idoji.

As clannish identity has a great role to play in the land, the crisis was later given clannish colouration so as to gain the sympathy of more supporters. This later degenerated to a serious violent conflict which lasted for six months or thereabouts. Skirmishes like that is a manifest of the psychological effects of frequent occurrence of violence among youths in the area. Since then, conflict between youths of the two streets, Idozumi and Idoji has been reoccurring intermittently. Indeed, during the period, the entire community was sacked due to this unrest. This pathetic situation in the land took a radical dimension as many houses were burnt and lives were lost. Precisely, the crisis resulted in unimaginable confrontations, killings and other forms of violence. There was curtailment of inter-streets movement as the people of Idoji could not, for any reason, move freely to Idozumi and vice-versa.

The state Government deployed security operatives to curbe the uprising. To address relapse and recurrence of the violence, the cultural union, under the umbrella of Traditional Council, played a significant role in ending the crisis. Serious appeals were made to the youths of the warring parties by the cultural union. There were sensitization programme. Prayers were offered by Muslims, Christians and traditionalists in their respective religious centres for the purpose of having peace permanently returned to the land. As part of measures to address the crisis, respected politicians in the area were present and made serious contributions financially or otherwise in putting an end to the crisis. However, the involvement of the politicians in resolving the conflict has negative implications in the land as the politicians used the avenue as a fertile recruitment ground for political tugs to be used for their political ends<sup>26</sup>.

The crisis was laid to rest through the efforts of religious leaders (Muslims) from the entire Ebiraland who made appeals to the warring parties and later offered prayers for peace to return to the land. As the crisis involved the youths using masquerades to fuel the unrest, the

traditional council that was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the cultural activities in the area made serious appeal to the warring parties. It is also pertinent to note that, as usual in the land, the death of the actors in the crisis seriously doused the tension as some of the leaders in the fight lost their lives. Thus, the coordination of the gangs was no longer possible. In addition to these, security operatives were appropriately deployed to the area by the government. Some members of the warring gangs were arrested by the police while other members fled the town to escape the arrest. The preparation for the new political dispensation brought peace to the town as there was great division in each of the conflicting groups on political party basis. This created room for instant reunion among members of the erstwhile conflicting groups as they were in the same political party. Thus, the preparation for the subsequent gubernatorial election paved way for peace in the area<sup>27</sup>.

Generally, festivals are an agent of social change and control in the land. This is so as the masquerades sing in praise of achievers and condemn those whose activities are considered inimical to the peace, progress and development of the land. The festivals continued playing the traditional social functions that were ingrained by Ebira culture and tradition until the festival was bastardised with the introduction of clannish and political sentiments into the system. Thus, masquerade festival is now a cultural nuisance as it is always a crisis-igniting agent in the land. A relevant instance is that seven days after the Edict No. 8 came into effect in 1995, the police in Okeloh local government could not stop some youths in Ihima who featured masquerade-related violence. A week after the Ihima episode, Okene began the celebration of masquerade (Eche-ane) which ended in violent conflicts between Idoji and Idozumi quarters. (Merietu, 2003)

Today, apart from killing, maiming and destruction of properties, as part of ugly results of social unrests in Ebiraland, many bonafide Ebiras also ignore the participation in the progress and development due to clannish difference. It has gotten to the extent that every Ebira man will always want to be identified along clannish line. Outrageously, the proposed Okengwe Local Government's head quarters could not be resolved due to clannish struggle in the area. Further to this, inter-marriage becomes uneasy, if not absolutely impossible, between warring clans in Ebiraland. Government have failed to stem the tide of violence associated with the activities of masquerade as youths have persistently defied the ban orders. Perhaps, the greatest consequence brought about by this frequent violence is on the political sphere. According to Suleiman (2007):

Ebiras whose lives have been battered by political vendetta are not mere men. They are institutions in their own rights, with sizeable followership. They are national figures whose opinions are respected by outsiders and by the same extension crucial element in Ebira negotiation for political power.... The Senatorial District has certainly lost out in the political equation of Kogi State. Some good persons who ordinarily should offer themselves for services of the land would not want to avail themselves for fear of thugs. Thugs now dictate the political pace in the area. The fear of thugs is the beginning of wisdom in Ebiraland. Sadly, these miscreants who unleash this reign of terror are seen by the young ones as role models. They do not answer great names like Soyinka, Chika Obi, Achebe, Raji Abdullahi etc but meaningless names like Skido, Kasta, Kenyikenyi etc which the thugs are known.

However, Ajaokuta Local Government area, a part of the Kogi Central Senatorial District, is relatively peaceful. The existing peace therein is attributed to the fact that the area is inhabited majorly by the Ebiras, Igalas, Bassa-Ngesand non-indigenes (mostly, workers of Ajaokuta Steel Complex). This could be buttressed by the fact that, the political leadership of the area is based on rotational system between the Ebiras and Igalas/Bassa-Nges. For instance, Mallam Nuhu Atai and Samson Bako Williams (both of Igala origin) were the Chairmen of Ajaokuta Local Government in 1996 (during zero party) and 2007 political dispensation respectively. In fact, the kings of Ajaokuta are all of Igala origin with the exception of Ahmed Nego (Anebira) who was imposed after the demise of Alhaji Ibrahim Ayeneba (King of Igala origin) but later deposed based on court ruling having ruled (from a distant land known as kilometre 18) for eight years. At long last, Attah Doga Mahmud was constitutionally and traditionally installed as Onu of Ajaokuta in 1997.<sup>28</sup> In general, it could be argued that incidences of violence during cultural festivities and political party activities in Kogi Central Senatorial District are deeply rooted in the rivalry among the opposing groups (clans) on the issue of paramount ruler of the land.

### Notes on Chapter Three

1. This is drawn from the interview with Pa Salihu Epo Yusuf (67) on 10/01/2011 at his residence, NO 8, Orietesu, Okene.
2. This is part of submission of Mallam Muktar (45), a son of ex-Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, in an interview on September 26, 2010, in his residence, No 40, Lafia street, Okene
3. This fact is sourced from an interviews granted by both Ahmad Itopa Daud (26) and Ibrahim Kamaldeen (33) on 12/07/2011 in their residences, W2/161, Agassa and AU4/OO5, Agassa, Kogi State.
4. This fact is gotten from interview granted by Sefiyah (23) on 12/06/2013 at the Department of Islamic Studies, FCE, Okene.
5. This is the observation or experience of the researcher as a member of staff of FCE, Okene
6. This fact is sourced from focus-group discussion on 13/07/2011 during Islamic Studies (ISS 322) lecture period titled “Comparative Religion” present the committed Anebira Muslim brothers and sisters were present. This course (ISS 322) is handled by the researcher of this work at Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State.
7. This fact is gotten through personal interaction of the researcher with the inhabitants (elders) of Otite. Outright condemnation of the celebration of masquerade festival in Otite is written (by Otite community) on the signpost erected in front of the College (F.C.E) gate.
8. This is gotten from Provincial Annual Report of Northern Nigeria in the year 1955.
9. This is the view maintained by Ahmad, E.D. (70) in separate interviews granted between September and October, 2010 in his residence, No.6, Ogaminana, Kogi State.
10. An oral interview with Mallam Ahmad Tijani Salawudeen (40) in October 8, 2010 at his residence, No. 13A Inike, Okene.
11. Interview with Adam Isah Abudullahi (40) on November 13, 2010 at his residence, NO 6B, Idoji, Okene.
12. This is gotten from the work of Ahmadu, E.D. titled *Who are the Ebiras*
13. This is the submission of Mallam Muktar (45), son of ex-Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, in an interview in October, 16 2010 in his residence, No 40, Lafia Street, Okene.
14. This is the position of Pa Sulaimon Lawal Ada (67) (and it is in line with the positions of some elders interviewed in different location in the land) in an oral interview at his residence, 03/04, Ohida road, off Lagos road, Obeiba, Ihima.



15. This is sourced from the interview with Pa Salihu Epo Yusuf (67) on 20/01/2011 at his residence, NO 8, Orietesu, Okene.
16. This is gotten from the work of Ahmadu, E.D. titled "Who are the Ebiras"
17. This is the position of Pa Sulaimon Lawal Ada (67) (and it is in line with the positions of some elders interviewed in different location in the land) in an oral interview at his residence, 03/04, Ohida road, off Lagos road, Obeiba, Ihima.
18. An oral interview with Mallam Ahmad Tijani Salawudeen (40) on 20/06 12 at his residence, No. 13A Inike, Okene.
19. The fact is sourced from focus-group-discussion held at Idoji street, Okene, in April 16, 2012.
20. This is the view maintained by Ahmad, E.D. (70) in separate interviews granted between September and October, 2010 in his residence, No.6, Ogaminana, Kogi State.
21. This fact is gotten from oral interview with Mallam Ahmad Tijani Salawudeen (40) in December 18, 2010 on 20/06 12 at his residence, No. 13A Inike, Okene.
22. This is the view maintained by Ahmad, E.D. (70) in separate interviews granted between September and October, 2010 in his residence, No.6, Ogaminana, Kogi State.
23. An oral interview with Alhaji Hamzat (40) on November 12, 2010 at his residence, NO 18, camp 2, Okene- Abuja road, Abobo.
24. An oral interview with Mallam Ahmad Tijani Salawudeen (40) on October 27, at his residence, No. 13A Inike, Okene.
25. This is the position of Pa Sulaimon Lawal Ada (67) in an interview conducted in October 8, 2010 (and it tallies with the views of some elders interviewed in different locations in the land) at his residence, Otite
26. This is part of submission of Mallam Muktar (45), a son of ex-Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, in an interview on September 26, 2010 in his residence, No 40, Lafia street, Okene
27. This is the fact gotten from Mallam Idris A. Musa (36) in an interview granted on 18<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011 in his residence at PDR/OGES/Ogaminana, Kogi state. His submission also tallies with the responses of Ibrahim Kamaldeen (33) and Adam Isah Abudullahi (40) in separate interviews on October 11, 2010 at Otite.
28. This fact is gotten from the oral interview with Attadoga Mahmud (36) on 2/10/2010 at his residence, opposite Onu of Ajaokuta village, Kogi State.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The people of Ebiraland have co-existed for ages. This compelled among them a shared history, inter-clan marriage and trade. Even when there were rifts, such would deepen their inter-group-relations. However, things started falling apart and the centre could no longer hold owing to some misunderstandings among the people. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination estimates that since 1999, 13,500 people have died in Nigeria, Ebiraland inclusive, as a direct result of ethnic and religious violence (Think Security Africa, 2011). Owing to the worrying effects of violence in Ebiraland, government at all levels, organizations and individuals are not ceaseless in finding lasting peace in the land. Thus, various steps are being taken to put a timely end to the crisis in the land.

#### **4.2 Moves for conflict resolution in Ebiraland**

Conflict resolution means a range of methods of eradicating sources of conflict or any reduction in the severity of a conflict or the process of resolving disputes between parties. It generally works in three phases namely: prevention, reduction of intensity of conflict and an ultimate resolution (Rashid, 2005). Having seen the ugly effects of incessant upheavals in Ebiraland, different means have been employed for the purpose of providing lasting solution to the crises in the land. As conflicts are not similar in all the time and spaces for the variation of its nature, types and dimension, it is quite clear that only one method is not enough to resolve or reduce the whole problem. The vital methods and practice of conflict resolution include tolerance, avoidance, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication, coercion, collaborative law, conciliation, litigation and diplomacy. Therefore, the approaches used for the resolution of conflict in Ebiraland include the followings: Traditional model, westernized model and the mixed procedures and practices model.

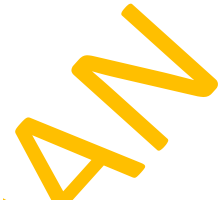
In recent times, scholars of Peace Studies have advocated for recourse to indigenous approach to conflict resolution (Agbaje, 1990). The reason for this is that, no peace-building can be effective if it is not based on the insights and resources of local communities involved in conflicts. Negotiation, mediation and arbitration are the aspects of traditional method of conflict resolution. It is also observed in the submission of Desalegn et.al (2005) that traditional conflict

resolution mechanisms in Africa are generally closely bound with socio-political and economic realities of the lifestyles of the communities. African conflicts, by nature, often generate from peculiar socio-cultural issues and concerns which may not be totally discernible except by people schooled in the customary inflexions and nuances of the group. It is observed that in the pre-colonial epoch in Africa, people engaged in peacekeeping in order to mitigate conflict and maintain a state of equilibrium in their various communities. They made peace and resolved conflicts which threatened to tear their societies apart as to restore order and harmonious relations. Traditional model / indigenous institution for conflict resolution involves traditional rulers and chiefs of various designations and status, council of elders, ancestral cults, local deities and family heads. They are all classified as indigenous personalities in the Africa traditional model of resolving conflicts. The traditional ruler, according to Maddlock and Plot (1950), is the traditional head of an ethnic group and as well, the holders of the highest primary executive authority in an indigenous set up. He is appointed to occupy the leadership position in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area concerned and by the order of the state government. This would make the traditional rulers to have recognition from the government and for this; the traditional rulers are very useful in resolving conflict in their domain. It is noted by Campell (1963) that the traditional rulers tried in assisting the Federal Government of Nigeria in resolving and restoring calmness to the dispute areas e.g Ife/Modakeke crisis. However, Alex (1987) has it that the hindrance to traditional rulers' role in conflict resolution is the failure of the 1999 constitution to define their functions in such a situation. This may be the reason why Hugh (1984) submitted that government does not respect or recognise the effort of the traditional rulers in conflict resolution.

