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Editorial

Dr Ebilabo Obubo, and Prof Ejitu N. Ota write on the Irony Of Oil Wealth and Poverty in the Niger Delta between 1998 and 2022. They argue that although the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has the highest concentration of crude oil deposits in the country and contributes largely to the Nigerian economy, indigenes of the region have, over the years, had to contend with neglect from the federal government. The paper observes that a major fall-out of the activities of transnational oil companies in the Niger Delta in collaboration with the federal government is youth restiveness.

The contribution of Sunday Omoafena Imanah and Jacob O. Osunide is on insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District and its impact on the people. According to them, insecurity manifests hostage, killing, rape, creation of fear, bombing, kidnapping for ransom, tension, destruction of life and property e.tc. They argue that the causes of insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District are illiteracy, unemployment and underemployment, poverty, greedy, bad leadership, lack of government presence, land dispute, poor social amenities/infrastructure, economic factor and lack of political will, ethnic and communal conflicts.

Dr. Fidelis Achoba writes on Flood Management of Niger-Benue Rivers in the colonial era and lessons for Nigeria's contemporary economy. This paper examines the place of the River Niger in transport and power sectors in Nigeria especially with respect to transportation and power generation which are pivotal to the economic development of the nation. The paper avers that despite the economic and administrative importance of the rivers to British colonial authorities, they were gradually neglected when other modes of transport like rail and roads were developing. The paper posits that the lackluster attitude of the

government towards the management of the natural infrastructure for transport subsists in post independent Nigeria. It concludes that if the government had developed the existing dams and built more on the Niger, the problems of marine transport, electricity and unemployment would have been assuaged.

Dr Arnold Stanley Udisi's essay is concerned with semantic signification and pragmatic implicature of personal names in ijo language. The study reveals that names have different locutionary forces couched in structures such as NPs, VPs, and sentences,. The paper also concludes that in Ijo language and culture, names reveal embedded meanings and pragmatic implicatures beyond being mere signification and identification labels. This foregrounds the cultural, sociolinguistic and pragmatic magnitude of names name.

Barisuka, Prince Beteh does a critical review of electoral violence in the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship elections. The paper explains that electoral violence takes various forms at pre-election, during election and post- election which include, harassment, intimidation, assassination and kidnapping. According to the author, power cabals employed violence to enable them impose candidate of their own choice against the will of the majority.

Dr Arthur Ebibolou Orupou and Kemebradikumor Theophilus Dabrilagha report on their research in oral literature and provide a thematic categorization of Ijo Owu (Masquerade) Songs as a form of oral poetry. The research evaluates the internal structure and artistic form of the songs alongside analyzing their socio-cultural significance within the community. Drawing on Awoonor's model of classification, the study categorizes the songs into three functional types: social, occupational, and religious.

.Prof Elliot Sibiri

Editor-in-Chief

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THE IRONY OF OIL WEALTH AND POVERTY IN THE NIGER DELTA BETWEEN 1998 AND 2022

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Abstract

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has the highest concentration of crude oil deposits in the country which has contributed immensely to the national economy. However, indigenes of the region have, over the years, had to contend with neglect from the federal government. This is in spite of the fact that crude oil exports from the Niger Delta provide the bulk of Nigeria's export earnings. Adopting the qualitative research methodology of content analysis and the historical descriptive approach, the paper has observed that a major fall-out of the activities of transnational oil companies in the Niger Delta in collaboration with the federal government is youth restiveness. This has resulted in the formation of such militant groups as the *Egbesu Boys*, whose modus operandi include the destruction of oil installations and the kidnapping of employees of the oil companies. The paper concludes that although the Presidential Amnesty Programme was set-up to address the grievances of youths from the Niger Delta regions, a lot more still need to be done, especially in the area of environmental management and control, as well as infrastructural development in the region.

Keywords: Oil wealth, Transnational Oil Companies, poverty, marginalization, Niger Delta, Presidential Amnesty Programme

Introduction

This essay is an examination of an aphoristic situation in the Niger Delta Region which produces the bulk of the wealth of the Nigerian state through its resources, especially oil and gas deposits. However, the region is denied all the good things

of life, such as access to good education, good roads, constant electricity supply, political offices and administration, and by implication, economic power and development. It is this evident marginalization of the people in the region in the distribution of the nation's wealth and their exclusion from vital political positions as well as reckless misrule and lack of responsiveness to the needs of the people by successive administrations that brought about youth restiveness and violence in the region.

The essay argues that the people, especially the youths, became so disempowered and frustrated because oil companies operating in the region continued to ignore them. Thus, the disgruntled youths also decided to turn their grievances into confrontations with the Federal Government in order to restructure the country. This was made manifest by the emergence of revolting movements such as the Ijo Youth Council (IYC) which proclaimed the Kaiama Declaration of 1998, . The IYC gave an ultimatum to oil companies operating in the region to quit the region between December 11 to December 30 1998.¹ With the expiration of the ultimatum, the Ijo Youth Council (IYC), through its military wing (the Egbesu Boys) revolted and engaged the military government under General Abdusalami Abubakar in armed confrontation. Worse still, while in Odi, some of these youths allegedly abducted and killed twelve police officers in the community, which development led to a reprisal attack and an unrestrained destruction of the community with evident massacre of its men, women and children by soldiers during the Olusegun Obasanjo-led federal government in 1999.³ But the unpalatable experiences did not deter the youths who are disempowered economically, socially and politically. Consequently, oil installations and government apparatus located in oil yielding communities became easy targets of attacks by the frustrated youth of the Niger Delta.⁴ The government did not also stop the bombing and destruction of communities and their inhabitants in the region, as they did to Oporoza, the home-town of a foremost militant leader, named Government Ekpomupolo (Tompolo). According to a source:

The Joint Task Force (JTF) attack the village of Oporaza in Niger Delta. It is uncertain whether president Yar'Adua ordered or acceded to this attack-perhaps to test the waters for a longer engagement- or whether the JTF is operating outside the Federal government. Both scenarios are of critical concern in their implications about the Nigerian government, the likelihood of escalation and the collapse of any peace initiatives. Particularly alarming is the decision to target Tompolo, a MEND Leader who is said to have been active recently

in talks with the Federal government and who is seen as a political leader of the movement⁵.

A Historical Dissection of Oil Exploration Activities in Nigeria before 1956

If there is any development of greater historical importance in Nigeria than electricity, it is petroleum. The petroleum industry has grown steadily over the years to become the cornerstone of the nation's economy. Since the 1970s, the nation's crude oil sector has contributed immensely to the government's revenue profile. In addition to dominating other sectors,⁶ the oil sector accounts for the bulk of the nation's revenue, especially her foreign exchange earnings. However, its displacement of agriculture as the main-stay of the Nigerian economy has created a structural imbalance for the economy, undermining economic performance and national development. Nevertheless, the relevance of the petroleum sector in the economic stability of the Nigerian state cannot be underplayed.

However, this history would be inadequate without examining the activities of the international oil companies (IOCs). Oil producing companies are inextricably linked with the nation's sustenance.⁷ The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) which is a product of the 1907 merger of the British Shell Trading and Transport Company and the Netherland Royal Dutch Group of Companies,⁸ is known to be among the pioneer oil exploration companies in the country. In 1937, the company obtained an exploration concession from the British colonial administration with exclusive rights over the whole area of the country, including the Southern Cameroons which was then administered as part of colonial Nigeria.⁹ Using Owerri in the present Imo State as its base, the company commenced the investigation of a totally unknown territory after merging with the D' Arcy Exploration activities in the country in the early twenties.¹⁰

By the period the Shell-D' Arcy Petroleum Development Company Limited started exploration in 1938, oil had not been found in commercial quantity anywhere in West Africa, and there was little indication of West Africa becoming a major oil-producing zone. Between 1939-1940, the Shell-D' Arcy survey party called the Thyssen Survey Party used Okwelle Okigwe in the present Imo State as its base, and undertook geological survey of the neighborhood of Okigwe, extending to about 12-15 miles south-west wards in the direction of Owerri. The Shell-D' Arcy exploration parties were forced to suspend activities in the 1940s as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War.¹¹

At the termination of the Second World War in 1945, the British Petroleum Company joined Shell D'Arcy in the exploration activities in Nigeria in 1946. This led to the changing of the company's name to Shell-B.P. The company thus, became jointly financed by the Royal Dutch-Shell Group of Companies and the British Petroleum Corporation on equal basis.¹² In September 1946, exploration activities resumed in earnest with more ground and aerial surveys. It was during this period that the Niger Delta area was selected for intensive search for petroleum as it was considered a more likely area to contain hydrocarbon accumulation.¹³ Suffice it to say that drilling of exploration wells by the company first took place in Owerri in 1951, and the second in Uyo province between 1953-1954. But it terminated further appraisal drilling due to the disappointing results from neighborhood appraisal results.¹⁴

By 1956 however, results of tests carried out at the company's exploration well at Otuabagi in the then Oloibiri District in Brass Division of present day Bayelsa State had shown a larger quantity of oil than so far discovered in the other exploration wells. More wells later drilled in the vicinity also confirmed a major oil field.¹⁵ Before the end of the year, oil was also found in commercial quantity at Afam in the then Umuahia Province. The year 1958 saw the discovery of a much larger quantity of oil at Bonu, 14 miles south of Afam,¹⁶ in the then Ogoni Division of present-day Rivers State. These early discoveries gave further impetus for the intensification of exploration activities and to the discovery of the Ebubu and Ughelli oil fields west of the Niger Delta in 1959. According to a source,¹⁷ prior to this discovery, all discoveries were in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria. Following the initial discoveries at Oloibiri and Afam, Shell-B.P. Petroleum Development Company commenced oil production. Through pipeline connection between Otuabagi (Oloibiri) and Kugbo Bay with the support of cargo vessels carrying crude oil to Port-Harcourt, the Company was able to export its first cargo of crude oil in 1958 from the temporary oil export terminal at Bonny.¹⁸

The commencement of oil production at Otuabagi in the then Oloibiri district was followed by the transfer of Shell-B.P. headquarters from Owerri to Port-Harcourt in 1957. Apart from nearness to the oil fields, Port-Harcourt was chosen because of the availability of infrastructural facilities like adequate harbour and port facilities to handle materials and heavy oil equipments. The availability of air transport and communication links with Lagos, the then Federal Capital of Nigeria was a further advantage of Port-Harcourt over Owerri. As stated above, the movement to Port-Harcourt, which was completed in 1959, started in 1957 when the company began the construction of its office buildings, workshops,

training centres, material handling facilities and residential area of 400 housing units.¹⁹

In 1958, the rate of production was 4000 barrels per day. This figure doubled the following year with the beginning of production from the Afam and Bonu fields. To handle the increasing rate of production, a decision was taken to build an oil terminal at Bonny but at the entrance of Bonny River was a bar which even small tankers could not pass through when fully loaded. This made the dredging of the Bonny Bar inevitable between 1959 and 1961 to enable the movement of bigger tankers. A total of four tanks were constructed at the terminal with a total capacity of 30,000 barrels.²⁰

With the success of Shell at Otuabagi (Oloibiri) other oil companies became interested in oil exploration in Nigeria. By 1958, the first export of crude oil of about 1.8 million barrels left the shores of Nigeria for Britain, valued at the equivalent of about one hundred and seventy million Naira (₦170 Million)²¹. With time, the production of crude oil rose considerably, with a lull experienced during the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967 to 1970. After the cessation of hostilities in 1970, crude oil production increased and so did earnings from oil exports. Paradoxically, these have not impacted positively on the lives of the vast majority of Nigerians,²² especially the people of the Niger Delta region.

Injustice and Frustration in the Niger Delta Region

Oil exploration in real sense brought about frustration in the Niger Delta as the indigenes were excluded from the wealth of oil. They were marginalized and abandoned like other southern Nigerian groups, The Niger Delta peoples constitute the largest ethnic minorities spread across the so-called South-South geographical zone. The implications of this political imbalance, according to a newspaper source,²³ have been manifested in unfavourable recurrent revenue-sharing formulae that put the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta at a disadvantage. This has in turn, resulted in agitations for “True Federalism” and “Resource Control”.

This infavourable distribution of the nation’s revenue accruing from oil and the political imbalance have created the background of hunger, anger, illiteracy and unemployment^{24a} which have combined to produce an army of restive youths in the Niger Delta. In a way, this is an indication of an apparent lack of any sense of corporate social responsibility on the parts of the multinational corporations (government inclusive) to their host communities. The situation is compounded by the evident disparities in the infrastructural development of cities

like Lagos and Abuja vis-à-vis the deplorable living conditions in the Niger Delta. This is best captured in the words of C.R. Amaechi thus:

there are two kinds of injustices in the Niger Delta. The first is the one the Nigerian country inflicts on the people of the Niger Delta. We are denied our rights to existence, our rights to own our God-given resources to solve our difficult terrain and to develop ourselves in the committee (sic) of the states. That is the larger picture: the smaller picture is the inability of people like us, those who are in government to manage the resources that we manage to squeeze out from the Federal Government.^{24b}

As repeatedly stated, this is the crux of youths' restiveness in the Niger Delta region. In order to retain and sustain its dominance of Nigeria's oil wealth, the ruling class has entered into unholy collaborations with Western Europe and the United States. According to a newspaper report:

the Nigerian government under president Musa Yar'Adua entered into agreements with Britain and the United States on the training of Nigerian policemen. The purpose of the training, according to the report, is for the trainees "...to be the arrow-heads of the war against terrorism which menace has been on the rise especially in the Niger Delta region".²⁵

With such kinds of training of the country's military and quasi military architecture, it is not surprising that, rather than solving the people's genuine demands, they are constantly harassed, maimed, and communities destroyed as they did to Umuechem in old Rivers State, Kaiama and Odi, and recently, Oporoza in Bayelsa and Delta states, respectively.

Social and Economic Impact of Oil Exploration in the Niger Delta

Instead of benefiting from oil explorations in the Niger Delta, the region has, rather, suffered from oil exploration induced poverty in the region. While it may not be possible to have a comprehensive analysis of the negative impact of oil exploration-induced poverty on the peoples social and economic activities, evidence abound that the Niger Delta communities wallow in object poverty. The

commercial-scale oil discovery in Otuabagi in 1956 and its growth into other areas of the Niger Delta transformed the source of conflict from palm oil to fossil and placed the area in a vital position on a national and international scale. The discovery of crude oil deposits completely changed the Niger Delta region, with more than 400 oil production and storage facilities, 600 oil fields dispersed throughout its swamps and creeks, and operated by Transnational Oil Companies (TOCs) such as Shell, ExxonMobil, Total, Chevron, Elf, Agip (Eni), and Texaco in joint ventures with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) ²⁶. Consequently, the region acts as a hub for both international relations and worldwide oil production, as it also provides context for understanding the issues in the Niger Delta²⁷.

