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Alternative dispute resolution in Nigeria: An evaluation of Ihima peace committee on Emani-Ohionwa crisis of Kogi State, 2005 and 2007

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Abstract

Alternative dispute resolution is an age long method prevalent in several societies in the settlements and resolution of conflicts, clashes, disputes, disagreements and rivalries to mention just a few. Such disputes range from marital crisis, family's crisis, disputes in homes, clannish rivalries, communal logger heads, ethnic rivalries, and boundary disputes, conflicts between states, nations and even at international levels. In some instances, alternative disputes resolutions as it implies are employed when every form of arbitrations, legal procedures, court sitting, crises, wars and dialogue have failed to resolve the case at hand. However, in other instances, some societies adopt alternative system of resolution as the first line of action in resolving issues when and where there is a need at hand. In the case of Ihima which is the main focus of this discourse, the failure of several legal proceedings and arbitrations adopted to nip in the bud the Emani-Ohionwa conflict, known as the Ihima crisis, birthed the establishment and adoption of the Ihima Peace Committee. This study therefore, attempts to evaluate the Ihima crisis, causes, effects, and measures adopted in the attempt to resolve the crisis, their failures and the eventual establishment of the Ihima Peace Committee. The work also discusses the members of the committee, term of reference, the committee at work and measures adopted to end the age long rivalries between the two clans involved. The study adopts a historical methodology by the use of primary and secondary data, through oral interview, books and theses. The study revealed that the committee succeeded in restoring peace in Ihima and later put measures in place to forestall any form of a breakdown of law and order as it concern Emani and Ohionwa and by extension, other clans in Ihima.

Keywords: Alternative, Dispute, Emani, Ohionwa, Ihima.

Introduction

Alternative dispute resolution has remained a credible and reliable measure in the settlement of conflicts in most societies; this method dates back to when men began to interact with one another. It has also proven to foster peaceful co-existence in most societies; it is considerably cheaper, less stressful, thereby providing access to seeking redress for man where conventional court services are inaccessible. This study therefore, focuses on examining the activities of the Ihima Peace Committee as an alternative method in the resolution of conflict as exemplified in the case of *Emani* and *Ohionwa* crisis, which is popularly known as the Ihima crisis of 2005-2007. The study attempts a discuss on the people of

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Ihima, their location, the origin of the crisis in view and the people involved. It further investigates various measures adopted in resolving the conflict, the failure of the measures and the establishment of the Ihima peace committee. In addition, the study assess the composition of members of the committee, the term of reference for the committee, the activities of the committee, which include deliberations that shows the committee at work, challenges encountered by the committee, achievements of the committee and the recommendations of the committee to the State, so as to forestall further crisis not just between the two clans, but ensure lasting peace in Ihima and by extension Ebiraland in general. The study also discovered that despite series of attempt to restore peace between the warring clans, peace was still elusive until the formation of the Ihima Peace Committee by the then Kogi State government, who ensured restoration of peace in Ihima, particularly between the two warring clans; *Emani* and *Ohionwa*.

The People of Ihima

Ihima is an Ebira traditional district located in Okehi local government area of Kogi State, situated in the north central region of Nigeria.[1] Ihima is located in an undulating valley surrounded by the hills that lies between 60 and 80 north of latitude, between 60 and 100 east longitude and twenty seven kilometers southwest of the Niger-Benue confluence. The average temperature of Ihima is homogenous with other districts of Ebira land, the hot season last for about four months, January-April, with an average temperature of about 89 degree Celsius. The cold season last for between May and October with an average temperature of 69 degree Celsius. The 2006 census figure shows that the population of Ihima is around one hundred and fifty thousand.[2]

Oral tradition reveals that Ihima is the youngest son of the father of Ebira people called *Itaazi*.[3] It was in an attempt of avoiding going to war with his elder ones as suggested by his mother, that made him migrated to his present location around the Okehi hill.[4] Anataku,[5] posits that it was in Ihima's quest to know more as he had an inquisitive nature despite being the youngest, that prompted him into an adventure in hunting for game that informed his settlement on the top of a hill called Okehi. Omananyi,[6] corroborated the above account that Ihima was a famer and hunter who in search of fertile land and hunting ground, settled on a hill top called Okehi, so that he could strategically view and survey the movements of animals and subsequently, the area was

[1]Ahmed Ademo Okene. "The Transformation of Ebira Land 1890-1960." A PhD Dissertation, Bayero University Kano 1995.
[2] Federal Republic of Nigeria's Official Gazette, No.2, Vol. 96, Abuja, 2nd February, 2009: 33-34.
[3] Oral Interview with Peter Obaro, Secretary, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 70 years, Oboroke, 11/08/2022
[4] ibid
[5] Oral Interview with Anataku Yakubu, Health Worker, Abobo Health Centre, 54 years, Abobo, 24/03/2023
[6] Oral Interview with Peter Omananyi, Business Man and Farmer, 54 years. Oboroke, 14/03/2022.