To Olaoba (2010), these institutions operate depending on the intensity of conflict and personalities involved. For instance, the family head, being the oldest living member of the extended family, presides over the resolution of any conflict within a family set-up. However, if the resolution is beyond the power of family head, the case would be taken to village council of elders. This is centred on the belief that elders are the focus of the attention of the youths owing to their (elders) wealth of experience and wisdom. Ebiraadage says "*Oza ana nyi irehi o ye izi ee nu ini ani ni*" (the person who owns the house is the one that knows the points that leak) <sup>1</sup> meaning it is the insider or the person undergoing problems who knows exactly the nature and

magnitude of the problem. In line with this, Bassey (2007) in Nwagboso (2012) expresses his opinion as follows:

....containment or management of conflict entails an understanding of its nature before we can deal effectively with it intellectually, emotionally and behaviourally... Structural analysis of violence and warfare focus on how the organisation of society shapes action...



In the traditional Ebirasetting, elders are believed to be occupying the position of ancestors on earth, and therefore their custodians anywhere they find themselves. The symbolization of ancestral power conferred on the African elders can be summarised as follows:

- Investiture of authority.
- Capacity for articulating norms and customs
- Ennoblement of personality
- Awareness of the well-being of the society
- Legitimacy of representation
- Linkage between abstract and sincerity of purpose
- Enablement to be divinely decisive and
- First-hand knowledge of virtual disposition for resolving conflict in traditional African society.

More importantly, should any conflict emerge between or among individuals of different clans in Ebiraland in the past; the case would be reported to the community head. As it is established that much importance is attached to clan in the land, various clan heads (in addition to the heads of clans to which the parties involved in conflict belong) would be invited by the community head for resolution. Having listened to both sides, heads of other clans there present would be charged with the responsibility of making amicable settlement between the warring parties. The essence of this is to ensure impartial judgement so far the case is ruled by the clanheads outside the clans of the conflicting parties and the community head is there to coordinate the resolution exercise. Success was always recorded as the conflicting parties would drink together symbolising the end of the conflict. In fact, one can conclude that, then, there was serious peaceful co-existence and the clannish attachment was for the progress and development of the land as against the recent developments when the youths have little or no regards for the elders. Traditional rulers are, today, reluctant in shouldering the burden of maintaining peace and

stability as the militants in the land are ready to have them as targets. However, inspite of the modernity coupled with the security challenges everywhere, this means of conflict resolution is still really effective in the remote villages in Ebiraland<sup>2</sup>.

If the case is beyond what the community leader could handle, the case would be taken to the palace. There are in the palace the community chiefs who administer justice with king, as the Presiding Officer, being the sacred representative of the supernatural on earth. He is also regarded as the link between the sacred world and the physical world. Thus, the king is a symbol of the kingdom. Olaifa (2005) has it that, in Yoruba setting, the king's court was the apex court for all cases and no appeal was allowed from this court and indeed the question of an appeal never arose in king's court. However, it noted that the traditional approach to conflict resolution is, today, of less effective as the general insecurity in Nigeria as a whole has extended to the palace.

In recent times, in Kogi Central Senatorial District, if the verdict of traditional approach(es) to resolution is not favourable to any or both of the parties involved in the conflicts, such a case would be taken to the court of law (westernized model) for resolution. Sometimes, the use of mixed procedures and practices which require multiple but simultaneous use of elements from indigenous and modern practices would be employed.

At the level of government, the police force is always used to combat the restive youths in Ebiraland during the period of conflict. In fact, Special Response Squad of policemen were stationed in strategic areas during the period and the police would be fully armed to deal with the miscreants fomenting trouble in the land. Armoured tanks with mobile police officers are retained in the heart of Ebiraland. Federal Government sometimes set up committee of inquiry to look into the causes of conflict and identify ways and means of achieving lasting peace in the area. One of such committees is a panel of inquiry headed by General Christ Ali. State government used to check the activities of the restive youths in the land. Local Government Chairmen, through their empowerment schemes, have employed some youths in the area to address the problem of unemployment. For example, Alhaji Yahaya Karaku, the Chairman, Okene Local Government Council pledged and gave compensations to the victims of the crisis to complement the efforts of the state government. The Chairman also employed some youths of over five hundred who draw salary of forty thousand naira as Special Assistants every month.

The Chairman gave interest-free loans to some social organisations or associations in the area for the purpose of empowering the members<sup>3</sup>.

The thinking of the State Government is that when youths are productively engaged there will be less propensity for restiveness. It is on this ground that attempts were made by the state government to address the issue of unemployment which is one of the causes of crises in the area. This was approached through different means such as: conveyance of the broad-based economic summit for the youths to be productively engaged and for this purpose, modern skill acquisition centre was established in Lokoja where over a thousand youths from the state are being trained in different trades for them to get themselves established in small scale business. For this purpose, the state government gave the total amount of 100,000 Naira each to the beneficiaries. Many Special Assistants were drawn from the area by the Executive Governor with 100,000.00 Naira monthly salaries each. Local Government Chairmen awarded contracts to some youths to do some renovations as well as the introduction of poverty alleviation programmes for the youths in Ebiraland, all for the purpose of empowerment of youths.

Furthermore, State and Local Government gave permanent appointments to some qualified youths in the area and the rich individuals have been employing the qualified youths in their private establishments be it within or outside Ebiraland so as for the youths to be productively employed. In addition, KogiCentral Forum met with the stakeholders at Abdulrahman Okene Town Hall, Okeneto explore way to solve the recurring crises. This is done by chanting a way forward for Ebiraland but not to apportion blame on anybody (Dada, 2010).

The activities of individuals and organisations in minimising conflicts in Ebiraland could not be overemphasised. Many textbooks, thesis, journals and conference papers have been written by Anebiras and the non-Ebiras to identify the causes of conflict in Ebiraland and to suggest ways-out of the problem. The need for equity in the distribution of political offices among the people of Kogi Central Senatorial District was stressed. Seminars and conferences on conflict resolution in Ebiraland have been organized on many occasions for conflict resolution in Ebiraland. A good example of such conferences is the National Submit of Ebira Youths Congress<sup>4</sup>. In addition to these, attempt has also been made by Dr Habibu Angulu Sani to establish school of Politics and Ideology with the following aims and objectives: To turn the seemingly unruly society to a more decent and civilised one. To teach the entrants into the arena of partisan politics, what politics and ideology are both in theory and practice. To make all and

sundry in any society see politics as not only the science of disagreement but essentially one of what the utilitarians refer to as providing the greatest happiness to the greatest number. And the project is also intended to take away the mob from the street in Ebiraland by rechanneling the energies of the people to more wholesome ends<sup>5</sup>.

The activities of different organisations in Ebiraland such as Ebira People's Association(EPA), Front for Ebira Solidarity (FES), Ebira Group for Advancement (EGA), Kogi Central Forum (KCF), Ebira Youth Peace Initiative Movements (EYPI), Ebira Youth Congress (EYC) and many more are worthy of mention. These organisations are doing their best in redeeming the image of Ebira, home and abroad.They are on daily basis finding lasting peace to the land. Sponsoring of some programmes on the media to re-orientate citizens about the ugly effects of conflict is another beautiful step taken to tackle theproblem of constant upheavals in the land. Appealing to individual feuding party to forget and forgive so that room would be created for progress and development in the land. The effort of the Ebira Youth Peace Initiative Movement in handling over 66 assorted guns retrieved from various communities to the state government is a laudable achievement. Kogi Central Media Practitioners chaired by Mallam Abdulkareem Abdulmalik embarked on dialogue with all stake holders to let peace reign (Dada, 2010). As a matter of fact, civil societies are being helpful in curbing conflicts in the area.

Ebira Youth Congress was formed on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2001 to provide answers to the yearnings of the people for a rebirth of value. It serves as a great source of inspiration and motivation in setting good examples of dedication and discipline in the pursuit and attainment of collective mission as a people. General publicity against violence is done and they sometimes move with public address system to preach peace and restore confidence in the mind of people. Consequently, a peace and reconciliation committee was set up for conflict resolution purpose. On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of October, 2001, Islamic and Christian prayers were organized in all the mosques and the various churches respectively for peace to reign supreme in the land and "Unity Tree" was planted in the Ohinoyi's palace during their courtesy visit there. On many occasions, they organised conferences and press releases on the crises.<sup>6</sup>

Introduction of programmes and its concretisation was geared towards changing the negative mind-set of the youths who are the main instruments used to perpetuate crisis in the land. More so, a day was declared for prayers and fasting for deliverance in which drivers, commercial motorcyclists, market and shop owners were prevailed upon to close for a six-hour

preaching for peace is a daily exercise in mosques and churches. The parents as well are charged to perform their duties as parents and give proper monitoring to their children and wards. The assistance of international donor agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO among others was sought to invest in projects for job opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths, and Federal Government was appealed to, for the timely completion of Ajaokuta Steel Complex and Itakpe Iron Ore to create job opportunities for the people from within and outside Ebiraland. The issue of paramount chief, which is one of the causes of the conflict in the land has been addressed with the adoption of Ohi Stool (district head) which is rotational on clannish basis. Ban has been imposed on all masquerade activities in the area for masquerade activities have been fingered as one of the immediate causes of the crisis in the land. Ekuechi and Echina festivals, which are significant causes of crisis, are temporarily banned and politicians were advised to imbibe the culture of tolerance, forgiveness and entrenchment of internal democracy. With all these, it seems that Ebiraland will be gradually wedded to its original state of peaceful co-existence<sup>7</sup>.

#### **4.3 Islamic approach for crisis in Ebiraland**

Conflict is natural to man as he/she is susceptible to dispute and misunderstanding by nature. This has been identified by the angels when they were notified by Allah about His decision to create man, as vicegerent who would have passion or emotion, on earth. The angels were of the opinion that man would be spreading mischief or shedding blood on earth as he is endowed with passion. In practical sense, the crises in Ebiraland pave way for merciless killings, even of the innocent souls, and senseless destruction of the hard-gotten properties as against the Islamic teachings on sanctity of life and property. For the essence of resolving conflict, in most cases, there is need for mediator(s) whose personality goes far in determining the outcome, even the take-off of the process. The mediator must be a person of proven integrity whose antecedents would recommend him to the parties. The basis of operation is for him to be accepted as mediator by the parties involved in the conflict. Bier and Stief (1997) suggest a few tips on the personality of a mediator of which the expanded version of it is presented below:

- (a) He must possess strong “people skill”, especially giving good attention with good listening skill;
- (b) He must be imbued with the ability to be directive and to confront. He must be able to elicit information directly from the client without any fear or intimidation;



- (c) He must be comfortable with high emotion, argument, interruptions and tears. He must not be taken in by emotional display so much as could tamper with his judgement;
- (d) He must be respected and trusted. This would be enhanced by his professional skills and antecedents;
- (e) He must be patient in following disputants' details of conflict and the progression towards resolution;
- (f) He must be able to emphasize and be gentle with his clients, to withhold judgement. He must not be quick in judgement;
- (g) He must be impartial; and
- (h) There should be low need for personal aggrandisement, overt and needless display of expertise for credit and recognition.

Added to the above mentioned qualities of a mediator in any conflict which guarantee him for the possession of third-party intervention, Albert (2001) is of the opinion that the mediator needs to be rooted in the culture(s) of the clients. A deep cognisance of information about the conflict setting is as well very significant in intervening in conflict situation. To buttress this point, Bassey (2007) in Nwagboso (2012) expressed his opinion as follows:

UNIVERSITY

....containment or management of conflict entails an understanding of its nature before we can deal effectively with it intellectually, emotionally and behaviourally... structural analysis of violence and warfare focus on how the organisation of society shapes action...

In fact, the impossibility to have any mediator (human) to have perfect possession of all the above mentioned qualities of a mediator is responsible for the failure of pure human intervention in putting an everlasting end to the upheavals in any society. This implies that only Allah, the Creator, the Sustainer and the Only Perfect Being is capable of providing the perfect means of conflict resolution in the society.

Islam recognises the inevitability of conflict or war in brotherhood of man. However, the inevitability of war does not mean that man should submit to their instincts of anger, fierceness of paganism, envy, cruelty and selfishness. Islam with its humanitarian spirit establishes universal peace by integrating races and colours and encourages mutual tolerance, friendliness and compassion among human-beings. Therefore, war or conflict should be controlled by moral, not lust, against tyrants and aggressors, not against the innocent. War should be constrained by the values of mercy and tolerance, as shown by the prophet (SAW), even towards the bitterest enemies and persecutors of Muslims. This could be seen in the prophet's high sense of magnanimity when his bitterest enemy, Abu Sufyan lying at his mercy during the conquest of Makkah. Peace is, therefore, a fundamental phenomenon in Islam for it is only when there is peace that the purpose of the creation of mankind could be realised. In fact, human rights are attainable only under peaceful condition.

More importantly, Islam lays great emphasis on justice being the means of ensuring peaceful co-existence between the ruler and the ruled, the privileged and the less-privileged, the believers and the non-believers. It, as well, teaches rejection of injustice and oppression as the motive underlying *Jihad* is to repulse aggression. Therefore, the suppression of strife and aggression is the end of fighting in Islam. To this effect, the Qur'an says:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ. الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ  
بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ  
وَأَسَاجِدُهَا وَلِلَّهِ الْكِبْرُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَبْصُرُ مَا لَا تَبْصُرُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَظَهِيرٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

To those against who war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for

their aid. (They) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right (for no cause) except they say, “Our Lord is Allah.” Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure.... (22:39-40)

However, Islam stresses the relevance of settling rift amicably and the danger inherent in conflict and hostility. Thus, the Prophet reported to have said:

Shall I not inform you of something more excellent in degree than fasting, charity and *salat*. On receiving the reply, “Certainly”, he said, “It is putting things right between people, for to incite people to dispute is like a razor. And I do not mean that it shaves off the hair but it shears the religion.