With this development, the Niger Delta region rose in significance in Nigeria's oil political economy, with export earnings increasing from 1% in 1958 to almost 98% in the state's total revenue in the 1990s²⁸. In spite of the benefits of the oil and gas economy to the Nigerian state, the oil rich Niger Delta region has to contend with neglect from the federal government, reinforced by the progressive downward review of the derivation principle of revenue allocation with each regime, and reduction in the 'share' of federal allocation of oil-producing ethnic minority states from 50% in 1966 to 3% in the mid-1990s²⁹. It wasn't until 1999 that it underwent another assessment and was increased to 13% derivation³⁰.

The extraction and exploitation of oil by various TOCs since the 1960s has had negative environmental impact on the soil, forest, and waterways of the Niger Delta communities, through oil spills and gas flares committed by the TOCs, and by implication, the Nigerian Government. This unwholesome situation has rendered the agricultural and aquatic endeavors which are the main sources of the livelihood of the Niger Delta inhabitants prostrate³¹. There has been some form of regulations on oil spillage and gas flaring acts in Nigeria since January, 1984. Some of these government regulations are, Oil in Navigable Waters Act (1968); Petroleum Drilling Regulation Act (1969); Oil Pipeline Act, 1956 (amended 1965) Oil Pollution Act (1990), and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA). In spite of these, the socio-economic life of the people of the remains in misery because of insincerity and non-commitment by the Nigeria government, and the TOCS. It is against the backdrop of these challenges faced by the oil rich communities in the Niger Delta that various Ijo groups were born and nurtured to engage the federal government to correct these injustices, but in response, the federal military government of 1966 under Aguyi

Ironsi, and the Olusegun Obasanjo led civilian administration in 1999, barraged the region with troops to suppress the people's legitimate demands.

Protestations of the Ijo Youth Council

Revolutions take place not because the initiators of such crises are malignant or demented criminals, but because they are victims of exploitation and deprivation which resulted in widespread poverty. Just like the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ijo Youth Council (IYC) was formed because of the insensitivity of both the oil-producing companies and the federal and state authorities in respect of the despoliation of the environment of the Niger Delta. The IYC, among other factors, was formed by the youths of the Niger Delta to confront the federal government and the oil-producing companies for largely ignoring their communal and individual rights. Thus, the crux of their struggle was in relation to the social neglect, economic and political marginalization, and underdevelopment of Ijo land in particular and the Niger Delta area in general.³²

Although the movement was older than December 11, 1998, it reached its climax on that date, as the name IYC is greatly associated with the 1998 Kaiama Bill of Rights or Declaration. On this date, a large number of Ijo Youths, including intellectuals like T.K. Ogoriba, and Felix Tuodolor, converged at Kaiama, Isaac Boro's home town in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, in a general meeting to discuss the future of the Niger Deltans. After discussing exhaustively, they issued a document, otherwise known as the Kaiama Bill of Rights or Declaration, addressed to the state and oil companies operating in the region, requesting for local control of oil revenue and better management of environmental practices. In the document, they suggested the need for the federation to be run on the basis of equality of ethnic nationalities and social justice.³³

Except for its radical approach, this Movement has the same ideological base with that of the Ken Saro Wiwa-led MOSOP, as their documents contain demands for a political restructuring of the country to reflect the principles of 'true federalism', especially in respect to control over local resources, politics, and economic engagements. In that convention, they gave ultimatum to the oil companies up to December 30, 1998. With the expiration of the ultimatum, the "Egbesu Boys of Africa" which was, (and still is), organised as the fighting arm of the Council or Movement, revolted and engaged the military government under General Abdusalami Abubakar in a very fierce arm confrontation. In spite of their organised and cohesive form, the "Egbesu Boys" was crushed and subdued by the federal military might, and its members dispersed to different places in the state

including “Black market” at Ovom in Yenagoa and Odi, a neighbouring community to Boro’s home town, Kaiama in Kolokuma/Opokuma local government area of Bayelsa State.

Because the youths were not deterred by this genocide, (since the epic Kaiama Declaration has instead exacerbated their desire for the struggle), they later renewed their struggle with the oil companies on protracted war on hostage taking, destruction of oil installations et cetera. The federal government and the oil companies have not only refused to honor these genuine demands of the people, but they have used their military might and apparatus to kill and destroy communities and intimidate the people to maintain the status quo, as blood and sorrow is still prevalent in the region. Hence, in the midst of plenty (oil), the people live in abject poverty and tears.

Government’s Response to Poverty in the Niger Delta, 1998-2022

Government’s response to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta since 1998 is far from satisfaction. Instead of genuinely assuaging the people’s fears and misery, the federal government authorised the military to barrage the region with troops, killing and shooting the inhabitants, especially the youths who form the socio-economic organization such as the Movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), the Ijo Youth Congress (IYC) et cetera to demand for the control of their God given resources, correct the imbalances of the federal structure, or to outrightly stop the marginalization that has been going on for too long.

A number of palliative measures has been adopted by successive administrations. For instance, Olusegun Obasanjo sent a bill to the National Assembly for the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as the agency to implement programmes of sustainable development for the region. However, the setting up of the NDDC did not reduce the crises in the region; crises that has assumed intercommunal, intra-communal, inter-ethnic, communal-oil companies and communal-government dimensions. The situation, no doubt, portends a great threat to the future of the Nigerian state as a political entity³⁴. It is the escalating crises in spite of the establishment of the NDDC that compelled late president Yar’ Adua to establish the Amnesty programme in 2008, which seems to have considerably lessened the crisis in the Niger Delta, but have not completely resolved it. Notwithstanding, the creation of the Federal Ministry of the Niger Delta is a further boost to the peace deal in the region. However, these laudable initiatives have not yielded the expected development for the

people due to a number of problems including bureaucratisation, underfunding, and corruption.

Conclusion

This paper has, dissected the evident plundering of the God-given oil and gas resources of the Niger Delta region by the federal government and international oil companies operating in the area. This has caused the people of the region to wallow in a life of want, misery, and hopelessness which forms the background to youth restiveness in the zone. The study has revealed that youths in the oil-producing communities feel aggrieved that their land and resources have been looted for a commodity that earns money for other Nigerians except themselves, who have, instead, become disempowered, and by implication, impoverished.

The paper further exposed that it was as a result of this economic marginalization and political exclusion of the region that the Ijo Youth Council was born and nurtured to demand for “true federalism”. But this revolution for the local control of the resources of the Niger Delta was mindlessly and ruthlessly resisted by successive governments of the federation, especially the 1998 Kaiama Bill of Rights or Declaration, and the 1999 Odi massacre. However, one could say that although the people were defeated in all of these, they were not deterred, and since the government refused to assuage their grievances, most of the militant groups have resorted to guerrilla warfare by hitting at oil installations as well as kidnapping high profile oil workers, especially foreigners. Oil pipelines are also routinely blown up, and this forced many oil companies go out of production and subsequently led to occasional drops in Nigeria’s foreign exchange earnings due to declining oil production in the Niger Delta.

Instead of government to holistically address the genuine concerns of the people and assuage their pain and sorrow, they decided to engage them in armed confrontations which have resulted in many deaths and destruction in the region. In conclusion, it is important for the government to give a listening ear to the demands of the people, especially the restructuring of the country or ‘true federalism’ in order to arrest the structural imbalances that have bedeviled Nigeria for long. Otherwise, no measure of intimidation or killings would deter these youths, for a man who is already down fears no fall.

Endnotes

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**INSECURITY IN EDO NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT AND ITS
IMPACT
ON THE PEOPLE**

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Abstract

Insecurity has become a monster in multifaceted manifestations like hostage, killing, rape, creation of fear, bombing, kidnapping for ransom, destruction of property e.tc. This research relied on primary and secondary sources to explain some key causes of insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District which are illiteracy, unemployment and underemployment, poverty, greedy, bad leadership, lack of government presence, land dispute, poor social amenities/infrastructure, economic factor and lack of political will, ethnic and communal conflicts, farmers/herdsmen crisis. The aim of this study is to ascertain the high level of insecurity and the resultant effect of insecurity has caused to the people Edo North Senatorial District in Edo state. The findings in this study show that there are serious insecurity challenges in Edo North Senatorial District with regards to the porous territorial border of the zone. Edo North Senatorial District also faces threats from change in climate condition, kidnapping, rape, natural disasters, killing, absence of foreign investment and industrial development in the Senatorial District resulting in high unemployment and underemployment rate. For peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic groups in the zone, use of local policing or vigilante is important. This will fine-tune a more peaceful way for the development and growth of Edo north senatorial district and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: Insecurity, herdsmen, farmers, Edo, Nigeria,

Introduction

One of the primary responsibilities of the government is to protect life and property of the citizenry and the fundamental human rights of the people or citizen of the country. The right to life, security of life and property are the primary responsibility of the Government as provided by the Constitution of a sovereign state. Therefore, since Nigeria is a sovereign state it's in the Nigeria constitution of 1999 section 14 sub-section 2b which says "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the Government".¹ This emphasizes the importance of security to all the three arms of government; Federal, State and Local level where we have the traditional institutions.

The major insecurity challenges to the people of Edo north senatorial district is the high level of criminality occurrences in the area in Edo State of Nigerian. The only people that are safe presently are the politicians in political offices and by extension political rulers who move about with sirens and carefully selected and effectively armed policemen.² We have all become walking corpses beyond the continuing wave of tension, killing, rape, kidnapping for ransom, destruction of farmland, burning of houses, the destruction of life and properties and obstruction of movement on our high ways and community roads by the activities of criminal element like bandit, kidnappers and Fulani-herdsmen in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State and the Country in general.³

Thursday, 2011 attack on First bank of Nigeria facility in Sabongida-Ora, in Owan-west Senatorial District of Edo State, where three persons, including a mobile police officer were killed in a robbery attack evident in the area.⁴ The raping of two women by criminals suspected to be Fulani herdsmen who attacked two villages in Edo North and Edo Central Senatorial Districts, where four women were raped in a community in Edo North, while two women Mrs. Maltina Omoyo and Ariyo were raped and killed in Ewu in Edo Central Senatorial District of Edo State. In the words of C. Ordia in the floor of the Nigeria Senate May, 22nd 2017 said, "the Senate notes with serious concern the heinous and criminal activities being perpetrated by herdsmen who, in the violent act of ravaging communities, deprived persons of right to life and prosperity, defiling women and destroying farm crops amongst other criminal activities across the country".⁵ This was seconded by F. Alimikhena who seconded the motion, "as we speak people in my constituents cannot go to their farm due to fear of Fulani Herdsmen attack".⁶

The recent attack on the National Institute of Construction Technology, Uromi boarded by Aviele signifies a new dimension to insecurity and kidnapping in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State. As fallout of that attack, two students and a lecturer were kidnapped. It has become recurrent for bandit,

kidnappers, and criminal gangs under various identities to work into our schools and kidnap school children, teachers and security men without any resistance from our security armed forces. Therefore, the dimensions of criminality in our communities currently call for immediate concern to all the security forces and the overhauling of the security operational system of the Nation.⁷ The negative impact of having our children and teachers kidnapped at school is unimaginable, unacceptable, non tolerated and should be condemned in totality by all and sundry.

On March 4, 2023, three persons including a cleric have allegedly been killed while working on their farm and others were also injured in attacks by armed men suspected to herders at Sobe in Owan West Local Government Area, Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State. According to Mr. Goddy Ahonsi, one of the youth leaders in the community, the cleric and two of his workers, were killed by the AK-47-wielding herdsmen. It was the fifth attack on residents of the community since January this year. He said: “The people of Sobe Community in Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State suffered another attack on March 4, 2023, following the renewed hostility by Fulani herdsmen in the area, a pastor and two of his workers were killed, while they were working on their farmland on Eti Oseh Road, which links Saboginda-Ora”. He continue that “efforts of personnel of Edo State Security Network to rescue the victims before they died, proved abortive, as the herdsmen numbering forty, opened fire on the rescue team, and most of them escaped with varying degrees of bullet injuries”.⁵

Although the problem of insecurity is not new in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo state and Nigeria at large, right from the period Nigeria gain her independence in 1960. Since the arrival of the third democratic rule in Feb 1999 by Olusegun Obasanjo, Yaradua, Good luck Jonathan 2011 and Buhari 2019.⁸ However, the level of insecurity take a new interest in Nigeria following the unfortunate death of President Yaradua and immediately the swearing in of Dr. Good luck Jonathan as the new President in February, 2010. Also, the Muhammadu Buhari as the nation’s President in 2015 to 2023, Nigeria State has been experiencing unparable security challenges and even now more worrisome and difficult to belief when Tinubu is now President and Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁹

In Edo North Senatorial District hardly a day goes by without a report on one security challenge or the other. It is clear that the State of the country and the ordinary citizen’s economic and social growth and development are in the state of wanton attack and destruction. The rate at which destruction, killing, dispute over farmland, destruction of properties, kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, political crisis, burning of houses, oil pipeline vandalism, banditry, terrorism, electrical

power vandalism, oil bunkering, land gambling, arms trafficking, insurgency, communal conflict, political thuggery and communal crisis has become a multi-hydra-headed monster to the people, Local, State, Federal government over the time.¹⁰

Edo North Senatorial District, Edo State and Nigeria in general insecurity has long been a threat to the livelihood of the people that resulted of loss of job, death, diseases, threat to life, loss of life and property, human right violation, loss of farm land and cold war between neighbours and among villages. This research looks at the economical and socio-cultural causes of insecurity on the people of Edo North Senatorial District, Edo State of Nigeria in general and on the possible Government ways at fostering peace in the State. (Government should know that negotiation is not always a win-win situation and not winner takes all).¹¹

Literature on the Concept of Insecurity

Security concept has been postulated different scholars views on security of life and property of the citizenry. According to 1994 United Nations development Program, human security can be defined as the protection from hidden and fearful disruptions in the daily activities in the daily activities, at home, offices or communities. That is to say that security is the state of being safe and secure from danger it could also be protection from chronic threat such as hunger, disease and repression.¹²

According to, Beland, Achumba Ighomeroho and Akpor-Robaro, the state of fear or anxiety steaming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection or inadequate freedom from danger is seen as insecurity. In another argument by Achumba et.al, opined that insecurity is a state of being subjected to danger exposed to risk or anxiety.¹³

Eme and Anyadike, posed that a person is said to be secured when not being exposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or deterioration.¹⁴ While according to, UNPP sees human security to include chronic threat like hunger, diseases and repression.¹⁵ In 2003, the Commission of Human Security is regarded as the protection of important aspect of human lives in a very way that would enhance human freedoms and fulfillment. Human security encompasses freedom from want, harm and fear, tension and the freedom to take appropriate actions without any form of hindrance. It is also the assurance of future well being and freedom from threat.¹⁶

According to Imobighe, human security is “freedom from danger or to a nation’s ability to protect and developed itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the well being of its people”.¹⁷ Therefore, the

need for an effective security apparatus to be put in place cannot be over-emphasized. Various segments of security which include internal security, human security, cyber security, food security, environmental security, economic security, health security, education security, global security, and housing security among others. Therefore, the researcher opined that security of a nation is absolute state of being secured, freedom from apprehension, confident of safety and freedom from danger or risk.¹⁸ Therefore, security is a paramount condition that must be satisfied in order to guarantee a feeling of survival within the world system that is anarchical in nature. The concept of security has been defined in so many ways by scholars, security managers, government officials, security agencies and analysts depending on their intellectual predilection and or ideological orientation Akinyeye.¹⁹

Orifah Samson Obadun in his work entitled “The Linguistic Situation and Geography of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area” noted that the origins of the various independent communities of Akoko-Edo local government area are quite different and questionable. According to him, the word “Akoko” is generally used to reflect the different hetero generous linguistic units scattered over Edo, Ekiti, Kogi and Ondo states in modern Nigeria. There are five Akoko’s in these different states. What is now Akoko Edo together with Ogori/Magongo belonged to Akoko-Gbangiri. The history of Akoko-Edo is replete with multi migrations and is as diverse, conflicting and complex as their languages, even among the homogenous ones like the Okpamaris. This historical study as it helped our explanations of insecurity in the Edo North senatorial district of Edo state.²⁰

According to Clark contends thus, “Defeating terrorism is more difficult and far-reaching than we have assumed.... We may be advancing the ball down the field at will, running over our opponent’s defenses, but winning the game is another matter altogether”.²¹ More importantly to this study, drawing from Clark’s assertion, is the question of appropriate and workable strategies for countering the threat of terrorism.