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named after him, hence the word Ihima.[7] Although, different accounts exist on the emergence of Ihima from available sources, mostly oral traditions. Despite the multiplicity of sources, there is no gainsaying that they all agreed that Ihima was the youngest son of *Itaazi* and that he must have settled in the present location either as an attempt to avoid going to war or in search of a fertile land for farming and hunting purposes. They also agree that Ihima was the father and founder of the Ihima people which has become a major district in Ebiraland. Hamza[8] posits that, upon the arrival of Ihima at his present location, he was said to have excelled in farming and hunting. He eventually got married to three wives from where he had six children. The first wife gave birth to three children named *Ure, Ogu* and *Odumi,* the second wife had a child called *Emani* while the third wife gave birth to the children named: *Oha* and *Ohionwa*. According to Onimisi,[9] Ihima had three wives the first gave birth to a child called Emani who was the senior, the second wife gave birth to three children *Ure*, *Oha* and *Odumi*, while the third gave birth to *Ohueta* and *Ohionwa*. A common narration in these accounts is that Emani is believed to be the first son while *Ohionwa* is the last son of Ihima and the other clans agreed with this assertion.

Relational Theory of Conflict

Adopting the relational theory of conflict as opined by John Burton, cited in Habu Mohammed,[10] the theory posited that the historical relation of a social groups and nature of their understanding of each other, mainly from sociological perspective, could lead to a prolong conflict. He argues that differences in value system of groups created suspicion, stereotypes and deep seated mistrust. This in turn is translated into economic and political spheres of interests among groups, leading to negative exchanges between them which made their interaction more conflict prone. Situating the relational theory of conflict with the *Emani* and *Ohionwa* crises, three key factors is captured in the age long crisis;

i. There is a historical antecedent and age long rivalry between the two, which made it very difficult to resolve despite series of attempt to.
ii. Perception as a major thrust of the relational theory clearly shows that an opposition mindset had been built in the people; hence, there was mutual distrust and suspicion of each other and
iii. The third concept of the relational theory was that there is a high level of stereotyping against each other.

Conflict in Ihima (Emani and Ohionwa)

Conflicts in Ihima dates back to centuries and have evolved over the years taken different forms and dimensions, and in some instances had resulted into serious

[7] ibid
[8] Oral Interview with Hamza Layi, a Retired Public Servant, 62 years, Felele, Lokoja. 10/10/2021.
[9] Oral Interview with HRH. Samuel Onimisi, Obobanyi of Ihima, 65 years, Ihima. 11/03/2022.
[10] Habu Mohammed. Basic Concept and Theories of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Habu Mohammed (ed), Concept and Issues in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution.(Kano: Bayero University Press) 2006. 24-25

crisis. They have occurred as a result of clash of interest, cultural practices, and title disputes and political up risings, but a major underlying or remote cause of the conflicts is shrouded in clannish rivalries on the account of superiority claims. When most of these conflicts are not properly nipped in the board, they resulted into crisis and in most instances have led to the destructions of lives and properties. However, a trace on the origin of conflict in Ihima revealed a historical account link to the acquisition of a Buffalo tail some centuries back. It was agreed within Ihima community then that clans could only install their heads after performing the feat of killing a rare white Buffalo. Oral tradition[11] has it that an *Ohionwa* hunter, who had a maternal uncle from *Emani*, killed a white buffalo and gave the tail to his uncle, who then used it to install himself as *Emani* clan head. When the *Ohionwa* hunter realized that the tail should not have been taken to his maternal home, cunningly took the buffalo tail to his paternal clan who equally used the same buffalo tail to install himself as Ohionwa chief.

Obaro,[12] corroborated this by giving the name of the *Ohionwa* hunter as Ejita, who killed the white buffalo. *Ohionwa* who felt that it was their biological son that has achieved this feat, thought otherwise that the tail should be taken to Ejita father's house and that they were supposed to use the tail to install their clan head or chief. They therefore began to scheme on how to retrieve the buffalo tail from *Emani* clan. Eventually, Ejita was able to retrieve the tail from his maternal grandfather through gimmicks.

Obaro[13] threw more light on the tricks of Ejita. He pretended to be ill as he refused to go out and refused to get up for days, this got his grandfather worried, and consulted Oracles that revealed nothing was wrong with the boy. This lingered for a while until he was asked to allow the boy perform some sacrifices, Ejita consented to and requested that buffalo tail was needed for the supposed sacrifice and he promised to return the tail immediately the sacrifice was done. But it was a trick to sneak the tail to his paternal home and they speedily announced the installation of their clan head of *Ohionwa* with the same tail. The tail was never again returned to *Emani*, since then the two clans have remained on each other's neck. This event was said to have set the tone for an age long rivalry that spanned centuries. The mutual distrust between the two clans later evolved and affected various aspects of their lives, such as cultural practices, political life and verbal confrontations that have seen the carrying of arms and weapons against each other. It therefore, suffices to say that the historical account of the revered white buffalo tail set the tone for generational rivalry between siblings.