In Islam, wealth is a trust for God while the destruction of life and property is a grave moral crime. Such an act is, in fact, equivalent to spreading mischief and corruption in the world. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was reported to have said in one of his sayings as follows:

أهزموا باسم الله في سبيل الله ولا تمثلوا الكفار والملحدين ولا تقتلوا المقتول، ولا تقتل المسن ولا الصغير ولا المرأة ولا تقطع الشجرة ولا تهدموا البيوت، ولا تذهب إلى المعابد بل ابعث إليهم الرسالة.

Conquer in the name of Allah, on the path of Allah...but do not be cruel or treacherous, do not mutilate dead bodies, do not kill an old man, a child or a woman and not to cut down a tree or demolish building, not to go to place of worship but to leave monks, priests and nuns etc to their life-long worship”.

In Islam, life consists of established, well defined forms of mutual love and respect, co-operation and mutual responsibility among Muslims in particular and the human race in general. Islam lays great emphasis on sacredness of life (*nafs*), property (*mal*) honour and dignity in the sight of Allah. The Prophet (SAW) emphasised the sanctity of life (*nafs*) and property (*mal*) in his farewell sermon by saying

أيها الناس، لا تعترضوا على الحياة ولا الأموال حتى تلقى ربك، الحماية على حياتك وأموالك حرام عليكم كحرمة يومكم هذا وشهركم هذا.

“...O men, your lives and property shall be inviolate until you meet your Lord. The safety of your lives and of your property shall be as inviolate as this holy day and holy month...” (1)

Great importance attached to human life and dignity is illustrated in the Quranas follows:

واتل عليهم نبأ بني آدم بالحق إذ قربا قربانا فتقبل من أحدهما ولم يتقبل من الآخر قال لأقتلنك قال إنما يتقبل الله من المتقين. لئن بسطت إلى يدك لتقتلني أنا ببساط يدي إليك لأقتلك إني أخاف الله رب العالمين. إني أريد أن تبوء بإثمي وإثمك فتكون من أصحاب النار وذلك جزاء الظالمين. فطوعت له نفسه قتل أخيه فقتله فأصبح من الخاسرين. فبعت الله غرابا يبحث في الأرض ليريه كيف يواري سوؤة أخيه قال يا ويلتى أعجز أن أكون مثل هذا الغراب فأواري سوءة أخي فأصبح من النادمين. من أجل ذلك كتبنا على بني إسرائي أن لا يهتفوا بالذين كفروا بآياتهم وأن يقولوا سبوا هؤلاء المشركين لما ظفروا بهم وكانوا في كيد مبين. ومن أحيائها فكأنما أحيى الناس جميعا ولقد جانتهم أرسلنا بالبينات ثم إن كثيرا منهم بعد ذلك في الأرض لمسرفين

Recite to them the true of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold: they each presented a sacrifice (to God): It was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter, “Be sure I will slay you” “Surely”, said the former, “God does accept the sacrifice of those who are righteous. If you do stretch thy hand against me to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you. For I do fear God, the Cherisher of worlds. For me, I intend to let you draw on yourself my sin as well as yours, for you will be among the companions of the fire, and that is the reward of those who do wrong”. The selfish soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother; he murdered him and became (himself) one of the lost ones...On that account, We ordained for the children of Israel that if any one slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if any one saved a life, ‘it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.... (5:27-32).

For the purpose of having peace reign supreme in the society, Islam makes provisions for and protects human rights. The provisions include: Right to life, right to property, right to honour, right to nationality and equality before the law, right to fair trial and justice, right to security, right to education and right to adequate standard of living. In addition to these are the right to work, right to privacy, human rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to participate in government, right to marry and found a family, the right to freedom from torture and in-human treatment among others.

More significantly, Islam recognises the essence of patience (*sabr*) and the need for adaptability of man in any given situation. The Quraysh threatened Prophet Muhammed, his folks and followers, ridiculed him and his message, (SAW). It commissioned its poets to revile him with their sharpest wit and to direct their most caustic sting against his preaching. It inflicted injury and harm on his (SAW) person and on the persons of his followers. They plotted against him threw stones at his house and even came close to killing him near the *Ka'bah*. The prophet

and his followers were banished and dispersed their country and as well injured them in their trade and commerce while impoverising them. All this notwithstanding, Muhammed continued to call men with kind and gentle arguments into the God of truth.

Islam is an all-embracing way of life. Peace is viewed, in Islam, as the pivot around which the stability and progress of mankind revolves. The society must be conducive for mutual understanding, peace and security whereby legitimate human rights are obtained with sincere humility and Godliness without grudge. Islam asserts that human beings who are asked to rule are only holding power in trust for God. It therefore teaches its adherents politeness, neatness and goodness which are all acceptable to all mankind.

For the essence of acquiring knowledge of harmonious living, enough and perfect provisions are made in the Qur'an being an embodiment of virtues and guidance against vices. Islam makes provisions for reconciliation (*sulh* or *maslaha*), meditation (*wasta*), arbitration (*tahkim*) and dialogue, all of which are effective weapons of establishing social equilibrium. Thus, sufficient provisions for conflict resolution as provided by Allah and exemplified by the seal of prophets, Muhammad (SAW). The provisions include patience (*sabr*), forgiveness ('*Afw*), farsightedness, compromise (*Tawafuq*), humility (*Khushū'*), cooperation (*Taawun*) and the adoption of *Ash-Shūrah* (consultation committee). Indeed, these were very helpful in the settlement of crises of the placement of black stone during the rebuilding of Kabah, the *Aus* and the *Khazraj* violent conflict, treaty of Hudaibiyah, the appointment of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and the conquest of Makkah among others. Indeed, these provisions are for the avoidance of war, minimising its impacts if it is unavoidably occurred and ending it as soon as possible with which the Prophet (SAW) succeeded in sanitising the pre-Islam Arabs immoral practices.

Resolution of conflicts is a collective responsibility in Islam as the Quran says:

وَإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِن بَعَثَ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْآخَرَى فَمَا تَلَوَا آلِي تَبَغِي حَتَّى تَقِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن فَاءَتْ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ. إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

And if two Muslim parties be in opposition with one another make peace ye between them: but if one of the parties maintains intransigence then fight ye all that party until it returns to Allah's order. But if it returns, then amend between them with equity and do justice. Surely Allah loves those who do justice. The believers are

but a single brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive mercy (49:9-10)

The divine conflict resolution strategies were seen in the life of Prophet Muhammed (SAW) even long before his prophethood. For instance, this was manifested as his exemplary life-style among his people earned him a nickname, *Al-Amin* (the trustworthy). Thus, this made his wisely-presented view to be unanimously welcomed by the conflicting clans regarding the placement of the Sacred Black Stone in the rebuilding of *Ka'bah*. Having known fully the implications of allowing any of the contending clans to solely responsible for the placement of the Sacred Black Stone, he intervened. Worthy of note is the fact that, in spite of high prestige he (SAW) enjoyed among all Meccans on the basis of his objectivity and candidness of purpose, Muhammed himself participated in the public life of Makkah. They supplied him the robe, as requested by the prophet, on which he placed the Black Stone. Thereafter, he invited an elder from each of the four contending clans to hold onto each of the edges of the robe and they all carried the Stone to the site of the construction. Muhammad (SAW) therefore picked the Stone and laid it in its place (Rahim, 2001). It is therefore established that the success recorded by the prophet (SAW) in the instant averted bloodshed amicably was on the basis of prophet's exemplary lifestyle, humility inclusive, as acknowledged by the Meccans.

More so, the readiness of the conflicting clans to compromise their egos or clannish prides created good atmosphere for cooperation which made them to comply with the Prophet's (SAW) suggestion. Qur'an says:

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا  
وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And let not those among you who are blessed with graces and wealth swear not to give (any sort of help) to their kinsmen, Al-Masakin (the poor), and those who left their homes for Allah's Cause. Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (24:22)

It is, indeed, necessary for the Anebiras of Kogi Central Senatorial District to put an everlasting end to their age-long clannish violence on the basis of the lessons of this prophetic bloodshed-

averting mechanism. In spite of the fact that the world is segmented into divisions, the Quran traces the genesis of mankind to a single soul. To this end, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا  
وِنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

O people! fear God, your Lord, who created you from a single being, and created its mate of the same kind and spread from these two, many men and women, fear God by whom you demand one of another your rights, and be mindful of the ties of relationship; surely God watches you (4:1).

Therefore, it is very relevant for Ebiras to see that the variation in clan is only for recognition and not for irrational clannish affiliation or self-praise as there is no superiority of, even, nation over other in the sight of Allah. The Ebiras need to see themselves as one entity and share their posterity and adversity together. Thus, the contemporary spirit of irrational clannish identity in the land should be convincingly jettisoned for peace to reign supreme in the land. The models of Islam in peace-making and conflict resolution are clear as follows;

In another related development, the lessons derived from the wisdom, patience, farsightedness, forgiveness and compromise the prophet exercised in averting crises during the treaty of Hudaibiyyah is another relevant instance of Islamic crisis-averting model. This incident occurred after a year of battle of Ditch, February 628 CE. This was the period when fifteen thousand Muslims prepared to perform *Umrah* (lesser pilgrimage) under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Muslims were disallowed, by the *Quraysh*, to perform the *Umrah* and treaty was, at long last, reached by both parties, prophet (SAW) and Suhayl being the representatives. Part of the treaty indicated that both parties would observe a ten years truce so that people might live in peace. Added to this, if anyone from Quraysh came over to the Apostle without obtaining permission of his guidance, he would be returned to them but if anyone of those with the Apostle escaped to the Quraysh, they would not be bound to return him. Anyone who wished to enter into a bound and security with the Apostle, he would be permitted to do so and likewise anyone could come to a similar agreement with the Quraysh (Rahim, 2001).

The negotiation or treaty seemed highly embarrassing and incredible to majority of the Muslims to the extent that Umar spoke his mind by stepping up to Abu Bakr and asked him “Had

the Apostle not told us that we would repair the house of God and go round it?”. In response to this, Abu Bakr calmed Umar down by replying as follows: “..but did the Apostle say that you would go to the House of God and perambulate it this year?” (Ali Nadwi, 1979). It is relevant to say that any agreement between Muslims and their enemy should be strictly adhered to by both parties. To buttress this point, the prophet (SAW) said: No people would break a treaty except that Allah has made their enemy to prevail over them (Imam Malik, n.d.). This nueralised the die-hearted curiosity of the Muslims for the performance of *Umrah*, at all costs, that very year. The episode, indeed, gives measure of the prophet’s tactical ability, of absolute obedience he was able to command from his followers. The relevance of patience and humility is, therefore, scripturally emphasised as the Qur’an says

” وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا“

“And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words) they reply back with mild words of gentleness”. (25:63)

In the end, the treaty latter turned to victory as the Quraysh, at least for the first time, recognised the Apostle (SAW) as being equal to themselves. Muslims were no longer seen as exiles and outlaws but as a community worthy of attention of the Quraysh of whom they have made a treaty of equals. This eventually created enabling atmosphere for peace to such an extent that Arabs embraced Islam more rapidly. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri said “There was never a victory in Islam greater than this. When the armistice came and war laid down its burdens, people began to meet in safety and converse together. And no intelligent man was apprised of Islam who did not enter it. Within two years of the truce, as many as those as had entered it before, embraced Islam, or even more”. In fact, the attitude of peace and amicableness displayed by the Apostle on this occasion demonstrated his exemplary patience and moderation which are capable of resolving crises of the like, Ebiraland inclusive. Therefore, the brilliant success recorded thereafter was based on patience (*sabr*), forgiveness (*Afw*), farsightedness, compromise (*Tawafuq*), humility (*Khushū*) and cooperation (*Taawun*) exercised by the prophet (SAW). Thus, the mediator (s) in the Ebiraland’s crises should make sense out of the prophetic manner of resolving conflicts during his life-time for the purpose of returning peace to the land.



After a very bloody battle in Buath in which the Aus fought against the Khazraj, some members of the two contending clans went to Makkah for religious purpose. The two rival tribes who held dominant position in the city, but for the last few decades had been bleeding to death in fratricidal feuds responded favourably to the prophet's call. They thereafter convincingly accepted his prophethood by saying:

We have left our people, the Aus and the Khazj, who are alienated from one another and full of hatred for one another. Would to God that they might meet you and unite under your leadership! Should this ever become the case, you will be the strongest man in Arabia (Haykal, 1982)

They informed their relatives regarding the new faith as they returned to Yathrib. Infact, the relatives received the news with joy and enthusiasm to the extent that there was no house, of either *al-Aus* or *al-Khazraj*, in which the name of Muhammad (SAW) was not mentioned with reverence and awe. In the next pilgrim session, ten and two members of *al-Khazraj* and *al-Aus* respectively set out for Makkah and met the prophet at *al-Aqabah*. This led to the first covenant of *al-Aqabah* in which the members of the contending clans promised to strictly adhere to the unity of Allah and to live the life of virtue and obedience. While returning, the prophet ordered Musab bn Umayr to follow them so as to reside with them for the purpose of teaching them *Qur'an* and precepts of Islam. Progress reports about Islam were sent by Musab bn Umayr to the prophet with its effects being manifested in 622CE when seventy three men and two women came to Makkah from Yathrib as to meet with the prophet (SAW).