In the Campbell Systematic Review, it is observed that “there is an almost complete absence of evaluation research on counter-terrorism strategies”.²² Lum, Kennedy and Sherley, argue that for the few studies available, some strategies do not appear to be effective as they “either didn’t work or sometimes increased the likelihood of terrorism and terrorism-related harm”.²³ However, according to Eji, this seems to reflect the Nigerian situation, as there is no existing evidence of a comprehensive review of Nigeria’s responses or strategies to counter terrorism either by policy makers or researchers.²⁴ In the review of the literature, various topics related to the study have been reviewed. From literature, several opinions

differ to the definition of insecurity only a relative small amount of research on insecurity has been conducted, particularly in the context of its causes on national security in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo state in Nigeria. Thus, this present study is different from previous studies in that it seeks to determine the causes of insecurity as regard the protection of lives and properties and increase in national security in Edo North Senatorial District, Edo State in Nigeria.

Causes of Insecurity

There are numbers of factors that are associated with insecurity in the Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State today. This include lack of government present, illiteracy, bad leadership/corruption, poverty, greedy, fear of attack from Fulani-herds-men, farming/herdsmen crisis, land dispute, unemployment and underemployment, lack of political will and poor social infrastructures, ethnic and communal conflicts e.g. electricity, road, market, schools, water and so on.

Bad leadership/Corruption: The Edo North Senatorial District comprises of six local Government council, they are; Owan-west, Owan-east, Etsako west, Etsako east, Etsako central and Akoko-Edo.²⁵ The people over the time had not have the opportunity of being represented by good leaders either than the selfish, self-centered, greedy and self imposed political leaders are the ones that find their ways into political offices, where the well fare and well being of the general people are being discussed. The level of corruption in Edo North Senatorial District and the country at large has its devastating impact on the proper functioning of our institutions. This is as result of bad leadership, the poor funding of our military architecture derives from the profligacy that corruption delivers this has turn Edo North Senatorial District home of fear, tension attack and other crime vases. The emphasis continues to explain the status of Nigeria as a failed state drawing from the evident of the various intact that define statehood. Nigeria lacks the capacity to effectively address the issues that underpin the security collapse of Edo North Senatorial District and the country at large.²⁶

In a number of case this bad political leaders divert the will of the people during election by buying of voters, writing of election result before the election, using of thugs and such will not allow vote to count. Sadly to say, this group of political leaders oppress the people of Edo North Senatorial District with their own federal, state and local Government allocated resources for the development of the zone, which this few bad political leaders looted to themselves and use it to oppress, train hooligans, thugs to the detriment of the Edo North Senatorial District and the people. This crops of hooligan, thus later result to criminals

activities like kidnapers, arm-robbers, bandit, and drug dealer/user and causes communities insecurity when they are dumped by the politicians after election. Thus, constituting a major challenge to the senatorial district in the state and the nation at large.²⁷

According to Walter Rodney in his Book, how Europe undeveloped Africa argued that “the masses and not to the leaders and one hopes that it would be instrumental in arousing some mass action by the people. In absence of committed leadership, many African countries has fallen prey to military exploitation to the extent that today the generals constitute the majority at African submit. This is not how it should be because when political leadership loses the sense of internal direction, when it bewilderment, it gives up its efforts to find solutions to people’s problem and begins to accumulate wealth for its own individual use, political leadership tends to get increasingly “commandant” in its state operations.” Logic rationale becomes subversive. And when politicians become “commandants”, they too become redundant, because who is better filled to giving command than the army”.²⁸

Ethnic and Communal Conflicts:

Another major cause of insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District is the facts arising from distrust among various ethnic groups and religious or communal conflict in Edo North Senatorial District and the country at large. This is as result of poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of leaders and security personnel. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way to prevent them from occurring. According to Achumba and Akpor, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation. Thus, instead of being national watch dogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from harm by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government effort, by supporting and fuelling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or aiding and abetting criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law.²⁹

Ibrahim and Igbuzor, Hazen and Horner, Salawu and Igbuzor, identified ethno-religious conflict as one major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Ethno-religious conflict was defined as a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation Achumba et al.

and Salawu.³⁰ According to Adegba, et al, the claim over scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy, local government, councils, control of markets and sharia among other trivial issues have resulted in large scale killings and violence amongst groups in Nigeria Adegba, et al.³¹

Unemployment and under-employment:

Another major factor of insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District is unemployment and underemployment, unemployment is defined as the condition of one who is capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any work. While underemployment is situation when someone is employed only on part-time, when one needs full-time employment or not making full use of his/her skills in a particular work place or in an organization. Unemployment and underemployment lead to economic disparity, while disparity causes terrorism, criminality which resulted to insecurity. Unemployment and underemployment confront the youth with devastating psychological and socio-economic effects.

Ahead 2020 of the Governorship election in Edo State, the People Democratic Party's candidate Godwin Obaseki during the Governor debate on Channel Television programme review that the unemployment rate in Edo State has reduced from 25 percent to 19 percent. According to Godwin Obaseki, "the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is clear , when we came in it was 25 percent and we have been able to reduce it to about 19 percent so that tells you much jobs have been created".³² However, this unemployment rate in Edo State is high and this show that Edo North Senatorial District is not in any way left out and such unemployment create great security threat to the socio-political development of the communities as they now engage themselves in illegal activities such as banditry, robbery, kidnapping, oil bunkering, land gambling, rape and killing.

This unemployment and underemployment has resulted to insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District, Edo State and Nigeria at large. A lot of youth had been scammed and some died in the process of seeking for job. Job seekers have continued to suffer great losses, because of a lot of their hard earn money has been collected from them under the promise of providing them with jobs. A good example is the Job seekers filled online application for recruitment into the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSDC) were ask to pay certain amount of money into designated bank accounts or pay cash to some individuals who claimed to be consultants to the corps (vanguard, 2013) and in the same van Mrs. Rose Uzoma, the comptroller-general of immigration (CGI) was removed or sacked from office over allegation of job racketeering at the Nigeria immigration service (NIS) in 2013.³³

This has equally take us to the limelight of shady deals that take place during recruitment exercises in government establishment, ministries, ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) in the country. For example in The senate committees on Federal character and inter-governmental Affairs has noted with displeasure irregularities which pervade employment at the Nigeria Immigration services, Nigerian custom service, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps and other Ministries, Department and Agencies in Nigeria. The central bank of Nigeria (CBN) issues on job racketeering to the highest bidders and to who is who in Nigeria in 2019 is still very fresh in our memory.³⁴

Land dispute:

This is another major cause of threat to insecurity in Edo North Sensational District of Edo State in Nigeria. According the land use Act of 1978 which stated that “this Act vest all land comprised in the territory of each state (except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies) in the Federation solely in the Governor of that state, who would hold such land in for the people and would henceforth be responsible for allocation of land in all urban areas to individuals resident in the state and to organizations for residential, agricultural, commercial and other purposes while similar powers with respect to non-urban areas are conferred on Local Governments and requires that such land shall be held in trust and administered for the use and common benefit of all Nigeria in accordance with the provision of the Act”.³⁵

According to Charles, land is intrinsic part of people’s lives and belief system, a source of social power and self-worth. The nature of environment usually contributed to the pattern of conflict in the society. But the important of land cannot be over emphasized in relative term, although land is a free gift of nature, its functions are critical to human existence and the formation of society or state. Land support human survival, particularly in agricultural production, for both local and mechanised farming system, construction proposes and other developmental project in line with human existence, thus this made it an issue of life and death.³⁶The Benin homeland is located in the forest zone of Nigeria. The zone has a lot of resources to offer which also paves the way for economic buoyancy and population outburst, to the degree that has not quite long, fragmented the land.

Land matters rank high among the Edo North Senatorial District, dispute related to land often resulted when a member of a family chooses to occupy or sell family land without consulting other members of the family. Trouble starts as soon as the family hears the illegal occupation or selling of the land. The family

land could be a farmland, the family members or their representatives would approach the illegal occupant or seller of the piece of land, asking for compensation or demanding that the occupant should stop trespassing in the family land. Failure to do so would result in conflict. In this case land is important because agriculture was the principal means of making livelihood (feudalism), but land which was the most important for that was in the hands of a few individual who always took the biggest share.³⁷

According to Achumba, Ighomeroho and Akpor-Robaro, identified two major sources of insecurity in Edo north senatorial district namely; remote factors and immediate and proximate factors. The remote factors include: Lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure, pervasive material inequalities and unfairness, ethnic religious conflicts, conflicts of perceptions between the public and government, weak security system loss of socio-cultural and communal value system, porous borders, rural/urban drift, and social irresponsibility of government, unemployment/poverty, and terrorism/banditry.³⁸

Other notable causes of insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District as posed by S. O. Imanah, include high illiteracy level, the breakdown of societal values, the lack of proper traditional structures, growing poverty, poor infrastructural facilities, greedy, political factor/lack of trust of political office holders, fear of attack from Fulani-herdsmen, farmers/herdsmen crisis, ineffective and inefficient security agents to tackled criminal activities, lack of inter-security agency cooperation, collaboration and synergy, poor road network and a fall from our traditional-cultural value system. Insecurity is regarded as a chronic threat to human life, property, territories, instructions, state, culture and religious beliefs to mention but few.³⁹

Conclusion

Insecurity has been on high in Edo North Senatorial District and has been a major challenge to the Edo State Government and Nigeria government at large. The activities of the criminal element have led to loss of lives and properties, fear, tension, militancy, cultism among the people of the senatorial district, some of this negative activities include; destruction of properties, killing, kidnapping, destruction of farm land, rape, armed robbery, political crisis, burning of houses, oil pipeline vandalism, banditry, terrorism, electrical power vandalism, oil bunkering, land gambling, arms trafficking, insurgency, communal conflict, political thuggery, many had been rendered homeless, children become orphans with no hope of the future, many lives and properties have been lost, many women rendered widows.

Oral Interview

- ¹ Interview with Mr. Collins Amoni, Farmer 66 years old, at Capital Road, Sabongida-Ora, Owan-west local government Area, Edo State, 8th April, 2023.
- ² Interview with Mr. Goddy Ahonsi,. Contactor 42 years old, at *Oke New Saboginda-Ora*, Owan-west Local Government Area, Edo State 8th April, 2023.
- ³ Interview with Chief S. Imanah. Contactor 63 years old, at *Ivbihere Village Ozalla*, Owan-west Local Government Area, Edo State 8th April, 2023.
- ⁴ Interview with Chief Samuel Ogba. Farmer /Clan head 63 years old, at *Ivbihere Village Ozalla*, Owan-west Local Government Area, Edo State 8th April, 2023.
- ⁵ Interview with Senator Clifford Odia, Former Senator 57 years old, at Benin City, Edo State, 11th June, 2023.
- ⁶ Interview with Senator Francis Alimikhena, Former Senator 61 years old, at Auchi Etsako Central Local Government Area, Edo State 7th April, 2023.
- ⁷ Interview with Mr. Femi Oyakhirome Retired Civil Servant/Farmer 66 years old, at *Avbiosi*, Owan-west Local Government Area, Edo State 7th April, 2021.

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**FLOOD MANAGEMENT OF NIGER-BENUE RIVERS IN THE
COLONIAL ERA AND LESSONS FOR NIGERIA'S CONTEMPORARY
ECONOMY**

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Abstract

This paper examines the place of the River Niger in transport and power sectors in Nigeria. Transportation and power generation are pivotal to the economic development of the nation. Long before the development of other modes of transport, the Niger was the only highway between the north and the south. In advancing its colonial motive in Nigeria, the British government, after confirming the navigability of Niger from the Gulf of Guinea seventy years earlier by John and Richard Landers, exploited the river for transport services through agencies like the Marine Department which it established in 1900 and the Inland Waterways Department (IWD) after the dissolution of the former on the eve of Nigerian independence. The paper avers that despite the economic and administrative importance of the river to British colonialism, it gradually neglected it when other modes of transport like rail and roads were developing. The colonial authorities also handled the perennial problem of flooding on the waterway with laxity. Efforts to curb the annual problems of flooding by the Nigerian government after British rule was the damming of the massive water body for hydro-electric power stations in Jebba, Kainji and Shiroro. It is discovered that since the power stations were built, they had faced poor management leading to erratic power supply and loosely control of the river course. The paper therefore posits that the lackluster attitude of the government towards the management of the natural infrastructure for transport subsists in post independent Nigeria. It concludes that if the government had developed the existing dams and built more on the Niger, the problems of marine transport, electricity and unemployment would have been assuaged.