Another factor that re-enforced the animosities between the *Emani* and *Ohionwa* is linked to masquerade outings. Masquerade outing during festivals have been a common cultural practice of the Ebira people and Ihima was

[11] Oral Interview with Chief I.A Jegede, Chairman, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years. Ohueta, 11/08/2022.
[12] Oral Interview with Peter Obaro. Secretary Ihima Kingmakers Council,70 years, Ihima, 11/08/2022.
[13] Oral Interview with Peter Obaro. Secretary, Ihima Kingmakers Council,70 years, Ihima, 11/03/2022

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therefore not an exemption. In Ihima, each clan had masquerades that perform during traditional festive periods; most popular of these festive periods are "*Eche Ori*" (New Yam festival) and "*Ekuechi*" (end of the year masquerade festival).[14] For the purpose of this work, the research shall limit the scope of masquerade outings to that of *Emani* and *Ohionwa. Emani*'s was said to have masquerades like *Kereni* and *Evako*, there are other smaller masquerades in the clan, but these two are the most popular in terms of massive followership, spiritual significance, wider viewing, great sponsorship and are very popular across Ebiraland. *Ohionwa* on the other hand had *Arijanu* and *Ura,* who are considered to equally have massive followership, spiritual influence, wider viewing, great sponsorship and with a fan base that cuts across Ebiraland.[15]

A major characteristic of these masquerades is their ingenuity in the composition of songs which attracted a huge fan base. Their songs are highly philosophical and embedded in strong spiritual and moral wisdom. But records have it that they had also used their ingenuity in singing to compose song aimed at attacking each other's clan and by such, have created a ground for further rivalry with each other, which again heightened the tension between the two. It is also important to know that some of these masquerades don't perform at the same period, while some do.[16] For instance, *Ura* of Ohionwa and *Evako* of Emani perform on the same day and in one of such outings, sometime in 1978, *Ura* supporters clashed with *Evako* which led to serious crisis and a life was lost. Similarly, in 1982, *Ura* and *Evako* clashed again, which took the efforts of the police to disperse by the spraying of teargas at Oboroke. No life was lost in that incidence but properties were destroyed.[17]

Perhaps, the most notable in the series of conflicts involving the two clans in recent times, which has resulted in violence, severe crisis, killing and attracting the attention of the State Government to Ihima, was that of 2005 and 2007. It was so severe that it spiralled out of the control of the elders who have been known to have mitigated and sued for peace whenever occasion demanded. The authority of the local government have also at certain instances attempted to use the instrument of government to arrest the situations, but the weight of the crisis appeared to have been heavier than the strength of such machineries.

It is important to note that several committees had been set up by the local government authority to arrest the situation, but could not put an end to such uprisings, the law enforcement agents were at some point drafted in by the state government to address the issues, but they could not find lasting solutions to the crisis. It was at the height of the 2007 incidence which resulted into the loss of several lives, properties and subsequently threw Ihima into a ghost

[14] Oral Interview with Hon James Adeku Obaro, Politician, Iruvusechi, 55 years Ihima, 11/03/2022.
[15] Oral Interview with HRH James Otaru, Ohiomata of Odumi Clan, 72 years, Ihima, 11/03/2022.
[16] Oral Interview with Chief I.A Jegede, Chairman, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years. Ohueta, Ihima, 07/05/2022.

[17] Oral Interview with Siyaka Oyeka, Community Leader, 72 years. Oboroke, Ihima. 10/03/2023.

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community, as many fled away, deserted their homes and became refugees outside their community, that the then Kogi State Government wadded in by deploying men of the armed forces to restore calmness across Ihima. It was as part of the measures by the Kogi State Government to provide a lasting solution to the incessant crisis between the warring clans in Ihima, that a peace committee was set up to address the long standing issues.[18] The crisis of 2005 and 2007 have come to be known as "Ihima Crisis" because directly or indirectly, other clans within the district have been dragged in and some non Ihima indigenes living in the area were also affected.[19]

Demographic difference has equally been attributed to the factors that have fuelled the dispute between *Emani* and *Ohionwa*. Records have it that the *Ohionwa* despite being the youngest of all the clans are more populous and this may not be unconnected to the fact that the clan permits intra-clan marriages; while other clans abhor it.[20] The demographic advantage of *Ohionwa* over other clans in Ihima has given them some privileges; for instance, since the return to democracy in 1999, the *Ohionwa* choice of political alliance usually emerge victorious, which shows their political dominance in the area. The *Emanis* have also accused *Ohionwa* of political marginalization, which had further widened the gap between the two.[21] The *Emani* and *Ohionwa* scenario is a reflection of the relational theory of conflict, where the sociological perception of the two clans, have prolonged the suspicion for each other, resulting in stereotyping and the unending nature of the conflicts. The memory of crises among the duo has been passed from one generation to the other, making it to spiral into political, social-cultural lives of the people.