The skilful diplomacy of the prophet adopted in the settlement of the age-long clannish rivalry between these tribes to the extent that the arrival of the prophet to Madinah was equally acclaimed by these two age-long conflicting clans. Buttressing the fact that the prophet was loved by the people with all their minds and hearts earned the land a change of name from Yathrib to Al-Medina Al-Munawara (The Illuminated City). More so, having gained people's confidence, the prophet (SAW) was allowed to give new constitution to be used in the land. In the constitution, Muslims and the men of other faiths were placed on equal footing on the freedom of religion and opinion, the inviolability of the city, human life and property and the forbiddance of crimes. In order to weld people together into an orderly federation, the prophet (SAW) granted a charter to the people, clearly defining their rights and obligations. This was to guarantee victory for the truth and progress of the world towards perfection in the higher unity of

mankind. He showed great wisdom, insight and statesmanship as he brought about political and organisational unity in the land. The genuine brotherhood arose and this forged the Muslim ranks into an indivisible unity.

The humility, compassion, faithfulness, outright charity, goodness to the poor, oppressed and deprived, as well as the prestige and influence of the prophet (SAW) made him to conclude the pact of friendship, alliance and co-operation in the safeguarding of religious freedom throughout the city of Madinah. Indeed, with the new constitution, the state of anarchy and corruption was suppressed as the prophet replaced blood bond with faith, blood feud with arbitration and tribal group with *Ummah*. The Ebiras should therefore be convincingly and faithfully ready for the replacement of clannish/blood bond and blood feud with faith and arbitration respectively.

The propagation of Islam received serious resistance from the *Quraysh* through serious persecution to such an extent that great sacrifice became small, and death itself became a welcome alternative for the Muslims. Thus, the Prophet with his followers was compelled to migrate to Yathrib for safety. Thereafter, as Islam spread outside Makkah, the *Quraysh* applied propaganda and mental warfare as a means of attacking the prophet and his followers. However, the more they persecuted him, the more patience and resolve Muhammed (SAW) showed in his mission. More significantly, inspite all the persecution, the Prophet still remained a modest man, full of love for his people, anxious to do well to them and to guide them in the truth path. The prophet is reported to have made submission that “أي مسلم يمسكن بين قومه ويتحمل المشقة والمصائب خير من الذي هاجر من قومه بسبب سوء أفعالهم” فيما معناه.

“A Muslim who lives in the midst of society and bears with patience the afflictions that come to him is better than the one who shuns society and cannot bear any wrong done to him”. More relevantly, Islam preaches forgiveness as Qur’an reads:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e Allah orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger and to excuse those who treat them badly) then, verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.(41:34)

Added to this, the amnesty granted to the Mekkans by the Prophet (SAW) during the conquest of Makkah is a great lesson for the entire world, Anebirasinclusive. The Prophet forgave them inspite the fact that he had the brilliant opportunity for vengeance (as he was with

over ten thousand committed Muslims) regarding the severe persecution he and his followers received from the hands of *Quraysh* in the course of propagating Islam. Indeed, Nadwi (1979) has it that during the Conquest of Makkah, it was observed that the Prophet was displeased with Sa' d's bragging saying "Today is a day of conflict". The Prophet (SAW) responded by saying "Nay, today is the day of mercy and forgiveness. Today, will Allah honour the Quraysh, and raise glory of the Sanctuary" Lane-poole writes "...The day of Muhammad's greatest triumph over his enemies was also the grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave *Quraysh* all the years of sorrow and cruel scron with which they had afflicted him, and gave amnesty to the whole of Mecca..." This implies that *Anebiras* should learn absolute forgiveness as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), irrespective of the ugly happenings in the past, so as to allow peace reign supreme in the land. The existence of peace in the land would definitely give room for serious development in Kogi Central Senatorial District.

The generational leadership tussle in Ebiraland could be put to an end on the basis of the lessons to be derived from the appointment of the rightly-guided caliphs which was based on *Ash- Shūrah* (consultation committee). The prophet (SAW) did not formally nominate or appoint any of his companions as his successor during his life-time but rather, he deligated authority to Abu Bakr to lead the *Ummah* in some occasions. Immediately, after the death of the prophet, there arose the successorship wrangling that was capable of destroying the entire *Ummah*. This led to hot arquement in *Shūrah*(consultative committee) between the *Ansar* (helpers) and the *Muhajirun* (immigrants). This was resolved as the *Ansar* compromised their views for the avoidance of disintergration among *Ummah*. The *Ansar* gave preference to the emergence of the successor among the *Muhajirun* there present which included Abu Bakr, Umar and Abu Ubaidah. In essence, Abu Bakr used his wisdom to avert danger as he suggested to the *Ansar* to choose either Umar or Abu Ubaidah as the successor. On the other way round, the two suggested individuals gave preference to the wise, experienced and elderly Abu Bakr to themselves as the worthy successor of the prophet (SAW).

The appointment was considered as a priviledge by the caliph as this was manifested in his sense of humility demonstrated starting from inaugural address. The address reads thus: You have elected me as your caliph although I am not better than you; I need all your help. If I do right, help me. If I do wrong, correct me... (Rahim, 2001 p 53-5). After the death of Abu Bakr,

Umar was elevated to the Caliphate as a man of great personality and talent. The ideal was generally welcomed by the Muslim *Ummah* and they all took oath of allegiance to him.

The emergence of Uthman as the third caliph was the outcome of *Shura*(consultationcommittee) set up by the second caliph, Umar while in his sick bed. He nominated a body of six notable persons which included Uthman, Ali bn Affan, Talha, Zubayr, Abdur-Rahman bn Auf and Sa'd bn Waqqas for the appointment his successor among themselves. After suggestions and deliberations, Uthman emerged as the caliph as he had the majority in the free and fair election conducted for the purpose. The choice was approved by the entire Muslim *Ummah* and they all took oath of allegiance to him. Thereafter, the assassination of Uthman led to the emergence of Ali as the fourth caliph. This was made possible as Abdullahi Ibn Saba, the leader of Egyptian party proposed that Ali as the rightful successor and all acclaimed it. As there was no imposition, of any form in the appointment, everyone swore allegiance to him and he was the caliph of Islam.

At this point, it is generally noted that the avoidance of leadership tussle in the appointment of any of the Rightly Guided Caliphs was based on Qur'an which reads:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

And those who answer the Call of their Lord (i.e to believe that He is the only One Lord (Allah), and to worship none but Him Alone), and perform *As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat)*, and who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them. (42:38)

The lessons derived from this style of appointing a leader are useful lessons for the world in general and Ebiraland in particular.

#### **4.3.1 Islamic approach to economic crisis in Ebiraland**

In spite of the fact that Nigeria is blessed with human and material resources needed for economic development in any community, Nigeria is still ranked as the 27<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world based on various human development indices. Ebiraland as part of Nigeria is facing economic problem which are as a result of various interlocked factors- poor management of resources, irreligious practice of polygyny, unemployment (among others), despite the fact that the land is blessed with abundant human and natural resources needed for progress.

It is an established fact that polygyny was practised long before the advent of new faiths-Islam and Christianity (1903 and 1921 respectively) in Ebiraland like any other ethnic groups in Africa. The practice continues till today for the new faiths (especially Islam) permit polygyny without minding the conditions of fulfilling husband's responsibilities coupled with the maintenance of justice between wives. In the past, the practice depended largely on social standing, taste and financial power, the later being the most determining factor. Nowadays, some Anebiras engage in polygyny without considering the real cultural essence of the practice and the roles to play as a father, such as maintenance of family, despite their meagre income. Anebiras who practise monogamy are mostly Christians and a few Muslims who are moderated by economic reasons, social change and priority for high standard of living. Some Ebira Muslims do not even keep to the maximum of four wives as stipulated in the Qur'an. Sanni (1993) observed that the wives, inEbiraland, live apart from their husbands in different locations and towns perhaps for avoidance of matrimonial crises between the wives. However, the ugly effects of such a residential pattern made Jubril (2009) to submit that polygyny is a menace inEbiraland for many fathers are not up to the task in the maintenance of family. Infact, parental care is heavily lacked in many polygynious settings in the land as against the adage which says "*Oo hi irehi, di oo hi ehe ri*" (thehouse gets filled before the outsider gets filled) <sup>8</sup> meaning charity begins at home.

Indeed, Islam recommends monogamy but at the same time, it permits polygyny to solve certain social problems such as high population of female over males, barrenness, high-sexual urge and the likes. In Islam, marriage offers tranquillity to the soul and peace of mind, so that man and woman may live together in an atmosphere of love, mercy, harmony co-operation, mutual understanding and tolerance. The prophet's concern for women reached such an extent that he did not forget to remind Muslims to treat them kindly in his farewell sermon. Islam gives them a status that they have never enjoyed in any other religion. According to report given by Buhari and Muslim, the Prophet (SAW) says "Treat women kindly, for woman was created from a rib. The part of it that most bent is the top. If you try to straighten it you will break it, and if you leave it alone it will remain bent. So treat women kindly".Qur'an says "And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan-girls then marry (other) women of your choice two or three or four but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly(with them) then

only one.....”(4:3). وإن خفتم ألا تقسطوا فى اليتامى فانكحوا طاب لكم من النساء مثنى وثلاث ورباع فإن خفتم ألا تعدلوا فواحدة أو ما ملكت أيمانكم ذلك أنى ألا تعولوا.

Difficulty in the maintenance of justice, as a condition attached to the practice of polygyny, is confirmed when Qur’an says “You will not be able to deal equally between your wives, however, much you wish (to do so)....” (4:129). Silence is maintained regarding the number of children a Muslim should bear but emphasis is seriously laid on the maintenance of family as a divine duty of a father (in Islam). The Qur’an reads:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْعَمُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَحَاوُونَ تُشَوِّهْنَ فِعْظُهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْتَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them from their means...” { Q4:34}

In support of this verse, prophet Muhammad (SAW) has a saying which reads "خيركم خير

لأهله وأنا خيركم جميعا."

"The best of you is he who is best to his family and I am the best among you". "خيركم خير لأهله وأنا

خيركم جميعا."

It is essential to note that in spite of the likely difficulty in practising polygyny, prophet Muhammad (SAW) practised it and demonstrated the maintenance of justice as humanly possible. They all lived together and Aisha, a prophet’s wife, reported to have said “ ... it was very rare that he (SAW) would not visit us all and come near each of his wives without having intercourse with her till he (SAW) visited one whose day it was and spend the night with her” (Lemu,1990). However, it is noted that many Muslim countries in the world prohibit polygyny. For instance, Moroccan Code of 1958 prohibited polygyny, the Tunisian Code of Personal Status 1957 says “Polygyny is forbidden”, Iraq Personal Status of 1959 imposed restriction on polygyny, in 1961, Pakistan as well placed restriction on polygyny and prohibition is as well completely placed on polygyny in Syria and Tunisia. Though, the restriction does not render such marriage invalid (Doi, 1984).

Having seen the ugly implications of joblessness or idleness among Epira youths in the land, one can now see the serious need for the aggressive employment generation and industrial expansion which is capable of minimising rising insecurity in the area. The fact remains that

security situation would continue to deteriorate unless government and individuals create massive jobs to curtail the high rate of unemployment. Job creation would take the poverty away from people and money from the politicians would no longer be attractive to anybody for being used for violence in the land.

Moreover, Islam stands not for life-denial but for life-fulfilment. It does not believe in asceticism and to this effect, Allah says “When the prayer is ended, then, disperse in the land and seek of God’s bounty...” (62:10). فإذا قضيت الصلاة فانتشروا فى الأرض وابتغوا من فضل الله واذكروا الله كثيرا. Therefore, man is encouraged to avail himself of the opportunity of productive enterprise afforded by the almost limitless bounties of Allah. Islam grants rights of independent ownership to individual who fulfils the conditions of legal capacity. This shows that Islam attaches no inhibition to man’s economic endeavours. For this, the Qur’an advises man to pray as follows: Our Lord; give us the good in this world and the good in the hereafter (Q 2:201). ربنا آتتنا. Allah also strongly censures those who refuse to benefit from His blessings. The Qur’an says “Say (to them): By whose order have you denied yourself those amenities which God has created for His people and those good things to eat and use (which He has made for you)?” (Q7:32). قل من حرم زينة الله التى أخرج لعباده والطيبات من الرزق قل هى للذين آمنوا فى الحياة الدنيا خالصة يوم القيامة كذلك فصل الآيات لقوم يعقلون

In the submission of Abul A’la Mandudi (1968), he observed that the principles of Islamic economics lie in the fact that an individual has neither the right to acquire and harness the worldly resources according to his own sweet will, nor is he entitled to draw a line independently to decide between the lawful and the unlawful. Indeed, both the Quran and *Hadith* are explicit on the acquisition of wealth as significant ventures in human life. In Islam, work is the primary source of earning income and acquisition of property and wealth. Islam insists that man should work for Quran reads: Command (O Muhammad): work, soon will God observe your work.... (9:105). *وقل اعملوا فسيرى الله عملكم ورسوله والمؤمنون وستردون إلى عالم الغيب والشهادة فينبئكم بما كنتم تعملون*. Work is a means of meeting personal and family needs. Qur’an reads “It is out of His mercy that He has made for you night and day that you may rest therein (i.e. during the night) and that you may seek His bounty (i.e. during the day) and that you may be grateful ( Q28:73). *ومن رحمته جعل لكم الليل والنهار لتسكنوا فيه ولتبتغوا من فضله ولعلكم تشكرون*.