Key words: River Niger, Colonial Occupation, Hydro-electricity, flood

1. Introduction

The name Niger came from the Berber phrase ger-n-ger which means River of rivers, or a reference also to a big river. The River Niger is the second largest river in Africa with a length of 2600 miles. River Nile is the longest river in Africa and indeed, in competition with the Mississippi River for the number one position in the world. The Congo River and River Zambezi occupy the third and fourth positions in Africa. These rivers have over the years served as a network of transportation and communication during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. They served as major highways as there were no modern roads. Besides, there was danger of wild animals on the available footpaths because of pervasive thick forests. It is important however to point out that the place where road transportation was extensively used was the north of the Niger River where pack animals were extensively used in the pre-colonial era to conduct the Trans-Sahara trade. There, the danger of wild animals was at its ebb because of the desert. The peoples of this trade contact were namely Africans, Arabs, Maghrebs, Tuaregs, Hausa Fulani and Kanuris of North and West Africa.

The Niger River took its source from the Fouta Djallon Mountains in Guinea, West Africa, flowing northwards between Timbuktu and Gao in Mali area and then flows southwards towards geographical regions of Benin, Niger and Nigeria respectively (Mabugunje, 1971). It empties into the Atlantic Ocean at Burutu, Brass, Bonny, Eket, etc. Within the Delta area, it is characterized by numerous Ox-bow lakes, rapids and cataracts. Its estuary therefore became the pathfinder for European penetration into the hinterland, part of what was later known as Nigeria. The Niger is so important that two nations in West Africa got their names from the River; that is Nigeria, an appellation of “Niger-area” and Niger Republic. Therefore, the Niger is to Nigeria what the Nile is to Egypt, Sea to Britain, Alps to Switzerland, Congo to Congo Zaire, and Congo Brazzaville and Rubicon to Rome now Italy (Achoba, 2015). The importance of this great river to the people of Nigeria, Benin, Niger, Mali and the European occupation of the areas cannot be over emphasized. It was and still is a major network of inter-human and intergroup relations among the peoples of Nigeria

2. Statement of Problem

The yearning gap that informed this study is that not much has been written on its vital role in the generation of hydroelectricity energy. In addition, the abandonment of a proposed Dam on river Benue to checkmate excess flood from Lagdo Dam in Cameroon is a disservice to Nigerian State and a pressing issue to solve as it has always been a yearly disaster to the peoples and towns and villages

along the river Benue. This, many scholars have not given the attention it deserves. It is therefore against this background that this study examines the role of the River Niger in the British colonial occupation of the area which later became Niger-area (Nigeria) as well as its place in hydro-electricity generation.

3. Niger and Benue Rivers as a Means of Transportation and Communication

Transportation and communication enhance the movement of persons, commodities and ideas from place to place and among persons, and mediates the relationship and interactions that exists among individuals and communities (Anthony & Joseph, 2014). Right from the beginning of time, man has remained a locomotive animal moving from one place to another for exchange of goods and services. The constant issue of scarce human and material resources as well as the indispensable need for the exchange of goods and services has always explained the importance of transportation in human history. Transportation played a great role in laying the foundation for the discovery of agriculture and the sophisticated tradition of iron metallurgy. For example, early agricultural activities began with the movement of the early men in search of edible items (Anthony & Joseph, 2014). When the early man through his gyrotory activities noticed the germination of already discarded seeds in his overgrown environment, he moved towards the direction. With the use of iron implements the Neolithic era, the adventurous ancestors of modern man were able to clear forest regions and through the use of their tools transformed these regions into farmlands while farm routes later grew into enlarged bush paths which were used by primitive communities. To enhance the movement of people from place to place, during the pre-colonial, colonial and even the post-colonial era, the River Niger played a great role.

The Niger River and its tributaries served as the major sources of energy protein in terms of provision of fishes' protein for the peoples around the rivers as well as the hinterland peoples. As side from that, other food crops such as beans, sorghum maize, millet, and cow-pea were also grown in such rich alluvial area. Meanwhile, the marshy parts along the rivers facilitated the cultivation of vegetables, such as okra, tomatoes, pepper, waterleaf, spinach, punchy, curry leaf and so on. This was done at both subsistence and commercial levels. The extension of annual flooding of the Niger, Benue and Anambra rivers to the swampy and low land Savannah area, enhanced cultivation of varieties of rice (Achoba, 2015).

The cultivation of yam along the lower Niger area was in late November to late January when flood must have recede, whereas the upland plantation was usually from late February to March especially after the first rain of the year. This

was to enable the seedling grow, instead of drying for lack of water. The harvest of all the hitherto mentioned species of yam was usually at the beginning of flood season, when the rivers started to overflow their banks after seven to eight months of cultivation. The proceeds were usually transported home and markets through the rivers. Thus, the pre-colonial wealth of an Igala man was to a great extent determined by the quantity of yam he had in his barn (Achoba, 2015).

The so called discovery of the mouth of rivers by Lander Brothers was not true to the world but to the West as there were native peoples of Ijo and Itsekiri origin who were always at the mouth of river Niger doing their fishing occupation. Thus, the River Niger facilitated civilization as a major network of interaction and served as a major source of transportation of raw materials and other goods to and from Nigeria via the Atlantic Ocean during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. At the colonial period, there were a lot of trading companies on the Niger, such as Royal Niger Company, John Holt, United African Company among others. These trading companies relied heavily on the Niger as their means of transporting goods via the Atlantic Ocean. Similarly, all other countries that have the River Niger pass through them used it as their major source of transportation and trade. This was so because, it was difficult to actually get direct footpaths leading from some places to other places; the available footpaths were dangerous due to the existence of wild animals. This made water transportation via the Niger an important means of transporting people and goods.

During the pre-colonial and Colonial periods, Nigerian rivers served as carriers of trade. River systems served as a major part of communication and carriers of trade and ideas in the past than they do in the present time. Before the coming of highways, railways and airways, rivers provided the only thoroughfares for the cheap transportation of large quantities of commodities over long distances in many parts of Africa. The presence of major rivers like the Niger and Benue as well as other inland waterways such as streams, estuaries and creeks paved the way for water transportation. Pre-colonial Nigerian peoples promoted the efficacy of water transportation through the dredging of rivers, streams and creeks to make them navigable by canoeists. European explorers, traders, missionaries and soldiers were attached to the Nigerian coastal waters because riverside communities engaged themselves seriously in the material development of water transport.

In the absence of roads and railways, the initial efforts at transport development focused on dredging southern Nigeria's inland waterways to render them navigable all year round by river vessels drawing at least five feet of water. This opened the river basins for direct exploitation by British traders. Through the

trade enhanced by the River Niger, communities were able to get access to essential goods. For instance, people could move to riverside communities for the purpose of buying riverside commodities such as salt, fresh fish, periwinkles and European manufactured goods. Therefore, the existence of the River Niger enhanced communication, transportation and further promoted friendly relations among communities.

After the end of First World War, reservoirs were built by the English engineers close to the right bank of the Niger River at its major confluence area with River Benue. These were basically used to store oil and gas for the distribution of energy in some parts of Africa around rivers Niger and Benue (Pedraza, 1960). It was also to supply fuel to deport at Gangué via 500 miles up the Benue in the French Cameroons (Pedraza, 1960). This was an evidence of strong tie between the British and the French. The huge oil storage tanks built at Lokoja, the confluence town of the river Niger and Benue was because Benue was the main route to the hinterland parts of Cameroon from Nigeria during the colonial period. The great general demand after First World War necessitated the construction of huge metal tanks to boost transportation. Today however, tanks have been abandoned though, it remained intact. This is supposed to enhance energy distribution if the Niger-Benue waters are navigable for oil vessels.

3 Management of Drivers of Flood in Niger-Benue Rivers

3.1. Climate change: Seasonal changes of surface pressure during the wet season which gives fast flow of air mass from the Atlantic Ocean brings about massive rainfall. In other words, the south-east trade wind is responsible for rainfall. At this period, the sea is warm and releases water molecule into the atmosphere which later comes down as rain through the south-east trade wind. Regular fall of this rain gets the earth saturated with water and becomes flood. Though there is no regular rainfall in place like northern Nigeria but the volume is very high when it rains compared to the amount of rainfall in the past. Climate change is therefore the major cause of rainfall in Nigeria. In this case, there is need for regular cleaning of water channels, so that the heavy water down pour can drain easily in readiness for another rain fall. Should these channels such as gutter, sanitary lane be unavailable, the community or government agencies like the town planning offices should ensure such provisions are made and maintained. In addition, availability of forest reserve will serve as reservoir for flood which can mitigate climate change.

3.2. Farming Activities: Farming along the bank of the Niger and Benue Rivers and other big rivers can cause soil erosion. This happens when the roots of grass and trees that supposed to hold the soil together are cleared for farming; the soil becomes loose and easily wears away into the river during heavy down pour. In addition, this will consequently increase the shallowness of such river and its shallowness leads to excess flood during its annual over flooding as the water spreads easily across its bank up to the neighbouring towns and villages. Thus, this becomes one of the drivers of flood in Nigeria. It is therefore important to note that farming along the banks of these rivers should be vegetables such as spinach, pumpkin leaf, pepper, tomatoes among others. In other words, crops that grow like grasses whose roots can still hold the soil together after harvesting should be planted.

3.3. Availability of many Tributaries: The river Benue alone has over nine rivers as tributaries which carry a lot of waste into it. This distorts the easy flow of water ways and culminates to flooding of the environments. Within the Niger Delta, River Niger, has over thirty-one distributaries or outlets. Some of these outlet and distributaries during wet season have strong current that carry a lot of debris and waste into the Niger River as in the case of river Benue. This therefore enhances sluggish flow of water current. Thus, the water current will spread its ways beyond the banks of the Rivers Niger and Benue with ease. There should be regular dredging and clearing of waterways as in the days of colonial era to allow free flow of river current.

3.4. Unavailability of Good Drainage System and lack of Town Planning: Absence of drainage or poor drainage system can cause flood in our environment couple with this is when there is no good planning that provide way for free flow of water during heavy rainfall can lead to flood. Town planning is therefore very important to urbanisation of any settlement or city in the world. Its absence makes any area to loose such status. Private fence in every compound that distorts flow of water should be discouraged. Each street should have adequate gutter to dispose excess water to its proper channel. In addition, interlocks block of compound should be encouraged against German floor. This is to enable compounds to absolve some water during rains.

3.5. Overgrazing of Niger-Benue Green Belt Areas: Overgrazing can lead to soil degradation as it exposes the soil to erosion. Whereas, erosion removes soil top layers into the rivers and thereby makes the river shallow which facilitates

flood during the annual raining season. To ameliorate this problem, there should be ranches where cattle are kept in confined places and fed. This will enhance dairy provision of milk for the teeming population of Nigeria. As the nomadic life of cattle makes them dehydrated and reduce their production of milk. Milk as a bye-product of animal husbandry will enhance food security (Achoba & Apine, 2017). Aside from the above, it affects agriculture as it destroys the fertility of the soil top layers by exposing it to excessive heat.

3.6. Inadequate Dams with Large Reservoirs: There are three dams on the river Niger. There is none on the Benue River to control the flood water from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon. This is no doubt a major driver of flood from the river Benue. Thus, there should be a minimum of three dams on the Benue River in Nigeria with large volume of reservoirs. At the confluence of rivers Niger and Benue another dam should be built to checkmate the volume of flood on the lower Niger River. By and large, the numbers of dams in Nigeria are grossly inadequate to meet up with flood control.

3.7. Lack of Dredging and Clearing of Rivers Highways: The sandbars at the middle of rivers Niger and Benue should be cleared as well as the water hyacinths. Whereas, government should intensify to dredge the main rivers Niger and Benue with provision of water embankment to protect the shoreline to an extent. Dredging properly Channel River's course and as such enhance strong current. However, absence of it makes the river especially Niger to change course overtime. In the course of this, many villages in the lower Niger that did not have natural barriers such as rocky cliffs have been eroded into the Niger thereby leading to evolution of new settlements. Whereas, in the colonial time the Niger River was being dredged regularly, there was no such displacement of villages.

3.8. Man's Interaction with the Immediate Environment: Immediate environment here refers to our compound and surroundings. When we alter the bare floor and green areas that supposed to receive excess flow of water during heavy rain, it bounces back to some residential areas. The advantage of this green areas and keeping of garden in our compound help in the oxygen we breathe in and the carbon dioxide we exhale as a result of the emission of chlorophyll from the garden and the green areas. We altered our compound bare floor by German floor, concrete floor and heavy interlocks. Hence the soil surface that should suck

water during rainfall is no longer there, rather flows and flood lower residential areas.

4. Colonial-Era Flood Management Policies and Practices on Niger/Benue Rivers

Colonial-era flood management policies and practices in Nigeria, particularly regarding the Niger River, were shaped by the broader objectives of the British colonial administration, which prioritized economic exploitation, infrastructure development, and political control over the needs of local populations and environmental sustainability (Nwokedi, & Obodo, 1993).¹⁰ While colonial flood management efforts were not as comprehensive or advanced as contemporary practices, there were notable attempts to mitigate the impact of flooding to facilitate trade, protect infrastructure, and ensure colonial interests. During the early stages of colonial rule, the British administration had a limited understanding of the seasonal flood patterns of the Niger and Benue Rivers. These rivers, which experience significant annual floods during the rainy season, were essential for trade and transportation, particularly for transporting goods such as agricultural products and minerals (Nwokedi, & Obodo, 1993). However, the unpredictable nature of flooding posed a challenge to the colonial government's efforts to establish and maintain reliable trade routes. The colonial authorities conducted basic hydrological surveys to better understand the river systems and their flood cycles. However, much of the response to floods during this period was

reactive rather than proactive, with little emphasis on long-term flood prevention or management. Floods posed a significant threat to colonial infrastructure, especially transportation systems like roads and railways. The British administration sought to mitigate these impacts through engineering projects, such as road and railway embankments. Flood-prone areas saw the construction of embankments and elevated roadways or rail lines to prevent them from being submerged during heavy floods (Picouet, Hingray, & Olivry, 2001). This was crucial for maintaining trade routes that were vital to the colonial economy. In addition, river ports and navigation were also involved. The colonial administration invested in building river ports and controlling the navigability of the Niger River (Picouet, et al, 2001).

During periods of flooding, the rivers became navigable deeper inland, which was beneficial for trade. However, the colonial authorities did little to address the destructive nature of floods on riverside communities, focusing more on maintaining navigation for economic purposes. Flooding along the Niger and

Benue Rivers was both a blessing and a curse for agriculture (Picouet, et al, 2001). While the annual floods provided fertile silt deposits, they also destroyed crops and disrupted agricultural cycles. The colonial government recognized the economic importance of agriculture, especially cash crops like groundnuts, cotton, and palm oil, and took some measures to protect farmlands. Basic drainage systems were developed in certain agricultural areas to channel excess floodwater away from farms. However, these efforts were limited and often only targeted areas that were economically significant to the colonial administration. Toward the later years of colonial rule, there were efforts to integrate irrigation systems into flood-prone agricultural areas (Picouet, et al, 2001). These early irrigation schemes were designed to regulate water levels for crops while managing excess floodwaters.