Previous Measures Adopted to Resolve the Conflicts

Several measures have been adopted to resolve the series of crisis in Ihima and to forestall such occurrence, but most of the measures adopted could not bring about a lasting peace, as relative peace were usually aborted by another spark off. This could be as a result of the complex nature of the crisis.

The first measure adopted was the attempt made by the law enforcement agents (police) to intervene and stop the mayhem. To some extent, it was believed that the law enforcement agents did their best at resolving the crisis, they however, lost control of the situation. Yunusa,[22] attributed this to the fire arms in the possession of the youths of the warring parties, as they were more sophisticated than that of the police, hence, the police were left with no choice than to retreat and the police station at Obeiba in Ihima was burnt down by the warring youths. In corroborating Yunusa's claims, Kazeem,[23] alleged that such

[18] Oral Interview with Dada Omanayin, Teaching, 67 years. Obeiba, Ihima. 10/03/2023.
[19] Oral Interview with Alexander Jimoh, Medical Doctor, 65 years. Oboroke, Ihima. 10/03/2023.
[20] Oral Interview with Haruna Adagiri, Community Leader, 69 years. Ikuehi, Ihima. 23/03/2023
[21] Oral Interview with Yakubu Anataku, Public Servant, 57 years, Iruvusechi, Ihima. 24/03/2023.
[22] Oral Interview with SaliuYunusa, Architect, 51 years. Ikueh, Ihima,. 24/03/2023.
[23] Oral Interview with Kazeem Ibrahim, Teaching, 58 years, Ikuehi, Ihima. 23/03/2023

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fire arm could have been given to them by prominent citizens of the clans, and in some instances, youths used as political thugs were armed before elections and such arms may not have been completely retrieved. Matters which required urgent intervention by police in Ihima was made impossible as a result of the burning of Ihima police station. Hence, the time difference between when a crime occurs in Ihima and arrival of police from Obangede or Okene/Checkpoint allowed room for escalation of crisis that could have been put under control had Ihima police station not razed down by the warring paries.

The next step taken in resolving the crisis was initiated by the late Obobanyi of Ihima (*Emani*) Siyaka Okaraga, who invited some youths and elders in Ihima for a meeting. It was said that his efforts were strongly opposed and frustrated by some quarters, because they viewed his moves as bias and therefore baseless.[24] This failure perhaps could be attributed to the fact that he was the leader of the *Emani* clan, he may have been perceived to be self-seeking. The reactions that greeted the initiatives of the late Obobanyi, could also be linked to the ongoing case where the Obobanyi sees himself as the Obobanyi of Ihima, instead of *Emani*. This, the entire Ihima perceived as arrogation of his rulership over the entire Ihima district, which has been resisted not only by the Ohionwa clan, but the entire clans in Ihima. The matter has however, been taken to the court.

Another effort in resolving the conflict was credited to Hon. A.K Salihu (the then member of the House of Representatives), who invited Ihima elders of the community for a meeting at his residence (Iruvusechi). He led a delegation to the palaces of the Obobanyis of the warring clans and appealed for peace, but the *Ohionwa* were said to have rejected settlement unless the Head of Emani clan stop parading himself as the Obobanyi of Ihima and limit himself to the Obobanyi of *Emani*, stating that he is only the leader of *Emani* clan and not the leader of the entire Ihima. This again, led to the abortion of the peaceful resolution that Hon Salihu sort to achieve.[25] It was said that the youth of *Emani* also met with Hon. A.K Salihu and Hajia Fatimoh (a women leader) at her residence where she appealed for calm. This effort was also regarded as a very welcome development, but was not potent enough to resolve the issue at hand, owing to the same reason given above.[26] It appeared then, that any move made by members of any of the warring parties was greeted by resistance, because, such was regarded as self seeking and may not captured the interest of the opposing side.

Ihima Welfare Association (IWA), Ebira People's Associations (EPA) have also at some point wadded into the matter, their efforts were able to secure a temporary resolution, but such resolution did not stand the test of time, the peace was truncated by another episode of crisis between the duo. At some

[24] Oral Interview with Chief I.A Jegede, Chairman, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years. Ohueta, Ihima, 07/05/2022
[25] Oral Interview with Peter Obaro. Secretary Ihima Kingmakers Council, 70 years. Ihima, 11/03/2022.
[26] Oral Interview with Chief I.A Jegede, Chairman, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years. Ohueta, Ihima, 07/05/2022.