(2)

Dignity of labour is taught and work is good as long as it does not involve anything unlawful. Islamic economy is based on public sector, private sector and voluntary sector (*Zakat* and *Sadaqah*) In Islam, there are financial alternatives or profit and loss sharing scheme through which loans are granted and these include *Musharakah* (Equity Participation), *Mudarabah*, *Murabaha* among others. *Musharakah* is a form of partnership whereby financial institution increases funds into an existing business. The ratio of bank and its clients' sharing of profit and loss is then predetermined according to the parties in the business. However, the parties are entitled to charge a wage for taking part in management of business. To Aliero (1993), *Mudarabah* model is about situation whereby one party supply capital and the other party is the enterprise for a business venture. Further to this, Omipidan (2008:83) views *Murabaha* model as cost plus contract in which a client requests the bank to purchase equipment or goods and sell them to him at cost-plus a declared profit. The source equally mentions *Ijarah* which is a contract of lease of a building on agreed price and *Wikalah* i.e. agent agreement where Mr. A. sells to Mr. B. for an agreed commission. Indeed, the basic human needs are water, food, clothing and shelter. Citizens in Islamic state may challenge government if their needs are not met and the aim the state is to produce citizens living a virtuous life. For this, Prophet Muhammad declared that government should provide citizens with facilities necessary for maintenance of health, happiness and dignity (Sharif, 1963)

Poverty is a phenomenon that affects all aspects of man's existence which includes physiological, psychological and moral aspect. Prophet (SAW) always prayed against absolute poverty by saying "O Allah I seek refuge with You from disbelief and poverty". In addition, one of the sayings of the prophet reads "O Allah, make the provision of Muhammad's household (just) sufficient for us". In fact, the best deed in Islam is feeding the poor and those who discourage feeding the poor are rebuked. Quran reads "And urges not on the feeding of Al-faqir (the poor)" (107:3). Prophet preached against having much attachment to excessive materialism, the deprivation of the weak and the neglect of the poor and the needy in the society. It is established that virtually all these were fully implemented and observed by the Prophet even when the oppression reached its highest peak. This is a pointer to the importance of food security to man. A hungry man is a devil's workshop, so says an adage.

Furthermore, according to Irfan in Raji (2010), government expenditure should be tailored towards the satisfaction of meritorious wants and or targeted towards raising living



standard and income potential of the under-privileged members of the society. Islam has an inbuilt institution through which an individual can render useful assistance in alleviating poverty for the prophet (SAW) was quoted to have said: Do good (unto others) as God has been good (generous) to you” .

The institution (*Zakat*) is the cornerstone of Islamic security system and desirability of social spending is to alleviate the effect of poverty, to remove helplessness and to alleviate temporary hardship. The fulfilment of man’s trusteeship function is based on spending some of his wealth in manner ordained by God for public purpose. Zakat is the determined allotment of wealth prescribed by Allah which should be taken from the rich for onward distribution to those entitled to them with reference to Quran which reads “ *As-Sadaqat* (here it means *Zakat*) are only for *Fuqara*’ (the poor) and *Al-Masakin* (the needy) and those who are employ to collect (the funds), and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam), and to free captives, and for those in debt...”(Q9:60). More so, in order to make *Zakat* ameliorating the hardship of the poor and the needy, enough should be given to them to lift them out of the vicious circle of poverty so that recipients become payers in the succeeding years. The Prophet was quoted as saying that ‘I shall give alms to the poor again and again till each one of them comes to possess at least one hundred camels. (Abu Ubayd’nd). سأتين العطاء للفقراء مرة فمرة حتى يأتي كل واحد منهم بمائة بقرة.

Umar bn Khattab reported to have said “If (you happen) give (*Sadaqah*) give to satisfy one’s need”. Added to this, Ata was reported to have expressed that he would like a *Zakat* payer to give what is substantial to meet the needs of Muslim family to such an extent that the poor beneficiary really become rich. This means that to give *Zakat* is not only for feeding but also to declare war against poverty. For universality of relevance of *Zakat*, Khayyat, a leading scholar in Jordan maintains that *Al-faqir* (the poor) as used in the Quran covers all categories of people whether Muslim or non-Muslim. This indicates that non-Muslims in the society can as well benefit from institution of *Zakat*.

Inferred from above, *Zakat* would be very useful for it would reduce the gap between the rich and the poor so that everyone, irrespective of his faith, would have basic necessities of life in Ebi-land. This would build love, compassion and brotherhood by quenching hatred among people in the land as it would attract people to do good deeds and soften the hearts of leaders towards their subjects. Of importance is to say that, as it is common to many unemployed able-

bodied Nigerians, good number of jobless active Anebira youths answer the calls of politicians to be used as political thugs. This is for the fact that they (such youths), sometimes, prefer death to living a borrowed life as poor Nigerians with little or no hope for better tomorrow. Therefore, Zakat provision would provide for the basic needs of the poor so as for them to live decent life capable of ensuring peaceful co-existence in the area.

The poor (in the land) are not heard and they are unable to participate in community events which lead to humiliation, loss of honour, social marginalisation, psychological distress, and expulsion from important events. They are infact powerless, voiceless and are labourers forced to work under inhuman conditions for they lack choice. Indeed, bailing the unemployed poor citizens of Ebiraland out of povery circle, with these Islamic provisions, would maximally reduce, if not completely erase, the chance of having poverty –stricken Anebiras available for use during any unrest in the land. It is hereby established that the institutionalisation of Zakat, without doubt, is capable of eradicating poverty as shown in the history of Islam during the era of Umar bn Khattab and Umar bn Abdul-Azeez (Umar 11) to the extent that nobody was to receive zakat in the community. Having enlightened Anebira Muslims about Zakat, it is therefore important to establish a political–neutral Zakat commission comprising learned and pious Muslim scholars (working under enabling environment) to man the collection and distribution of Zakat in Ebiraland within Nigerian constitutional provisions.

#### **4.3.2 Islamic approach to leadership crisis in Ebiraland.**

There has never been any provision for centralised administration in the Ebiraland for they are, in fact, blue (royal) blooded tribe. The people find it difficult to accept a centralised one-man rulership but rather each clan has clan-head for properly- coordinated administrative purpose. The land has the imposition of paramount chieftaincy, by the colonial masters, as the basis of crisis. The imposition of one's interest on the people is against the Islamic political system. In this regard, the Prophet said “Be a leader if you are chosen” It is established that Anebiras are individualistic and republican in nature. It is as well observed that ungodly leadership is the root of evils afflicting humanity. This could be buttressed with the saying of the prophet (S.A.W) which reads: There are two classes in my Ummah, if they are right the Ummah is set right, if they are wrong the Ummah goes wrong; they are the rulers and scholars. *صنفان من أمتي إذا صلحا صلحت الأمة وإذا فسدوا فسدت الأمة هما العلماء والرؤساء.*

Prophet Muhammed (SAW), the unlettered son of a poor family background, with the revelation of the Quran was charged with a big responsibility of saving the whole world from moral decadence, giving up evil ways and teaching them of their duties to their fellow beings. He was very exemplary and he demonstrated the pristine teachings of Islam in practical terms so as to obey Allah and, as well as, for the people to learn from him. The reflection of this is seen in the religious discussion of the new converts in Makkah with Axumite Negus which reads:

O King, we were a barbarous and idolatrous people, stained with horrible crimes, careless of the bond of kinship and of our duties to our neighbours; among us the stronger devoured the weaker, until God raised up from among us a messenger, whom we have acknowledged as a man of clear speech, just, faithful and honest....for this our people persecute us (Gabriel, 1968).


During his life-time, he made slaves governors of provinces. To this effect, Quran reads “Say, O Allah, Lord of sovereignty, You give power to whomsoever You wish and You take power from whomsoever You wish” (3 v 26). The prophet (SAW) is reported to have said “Listen and obey even if a Negro is appointed as a ruler over you”. *إسمعوا واعوا إذا تأمر عليكم عبد حبشي.* To this effect, weavers and cloth-sellers became judges and jurists and to this day they are reckoned as the heroes of Islam. In Islamic political system, God, the Creator is the sole master, ruler, director and administrator of His creation. All attributes and power of sovereignty are solely God’s prerogatives but He grants an opportunity to rule on His earth to whomsoever He desires and withdraws this privilege from whenever He so will. In Islam, both the leader and the governed are equal before the law as against the general saying which reads “Queen does no wrong”. The cardinal principle of people in the society has it that the power that becomes immuned to public criticism. Furtherstill, the fulfilment of promises, covenants and pacts by the leader and the led are repeatedly stressed in Islam. To this effect, Quran says “Those with whom you make an arrangement and then they break their agreement everytime, and do not cherish fear of God, such characterless people are to be deprecated” (8:56). Nowadays, it is noted that non-fulfilment of promises is more or less a custom in the society and this one of the causes of conflicts in human’s dealings.

In the work of al-Mawardi in Rosenthal in Hanafi (2009), it is identified that a leader may emerge on the basis of election, designation and hereditary. He cited the choice of Abubakar and Uthman by some companions, and Abubakar’s designation of Umar as good examples of

emergence of leadership by election and designation respectively. He also maintained that emergence of a leader on the basis of heredity is legal provided the consent of the person to inherit is sought. More so, such a leader must have the required qualifications for leadership position as it is obtainable in the community.

Islam gives zero-tolerance for the dictatorship of any person or group of persons in any form since everyone is a caliph (vicegerent) of God herein. Leader is answerable to God on one hand and the other to his fellow human beings. As it is established that prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was instrumental to the holy *Quran* revealed for the guidance of the universe, if he wished, he could very well play the role of Shepherd, driving the sheep in the direction he liked, but in that case he could not become a nation builder. The prophet's followers held him in high esteem to the extent that his deeds and utterances were laws to them. If he wished, he could have twisted *Hadith* (which is the supplement to *Quran*) and the interpretation of Quran to satisfy his selfish human desire. He was not blindfolded by the respect accorded him to the extent of treating the opinions of the Muslims with contempt. He had consultations with his companions before taking decision in matters of state. Infact, the inclusion of Ijma'u (consensus of opinion of Muslims) as a source of Islamic law is a succinct example of democratic tendency of Islam.

After the demise of the Prophet, his successors towed the democratic foundation laid by him (S.A.W). In the submission of Rahim (2001), the appointment of Abubakr as the first caliph in Islam was based on the consensure of Muslims. So also, Umar was elevated to the position of caliph, after the demise of Abubakr, on the basis of his great personality and talents. The appointments of Uthman and Ali as the third and fourth caliphs respectively were acclaimed by the Muslims as the selection/election was democratically done. Indeed, the choice of the first as well as other rightly guided caliphs in Islam (Abubakar) is a brilliant testimony to the democratic principles of Islam. After the appointment, the true spirit of democracy was breathed with the caliph Abubakar's proclamation which goes thus:



O men! Here I have been assigned the job of ruling over you while I am not the best among you. If I do well in my job, help me. If I do wrong, redress me. Truthfulness is fidelity, and lying is treason. The weak shall be strong in my eye until I restore to them their rights, and the strong shall be weak in my eyes until I have dispossessed them of that right. No people give themselves to lewdness He envelops them with misery. Obey me as long as I obey the commandment of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

But if I disobey God's command and His prophet, then no obedience is incumbent upon you. Rise to your prayer so He may have mercy on you.

The Muslims responded as follows: Should you go wrong, we shall correct you with the spear of our lances. This implies that a leader (creature) needs to realise the imperfect nature in him which stands to be corrected by others, the ruled inclusive.

Domination of a group or clan (in the presence of the qualified ones in other clans) in the political field of a community is not a welcomed idea in Islam. The Prophet (SAW) was reported to have said that the hour of doom should be expected when the government is entrusted to those unworthy of it. This means that the best qualified member of the society (according to the general belief and custom of the land) should emerge as the leader in the land. The leadership of Muhammad (S.A.W) at Madinah was the hard-earned confidence of the people based on common acceptance of his leadership to all manners of people in the community. The prophet's conduct, qualities of humility, compassion, faithfulness, competence and other exemplary qualities of leadership earned him the confidence of, even, the non-Muslims to entrust him with the leadership of the community.

Unrestricted scope for personal achievement based on one's inborn capacity and personal merit without prejudice to similar rights of other people has always been the hallmark of Islamic society. Everyone would enjoy equal opportunities of progress. Anybody could emerge as a leader irrespective of social or clannish consideration and noblemen belonging to the highest families should not feel ashamed to serve under them.

In Islam, dictatorship is a negation of popular vicegerency and every individual is held personally answerable to God. This is the reason why there is not the slightest trace of regimentation in the rule of the Holy prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Any sane and adult Muslim is entitled to express his or her opinion for each of them is the repository of the caliphate. More importantly, as Islam recognises the possibility of disagreement in the society, provisions are thereby made for settlement of differences when arise. Rule of law is a principle upheld by every civilised community of people and it is the only constitutional means of settling disputes for the Quran says:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولى الأمر منكم فإن تنازعتم في شئ  
فردوه إلى الله والرسول إن كنتم تؤمنون بالله واليوم الآخر ذلك خير وأحسن تأويلاً.