While there were efforts to manage the immediate impacts of flooding, the colonial administration did not invest in large-scale flood control infrastructure such as dams or levees. This was largely due to the high costs associated with such projects and the colonial government's focus on maximizing short-term economic gains. Moreover, the colonial administration often relied on traditional knowledge and practices of local communities, who had developed coping mechanisms for seasonal flooding over centuries. By the early 20th century, the British colonial government began to recognize the importance of scientific data collection to understand and manage the Niger River's flood patterns. Hydrological surveys were conducted to study the river's seasonal fluctuations, sedimentation, and flow rates (Nwokedi, & Obodo, 1993). This data was used to inform the construction of infrastructure like bridges, roads, and river ports, ensuring that they could withstand seasonal floods. However, these surveys were often limited in scope and primarily focused on areas of economic importance to the colonial administration, such as the Niger Delta and regions near Lagos and Kano (Yang, Khan, Xie, Ringler, Ogilvie, Seidou, Djibo, Weert, & Tharme, 2018).

The broader environmental and social impacts of flooding on local communities were generally not a priority for the colonial government. In the later stages of colonial rule, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, the British administration established river basin authorities to manage water resources more effectively (Yang, et al, 2018). These authorities were tasked with overseeing the use of river systems, including flood management, irrigation, and transportation. Their primary concern was to maximize the economic utility of rivers like the Niger and Benue for the colonial economy. However, these river basin authorities were largely under-resourced and lacked the capacity to implement large-scale flood control projects. Their efforts were more focused on facilitating navigation

and irrigation rather than addressing the broader environmental and social consequences of flooding.

5. Role of Flooding in Colonial Transportation Infrastructure Development

Flooding played a significant role in shaping colonial transportation infrastructure development in Nigeria, particularly in areas surrounding the Niger River. The British colonial administration relied heavily on these rivers as major transportation routes for trade, especially for agricultural and mineral products. However, the seasonal flooding of the rivers posed both opportunities and challenges, influencing how transportation systems were developed.

Flooding during the rainy season made the Niger River deeper and more navigable, enabling larger boats and ships to transport goods farther inland (Grove, 1972). This was crucial for the movement of goods from rural areas to coastal ports, such as Lagos and Port Harcourt, for export. The colonial administration, therefore, capitalized on the natural flooding patterns to facilitate riverine trade, making rivers key components of Nigeria's transportation infrastructure during the colonial era. In response to the challenges posed by flooding, colonial authorities built elevated roads, bridges, and railway embankments to ensure transportation routes remained operational during flood seasons. These elevated structures were designed to withstand seasonal inundation and protect key trade routes. For instance, railway lines, particularly those connecting the hinterlands to major ports, were constructed with embankments to prevent flooding from disrupting transport operations (Nwokedi, & Obodo, 1993). While rivers became more navigable during floods, road and rail networks often suffered damage due to waterlogging and erosion, particularly in flood-prone areas. The colonial government invested in constructing more durable infrastructure in these regions, but maintenance costs were high due to recurring flood.

6. Niger River and Hydro Energy Generation during Colonial Era

The Niger River has long been recognized as one of West Africa's most important natural resources, particularly for hydroelectric power generation. The colonial and post-colonial eras saw different approaches and impacts concerning hydro energy generation from the Niger River in Nigeria. During the colonial period, European colonialists primarily viewed rivers like the Niger as transportation routes to facilitate the export of resources. While some colonial infrastructure development occurred, it was largely for the benefit of the colonial economy rather than for the development of local industry or energy needs. The colonial

focus was not on hydroelectric development for local power. Colonial powers prioritized extractive industries and transportation, so while the Niger River was recognized for its potential in hydropower, major investments in hydroelectric plants did not occur.

Toward the late colonial period, British colonial administrators recognized the river's hydroelectric potential. Feasibility studies and proposals were conducted, particularly in the 1950s, setting the stage for post-independence development. However, no major projects were implemented during colonial rule. In 1968, after Nigeria gained independence, the Nigerian government completed the Kainji Dam on the Niger River, marking one of the first major post-colonial investments in hydroelectric power. Funded partly by international organizations, Kainji Dam became a crucial power source, supplying electricity to various parts of the country. Subsequent projects followed, including the Jebba and Shiroro dams, which were completed in the 1980s. These developments aimed to harness the Niger River's potential more fully to meet Nigeria's growing energy needs. Despite the initial success of these projects, maintenance has often been inadequate, leading to reduced efficiency and frequent power shortages. The lack of reinvestment and upkeep has limited the power output from these hydro facilities.

Although, these dams have been advantageous, the construction of dams has caused significant environmental changes, affecting local communities that rely on the river for fishing, farming, and transportation. Seasonal flooding was also disrupted, impacting agricultural cycles. These effects have led to conflicts over water resources and local displacement. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in optimizing and expanding Nigeria's hydroelectric capabilities along the Niger River. With increased focus on sustainable energy, the government has explored rehabilitation projects for aging infrastructure and considered smaller-scale hydropower projects to improve rural electrification.

In summary, while colonial powers did not fully exploit the Niger River's hydroelectric potential, the post-colonial era saw Nigeria's government invest significantly in hydroelectric dams to meet national energy needs. The development has had both positive and negative impacts, providing essential electricity yet causing environmental and social challenges. Modern efforts aim to address these challenges and maximize the river's potential for a sustainable energy future.

7. Niger and Benue Rivers as a source of Hydroelectricity Energy

One of the major indices of development in the world is the provision of stable electricity. Thus, the Europeans after their industrial revolutions have always referred to Africa as a dark continent. Therefore, it's important in facilitating or enhancing industrial growth job creation, better life for urban and rural dwellers cannot be overemphasized. The first project in Nigeria started in Lagos by British Colonial administration in 1896. By 1946, it metamorphosed to power work department. However, major power Generation Company started as Electricity Corporation of Nigeria by the colonial government in 1950. In the post independent period, a River Niger Power Dam Authority was established on 25th of November 1964 by an Act of Parliament.

The search for more power generation led to the establishment of Decree 24 of 1974 of which gave birth to the Nigerian Electricity Power Authority (NEPA). All assets previously owned by the Niger Dam Authority which operated the Kainji, were all merged into this new nucleus called NEPA which is a public limited company. In Nigeria, the major watershed in power revolution was the establishment of Parliamentary Act of 2005. By this, electricity was privatized to a great extent which transformed NEPA to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

The river Niger helps to generate electricity which powers the states and the federal capital territory through dams. Its reservoir is Lake Kainji in Niger State of the Nigerian federation which got its name from river Niger. Kainji Dam is the largest of the three dams or reservoirs. It is one of the largest and most important dams in Nigeria generating electricity. It consists of 11/041 KV electrical distribution network. The dam comprises the main concrete gravity dam with earth embanked dams on either side of the main and saddle dams, which closes a secondary valley, and two gates. The main dam is 550m long with a maximum height of 64m. It is made up of water intakes, spillway and abutments.

The powerhouse is located downstream of the dam, on the right bank, and at right angles to the water intakes. The reservoir, which forms Lake Kainji, is 136 km long and has a capacity of 15 BCM (Billion cubic meters). Kainji powerhouse is equipped with eight turbine-alternator units including four Kaplan turbines rated at 80 MW each, a further two Kaplan turbines rated at 100 MW each, and two propeller turbines rated at 120 MW each. The available head ranges between 23.8 m and 41.2 m according to the water level in the reservoir. The original Kainji HPP project considered 12 turbine units, only eight units have been installed. The required civil structure is in place for the remaining 4 units. The project has

multiple purposes, which include energy generation, flood control and navigation. The design capacity of the power station is 750 MW.

The dam has operated for approximately 45 years and wear and tear (cavitation's pitting, slight abrasion, other small damages to blades and wicket gates, surface condition, etc.) has reduced the effective efficiency of the turbine by approximately 2.0% compared to the efficiency level of the 'as built' condition, which gives an estimated current turbine efficiency of approximately 91.3%. The aim of the rehabilitation is to re-establish the rated power output of 750MW of the hydropower scheme of Kainji until the end of November 2018. Depending on the performed refurbishment works and taking into consideration the current condition of the units, an increase in efficiency of 1% to 3% is targeted at present, the units 1G11 and 1G12 show a much better hydraulic performance. It can therefore be assumed that units 1G7 to 1G10 can be upgraded to at least a similar efficiency level of 94.3% by replacing and modifying the hydraulic 'sensitive' parts. MESL's rehabilitation programme will mainly focus on units 1G7, 1G8, 1G9 and 1G10. Jebba Dam also located in Niger State contributes to hydroelectric power generation in Nigeria. Jebba is a town that is across both Kwara and Niger State of Nigeria. It has a very strong hydroelectric house but not as much as that of the Kainji Dam. The Jebba Dam comprises an earth and rock-fill dam wall and several auxiliary dams. The main dam is 670m long and 42m high, and has a capacity of 3.22 BCM. The main dam is located approximately 100 km south of the Kainji Dam and is followed by a lock and three auxiliary concrete dams as dams 4, 3 & 2. Between these auxiliary dams there is an emergency concrete spillway and powerhouse with water inlet. The spillway and auxiliary dam 1 is rock fill with earth core similar to that of the main dam. A saddle dam, of the same type as the main dam, closes a secondary valley. The powerhouse is equipped with six turbines and six turbine-alternator groups. Each of the propeller turbines is rated at 96.4 MW for a net head of 102 MW at maximum output. The total nominal power installed is 578 MW.

The Shiroro Dam is also located in Niger State. It began operation in 1999. It is located at the Kaduna confluence of the Niger River. As at now, the Shiroro station has the capacity of 600 megawatts.

Conclusion

From the above, it is obvious that along the Niger River and its tributaries, a lot of villages and towns evolved from the upper and the lower Niger in Nigeria. Among these in Nigeria are Borgu, Zungeru, Jebba, Kainji, Moye, Lokoja, Gbobe, Ajaokuta, Ogoli, Idah, Agenebode, Anegbete, as well as some Ibaji Local Government villages, Ojigono, Ebu, Onitsha, Burutu among others. Along the

Benue, Loko, Moju, Makurdi, Wukari, Ibi, Yola and so on. The river Niger played great roles during the pre-colonial and colonial era in what is known as modern Nigeria. This is because within these periods, the river was a major highway or network of interaction, transportation between Nigeria and other parts of the world.

The river aided communication, commerce and agriculture. Those who lived around the river Niger used it for agricultural purposes such as irrigation. They also fished in the river, thereby providing the people with their source of protein. The river further shaped the people's outlook and became a major means of civilization. More so, the river Niger served as a means of power generation and other forms of energy. It is rather unfortunate that despite the great roles played by the river Niger as a means of transportation, communication and promotion of friendly relations among various societies, the government has till did not paid the necessary attention to the river. From the analyses of this paper, it is important to note that paying attention to River Niger will enhance the growth of Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommends that the government should pay necessary attention to River Niger as an important channel of communication, transportation, hydroelectricity among several others.

In addition, the river is indeed the germ of modern Nigeria as it is the deed of the past that makes the present. In spite of the forgoing important role of the Niger River, it is also a disaster to so many people of Nigeria in recent times, especially during its annual over flooding arising from climate change. This is to an extent due to the failure of the government to dredge the river and build water embankment as well as planting of adequate trees to prevent erosion and mitigate climate change. In addition, the abandoned proposal of the Nigerian government to build a reservoir dam in River Benue close to Cameroon to check the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon is a major factor responsible for excess flood along the Benue and by extension the river Niger it feeds.

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SEMANTIC SIGNIFICATION AND PRAGMATIC IMPLICATURE IN PERSONAL NAMES IN IJO LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of Ijo Personal naming system from the semantic and pragmatic perspective. Although quite much has been done on **onomastics**, not much scholarship on Semantics and Pragmatics of Ijo Personal Names has been done. And this is the gap this work intends to fill. The study employs Austin's Speech Act Theory as a tool in the analysis and interpretation of Ijo personal names as it relates to its locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces. It also employs the felicity conditions with attention to the sincerity, preparatory, executive and fulfillment conditions which justify the names and naming procedure among the Ijo. Data for this study are obtained through interview, few works written on names and personal observation. Findings from the study show that names have different locutionary forces couched in structures such as NPs, VPs, sentential, imperatives, elliptical, interrogative. The study reveals onomastic in Ijo language and culture reveal embedded meanings and pragmatic implicatures beyond being mere signification and identification labels. This essay is significant as it foregrounds the cultural, sociolinguistic and pragmatic magnitude of names.

Keywords: Onomastic names, semantic signification, pragmatic implicature, speech acts, Ijo

1. Introduction

This study examines the semantic signification and pragmatic implicatures of Ijo personal names. Personal naming practice or onomastics is a universal tradition, as Philip (2019 p.56) reiterates. Names are embedded in languages, and these languages carry the culture, beliefs and origin of persons, that is, the name bearer. Lyons (1977, p. 32) describes language as an instrument of communication. A name is a signifier of individuals in society and that is why every human being is given a name at birth a personal identity and by which an individual is distinguished from other people or things (Olatunji, Issah, Noah, Muhammed &

Suleiman, 2015). In addition, names are usually coined as phrases, clauses and sentences, and in which case, they carry illocutionary force.

As a people and a language, naming is natural among the Ijos. As a component element of language which carries the culture of the owners, name largely exude and reflect the worldview of the linguistic community as the Ijos. Therefore, naming is as important to the Ijo people as the birth of a child and parents express all their expectations in life in the name they give to their child/children. From the name children bear, one can guess the intention/life experiences or expectations of the child's parents. Basically, Ijo people give names to their children based on what they have passed through in life, what they are going through, and their expectations of the future (circumstance naming). A typical example is the name and *Nimiweriyananagha* meaning 'had I known, I wouldn't have married (her)'. This name is has pragmatic interpretations. The name was given to the child because he felt he would not have married the woman/ child's mother if he had known, so it is through the name given to the child he announces his regret of marrying the mother of the child. The semantic signification and pragmatic implicatures of names in Ijo are also espoused in Kwokwo, (2009 p15) According to him, names are an integral part of language and they identify specific, unique, and identifiable individual entities. Names being part of the language of a people are intrinsically part of their culture. Mbonu (2010 p15) defines a personal name in Igbo as a story. She opines that a name functions as a place-holder, social location and a part of belonging in most African societies.