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instances when it appeared a breakthrough was on sight and relative peace recorded, the crisis erupted over and over again. The development has come to make Ihima a hot spot in the entire Ebira land.[27] The young and emerging generations of the clans have come to develop hatred for each other, even when the origin of the crisis predates their existence. Perhaps the young generations had been brain washed by each of their progenitors into believing that they are each other's enemies. This again gives credence to the relevance of the relational theory of conflict.

Why the Inability for Resolution?

A major step taken in resolving the crisis was that of the state government under the leadership of His Excellency, Governor Ibrahim Idris. The state government set up a seven man administrative panel of enquiry which was inaugurated on 23rd January, 2006 and was mandated to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the crisis between *Emani* and *Ohionwa* clans in Ihima District of Okehi Local Government Area with a view of proffering solutions to the lingering problems.[28] The panel of enquiry was chaired by Hon. Dan Kadiri, who was then the Hon. Commissioner for Commence and Industry in Kogi State. Other members included Alhaji Rasheed Bello, Mall. Isa Khaba, Barrister E.O Akpan and Mr. Martins S.O Enimola, was appointed the Secretary. The co-opted members were elder P.S Ocheni, Mrs. R.O Obinaiye and Mr. Sunday Haruna. The panel made their enquiry and submitted their report to the State Government on April 2006.[29]

In similar vein, in May, 2006, the Supreme Council for Kogi State Central Senatorial District was formed by the elders across Ebiraland in response to the pressure from concerned Ebira, His Eminence, Alhaji Ahmad Badamasuiyi. On the 7th May, 2006, the council was inaugurated at Okengwe Town Hall, Okengwe in Okene Local Government Area. The council after series of meeting on the way forward in the entire Ebiraland and finding lasting peace in Ihima in particular, recommended that the state government should setup a committee on peace and reconciliation to look into the crisis in Ihima and proffer a lasting solution. The government responded by consenting to the request of the Supreme Council for Kogi State Central Senatorial District.[30]

From the foregoing, it is evident that several attempts have be made by individuals, groups, elders of Ihima and even the state government to find a lasting solution to the crisis. However, none of these efforts yielded positive result in terms of providing temporary solutions to the long lingering crisis in Ihima. The warring parties seemed not to be ready to sheath their sword, hence, the crisis lingered. When conflicts are not resolved and nipped in the board

[27] Oral Interview with Peter Obaro. Secretary Ihima Kingmakers Council, 70 years. Ihima, 11/03/2022
[28] Oral Interview with Haruna Adagiri, Community Leader, 69 years. Ikuehi, Ihima. 23/03/2023.
[29] Oral Interview with Otaru Amos, Adviser Oral Interview with Ohionwa Clan, 78 years. Oboroke, Ihima. 23/03/2023.
[30] Oral Interview with Peter Onipetu, Emani Youth Leader, 48 years. Obeiba, Ihima. 23/03/2023.

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early enough, the resultant effect is usually manifested in violent crisis which could leads to serious mayhem.

Constitution of Peace Committee on Ihima Crisis

The then Governor of Kogi State, His Excellency Alhaji Ibrahim Idris constituted the Peace Committee on Ihima Crisis vide letter reference DLGCA/CHI/S/30/254 of 11th May 2007 It had the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland HRM Alhaji (Dr) Ado Ibrahim as the Chairman. The Ohi of Eika was appointed member and Secretary to the committee. The committee had all the Ohis in Ebiraland and all the Clan Heads in Ihima, including the two contenders to the stool of OHIOMATA of *Odumi* Clan as members and their names are listed below. The committee's terms of reference was to find lasting solution to lhima crisis and had two (2) weeks from the date of the letter of appointment to submit its report. The venue of the meetings of the committee was Government Lodge, Okene.[31]

Members of the Committee

1. HRM, Alhaji (Dr) Ado Ibrahim, Ohinoyi of Ebira-land ……..Chairman.
2. HRH, (Dr) Bello Asuku Ibrahim, Ohi of Adavi……Member.
3. HRH, Mall. Musa IsahAchuja, Ohi of *Eganyi*…….. Member.
4. HRH, Alh. Shehu M. Adaviriku, Ohi of *Eika*……..Secretary.
5. HRH, Mall. Yahaya Sadiq,Ozomata of *Odumi*…… …Member.
6. HRH, Alh. Yakubu A. Yusufu, Ohi of Okengwe/Okene……Member.
7. HRH, Mall. Isiaka O. Lawal……..Member.
8. HRH, Alh. Shehu Tijani Usman, Ogasube of *Ure*……Member.
9. HRH, Alh. Hassan S. Otokiti, Obobanyi of *Ohueta* Clan……Member.

    (i) Mr. Idris Okomanyi& (ii) Mr. Ozovehe Ovoko

both contending for the stool of Ohiomata of Odumi……..Members.