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the last day: That is best and most suitable for final determination” (4:59)

Both the ruler and the ruled are to be subjected to the rule of law with the establishment of absolute and universal justice for all citizens as Allah says “...and not let the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just, that is nearer to piety ...” (5:8)

Muslims can successfully live under the leadership of non-Muslims so far the freedom of religion is guaranteed. The Christian King of Abyssinia gave political / religious asylum to about a hundred of the companions of the prophet (SAW) where they lived and were subjected to the laws of that land for about a decade. In Islam, the requirements of good government are: (a) Justice, (b) Goodness and (c) Returning good for good. While acting tyrannically, tampering with other people’s right and any forms of indecency are disapproved. (the adoption of *Shurah* (consultationcommittee)

#### 4.3.3 Islamic approach to religious crisis in Ebiraland

Religion is as old as man himself for man has never lived without the consciousness of God which could be termed as religious experience. This experience of a man always leads to religious reflection which means worship. Peoples in the world have never had a common religion but they all worship God in different ways. In addition, God commissioned and raised different prophets and messengers among different nations at different periods and He expects a variety of faiths and belief systems among His creatures. However, religion has failed in the performance of its functions, as agent of peaceful co-existence, in Ebiraland, owing to the failure of the adherents in wedding religions to their pristine essence. The appearance of people with different faiths in the world is not accidental for Allah says “And had your Lord willed, those on each would have believed, all of them together, so will you (O Muhammad) then compel mankind, until they become believers” (10:99). ولو شاء ربك لآمن من في الأرض كلهم جميعا أفأنت تكره

الناس حتى يكونوا مؤمنين.

In Islam, religious tolerance is established in human society with some limitations for the avoidance of abuse of such freedom. An individual has the right to uphold any creed without any external pressure or coercion. To this stand, Qur’an reads “There is no compulsion in

religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error” (2:256). لا إكراه في الدين قد تبين الرشد من الغي فمن يكفر بالطاغوت ويؤمن بالله فقد استمسك بالعروة الوثقى لا انفصام لها والله سميع عليم.

In supporting this stand, Malik and Hisham(2003) was quoted by Arimiyah (2007) as follows: If you compel a person at the gun point or at the award point of all danger to say a “Khalimah”, the creed of Islam, it is absolutely worthless”. To this effect, Allah instructed prophet Muhammad (SAW) to limit the goal of his message to mere explanation of issues, conveyance of information and reminding others but without much pressure or compulsion. Allah says “Say: (O Muhammad) the truth is from your Lord, then whosoever wills, let him believe; and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve...” (18:29). فليكنر إنا أعتدنا للظالمين نارا أحاط بهم سرادقها وإن يستغيثوا يغاثوا بماء كالمهل يشوى الوجوه بئس الشراب وساءت فلينكفر إنا أعتدنا للظالمين نارا أحاط بهم سرادقها وإن يستغيثوا يغاثوا بماء كالمهل يشوى الوجوه بئس الشراب وساءت مرتقفا. To support this stand, another Quranic verse reads “So, remind them (O Mohammed): you are only one who reminds. You are not a dictator over them.”(88:21-22)

فذكر إنما أنت مذكر لست عليهم بمصيطر.

Freedom of worship is as well guaranteed in the Nigeria constitution for there is provision for the freedom of thought, conscience which includes changing one’s religion or belief. Added to this is the freedom to manifest and propagate one’s religion or belief; in worship, teaching and observance. Of note is to say that these provisions exclude any secret society membership in all ramifications.

The most important pillar of Muslim faith is the belief that man is created by God and is subservient to none but Allah. One of the primary objectives of prophetic mission was to rescue man from the burden and chain of Shaytan. This implies that man is born free, no one, not even the state, has the right to abrogate this freedom and to subject his life to regimentation. The spirit of this freedom prompted Umar, the second caliph, to declare as follows: Since when have you enslaved people although their mothers had borne them free. It is also in the opinion of Shafi, the founder of Shafi school of Muslim jurisprudence, that “God has created you free and therefore be nothing but free”. Muslim jurists are of the opinion that restriction cannot be imposed on a free, matured and sane person on the basis of the following principles:

1. The larger interest of society takes precedence over the interest of the individual.
2. Although “relieving hardship” and “promoting benefit” are both among the prime objectives of Shariah, the former takes precedence over the latter.

3. A bigger loss cannot be inflicted to relieve a smaller loss or a bigger benefit cannot be sacrificed for a smaller one. Conversely, a smaller harm cannot be inflicted to avoid a bigger harm or a smaller benefit can be sacrificed for a larger benefit.

As regards intra-religious crisis among Muslim it is worthy of note that the outcome of the crisis negates the teachings of Islam which is the religion of peace. The form of unity which Islam forges among its adherents transcends the boundaries of mere similarity between people's requirements, it goes extra mile of trying to weld relationship between its adherents into one single brotherhood which could be stronger than consanguinity. Glorious *Qur'an* is dotted by instructions on the expected structure of relationship between Muslim persons regardless of race, creed, social status and other similar considerations. The following verses could be cited as samples. Allah says "Verily, this Brotherhood of yours is but a single Brotherhood and I am your Lord so worship Me" (21:92). *إن هذه أمتكم أمة واحدة وأنا ربكم فاعبدون*. Another verse reads "Verily, the Believers are all brothers. (49:10) *المؤمنون اخوة إنما*

Leadership position is a very delicate position for it is considered as a divine trust which requires accountability before Allah. Divergence of opinion of scholars on religious matters or the presence of sects should be used positively for the prophet was reported to have said "Divergence of opinion (among scholars) in my community is a blessing". It is established that the people of Ebiraland are predominantly Muslims but a critical causative factor for the incessant conflicts in the area, among others is the disconnect between Islam and its practice among the people. Complete neglect of the anti-Islamic practices in Ebira culture remains a problem to many Ebira Muslims as separation of culture from whatever religion proclaimed by Anebira is a difficult task.

In addition to this, Muslims are enjoined to have good relationship with every member of the society including the non-Muslims for they are all Allah's creatures. The charter granted to the Christians by the prophet (SAW) at Madina in 628AD accorded them the right to religion, life and property. Thus, the people were treated with fairness and justice. The prophet (SAW) was reported to have said that "To Jews who followed us must enjoy the same help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided...." Indeed, this is manifested as the non-Muslims enjoyed their rights and followed their professions without hinderance. There was no room for the demolition of churches but rather Muslims were to assist in the repair of church.



More relevantly, Christian women married to Muslim could follow their religion (Rahim, 2001). Indeed, to support this view, the prophet was reported to have said “One who hurts a Dhimmi (a non-Muslim who lives and enjoys all human rights in an Islamic state), hurts me; and one who hurts me, hurts Allah.”

Islam gives room for freedom of religion for individual is allowed to uphold any creed without cohesion. Religious tolerance is preached in Islam with reference to Quran 10:99, 2:256, 11:118-119 among others. The Prophet (SAW) was friendly with the Jews and Christians and established them in their religion. It is established that the prophet (SAW) sent some deputations to some tribes in Arabia peninsular to explain his prophetic mission to them. For this, they (include the Christians of Najram) visited the prophet (SAW) in the mosque in *Madinah*, he (SAW) told or allowed them to pray when the time of their prayer came. Later on, friendly discussion took place between them and the prophet on Jesus and Islam. In fact, this discussion yielded fruitful religious outcome for the prophet (SAW) (Daud 1993). The prophet (SAW) preached to people in the most gentle and reasonable manner. He adjured his people by the wonderful sights of nature. It is therefore relevant to state that for the first three years of prophet's constant but quiet struggle for Islam, only thirty followers were secured (Ibn Kathir, 1997). This implies that patience as well as perseverance is required in the propagation of Islam as exemplified by the noble prophet of Islam.

Cursory look at Islamic provisions, it is noted that the conscious Muslims in Ebiraland, are technically disallowed to practise their faith in the sense that freedom of movement is seriously tampered with during Ekuechi and other cultural festivals in Ebiraland. Women cannot go out, for whatever reason, until certain period of the day throughout these festive periods. In fact, people (especially women including female students) are imprisoned during the period in spite of the constitutional provisions for human rights in Nigeria. In spite of the violation of human rights during the cultural festivals especially masquerading, few among the informants expressed serious concern over the religious rights and privileges of the people of other faiths in the land particularly in the process which privileged the Islamic approach to conflict. The informants generally noted the objectivity, neutrality and relevance of Islamic provisions on religious crises and they all accepted the biasless application of teachings so as to return the land to the epoch of peaceful co-existence.

#### 4.3.4 Islamic approach to clannish crisis in Ebiraland

The clannish identity being the source of violence is not peculiar to only the people of Kogi Central Senatorial District but also to almost all the clans/tribes in the world. The clannish attachment, as one of the crisis-igniting factors in the land, has its similitude in Medina as there existed warring relationship between the Aus and the Khazraj in spite of their common descent traceable to the tribe of Azd in Yemen. These two clans were well known for their passionate, chauvinistic spirit of the clan, self respect and valour as well as heroic character. The freedom of the desert was in their blood: neither had they ever submitted to any authority nor paid impost to a sovereign. Likewise, the entire Anabirans, irrespective of clans, have a single ancestor, *Ebira* and, as well possessed like qualities of the Aus and Khazraj. The arrival of prophet Muhammad (SAW) put an everlasting end to the age-long existing conflict between the Aus and Khazraj as the teachings of Islam were so glowing that the people of the clans awakened to interest and quickly attested their faith in Islam. The prophet with some Muhajirin (Muslim immigrants) pacified them and appealed to their bonds of harmony brought about by Islam in its real essence. By skilful diplomacy, the prophet (SAW) gave the law, order, organisation and religion having gained the people confidence. The blood-bond is replaced with faith, blood feud is suppressed and replaced by arbitration and the Ummah replaced the tribal group (Abdul, 1988). Indeed, having the causes and the sorrowing impacts of the crisis, the two conflicting clans wept and embraced one another as if nothing had happened. It is therefore noted that the success recorded in the settlement of this conflict was based on the divine wisdom applied by the prophet (SAW) coupled with the people acceptance of Islam. This was brought about their readiness to forgive one another and compromise some important things, most essentially, the ego so as to create enabling atmosphere for peace. Thus, the people of Ebiraland, having Muslims in majority, should consider the Islamic-conflict-settlement-pattern between the *Aus* and the *Khazraj* as the appropriate model of putting end to the existing generational clannish differences in the land. More so, the teaching is workable in any society on the basis of its absolute objectivity.

In Shariah, the entire mankind is one nation and human rights granted by Shariah are meant for the welfare of the world. In spite of the existence of clans or ethnic groups in the world, Islam discounts racial pride when it proclaims that all mankind are made from Adam and Adam is made from dust. Islam proves that every person is a master of himself and that there is equality of mankind irrespective of age, race and social status. And in fact, with reference to

Quran 49:13, the most honourable person in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious; that is to say that the one who possesses taqwa (piety). Both the ruler and the ruled are expected to subject themselves to the rule of law. In the past, one of the relevance of clans was that they were used as the vehicle for mobilising people for communal self-help projects in Ebiraland. This greatly assisted the people to live in peace.

Islam discourages certain individuals or nations being favoured owing to their wealth, power, race or clan. And in order to solve the problem of racism, as it is rampant in the world (Ebiralandinclusive), prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was reported to have said:

O people! Your God is one and your fore- father (Adam) is one.  
An Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab, and a red person is (i.e. white tinged with red) person is not better than a red person except in piety.   
أيها الناس إن ربكم واحد  
وأبوكم واحد (آدم) ولا فضل لعربي على العجمي ولا العجمي على العربي ولا الأبيض على الأسود إلا بتقوى الله

In another instance, the Prophet is reported to have said“All creatures of God form the family of God and He is the best loved of God who loves best His creatures”. For the purpose of maintaining peace and tranquillity on earth, Islam asserts equality of all persons before the law. The Quran reads“Verily, Allah commands you to restore trusts to their owner; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice” (4:58).

More importantly, Islam establishes a common source of mankind and the significance of tribes in human society. Allah says “O mankind! We have created you from male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is the best in conduct.”(49:13).