A name defines a person, gives a sense of identity to who a person is as well as the communities they belong, and their place of birth. Some of them establishes the nativity of an individual, a person's place of birth, the supremacy of God as protector and provider, and the power of their deities. Names are more than a bunch of letters grouped together to sound pleasant to the ear because every name carries power and significance, in such a way that a positive name portends positive outcomes, while a negative name brings negativity. Names perform a variety of discourse and pragmatic functions, such as requesting, commanding, questioning/inquiring, and stating/informing. However, some of the discourse and pragmatic functions names perform in Ijo society are praise and worship of God or gods, expression of wishes, testament of place, circumstances of birth, praise of self and demonization of others (Kwokwo, 2009). In Nigeria, names are used to convey certain messages, either to an individual, family members or a community. It is observed that majority of the Ijo names show in one way or the other the people's awareness of their complete dependency on the spiritual being, namely

the supreme God, minor deities and ancestral spirits. Names are an incredibly important part of our identity. Whatever God created on earth ought to have a name.

Language has numerous definitions due to diverse perspectives among linguists. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define language as a structured system of sounds for communication. Dom and Uche (2010) describe it as an arbitrary symbol system tied to cognition and expression. Ikenna et al. (2022) see it as central to social interaction and cultural expression. Generally, names are often mere identifiers or signifiers of real entities in the material world. However, in African and particularly Ijo culture, names carry deep meanings, believed to influence the bearer's destiny. This belief is shared by classical Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and Roman traditions.

2. Statement of Problem

Onomastics or naming is a universal practice across cultures and languages since they are a means of signification and identification of human and non-human entities in the world. The importance of naming has generated significant volume of research but Ijo anthroponomy has received little scholarly attention, particularly from a pragmatic perspective. While some studies have explored the meanings of Ijo names - often highlighting their circumstantial nature - there is no evidence of a detailed analysis using pragmatic principles. Existing research tends to focus mainly on theophoric names, leaving a gap in the linguistic understanding of Ijo personal names. This study therefore aims to fill this gap by analyzing the semantic signification and pragmatic implicatures of Ijo names, recognizing their cultural significance and their linguistic contribution to Ijo identity.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine Ijo indigenous personal names in the context of culture
2. To ascertain the pattern of semantic signification of names
3. To identify various pragmatic functions names perform in Ijo language

4. Theoretical Framework

The research is hinged on semantics concepts of *signifier* and the signified, and pragmatic Speech Act theory relating to locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary utterances as well as the finer perceptive utterance typologies of assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative utterances. The Speech Act theory is adopted in this study to underscore the fact that names in Ijo culture, being an integral part of the language as noted by some scholars

referenced earlier, are utterances or statements with pragmatic force and a story to tell.

A number of pragmatics theories have been propounded by many scholars and linguists over the years but this study is based on J.L Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory (SAT) in Pragmatics as it relates to its locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces in the analysis and interpretation of utterances. Some of the performative illocutionary speech acts, according to Searle (1999) are Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declaratives. Wardhaugh (2006) states that humans communicate through utterances couched in sentences which may be stating, questioning, requesting and exclaiming (p.284). Speech Acts (SA) are therefore, concerned with what utterances do and how we use them in conversation. Most utterances by speakers make propositions which may be true or false in a world of reality

Locutions are the actual words or utterances speakers use to communicate their ideas or make their propositions. Illocutionary acts express the desires of the speaker. It causes the listeners to want to do something, react to what the speaker has said. Out of these myriads of kinds of utterances, Austin identified Performative Utterance as a unique type of speech act. In a performative utterance, Wardhaugh points out that a person is not just saying something but is actually doing something if certain real- world conditions are met (p.285). Hence, if a speaker says *I name this building Margaret Ekpo Hall*, or *I pronounce you husband and wife* or *I sentence you to life imprisonment*, the person has not just said something but has actually done something. Hence, Speech act theory with its locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces is directly relevant to the task of naming and interpreting names of members of Ijo cultural society. This is because the naming of the child by the name-giver is a locutionary act as it involves the use of the actual words that constitute the bearers name. The name-givers intention is for the members of the community to know, recognize and call the bearer by that name.

Austin (1962) distinguishes a special kind of utterance in speech act as performative utterances or performative acts (Mabaquiao 2018/2019:11). These are utterances which do not just say something but through which the speaker actually does something if certain conditions are met. Performative utterances are action-packed. Austin prescribes that for performative utterances to be successful or have the desired effects on the listeners or hearers they must meet certain felicity conditions. These are real-world conditions that must be met before such utterances are acceptable and binding. Consequently, on the basis of the principles

of illocutionary point, direction of fit, and sincerity condition, Searle (1999, cited in Mabaquiao, Jr. (2018/2019) identified the following basic types of speech acts:

(1) **Assertives**. E.g.: statements, descriptions, classifications, and explanations.

Illocutionary Point: “[T]o commit the hearer to the truth of the proposition. (2) **Directives**. E.g.: orders, commands, and requests. Illocutionary Point: “[T]o try to get the hearer to behave in such a way as to make his behavior match the propositional content of the directive

(3) **Commissives**. E.g.: promises, vows, pledges, contracts, and guarantees. Illocutionary Point. For the speaker to commit “to undertake the course of action represented in the propositional content’

(4) **Expressives**. Some examples are: apologies, thanks, congratulations, welcomes, and condolences. Illocutionary Point: “[T]o express the sincerity condition of the speech act”.

(5) **Declaratives**. E.g.: “I pronounce you man and wife,” “War is hereby declared,” “You are fired,” and “I resign.” Illocutionary Point: “[T]o bring about change in the world by representing it as having been changed”

5. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on selected Ijo personal names. The research work has been limited to investigating the semantic and pragmatic functions of Ijo personal names in communities in Kolokuma and Opokuma clans in the Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area in Bayelsa State. Communities in Kolokuma and Opokuma clans are used in this study because Kolokuma dialect of Izon has grown to become the mainstream dialect as it is used in education and the mass media.

6. Literature Review

Naming dates back to Creation, with Adam as the first name-giver (Gen. 2:19–20). Biblical naming, such as Cain, Esau, and Jacob, reflects descriptive theories where names match traits or circumstances. Saeed (2003) notes that while English names perform identity functions alone, African names reveal culture, beliefs, and aspirations. There is a dearth of onomastic studies in Ijo language. However, Kwokwo’s (2009) article entitled *Socio-Cultural Significance and Discourse Functions of Names in Izón Culture* is a rare exception. In this paper, Kwokwo argues that Names are an integral part of Language and they identify specific, unique and identifiable individual entities. He expresses the view that “names do not just serve as identity or signifiers but embed in perform some other deep

social, cultural, religious and philosophical implications". Kwokwo's study explored socio-cultural and discourse functions of names in Izón culture.

Kwokwo (2010) identifies the following socio-cultural and discourse functions of names in Izon language: expression of religious belief, expression of wishes and prayers, testament of place and circumstance of birth, the mysticism of the reincarnation and linguistic symbolism. He concludes that, people often use name and language to locate themselves in a multi-dimensional social space, just as Hudson (1980:195) argues, in his book *Sociolinguistics* that people use speech (and names being words of the language, and part of the speech) as a source of information about the speakers or a third person's social circumstances.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

The data presented is a random selection of names. The data is in form of typology names, semantic denotation and pragmatic essence in a tabular form below.

Table 1: Semantic and Pragmatic Typology of Names

Name Typology	Ijo Names	Semantic Meaning	Pragmatic Speech Act
Theophoric	Woyengikuro	The power of God and his supremacy	Assertive illocutionary Speech Act making a statement or proposition of truth
	Woyengiebi	The goodness of God	Assertive illocutionary Speech Act making a statement or proposition of truth
	Woyengidinipre	God protect for me	Directive illocutionary Speech act. This is a request or prayer to God.
Belief and Worldview	Fiibara	Forget death or Death forget me	An order; Dircitive illocutionary Speech Act. Expecting the hearer to act in a particular way.

	Mawaikumo	Do not return (to the land of the dead)	An order, Directive illocutionary Speech Act
	Mawaigha	Will not return (to the land of the dead)	Locutionary (commissive) Speech Act – speaker makes a statement, declaration or a promise
	Youkori	One to stop ‘crying’ or tears or sorrow	Illocutionary performative speech Act. It is an action stopping someone from crying or stopping someone’s sorrow.
Deity Oriented	Egbesuye	A child belonging to the Egbesu deity	Constative or Assertive illocutionary Speech Act making a statement or proposition of fact.
Testament of birth place or nativity	Odiowei	A man from/ of Odi	Assertive illocutionary speech act. The implicature is that the bearer is a native of Odi town or was born in Odi Town.
	Kaiamaere	A woman of kaiama	Assertive illocutionary speech act. The implicature is that the bearer is a native of Kaiama town or was born in Kaiama Town
Adversarial	Ilakimifa	Nobody is as good as me. Nobody is up to me (in wealth or importance)	Assertive illocutionary Speech Act with implicature of talking down on some perceive adversaries
	Toboulayefa	Nothing equal to (having) a child	Assertive illocutionary speech act. The implicature is money or wealth cannot be compared to children. A Locutionary Speech Act of

			fact
	Bubarayelayefa	Nothing is as good as having yours	Assertive illocutionary Speech Act; The implicature is money or wealth cannot be compared to children. A Locutionary Speech Act of fact

The names presented in the table above are categorized in to three broad classes, namely theophoric, beliefs and worldview, geospatial testament. Deity worship is also theophoric, in a sense. But, more important they are statements that carry different pragmatic illocutionary force. For instance, the names Woyengikuro and Woyengiebi are both theophoric as they refer to some quality of God Almighty. However, in terms of pragmatic illocutionary force, both are Assertive illocutions. This means that they are just statements of fact irrespective of their truth condition status. The name Egbesuye reflects the traditional religious belief by stating that the entity so named belongs to “Egbesu” deity. Therefore, it also possesses Assertive illocutionary force.

Names classifies as identification of nativity or place of birth are commonplace in Ijo language. It can indeed be said that such names are geospatial indicators of nativity and/or place of birth. The names Odiwei and Kaiamaere in the table above are some examples. Beyond their semantic significations of the individuals who bear the names, they also carry pragmatic implicatures. Since they simply make a statement, they are said to be Assertive in illocutionary force.

Adversarial names are names that tend to address some unseen perceive enemy competitor of adversary in an attempt to indirect elevate oneself above others. For instance, a name such as Ilakimifa is a statement that nobody is like me or up to my standard in anything especially wealth. As a statement, pragmatically, in terms of speech acts, it is an Assertive. It has an assertive illocutionary force even as it indignant and resentful of others persons. Similarly, the name *Igbaseimokumo* is adversarial because it addresses an imaginary adversary not to talk evil of or demonise the speaker. In terms of illocutionary force, it is a Directive, a kind of order, plea or entry.

8. Semantic Signification of Names

This section analyses semantic signification of names. This analysis is thematic in orientation. Names may be theophoric or religious, reflecting beliefs and worldview, or geospatial as testament of nativity or place of birth. They are explained in the subsections below.

8.1 Theophoric Names

Theophoric (God-oriented names) Ijo indigenous personal names acknowledge the existence and supremacy of *Woyengi*, the Almighty God, the creator of the universe who controls the destiny of man. The Ijos believe in the existence and complete dependence on the Almighty God. Therefore, they give God-oriented indigenous personal names to their children. Examples of Woyengi-related names include.

Table 2 Theophoric Names

S/N	IZON NAMES	LITERAL MEANING
1.	Woyengidinipre	God wash over/protect for me.
2.	Woyengitari	God's love.
3.	Woyengibarakemi	In the hands of God.
4.	Woyengidoubara	The will of God.
5.	Woyengilayefa	Supremacy of God top.
6.	Woyengimienseindo	God has done it all.
7.	Woyengidenmodo	God has overpowered them.
8.	Woyengiebimoimomoemi	The goodness(es) of God are with me.
9.	Woyengizwode	God has saved me
10.	Woyengiegberi	God's word

8.2 Deity Oriented Ijo names

Apart from the Supreme Being, the Almighty creator of the universe, the Ijos believe in the existence of small gods or deities which they worship. Before the coming of Christianity and Islam, there existed (and still exist) shrines where traditionalists go and make sacrifices to deities (gods). Names of these gods and their priests are often given to Ijo children as personal names.

Table 3: Deity Oriented Ijo names

S/N	Names	Meaning
1.	Orukari	worship the deity
2.	Oruye	belonging to the deity
3.	Orukipreye	gift from the god
4.	Oruegberimo	the words of the gods
5.	Orudiowei	one who looks after the god
6.	Oruodubogbaowei	servant of the deity

8.3 Belief and Worldview

The issue of child mortality was common knowledge and experience in the under-developed countries in Africa of which Nigeria and of course the Ijos were not an exception. The major cause was poor health-care services. But the incidence of Waibodei, children who are born-to-die and stubbornly repeat the spiritual cycle of rebirth, is a common belief among the Ijo. Families that have the misfortune of having such spirit-children that plague them give names that express their plight in forms of “pleas, despair, courage and hope”. In fact, this was deeply rooted in the belief and worldview of the people about the world of the living, the world of the dead and the world of the unborn. The incidence of dying and returning is known as Wabode, Ogbanje or Abiku in different languages and cultures. Table 4 below illustrates this category of names:

Table 4: Belief and Worldview

S/N	Names	Meaning
1.	Fidude	Death has ended
2.	Binabo	One's relative
3.	Mawaigha	(I) will not return back
4.	Mamugha	I will not go back

8.4 Testament of Nativity and Birth Place

Some names reflect the nativity and/or place of birth of the bearer. Such names are a kind of social statements an individual who bears the name of a town or clan is an indigene of such geospatial location. That is why it is a testament of nativity. Secondly, names may also be an historical record by reflecting the place of birth of an individual. It also therefore performs a geospatial referential function in terms of functional linguistics. This is the reason behind such names as boukozi, Igbedikimi, Odiere, Odiowei, Kaiamaere, Gbarainowei, Oporomaowei, and even distant places as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, Zaria, etc.

Table 5: Names of Nativity and Testament of Place of Birth

S/N	Names	Meaning
1.	Boukozi	Birthed in the bush
2.	Igbedikimi	A man from Igbedi community
3.	Odiere	A woman from Odi
4	Odiowei	A man from Odi
5	Olobiri	Born in Olobiri
6	Port Harcourt	Born in Port Harcourt
7	Kaduna	Born in Kaduna
8	Lagos	Born in Lagos

8.5 Adversarial Ijo names

Adversarial names are subaltern in names. They tend to address or speak to an unseen person, an imaginary adversary. Such names makes statement in a manner of challenging someone or responding to some persons. The examples in Table 6 testify to this point of view.

Table 6: Adversarila Names

S/N	Names	Meaning
1.	Kemeikankumor	Nobody should envy me
2.	Inekuronaka	I did not take it by my power
3.	Itariweribakumo	Don't pretend to love me and end up killing me
4.	Igbaseimokumo	Do not condemn me with spoken words
5.	Warikimibah	Insult does not kill a person
6.	Zinakedou	I have reclaimed mine through birth

Discussion

Human statements can either be a constative or a performative speech act. A constative speech act is an utterance and the performatives are divided into locution, illocution and perlocution. Searle (1999) further identifies five illocutionary performative acts, namely assertive, directives, commissives, expressive and declaratives. Most Ijo names are clausal or sentential. Therefore, they are mostly likely to fall into one or the other of these illocutionary performative speech acts.