10. HRH, Chief Jeremiah Aka'aba, Obobanyi of Ohionwa Clan..Member.
11. HRH, Comm. Albert J. Sanni (Rtd.) Idu of *Oha* Clan…….Member.[32]

[31] Administrative Panel of Inquiry into Ihima the Emani-Ohionwa Crisis in Ihima District, Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State, April 2006
[32] Administrative Panel of Inquiry into Ihima the Emani-Ohionwa Crisis in Ihima District, Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State, April 2006.

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Terms of Reference of the Committee

i. The terms and reference of the committee was to investigate and find out the remote and immediate causes of the crisis;

ii. The Committee was to find a lasting solution to the crisis in Ihima.

iii. The venue of the Committee's meeting was to be the Governor's Lodge, Okene and

iv. The Committee was given two (2) weeks from the date of this letter to submit its report to the Executive Governor of Kogi State.[33]

The Committee at Work

In carrying out its primary assignment, the committee's first step was the visit to the troubled spot twice and called for and received written and oral submissions from the contending parties, representatives of other clans, spokes men of various Associations in Ihima and selected elders who cut across the clans and sub-districts. After series of consultations and meetings with stake holders, the committee came up with these findings:[34]

i. The shifting alliances among powerful politicians in Ihima dovetailed into the old-age clannish rivalries among the clans in Ihima helped to fuel the crisis;

ii. Politicians were reported to have supplied heavy arms to unauthorized youths who used these arms indiscriminately to destroy properties and kill fellow human beings;

iii. Absence of operational Police station, which was destroyed by the Ihima youths in a previous crisis, made it difficult to stem the crisis at its initial stage. The time difference between when a crime occurs in Ihima and when it was reported in either Obangede or Okene/Checkpoint was a distance of about 7 kilometers and 15 kilometers respectively.

iv. Clannish rivalry between *Emani* and *Ohionwa* was understood by *Ohionwa* as a fight she was fighting on behalf of the other three Clans over the nomenclature of the "Obobanyi" stool against Emani clan. However *Odumi* clan decided to remain neutral; this added to the flexing of muscle between the two clans, which was exploited by desperate politicians;

[33] Administrative Panel of Inquiry into Ihima the Emani-Ohionwa Crisis in Ihima District, Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State, April 2006

[34] Kogi State Government's Letter Setting up Peace Committee on Ihima Crisis, 07/05/2007.

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v. Intra clannish rivalry within the *Odumi* clan resulting in the division of the clan behind the two contenders to the *Ohiomata* of *Odumi* stool made each division of the clan alliance to *Ohionwa* clan and *Emani* clan respectively. This escalated the crisis because instead of the intervention by a third party to resolve the crisis, the third party became involved in sympathy for its alliance;

vi. The Ihima elites living outside the state were alleged to have further escalated the tension between the warring clans. Their involvement was said to have been their various donation of handsome financial resources from their various base to prosecute the crisis and to establish the supremacy of their different clans;.

vii. The people, particularly some elders in the society were not sincere in handling the crisis abinitio. What they say seems to contradict what they do both in public and private life. This double-face in no small measure helped in escalating the endless crisis in Ihima area. The elders should show in practical terms, borrow leaves from that attitudinal behaviour of the elders who serve as the light to the younger ones.

viii. The elders were also found to be telling the youths ancient stories that did not promote healthy living among the clans in that society. Negative historical knowledge are been told to the generality of Ihima indigene. The youths worked with this type of knowledge negatively, hence the protracted crisis among the clan heads and their members.

ix. The Age-long seniority rivalry between *Emani* and *Ohionwa* owing to the killing of a white Buffalo which tail was a major requirement for the installation of a clan head.

x. The long standing issue on the adoption of the nomenclature "Obobanyi of Ihima" by Emani had generated serious crisis between the two clans and by extension, between Emani and the other clans in Ihima. With the aforementioned, the committee was obliged to take immediate and drastic steps to address the issues on ground.

Challenges and Achievements of the Committee

The work of the committee was not without challenges. Notably among the challenges, was the short time frame to complete the assignment and submit its report to the state government. This however put the committee under pressure to deliver, but afterwards, the members requested that additional time be given to enable them carry out a thorough assignment. The request was granted.[35] HRM the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, Alh. Ado Ibrahim who was appointed Chairman of the committee insisted that the venue of meeting be moved to his palace instead of the Government Lodge, Okene as directed by His Excellency.

[35] Report of Peace Committee on Ihima Crisis, May, 2007

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The committee afterwards unanimously appointed HRH, Alh. Yakubu A Yusuf, the Ohi of Okengwe/Okene as the acting Chairman.[36] Again, the memoranda submitted by the various actors and clan representatives only captured the immediate crisis between Emani and Ohionwa, and did not include some other issues, like that of the two contending parties for the Ohiomata's stool of *Odumi*, which was part of the committee's assignment as indicated in the term of reference. This however caused additional setback.[37] The need for shifting venues for most of the meetings did not allow the smooth running in addressing the issues, coupled with inadequate fund to carter for logistics in terms of mobility was a major challenge the committee had to deal with.