يا أيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم إن الله عليم خبير

It is therefore patinent to establish the fact that the successful application of Islamic models of conflict resolution in Ebiraland rests on good understanding of the teachings of Islam by the people who are, today, predominantly Muslims. This is based on the fact that that the religious conviction is the man’s strongest and most precious possession which he is prepared to sacrifice wealth, peace, freedom and life itself. More importantly, Muslim scholars in the land should preach to the people in the most gentle and reasonable manner as exemplified by the prophet. This is necessary as it is established that the people in the area are somehow hard-hearted and strongly determined in doing whatever they are set to do. Afterall, the situation in

Makkah and Yathrib then, was worse than the present situation in Ebiraland where leadership tussle as well as the clannish identity was a crisis-igniting factor. Historically, *Anebiras* are of common origin and clans have their origin traceable to the children of *Anebiras*' ancestor known as "*Ebira*". The use of clans for peaceful co-existence and progress in *Ebiraland* was latter short-lived owing to the clannish identity in religious and political fields in *Ebiraland*. Clannish factor should not be considered in decision-making arena in *Ebiraland* for no significant spiritual attachment is given to clannish matter in Islam. To this effect, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) addressed his clan after the conquest of Makkah as follows:

أيها القریش: الله قد أخرجکم من ظلمات الجهل إلى نور الهداية أيها الناس کلکم أبناء آدم  
وآدم من ترب لا فضل لأحد على الأخرى ولا العربي على العجمي إن أكرمکم عند الله  
أتقاکم

O people of *Quraysh*! Allah has rooted out your haughtiness of the days of ignorance and the pride of ancestry. O men, all of you are descended from Adam and Adam was made of clay. There is no pride whatever in ancestry; there is no merit in an Arab as against a non-Arab nor in a non-Arab against an Arab. Verily, the most meritorious among you in the eyes of God is he who is the most pious"

UNIVERS

### Notes on Chapter Four

1. This is one of proverbs gotten from a book titled “100 *Ebira* Proverbs” authored by S.S. Sanusi in the year 2009.
2. This is the submission of the elders interviewed at different locations and times. These include Pa Bello (66) at his residence No. 18, Otiteand Dr Ijanaku (60) in his office at Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria.
3. Interview with Alhaji Japa, M.I.(50) on 10/10/2010 at his residence KLM8, Abuja-Lokoja road, Nagazi-Uvete, Kogi State, Nigeria
4. Interview with Mallam Nuhu Ogirimah (45), (The Chairman of Ebira Youths Congress) on 22/12/2010 in his office, Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State.
5. The fact is obtained from the letter of request for affiliation sent by Dr Habibu Angulu Sani to Federal College of Education, Okene. This letter was read and deliberated upon in the Academic Board meeting held on 19/07/2011 at the College.
6. Interview with Mallam Nuhu Ogirimah (45), (The Chairman of Ebira Youths Congress and as well the National Secretary, COESU) on 22/12/2010 in his office, Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogistate. This corresponds with the submission of Dada, A. 2010, Towards an enduring peace in Ebiraland, retrieved on July 7, 2010 from <http://sunday.Daily trust.com/index.php?>
7. Interview with Alhaji Japa, M.I.(50) on 10/10/10 at his residence KLM8, Abuja-Lokoja road, Nagazi-Uvete, Kogi state, Nigeria
8. This is as well sourced from “100 *Ebira* Proverbs” vol.1, authored by S.S Sanusi in the year 2009.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Summary

Conflict is a natural phenomenon and common feature in any social life as it is seen in different parts of the world. Sometimes, there comes disagreement before an agreement is reached on issues which always end up in arriving at a logical conclusion. Conflict may or may not result to violence depending on how it is managed to achieve the set goal. In any society, peaceful co-existence is the main focus of good governance for its being the basic foundation for progress and development. It is noted that the uninterrupted peace was enjoyed for many decades past among EbiraTao people inhabiting inKogi Central Senatorial District until the recent time when the land turned to center of social upheavals in the state. The incessant unrest in Ebiralandis unique for having clannish identity as the basis coupled with the aggressive, individualistic and republican nature of an average Anebira. There is adisconnect between Islam and its practice among the people as it is manifested in their predilection for republicanism and narcissism. More importantly, the hard-hearted nature ofAnebirawith the inability to apologise for any wrong done to others serves as the foundation upon which other factors leading to violence in the land – clannish, leadership, economic, cultural festivals among others are built. It is also observed that the source of conflict is attributed to the spirit of retaliation which has been embedded in Ebira cultural heritage.

The one-time peace-loving and well-cultured tribe ofKogiCentral Senatorial District (EbiraTao) has degenerated to violence-loving tribe in-spite of the fact thatEbira simply means “Character”. This assertion is buttressed in the words of Onome (1988) in Abdullahi (2008) by saying “Ebirato a man are lawless. Don’t fight an Ebiraman. They are hot-tempered. Human life means nothing to them... I say never you fight them”. The crisis in the land manifests itself under the umbrella of clannish consideration. This is premised on the fact that an average Anebira prefers himself being reckoned with on clannish recognition to tribal / national identity. This record of clannish violence in the land is a good testimony to the fact that Anebiras have republican life-styles and do not want to be under the governance of any centralised authority. Thus, the imposition of Paramount Chief by the colonial masters in Nov. 11, 1917 gave widened interpretation to clannish identity which has succeeded in giving a continuous violence

leadership tussle in the land till date. The politicians in the land, since then, have been employing tactics (especially clannish identity) to divert the attention of the masses from fighting against the exploitation by the selfish politicians. In addition to this, the ideal structure and succession model to the Ohinoyi stool had not evolved in Ebiraland. Therefore, there is no acceptable method of selecting candidate to occupy the throne of Ohinoyi.

Further still, in spite of the fact that majority of Anebiras claim to have subscribed to Islam, separation of anti-Islamic culture of theirs (most significantly, the Ekuechi and Eche-ana) from pristine Islam remains a very difficult task. This accounts for the difficulties encountered by the few committed Muslim brothers and sisters in the course of, even at least, checking the excesses during the cultural festivals in Ebiraland. This is for the fact that majority of the sponsors, supporters and the participants are mainly Muslims. And indeed, one would hardly see anybody bearing Christian names among the participants or sponsors of cultural festivals which is one of the causes of violent conflict in the land.

The aggressive nature of Anebira, like any other tribes, remains idle until it is stimulated by necessity. At the same time, this nature of Anebira is highly aggravated when having links with clannish identity which always result to violence in the land. This is felt in religious circle especially among Muslims and Afrelists. The Muslims community fractured into two over the appointment of Imam of central mosque which finally led to the establishment of factional Central Mosque at a trekable distance (Idoji) to the existing one in the town. Added to this is the serious enmity between the factions in Muslims community in the land. The cultural festival which was hitherto peaceful is now, according to Suleiman (2008), considered to be cultural nuisance in Ebiraland as a result of the introduction of clannish identity into cultural festivals. Japa (2006) put it that "The peaceful co-existence among clans in Ebiraland became altered owing to the activities of local musicians and masquerades who have been churning out derogatory songs against other clans..." This led to violence among the masquerade groups with its negative implications on Ebiraland in particular and Nigeria at large.

The land is seen as the violence zone which is not conducive for any investment. Thus, job opportunity is not readily available for the active able-bodied youths in the land. Indeed, this has created fertile ground for the recruitment of instruments to be used by the politicians in achieving their selfish political goals in the land. Suleiman (2007) in Japa (2007) captures the scenario of the crises-ridden area, thus:

... In all these, it was a full-scale war-war with its horrendous features, it's frightening effects which enveloped the concerned groups. The rattle guns, the bliz on hard-earned magnificent buildings of opponents: the palls of smoke in staccato spots, in designated area, the cremation of precious lives who were shot dead, the ricocheting bullets that slew the innocent, the weeping, the gnashing teeth and fleeing of people from their homes have contributed to be the sights in each of these wars...

Worthy of mentioning is the fact that there has never been on record any intra-religious violent conflict in Christians circle or between the Christians and people of other faiths in Kogi Central Senatorial District.

With all efforts of government, organisations as well as some individuals to put an end to the crisis, failure is always recorded especially at the implementation stage due to the activities of politicians with selfish goals. In reality, leadership tussle is everywhere in the globe. However, the leadership tussle in the land deviates from the principles that govern healthy competition. Sometimes, crude methodologies are created for this tussle by designing deliberate strategies of defamiliarization and estrangement of one another through clan and class struggles. People subordinate the interest of the whole to the units and fragments. This explains why clan affiliation has taken the centre stage over neighbourhood solidarity/fraternity in the area. These man-made weaknesses call for the application of Islamic provisions which are very neutral and objective in dealing with the entire creatures of Allah. Added to this, Islamic approach would be an alternative model in solving the crisis in the land not only because of its viability but also due to preponderance of Muslims in the area.

## **5.1 Conclusion**

It is possible to argue that conflict is endemic to human relationships as it has been observed by Zartman (1991) that conflict is the result of interaction between or among people; "an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence". Further to this, the realist school views human interaction as taking place within a power arena with possession of power becoming a scarce resource which can engender frustration in the one who does not possess it. However, the outcome of any conflict depends on how it is managed - constructively or destructively. In fact, the destructive



management of conflict has negative effects not only on individuals but also on the society at large as it is seen in the whole world Ebiraland inclusive today.

What is evident today in the land of rich natural environment Ebiraland and among the otherwise hardworking people is the extreme social condition of acrimonious poverty as well as untold hardship. Many of Anebiras eke out a miserable living within and outside Ebiraland. While many others, especially among the youth population, are driven by the absence of sufficient focused community development programme into a life of violence, crime and banditry. This unwholesome reality is inevitable in a society where things have fallen apart, a society adrift, a society imprisoned in primitive clannish rivalries and blindfolded by primordial greed, a society unwilling to undergo the necessary self-assessment and stocktaking, a society unprepared to learn from history and to take concrete steps towards social liberation and economic upliftment. Leaders have a moral duty to act as visionaries and shepherds, to play the role model, to make tangible sacrifices and to give inspiration and hope to the young people. Those who aspire to leadership in Ebiraland must therefore subject themselves to the litmus test of responsibility, credibility, and productivity.

It is observed that Ebiraland people were/are republican in nature whereby there was no centralized administration and each clan was completely independent and none was subordinate to any other clan. Indeed, in the olden days, the people only recognized the autonomy and rights of each clan – group as political unit. In spite of this, peace reigned supreme in the land. However, the new administrative pattern created by the Whites (British), which was mainly for their own administrative convenience, is very unsuitable to Ebiras who are naturally individualistic. The failure of the British in the application of a more thoughtful, in 1917, in the selection of a candidate for the Central Political Agency in the land is a good contributing factor for social and political upheavals in the land till dates.

Furthermore, the introduction of clannish identity coupled with the aggressive nature of Anebiras has done more harm than good in the land with the exception of Ajaokuta and Ogori/Magongo Local Government Areas of Ebiraland where there is relative peace. The reason for this is attributed to the fact that the percentage of Anebiras residing in these areas is insignificant. The fact remains that, the causes of conflict in the land are all man-made and the factors responsible for the failure of the moves made towards resolution are, majorly, the activities of the politicians in pursuance of their selfish interests. Thus, Islam, being the religion

of peace with adequate provisions for the needs of the creatures at all times remains the only available means to put an everlasting end to the unrest in the land.

The acceptance of Islam by Anebiras in Kogi Central Senatorial District should be in totality as mere profession of Kalmah (to acknowledge that there is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah) does not qualify one to be a Muslim. Islam is a complete entity and belief cannot be established without obedience to the injunctions of Allah. In fact, all anti-Islamic cultural practices (including masquerade festivals) should be jettisoned by the Muslims in the area. Qur'an reads thus: There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error (2:256). Persuasive tongue should be appropriately used in preaching Islam with great and worthy emphasis on pure Islamic monotheism. This would afford the Muslim participants and supporters or sponsors of masquerades to be convinced of the implications of such an act before Allah as the accountability of creatures before the Creator is a must.

The exemplary life-style of Muslims, as exemplified by the noble prophet of Islam, Muhammad (SAW) as well as the itinerant scholars who brought Islam to the land, has a significant role to play in convincing people to accept Islam in totality. This is needed as many Anebiras could neither read nor write the Islamic texts and as well, could not access Muslim scholars for the purpose of having the real knowledge of Islam. The only means they have is to understand Islam through the way and manners Muslims behave.

*Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition* (1978) sees that culture is a distinctive human mode of adapting to the environment-moulding nature to conform to man's desires and goals. It is the learned ways of behaving and adapting, as contrasted to inherited behaviour patterns or instinct. The essence of culture is to guide the behaviour of members of the society and acts as an agent of social control by providing for social co-operation and solidarity among members of the society (Joseph, 2003). In contrary to this, one can establish the fact that the celebration of Ekuechi and Eche-ana festivals is always with violence attachments which might be responsible for the need for guarantors standing for any masquerade before outing, even, in the remote past. For this purpose, any aspect of culture that is, in anyway, terrorising societal existence should be adjusted to meet the societal and constitutional demands. It should therefore be noted that no freedom without its limitations in Nigeria constitution. In spite of the civilization in the country, the festival is also with adverse implications on the area including educational

institutions as females (including students) are always culturally denied the right to go out in the early hours of the day (until 10 a.m or thereabouts). Thus, freedom of movement (of women) which is always tampered with during Ekuechi festival should be addressed through constitutional means for the avoidance of violence among the adherents of different faiths in the land. One can therefore say that any festival that insists on infringing on other people's rights should be completely banned by government for peace to reign supreme in the land.

Added to these, EbiraTao people in *Kogi* Central Senatorial District should imbibe the culture of tolerance among Anebiras of different clans as it was observed in the past. Ebiraland should be seen as a commonwealth which must be defended, not with the force of arms, but with the force of love. Therefore, Oziogu, Oziomoye, Ehebe, Eyire, Aniku, Omavi, Ezika, Emani among other clans under the auspices of the Ebira-genealogy must begin to act as brothers. It is a fact that in several quarters, fires razed the hard-earned castles of men; human beings have been slaughtered on common streets and hatred has been instituted, yet, the judgment of the wise is that violence favours no one, and never will. So the injured should summon the grace to forgive especially the innocent victims of violence who are unlucky to have lost their lives and, or properties in the mayhems of Ebiraland.

There is a need for immediate reconstruction of Okene, Ihima, Adavi as well as the reunification of Idozumi, Idare, Idoji, Ahache, Ahogede, Okene-Eba, and all the regions whose links were divorced from each other as the outcome of the latent crisis. Anebiras at home should also imbibe the spirit of tolerance, forgiveness and peaceful togetherness as it is observed nowadays in different locations where Ebira Tao people have settlements outside Ebiraland. As noted that Anebiras love the strangers in their midst than the fellow Anebiras especially in the area of inter-personal relationship, the same relationship should be extended to fellow Anebiras. This would definitely create room for peace to reign supreme in the land.