Naming a new child is both a semantic signification and a speech act, a performative utterance. As a speech act, its success depends on the felicity conditions that justify the names given by the name-giver who must have the knowledge of not only the culture of the people but also the linguistic code and the contextual background of the cultural society. Some of the felicity conditions are sincerity, preparatory, executive and fulfillment. For example, if a priest, in the process of naming a baby-girl Joy pronounces Jezebel, the parents will definitely reject such a name because it does not fall in line with the socio-cultural reality of the people. In this case, the name-giver has committed a socio-cultural atrocity by giving a child a name associated with crime or social injustice. The implication is that the name-giver must be familiar with the socio-cultural norms of the people since there is a strong interface between names and the culture of the people as a name is an identity tag of its bearer.

Contribution to knowledge

The study may, to a great extent, change the negative attitude of Nigerians and act as a re-awakening stimulus especially to the Ijo elite and the urban dwellers who, as said elsewhere, are afflicted by cultural schizophrenia. This research, therefore, is a call to cultural renaissance, using language studies as a tool for enlightenment and education. The study may create an opening for scholars and students who may wish to embark on further research on any aspect of the research not adequately covered by the current study. The findings list will serve as reference for Ijo baby names. Findings from this study can impact knowledge in Ijo language learners and persons writing orthographies for Ijo personal names.

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**A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN THE
2019 BAYELSA STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS**

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Abstract

Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule on 29th May 1999, transition of power through election has been fraught with violence in Bayelsa state, in particular, and Nigeria in general. Acquisition of arms during election has become synonymous with possessing voter's card. This has led to proliferation of arms in the state. This violence takes various forms at pre-election, during election and after election and they include, harassment, intimidation, assassination and kidnapping. Power cabals employed the use of electoral violence to enable them impose candidate of their own choice against the will of the majority. It is based on these premises that the paper tends to focus on the factors that influences electoral violence during the 2019 gubernatorial election and also suggest ways to curb or reduce electoral violence in the state. It adopted the Relative Deprivation theory propounded Ted Robert Gurr, 1970 as its theoretical framework and applied desktop method of data collection for the study. The paper found that unemployment, weak internal political democracy and money politics, were the major factors that influences electoral violence that posed negative implications to in the state and recommended severe punishment for those involved in the violent acts.

Keywords: Election, electoral violence, money politics, nemployment and eak institution

1. Introduction

Elections are meant to choose leaders would represent the interest of the people in government. Elections are meant to serve as a peaceful alternative to using force to settle disputes between competing claims to power. However, in actuality, these expectations frequently fall short of what happens after the people assume office. Elections are often violent from the campaign, on Election day, and aftermath of

voting. A violent environment can occasionally be characterized by crises, disputes, conflicts, and even war, all of which have impact on societal development and relationships (Mbaya, 2013; Okpako and Okolo, 2020; Okolo and Etekpe, 2014). According to Ogbulafor et al (2018), election is expected to be a crucial step that recognized the power of the people and also grant them the right to decide their leaders through a credible and transparent process. In Nigeria, electoral process is not devoid of challenges as witness in the 1999 election where there were instances of electoral malpractices. The irregularities included voter's intimidation, ballot box stuffing, vote buying and manipulation of results (Etekpe, 2019).

Violence during elections is now regarded as an institutionalized practice, particularly in Nigeria and other developing parts of the world. Political leaders utilize violence during elections as a form of electoral fraud to stay in power (Agah, 2017). The frequency with which power has been acquired by violence varies throughout societies and circumstances to the other. Bayelsa State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria and is located in the heart of the Niger Delta. The state is one of the six oil and gas producing states in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country. The Bayelsa gubernatorial election of November 2019 is one of the most recent elections conducted in Nigeria. The November 2019 election in the Bayelsa State is not without controversy of violence and other electoral malpractices (Otu& Odalonu, 2021). Electoral process in the state has been marked by violence such as, arson, political thuggery, assassinations, and violent disputes, among other things. Similar to their counterparts in other regions and state in Nigeria, politicians in Bayelsa State are intolerant of discussion, compromise, and agreement (Azeez, 2005).

In the build-up to the 2019 Governorship election, the conflict environment was already characterized by intense and political competition by the two major political parties. People' Democratic party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC). Despite promises from the state's security agencies and the Electoral Commission, there was violence during the 2019 state governorship election. Prior to the election, specifically, on November 13, 2019, PDP campaigners were in Nembe local government area when a group of ruthless gunmen, suspected to be members of rival political party, showed up at the venue without warning and opened fire on them, killing numerous law-abiding Nigerians (Dailypost, 2019), (Table 2).

The situation was also experienced in other part of the state, precisely on the day of election, armed thugs dressed in military uniforms also invaded Ayama ward 4 in Ogbia local government area of the state and hijacked voting materials,

destroyed houses and properties of their political rivals in the community. When such violence occurred, not only their perceived political opponents are attacked, injured and even killed but also innocent individuals who reside within the community suffer the same degree of loss (Njoku, 2012; Allen and Okolo, 2018).

The study examines the factors that influenced electoral violence during the 2019 gubernatorial election as well as, to proffer solutions to curb or reduce electoral violence in the state. This is important because the state cannot produce a credible leader under violent environment.

2. Statement of the Problem

The issue of elections and electoral violence continues to pose a significant threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where political competition is often marked by volatility, ethnic tension, and militancy. While scholars such as Omotola (2019) and Ladan (2020) have explored electoral violence from national and regional perspectives, there remains a noticeable scholarly silence on the micro-dynamics of violence as it played out in the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election. Existing studies often generalize electoral violence without dissecting the local context, political actors, and power struggles unique to Bayelsa State, where the convergence of youth restiveness, oil politics, and community-based allegiances play a unique role in fueling pre- and post-election crises.

The 2019 governorship election witnessed widespread reports of ballot snatching, intimidation, armed confrontation, and voter suppression, yet few academic inquiries have interrogated the specific triggers, patterns, and localized motivations behind these acts of violence in Bayelsa (Agbo, 2020; Ibeanu & Orji, 2019). Moreover, there is insufficient examination of how electoral institutions, political godfatherism, and community leadership structures either mitigated or exacerbated the violent outcomes during that electoral cycle. This gap creates a critical void in understanding how electoral violence evolves in context-specific environments such as Bayelsa, thereby necessitating a deeper localized and evidence-based investigation of the 2019 governorship election to fill the theoretical and empirical lapses in existing literature.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research is aimed at examining elections and electoral violence in Bayelsa State: 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election in focus. The specific objective is;

- i. to identify and analyze the underlying political, socio-economic, and cultural factors that contributed to electoral violence during the 2019 governorship election in Bayelsa State
- ii. to examine the roles of political actors, electoral institutions, community leaders, and security agencies in either promoting or preventing electoral violence during the 2019 election
- iii. to assess the effectiveness of existing legal and institutional frameworks in addressing electoral violence in Bayelsa State

4. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive and exploratory method of data analysis. The descriptive aspect allows for a systematic presentation of factual information regarding the nature of the 2019 Bayelsa gubernatorial election, especially with respect to incidents of violence, actors involved, institutional responses, and political developments leading to the election. On the other hand, the exploratory component is aimed at uncovering underlying factors that may not have been previously analyzed, such as the influence of local power structures, community-based mobilization of violence, and the interplay between oil-related interests and political contestations. This dual design is appropriate because the subject matter entails complex and context-specific socio-political phenomena that require in-depth analysis of pre-existing literature, reports, and archival data.

i) Sources of Data

All data used in this study were obtained exclusively from secondary sources. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, newspaper reports, election observation reports from bodies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and international electoral observation groups (e.g., EU Election Observation Mission, YIAGA Africa, CLEEN Foundation), as well as government publications and civil society organization (CSO) reports. In addition, academic theses, policy briefs, online scholarly databases (such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Research Gate), and credible news media archives were extensively consulted. These sources provided both historical context and real-time documentation of events as they occurred during the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election. All data were carefully selected for relevance, reliability, and credibility to ensure an objective and comprehensive understanding of electoral violence in the study area.

ii) Method of Data Analysis

The study utilized qualitative content analysis as the main method of data interpretation. This involved systematically reviewing, coding, categorizing, and interpreting textual data from the collected secondary sources. Themes such as causes of electoral violence, types of violence experienced, roles of key political actors, responses by electoral institutions, and the impacts on democratic processes in Bayelsa State were identified and critically examined. By employing content analysis, the study was able to synthesize large volumes of narrative data and extract meaningful patterns, connections, and insights relevant to the research objectives. Particular attention was given to triangulating data from multiple sources to enhance validity and reliability of findings. The analytical framework also integrated elements of political conflict theory and contextual electoral studies to support the interpretation of events within broader socio-political and institutional frameworks

5. Scope of the Study

This study is geographically conducted in Bayelsa state and it is limited to elections in the State with major emphasis on the 2019 governorship election. The scope and content of this research is delimited in examining elections and electoral violence in Bayelsa State.

6. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enlighten, and guide multiple stakeholders in the democratic process. For policy makers and government agencies, the study provides critical insights into the root causes and dynamics of electoral violence in Bayelsa State, helping to inform the design of more effective electoral policies, conflict prevention strategies, and law enforcement mechanisms. For electoral bodies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the findings serve as a valuable resource for improving electoral administration, security deployment, and voter protection measures in future elections. Political parties and candidates stand to benefit from understanding the destructive impacts of electoral violence on democratic legitimacy and voter participation, thereby encouraging more peaceful and issue-based political engagement.

7. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Relative Deprivation Theory postulated by Ted Robert Gurr, (1970) as its theoretical framework. Gurr introduced this theory in his seminal work *Why Men Rebel*, where he posited that the potential for collective violence increases when there is a perceived gap between what people believe

they deserve (their value expectations) and what they actually experience (their value capabilities). This perceived discrepancy generates frustration, which, when widespread among a group or community, can lead to aggressive behavior and eventual violent actions. Relative deprivation, therefore, is not necessarily based on absolute poverty or lack, but rather on the perception of being unjustly disadvantaged in comparison to others, particularly in a politically competitive or conflict-prone environment.

In the context of elections and electoral violence, Gurr's theory provides a powerful explanatory lens through which the motivations for violence can be analyzed. Electoral violence often emerges when individuals or political groups feel systematically marginalized or excluded from access to power, political participation, or the benefits of state resources. In societies where political positions are seen as the primary route to economic advantage and social mobility, elections become zero-sum contests. If a segment of the population perceives that the electoral process is unfair, manipulated, or does not reflect their political will, the resulting sense of deprivation can trigger hostility against the state, political opponents, or even fellow citizens. In the case of Bayelsa State, Nigeria, the perception of political manipulation, exclusion of certain ethnic or local interests, and dominance of elite political structures may have contributed to a heightened sense of collective deprivation, which in turn manifested in the form of violence during the 2019 governorship election.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

The 2019 gubernatorial election was another fiercely contested and violent episode in Bayelsa's political history. David Lyon of the APC was initially declared the winner, defeating Douye Diri of the PDP with a significant margin. However, the victory was short-lived as the Supreme Court nullified Lyon's election just a day before his inauguration due to inconsistencies and forged certificates presented by his running mate. This sudden reversal led to widespread protests and retaliatory violence by APC supporters, especially in Yenagoa and other APC strongholds. Prior to and during the election, there had been widespread reports of electoral violence, including the kidnapping of INEC officials, the hijacking of electoral materials, and armed attacks on voters and political opponents. The use of violence was systematic and targeted, often orchestrated by politically connected actors who enjoyed impunity. The fear and intimidation experienced by the electorate reduced voter turnout and undermined the credibility of the process, while the post-election crisis revealed the fragility of the state's democratic institutions.

Table 2: Electoral Violence based on reported incidents in local government areas of Bayelsa State in the 2019 Governorship Elections.

S/N	LGAs	No of Reported Incidents	No. of Reported Casualties (injured)	No. of Reported Casualties (killed)
1.	Brass	12	25	2
2.	Ekeremor	10	30	1
3.	Kolokumo/Opokuma	4	6	0
4.	Nembe	40	195	30
5.	Ogbia	15	27	3
6.	Sagbama	8	4	0
7.	Southern Ijaw	30	50	15
8.	Yenagoa	25	18	2

Source: Department of Crime Recording and Statistics, Nigeria Police Force, Bayelsa state command, (2020).

8.1. Underlying Political, Socio-Economic, Cultural and Technological Factors that Contributed to Electoral Violence during the 2019 Governorship Election in Bayelsa State

The 2019 governorship election in Bayelsa State was profoundly shaped by a constellation of political, socio-economic, and cultural factors that created fertile ground for the eruption of widespread electoral violence. Politically, the highly polarized competition between the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) transformed the election into a high-stakes contest for control over the state's vast oil resources and political patronage structures. In a state where access to political office often guarantees access to economic power, elections are viewed as a zero-sum game, intensifying the likelihood of violent confrontations when outcomes appear unfavorable to certain interests (Agbo, 2020). The defection of former governor Timipre Sylva to the APC and his subsequent mobilization of political support across Southern Ijaw, Brass, and Nembe further heightened tensions, as these areas became

flashpoints of electoral violence, given their political leanings and strategic significance.

Socio-economically, the persistent youth unemployment, poverty, and disillusionment with governance provided a vast pool of idle young men who were easily mobilized as political thugs. A situation whereby an individual cannot provide for himself all the basic necessities of life and such will be readily available to carry out an assignment that will provide him economic leverage. The monetization of politics in Bayelsa has normalized the use of financial inducements to recruit supporters for violent purposes, making electoral violence both an economic opportunity and a political strategy. As noted by Uzochukwu (2020), political actors in Bayelsa and across the Niger Delta routinely exploit the economic vulnerabilities of the youth to deploy them as instruments of electoral coercion and ballot manipulation. These conditions were starkly visible in the 2019 election, especially in coastal and riverine communities where governance gaps are most acute. The effects of electoral violence in the state are immeasurable and has jeopardizes social economic development, social integration and robs people of their psychological and emotional stability (Ifeanyichukwu, 2017).