Despite that, the Committee recorded major achievements, while some were immediate and others took a while. The achievements include; on the spot reconciliations/settlements; blames were apportioned to those found wanting in the entire crisis and most importantly; was the reconciliation measures adopted to restore peace to the community as a whole and also to forestall a future occurrence. For instance, the committee reconciled Alh. A**.** Umar, the (Onoguvoh Obanyi of Ebiraland) and Peter Obaro, the secretary to *Ohionwa* clan council over the allegation by Peter Obaro that, Alh. A. Umar was arming the youths of *Odumi* clan for crisis. The committee also reconciled a housewife (*Odumi*) who was brutally beaten by one Mall. Isa Onuvoha, (*Ohionwa* and a Carpenter) on the excuse that she was using a cell phone to communicate with her clan mates about the crisis. Onuvoha was to refund the hospital bills of N20,000:00 and his clan accepted to pay. Again, the committee agreed that financial token be sent to some internally displaced people within Ihima and environs, the disbursements include: [38]

i) N20, 000:00 to Ohionwa clan through Chief Ozovehe

ii) *N50,* 000:00 to Ohionwa refuges through Chief Ozovehe.

iii) *N50,* 000:00 to Obeiba zone through OHI of Ihima.

iv) N50, 000:00 to Ikuehi zone through OHI of Ihima.

v) N15, 000:00 to refuges in Adavi-Eba through the Asema.

Vi) N30, 000:00 to displaced persons in Obangede through the Ohi of Eika.

Peace Restoration Measures

As part of the committees major and primary assignments to put an end to all forms of crisis in Ihima, it set up community based peace sub-committee in each of the crisis areas to handle fresh crisis that may arise at any point in time. The

[36] Ibid
[37] Ibid
[38] Ibid

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community based peace committee comprised members that made up each section. The committees were advised to liaise appropriately with the members of the security personnel in the areas where necessary. Members of the committee appealed passionately to his Excellency, Alh Ibrahim Idris to allow the military personnel remain in Ihima until absolute peace was restored in the area. It was worthy of note that the committee was receiving maximum cooperation from its members, individuals from within and in diaspora, including other concerned Ebira people outside Ihima District.[39]

Recommendation of the Committee

The committee went further by making some recommendations to the State Government which it considered to be a strong and method to restore lasting peace to the area and fostering peace, unity and progress in Ihima. The recommendation of the committee are stated as:[40]

i. Ban on the festival in the Central Senatorial District and violators of this ban should be made to face the full wrath of the law;

ii. *Emani* and *Ohionwa* clans were reprimanded, vehemently cautioned and forcibly advised to mend their fences, to allow peace, unity and progress reign in Ihima. The other four clans should display visible neutrality in the event of disagreement between the two clans (*Emani* and *Ohionwa*). Akuta and Aninyere clans should be commended for the neutrality they have displayed throughout the feud. None of their members was mentioned throughout the crisis. Some Akuta members whose properties were destroyed should be considered whenever there is relief;

iii. Freedom of association, be it in politics, religious or other social spheres as entrenched in the Nigeria constitution should be allowed to flourish at all times in Ihima. Politicians should however, close ranks to give peace a chance. People to be governed should not be intimidated, threatened, dehumanized, humiliated and even killed during the cause of struggle for power or supremacy;

iv. Politicians should play down clannish sentiments in their campaigns and political activities. Culture of thugery, which seems to have been deeply rooted in Ebira politics, should be condemned in its entirety. Youths should not be destroyed for the sake of power seeking. Clear cases of thugery should be dealt with appropriately in the court of law. There should be no sacred cows in the dispensation of justice in this regard;

v. Efforts should be made to reduce youth restiveness through creation of job opportunities in the land. The two ailing industries, Ajaokuta Steel Company and National Iron Ore Mining Company in ltakpe should be reactivated to absorb the employable youths. Once the majority of the youths are gainfully employed, they will have little or no time to engage in destructive tendencies;