At this juncture, one can reach a logical conclusion that wedding Islam to its century by Anebira Muslims would return *Kogi* Central Senatorial District to its century of hospitality, peace, progress and high moral standard. This could be achieved by being complete yes-servants to Allah's injunctions. The essence of Islamic law is security which implies that Islam abhors any act that threatens security of any of individuals and the society in general. To buttress this position of Islam, the Holy Qur'an states:

...whoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption and mischief in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers came unto them of old with clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty), but afterwards lo! Many of them became prodigals in the earth (Qur'an, 5: 32)



The coming of Islam however was a watershed in the history of inter-personal relationship generally in Africa and in Nigeria in particular as it constituted the first kind of internationalization of the horizons of the thought of the people. This occurred first among the adherents and later, through inadvertent influence, among all. Acceptance of the teachings of Islam to the letter by people (Anebiras) who are predominantly Muslims would definitely return peace to the land permanently. Acceptance of these moral teachings which are very neutral, universal and objective in nature by the generality of Anebiras, irrespective of faiths without giving them any religious connotation, is helpful for peacebuilding in Ebiraland. Further still, acceptance of such teachings is not the means towards the imposition of Islam on the people of the land but rather only the means towards having peaceful co-existence permanently returned to the land. Finally, there was consensus over the workability of the Islamic models particularly with proper understanding of Islam as well as absence of clannish attachments.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Published Books

- Abdullahi, Y. 2008. *Ebira will survive*. Ijebu Ode: Sebotimo Publications.
- Abd-al-Rahman,A.1980.The life of Prophet Muhammad. *Islam: its meaning and message*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- Abdul, M. O. 1988. *The classical caliphate*. Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau.
- Abul ‘Ala, M.1980.*Political theory of Islam. Islam: its meaning and message*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- Adeniran,T. 1988. *Introduction to international relations*. Lagos: Macmillan.
- Agbaje, A. 1990. In *search of building block: The state, civil society, voluntary action and grassroots development in Africa in Zartman ,I.W., traditional cure for conflict*. London: Lynne Reinner Publisher.
- Ahmadu, E.D. 2004. *Who are the Ebiras*. Maiduguri: Bett Bekkar Documentation Services.
- Albert, Isaac O. 2001. *Introduction to third-party intervention in community conflict*. Ibadan: John Archer.
- Alex, G 1987. *Political valves local government in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Al-Qaradawy, Y. 1995. *Introduction to know Islam*, Cairo: Islamic Inc. Publishing and Distribution.
- Barash, D.P. & Webel, C.P. 2002. *Peace & conflict studies*. California: Sage Publication, Inc. 26
- Beer, E. Jennifer and Eileen Stief. 1997. *The mediator’s handbook*. Canada: New Society Publisher.
- Broom,B.J.1993. “Management differences in conflict resolution: The role of Relational Empathy” Dennis,J.D., Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe.eds.*Conflict resolution theory and practice* .Manchester: Manchester University Press. 104
- Charles, T. 1978. *From mobilization to revocation*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Campell, M.J. 1963. *Law and practice of local government in Northern Nigeria*. Lagos: African University Press.
- Coates, K. and Surbur. 1970. *Poverty the forgotten Englishman*.Harmondsnorth:Penguin Books.
- Dahl, R.1991. *Modern political analysis*. London:Practice – Hall International.

- Doi, A.I. 1984. *The Islamic law*. London: Taha Publishers.
- Durkheim, .E. 1954. *The elementary forms of the religious life*. Glencoe: Free Press
- Encyclopaedia Americana*.2000: Crolier Press.
- Gabriel, F. 1968. *Muhammad and the Conquests in Islam*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd.
- Haralambos, M. and Heald, R.M. 1980. *Sociology themes are perspective*. New York.
- Haykal, M. H. 1976. *The life of Muhammad*. Trans from 8<sup>th</sup> edition by Ismail Ragi A. al Faruqi. USA: North American Trust Publications.
- Hornby, A. 1874. Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary of Current English, London: Oxford University Press. 988.
- Ibn Kathir, I. 1997. *Stories of the prophets*. Mansoura: Al-Nour.
- Isah, H. 2005. *The historical events of Ebira people*. Okene: Maigida Rio Press.
- Irfan, U.I. 1996. *Economic doctrine of Islam*. Herndon Virginia:The International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Jibril, I. K. 2009. *Kiss of life in Ebiraland*. Okene: Maigida Rio Press.
- Joseph, A. 2003. *Nigerian people and culture*. Sokoto. Uthman Dan Fodiyo University Press.
- Katz, P. and Kahn R.L.1978. *The social psychology of organization*. New York: John Wiley and son.
- Khurshid, A. 1980. *Islam: its meaning and message*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- Kirby, M. 1997. *Sociology in perspective*. Oxford: Heinemann Education Publisher.
- Le Baron, Michelle and Pillay, Venashri. 2006. *Conflict across culture: a unique experience of bridging differences*. London: Intercultural Differences.
- Lemu, A.B. 1990. *Islamic Studies for senior secondary school*. Book2. Lagos: Islamic Publication Trust.
- Lewis, O. 1961. *The children of Sanchez*.New York:Random House Publication.
- Maddocks, P.J and Poll, D.A. 1950. *Local government in the northern provinces of Nigeria*. Kaduna: Government Printer.
- Mitchell, J.C.1989.*The Structure of international conflict*. London: Macmillan Press
- Muhammad, M.O. 1996. *Chosing the next Ohinoyi Ebira: A wayout*. Kaduna: Botcom Enterprises.
- Nadwi, A.H. 1979. *Muhammad Rasulullahi*. Lucknow: Alasela Islamic Publications.

- New Age Encyclopaedia* 1980. Canada:Lexicon Publication Inc.
- The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*.1998. USA: Encyclopaedia Britannical, Inc.
- Nnoli O. Ed.*Ethnic Conflict in Africa*. Senegal:Codestria Book.
- Ohida, P.E. 2008. *Prayer guide for Ebira nation and historical brief*. Kaduna: Karlemedia.
- Ogido,Y.S. 2004. *Leadership and crisis: a case study of modern problem in Ebira Opete*.Abuja: Prime Publisher Ltd.
- Olaniyi, R.O. *History of conflict in Nigeria*. National Open University, Lagos.
- Owens, R. G. 1981. *Organisational behaviour in education*. (2ed) New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Rahim, O. 1981. *Islamic history*. Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau.
- Rashid, H.G. 2005. *An introduction to peace and conflict studies*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.
- Wallenstein, I. 1974. *The modern world system*. New York: Academic Press.
- Week, D. 1992. *The eight essential steps to conflict resolution*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc.
- Sanni, A.H 1993. *Sociology of Ebira Tao people of Nigeria*, Ilorin: Universityof Ilorin Printing Press.
- Sharif, M.M. 1963. *History of Muslim philosophy*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Suleiman, J. 2006. *Ebira in search of relevance*.Ed.Ibadan: Safmo Publishers Anofil.
- Stark, R. 1987. *Sociology*. California: Wads Worthy Publishing Company Belmont.
- Yakub, A. Y. 2005. *Ohindase stool of Ebiraland*.Okene: Maigida Rio Press.
- Yusuf, A. Ali. *The Holy Quran, text, translation and commentary*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation.
- Zartman W.I. 1999. *Conflict resolution in Africa*. Washingtgon DC: the Brooking Institute.

## **Journals**

- Abdulazeez, M.A. 2010. "Re-enthroning Islamic legal code of ethics for correcting global economic distress." *The Pacesetter*. Emmanuel Alayande College of Education. 15:1.
- Abdus-Sami'i, I. A 1996-1999. "Towards the adoption of Islamic economic principles in solving Nigeria's economic problems". *Journal of Arabic and Religion Studies*. Ilorin: Department of Religions, University of Ilorin.
- Arimiyah S. 2007. "Religion and Human Rights." *Journal of Association for the Study Religion and Education (NASRED)*, Ijebu-Ode: Alamsek Press Limited.
- Daud, O. 1993. "Islam and religious tolerance: a case study of Nigeria public uprising (1950-1992)". *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*. 10: 13.
- Hamza, G.I. 2007 "Developing the small business sector. A key strategy for the attainment of the poverty eradication". *Journal of General Studies*. Kogi State Polytechnic. 1:1
- Japa, M.I. 2007. "Relevance of citizenship education in stemming conflict in Nigeria: the Epira experience". *Confluence Journal of Education*. (CJE) 3:1.
- Nasiru, W.O.A 1980. "Nigeria's political problems and their solutions from Islamic point of view." *Journal of the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. 1:3.
- Oyedeji, A. 2007. "Religion and human rights: an Islamic perspective". *Journal of National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED)*, Ijebu-Ode: Alamsek Press Limited.
- Raji, A. 2011. "The practice of polygyny in Epiraland: Islamic approach." *Kogi Journal of General Studies (KOJGEST)*, Lokoja: Kogi State Polytechnic. 4.2.
- Vanghan, O. 1999. "Chieftaincy politics and social relations in Nigeria". *Journal of Wealth Comparative Politics*. No 3. London. Frank Cass.



### **Other Publications**

- Adebimpe, I.A and Ogunsola A.O.2009. "Ethno-religious violence in a plural society: a case study of Nigeria." *Religions and Modernity*. National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED).
- Folorunsho, M.O., Oyeneye, I.O. and Adebayo, R.I. Eds. *Religion and Modernity*. Ijebu-Ode: National Association for the Study of Religion and Education.
- Gusau, S.A. ed. *Prohibition of interest in an Islamic economy: Readings in an Islamic Economy*. Sokoto: Usman Danfodio University.
- Hanafi, U.Y. 2009. Al-Mawardi's Discourse on modern challenges to governance and public administration. In Y.O. Imam. *Public Administration and Information and Communication (ICT) Through the Lenses of Arabic and Islamic Studies*. Ijebu-Ode: Shebotimo Publications. 40.
- Imam, Y.O. *Public administration and information communication technology (ICT) through the lenses of Arabic and Islamic studies*. Ijebu-Ode: Shebotimo Publications.
- Ismaila, B. R and Ayilara-Dindi, 2007. Modernity and human rights abuse: the Islamic antidotes. In M.A. Folorunsho, I.O. Oyeneye and R.I. Adebayo (eds). *Religion and Modernity*. Ijebu-Ode: National Association for the Study of Religions and Education (NASRED). 27-33.
- Obodoekwe, S; Meju, C. & Naagbaton, P. 2005. Big disarmament gamble; the comeback of small arms and light weapons (SALW). *A publication of the Centre for Environment Human Rights and Development (CEHRD)*. Eleme, Rivers State.
- Ohiare, A. 1950. "Address at the Inauguration of Igbira Tribal Union. *West African Pilot*. Oct.
- Omidan, B. 2008. The Islamic law position on banking interest. *Al-Mujtahid*, A Publication of the Law Students Society of Nigeria

### **Unpublished works**

- Bejehson, M.J. 1999. "Creating an enabling environment for economic development in Ebiraland.Ebira in the Coming Millennium." *Report of the First Ebira National Conference.*
- Desalegn et al 2005. *Indigenous system of conflict resolution in Oromia, Ethiopia. A Paper Presented at the International Workshop on 'African Water Law: Plural Legislative Frameworks for Rural Water Management in Africa'*Johannesburg.
- Ibrahim, Y.A. 1999. "Lesson from history and the need for central organisation:Ebira in the Coming Millennium." *Report of the First Ebira National Conference.*
- Iyayi, F. 2008. Niger Delta crisis: development and socio-cultural implication. *A paper presented at the forum organised by PENGASSAN at Gateway Hotel, Ijebu-ode*
- Japa, M.I. 2007. "Violence and development in Ebiraland: burning and disturbing issue for reflection." *A Conference Paper Presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Conference by Association of Nigerian Teachers (ASSONT).*
- Ohiare J.A 1999. "Culture as a vehicle for development and social cohesion: Ebira in the Coming Millennium". *Report of the First Ebira National Conference.*
- Olaifa, Temitope A. 2005. Effectiveness of Alternative Dispute Resolution: A Critical Examination of the Out-of-Court Settlement as Exemplified on the Gateway Television Programme 'Olowogbogboro'. *A Master Degree Dissertation.*Ibadan: University of Ibadan.
- Onekata, S.S. 1999. "Education and youth in Ebiraland: Ebira in the Coming Millennium." *Report of the First Ebira National Conference.*
- Shuaib, A. 2003. "Islam in Ebiraland." *B.A. ED Project.* Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University.
- Suleiman .J. (2007). "The environment as a star killer (point ii)". *An Unpublished Article..*
- Tenuche, M. 2003. "Intra-ethnic conflict and violence in Ebiraland." *A Research Submitted to African Centre of Demographic Governance (AFRIGOV) Abuja (Unpublished).*
- Yaqub, O.N 1999. "Political leadership and progress in Ebiraland". *Ebira in the Coming Millennium.* Report of the First Ebira National Conference. 52.

### **Information from the internet**

Edofolk.com (2007) "Edo traditional funeral rites and westernization". Retrieved on November 21, 2007 from [www.edofolks.com/htm/pub110.html](http://www.edofolks.com/htm/pub110.html)

<http://www.somali.press.com/news>. Retrieved Aug. 2, 2010.

Ogo and Emarpor (2005). Conflict resolution: Nigerian contribution.

<http://www.accord.org.zal>. Retrieved July 28, 2010.

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia. Retrieved July 13, 2010.

### **Magazines and news papers**

Abdulsalami, A. 2005. "The challenges of security in Nigeria". *The Newswatch*, Lagos. Feb. 12, 2005: 12.

Dada, A. 2010. "Towards an enduring peace in Ebiraland". Retrieved July 7, 2010, from <http://sunday.Dailytrust.com/index.php?>

MacRow, D.W. Okene. *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 45, 1954. 50.

Naagbaton, P. 2007. "The metamorphosis of Soboma George." *The Midweek Telegraph*. Feb. 10, 2007: 56.

Sanni, H. 1974. "Period of evolution, revolution and mobilization in Igbira-land". *Nigeria Herald*, Lagos.

UNIVERSITY