[39] Ibid
[40] Ibid

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vi. Religious leaders, Community leaders, opinion molders, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and others, should be appealed to in preaching peace among the people in the Central Senatorial District of the State. The committee commended the efforts of the Ebira Peace Project, headed by Alh. Abubakar Imam for his positive roles in preaching peace and supporting peace moves and commended the role played by the Justice Development Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese Lokoja;

vii. Security outfits in the Central Senatorial District should endeavour to protect lives and disseminate their information on the security situations at any given time, keeping the confidentiality of their sacred ethical practices;

viii. Government should be appealed to, to continue keeping the military personnel for the next couples of months until total normalcy returns to Ihima area;

ix. It was suggested that the Federal Government should establish permanent military base in the Central Senatorial District. Presence of military men means peace in the circumstance the police can no longer withstand the sophisticated arms and ammunitions among the youths and their sponsors**;**

x. Although the destruction of lives and properties was self-afflicted by lhima indigenes, the Government at all levels (Federal, State and Local government) should come to the aid of the innocent victims of the mayhem and

xi. Post-crises period should embark upon "4Rs" Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Reconstruction. Permanent Conflict Resolution Committee (PCRC) should be established in Ebiraland. Members of such committee should be people of proven pedigree. In view of the pending court case (i) *Emani* Vs *Ohionwa* (ii) The case between the two contenders to the *Ohiomata* stool of *Odumi* clan, this committee will not recommend the institution of a Judicial Panel for the Ihima crisis, instead a professional committee should be appointed to estimate the value of the destruction of properties, since this committee recommend strongly for the government assistance.

The government' adoption of the report of the committee, with particular reference to the recommendations, has gone a long way to curb the perennial crisis in Ihima. Again, it has been observed that a few violators have been greeted with the immediate punishment and perpetrators punished by members of the standing sub-committee on peace that was introduced as a result of the recommendation of the Peace committee of Ihima. In addition, further investigation should be made to know and fish out those working behind the scene to unleash mayhem on Ihima. Such individuals whether politicians or other prominent sons of the area should be dealt with by the government. In a case that a politician is proven guilty, a vote of no confidence should be passed on him or her and should never be allowed to contest any position in the area again.

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Furthermore, the presence of a military base in Ebiraland, may act as check on all forms of menace perpetrated by miscreants in the land. This is against the background that some of the bad elements in the community are alleged to be in possession of sophisticated weapons that supersedes that of the police firearms. The Peace Committee on Ihima crisis may have proven that alternative conflict resolution will engender peaceful coexistence among societies; therefore, this kind of measure can be adopted by stake holders of warring communities within and across the globe.

Peace in Ihima

The above recommendation was reported to the state government and it was accepted as a welcome development and adopted by the Ihima traditional council. This became the working document in the maintenance and enforcement of peace in Ihima, not only for the warring clans, but for the entire district. Commenting on the activities of the Peace committee on Ihima crisis, Otaru,[41] agrees that the committee has brought peace and harmony to not just Emani and Ohionwa, but to the entire Ihima people, to him, since the adoption of the resolution of the committee, clannish rivalry in Ihima is no longer a popular phenomenon

Conclusion

The study interrogated the age long rivalry between *Emani* and *Ohionwa* clans in Ihima district of Okehi local government area, in the Central Senatorial District of Kogi State, Nigeria. It is observed that the rivalry which is deeply enshrined in their history has been passed on from one generation to the other and its dynamics have afterwards evolved into severe crisis, which had spiraled into their inter-personal relationships, socio-cultural lives and not sparing the political culture of the people. The study clearly divulged that there is a deep-seated misgiving arising from mutual distrust, suspicion and name callings about the personalities of the duo, but the most prominent of it was the 2005 and 2007 eruptions which led to destructions of lives and properties, culminating into the people fleeing their ancestral home to seek refuge outside, and turning the entire Ihima district into a ghost town. While these misgivings may be deeply rooted in their history, the remote cause shows an allegation centered around the killing and use of a white buffalo tail to install a clan head, which an *Ohionwa* son achieved, but because he was not raised in his paternal home, had to devised a way of taking the buffalo tail to his paternal home through a trick, which *Emani* considered as mischievous. That singular act set the tone for a trans-generational rivalry between siblings. Again, the study revealed that the age long crisis eventually was put to an end through an alternative dispute measures, despite series of attempts by government and the law enforcement agencies, which did not yield the desired result as relative peace between the clans was soon truncated by another development and thereby, adding to the series of crisis between the duo. “Ihima Peace

[41] Oral Interview with HRH James Otaru, Ohiomata of Odumi Clan, 72 years, Ihima, 11/03/2022.

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Committee", an alternative dispute resolution measure became the body that ended the age-long rivalry of *Emani* and *Ohionwa* clans in Ihima. This shows that the traditional measures of settling disputes still remain credible, reliable, very effective and less costly and as such, should be adopted by societies, states, nations and by all and sundry, to ensure peaceful co-existence and resolution of conflicts even among sworn enemies. Finally, the paper has examined the formation of the Peace Committee on Ihima crisis, the composition of the committee in terms of membership, the terms and conditions under which the committee carried out its assignments. It has also looked into the works, challenges, achievements and various measures adopted to resolve the crisis. Should the recommendation of the committee be adopted by the government, it would restore and ensure lasting peace. The study therefore, revealed that alternative dispute mechanism remain a reliable measure in the restoration of peace and order which could be adopted across the world, as exemplified in the case of *Emani* and *Ohionwa* case.

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