Also, *The selection process for governorship candidates of the two major political parties, Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressives Congress governorship primaries in Bayelsa State during the 2019 gubernatorial election were characterized by intriguing drama as members of the two major political parties in the state approached burial functions, wedding ceremonies, rallies and campaigns, etc., their supporters clashed in the processes (Daily post, 2019).*

Imposition of unpopular candidate on the people leads to discontent. Most of the time, this results in people switching parties to compete with the other, supposedly weaker contender. Furthermore, "do-or-die" politics frequently result from the general public's rejection of the unpopular candidates (Falana, 2009; Okolo and Inokoba, 2014). In such situation, the rejected candidate arms some vulnerable youths with weapons with the instruction to attacked and kill his perceive opponent. The onslaught is not only targeted at the political opponent but it's extended to other innocent members of the public.

Culturally, traditional communal rivalries and localized ethnic identities played significant roles in shaping the political landscape of the 2019 election. Bayelsa's eight local government areas are marked by longstanding ethnic and clan-based allegiances, which are often translated into political affiliations. During the election, these divisions were reinforced by party propaganda and intra-community competition for political appointments, contracts, and development benefits. Political actors exploited these ethnic cleavages to galvanize support and

justify acts of violence against perceived outsiders or opposition loyalists. As stated by Okonkwo (2019), cultural identity in the Niger Delta region is a key political resource, often manipulated during elections to stir communal sentiments that facilitate electoral violence.

Technologically, the advent of contemporary technologies, particularly information and communication technology (ICT), is transforming how individuals conduct their daily lives. In many respects, the accessibility and availability of technologies like computers and mobile phones have altered human social connections, particularly among young people. According to Lenhart et al (2010), a majority of the youth in the Bayelsa state, specifically over 80% of them, possess at least one type of electronic media technology, including computers, PDAs, and mobile phones for internet access. While this is beneficial for networking and cross-border connections, it can also be abused, with disastrous results (Odora & Matoti, 2015). One of the effects is cyberbullying, which occurs when young people harass one another online. This is happening to pupils in schools, even in Nigeria (Ayas & Horzum, 2010; Olumide, Adams & Amodu, 2015).

During the 2019 Bayelsa state gubernatorial election, a deluge of nasty remarks and statements—now known as vawulence—was spread online with the intention of mocking, disseminating misleading information, and compromising the credibility and reputations of candidates running for elected office. The tumultuous momentum that is escalating to cause confusion and chaos on social media may cause Nigerians to ignore the problems facing the state in favor of frivolities, character assassination, and intimidation of politicians and their supporters. The golden opportunity we have been given to reverse the course of poor leadership will be destroyed on the altar of absurdities and frivolities, just like a pack of cards.

Additionally, there were provocative and offensive remarks being made by social media organizations like Sayelba, Bayelsa Focus organizations, Inside Bayelsa, Democracy Vanguard, Voice of Naija, and South-South People's Parliament. Furthermore, people are the targets of cyberbullies. Instead of posting words that are generally provocative, they publish derogatory things about a specific individual in an attempt to intimidate or shame them. This might come in the shape of cruel essays and notes, as well as personal images or recordings of the target. They could broadcast the information online or privately send it to the target as a way to tease them. The sole intention of cyberbullies is to harm and degrade their victims. They don't care about attention; thus, their victims will receive negative attention instead of attention for themselves.

In Bayelsa state and in general, cyberbullying is a widespread issue. According to Bauman (2014), the widespread availability of digital technology and the rapid advancement of technical advances are to blame for the prevalence of cyberbullying, which would ultimately lead to various outcomes in terms of electoral violence in Bayelsa state.

8.2. Roles of political actors, electoral institutions, community leaders, and security agencies in either promoting or preventing electoral violence during the 2019 election in Bayelsa state

Political actors played a central role in both instigating and escalating electoral violence during the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election. Leading politicians and candidates, especially from the APC and PDP, allegedly financed and armed youth groups to disrupt the electoral process in opponent strongholds. Timipre Sylva of the APC was widely reported to have mobilized local militia and former cultists, especially in Nembe and Southern Ijaw, which experienced some of the most violent episodes during the election (YIAGA Africa, 2019). Similarly, allegations were leveled against PDP-affiliated actors for organizing intimidation campaigns in select areas to suppress opposition votes. The strategic use of violence to gain territorial control and electoral advantage reflected the entrenched culture of winner-takes-all politics in Bayelsa.

Electoral institutions, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), were hampered by logistical weaknesses, allegations of bias, and lack of institutional independence. Reports by election observers noted that INEC officials were kidnapped, intimidated, and, in some cases, compromised during the voting process (EU EOM, 2019). The inability of INEC to provide adequate protection for its personnel and electoral materials in volatile areas contributed to the perception of complicity or helplessness, undermining public trust in the integrity of the electoral process. Security agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Army, and Civil Defence, were deployed to safeguard the election. However, their effectiveness was uneven and, in some instances, compromised. In Southern Ijaw and Brass LGAs, credible reports indicated that security personnel either stood by passively during violent disruptions or were themselves involved in partisanship, assisting in the transportation of compromised electoral materials and shielding political thugs (CLEEN Foundation, 2019). While some security operatives acted professionally, the broader narrative of selective enforcement and collusion contributed to the escalation of violence and the erosion of electoral credibility.

Community leaders, including traditional rulers and religious figures, had a dual role in the 2019 election. In some areas, they acted as peace advocates, urging their followers to refrain from violence and encouraging political neutrality. However, in other cases, local leaders aligned with political interests and lent their legitimacy to violent actors by turning a blind eye to intimidation or by directly endorsing partisan thuggery. The politicization of local authority structures weakened their role as stabilizing forces and instead made them instruments of electoral conflict (Ibeanu & Orji, 2019). The 2019 election reflected a breakdown in institutional safeguards and a failure by key actors to fulfill their mandates. The convergence of political desperation, institutional fragility, and selective law enforcement allowed electoral violence to thrive and become an accepted component of the political process in Bayelsa State.

8.3. Legal and institutional frameworks in addressing electoral violence in Bayelsa state

The Nigerian legal and institutional frameworks governing elections are anchored on the Electoral Act (as amended), the 1999 Constitution, and guidelines issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). These frameworks contain clear provisions for the conduct of elections, the prosecution of electoral offenses, and the roles of security agencies. However, in the case of the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election, these legal instruments were poorly implemented and selectively enforced, rendering them largely ineffective in curbing electoral violence. The Electoral Act criminalizes actions such as ballot box snatching, voter intimidation, and disruption of polling activities. Despite the prevalence of these offenses during the 2019 election, there were few, if any, successful prosecutions of perpetrators. This failure was partly due to the absence of robust institutional mechanisms for the identification, documentation, and prosecution of offenders. According to Ladan (2020), the culture of impunity that surrounds electoral violence in Nigeria is sustained by the lack of political will to implement legal sanctions against powerful actors who sponsor violence.

Institutionally, INEC is mandated to conduct credible elections, yet its operational autonomy remains constrained by political interference and logistical shortcomings. While INEC introduced innovations such as the use of smart card readers and off-cycle election scheduling, these were undermined by deliberate sabotage, especially in areas where violence was used to prevent accreditation and manipulate turnout. In Bayelsa, the effectiveness of INEC's interventions was compromised by local political pressures and security challenges that made certain areas inaccessible during the election (YIAGA Africa, 2019). Security institutions,

legally responsible for protecting the electoral process, lacked clear coordination mechanisms, and often operated in silos. Their inability to act impartially and efficiently during the 2019 election raised serious concerns about the integrity of the security architecture. The police and army, though present in large numbers, were often reactive rather than proactive, and in some instances, directly facilitated the disruption of the process, as documented by international observers (EU EOM, 2019).

Furthermore, the judiciary, which plays a critical role in resolving electoral disputes, was called into action following the Supreme Court's ruling that disqualified the APC candidate due to issues with his running mate's credentials. While this decision affirmed the court's capacity to act as a legal check, it also triggered violent backlash from APC supporters, raising questions about the judiciary's ability to enforce rulings without provoking further unrest. This underscores the fragile relationship between legal authority and political legitimacy in volatile electoral contexts like Bayelsa.

9. Discussion of Findings

From the analysis, the study found out that;

1. The 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election was characterized by widespread and systemic violence, with clear political motivations underlying most of the attacks and disruptions.
2. Political actors, especially from the two leading parties (APC and PDP), actively sponsored and mobilized violence through armed thugs and youth militias in order to gain territorial and electoral advantage.
3. Electoral and security institutions were either too weak or complicit to prevent the violence, with instances of INEC officials being kidnapped, compromised, or forced to abandon duties, and security agencies selectively enforcing laws.
4. Legal frameworks such as the Electoral Act and the Nigerian Constitution, though theoretically adequate, were largely ineffective in practice due to lack of political will, institutional fragility, and a prevailing culture of impunity.

From the findings, it is evident that the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election did not only suffer from technical and logistical failures but was deeply undermined by political desperation and institutional breakdowns. The violence that erupted during the election was not random; rather, it was a systematic outcome of long-standing socio-political decay, manifesting in a zero-sum

political culture where winning an election means access to state resources and power, often at the expense of democratic principles. The central involvement of political actors in orchestrating violence, coupled with the complicity or inefficiency of electoral and security institutions, highlights the entrenched nature of electoral malpractices in Bayelsa. Moreover, the failure of legal and institutional frameworks to punish perpetrators or deter future incidents has further normalized violence as a viable electoral strategy. Thus, electoral violence in Bayelsa State remains a deeply rooted issue requiring comprehensive reforms that address not only surface-level irregularities but also the structural and systemic factors perpetuating conflict during elections.

Discussion: The discussion of findings in this study on “Elections and Electoral Violence in Bayelsa State: 2019 Bayelsa State Governorship Election in Focus” aligns significantly with the existing body of scholarship that has examined the patterns, causes, and consequences of electoral violence in Nigeria, particularly in resource-endowed but politically fragile states like those in the Niger Delta. Multiple scholars have established that the endemic nature of electoral violence in Nigeria stems from the convergence of socio-economic vulnerabilities, institutional weaknesses, and the desperation of political elites to acquire or retain power by any means necessary (Omotola, 2010; Ayoade, 2013; Ibrahim & Ibeanu, 2015). This study reinforces these findings by highlighting the politically charged atmosphere of the 2019 Bayelsa gubernatorial election, which was marked by fierce competition between the APC and PDP, both of which mobilized violence through the recruitment of local militia and cult groups, especially in areas like Southern Ijaw, Nembe, and Brass.

Omotola (2010) argued that Nigeria’s electoral system suffers from a credibility deficit, which creates incentives for political actors to resort to violence as a means of circumventing institutional processes. This view is validated by this study’s observation that both political parties in Bayelsa deployed strategic violence, ballot hijacking, and intimidation to secure territorial control and influence the electoral outcome. Moreover, Agbu (2016) emphasized the zero-sum nature of Nigerian politics, where winning an election is equivalent to monopolizing access to state resources. This helps explain the desperation and violent strategies used by Bayelsa’s political class in 2019, as the governorship position symbolized control over oil wealth, patronage networks, and federal connections. The socio-economic dimension of electoral violence discussed in this study also resonates with findings by Akinbobola (2014), who contends that youth unemployment and poverty are critical enablers of violence. Young men are often

lured with money, drugs, or the promise of future political rewards, turning elections into violent contests. This finding was reflected clearly in the 2019 election, as widespread poverty and underdevelopment in coastal and riverine areas created an easily exploitable population for political actors. This trend is further elaborated by Nwankwo and Okafor (2018), who found that political thuggery and youth militancy are fueled by a combination of socio-economic exclusion and the politicization of community leadership structures.

This study's finding on the instrumental role of cultural and communal divisions in mobilizing violence is supported by the work of Ukiwo (2011), who posits that ethnic identity politics in the Niger Delta not only shape political alignments but also intensify electoral contestations. In Bayelsa, the manipulation of clan and community loyalties during the 2019 election created localized conflict zones where inter-group rivalries were activated by political interests. This highlights the intersection of identity, geography, and politics, which scholars like Ikelegbe (2014) argue is central to understanding electoral instability in the region. On the role of electoral institutions and security agencies, the study's findings affirm widespread scholarly observations regarding institutional fragility and complicity. According to Ibrahim and Ibeanu (2015), INEC's operational limitations, such as late delivery of materials and inadequate protection for officials, make it vulnerable to manipulation. This was evident in the 2019 Bayelsa election where INEC officials were kidnapped, materials hijacked, and processes disrupted, especially in opposition-dominated areas. Similarly, security agencies were either passive or actively complicit in violence, a trend identified in the findings of Adejumobi (2015), who argues that the militarization of elections in Nigeria often results in collusion between security agents and political actors, undermining electoral integrity.

This study also validates the critique by Ladan (2020), who emphasized the culture of impunity as a major challenge to prosecuting electoral offenders. Despite the clear provisions of the Electoral Act, few perpetrators of violence are ever brought to justice, a situation mirrored in the 2019 Bayelsa case. The judiciary's role, while crucial, remains contentious. Although the Supreme Court annulled the APC victory due to certificate forgery, this sparked further violence, revealing that legal decisions alone cannot stabilize the electoral environment in the absence of political consensus and public trust. An observation also noted by Okoosi-Simbine (2013). The discussion also contributes to the growing literature on the erosion of democratic institutions in oil-rich regions. Scholars like Osaghae and Suberu (2005) argue that in such regions, the state becomes a contested terrain where elections are not democratic exercises but opportunities for resource

capture. This aligns with the Bayelsa context, where control of the governorship translates into access to oil revenues, federal allocations, and influence over security appointments. The high stakes associated with political control, coupled with institutional ineffectiveness, create a volatile atmosphere in which violence becomes both a symptom and a tool of political engagement.

10. Conclusion

This study addresses the gap in localized scholarly inquiry concerning elections and electoral violence with a specific focus on the 2019 Bayelsa State governorship election in Nigeria. While previous research has extensively covered electoral violence in broader national and regional contexts, there has been limited investigation into the micro-dynamics and localized factors that shaped the violent electoral environment in Bayelsa. The research identifies how electoral violence in the state is driven not only by structural political instability but also by socio-economic and cultural factors that uniquely define the state's volatile democratic experience.

The objectives of this study were threefold: first, to identify and analyze the political, socio-economic, and cultural factors that contributed to electoral violence in the 2019 Bayelsa governorship election; second, to examine the roles played by political actors, electoral institutions, community leaders, and security agencies in either promoting or preventing the violence; and third, to assess the effectiveness of the legal and institutional frameworks in place for curbing electoral violence in Bayelsa State.

The study employed a descriptive and exploratory research design. The descriptive dimension was used to systematically present factual and narrative accounts of election-related violence, while the exploratory aspect uncovered deeper, less-observed causes and consequences of such violence. Data were collected exclusively through secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, official government publications, election observation reports, academic theses, and reputable online databases such as JSTOR and Google Scholar. The method of analysis was qualitative content analysis, which involved coding and thematically organizing textual data for interpretation. This analytical method allowed the study to extract patterns and meanings from a wide array of narrative materials, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the election crisis.

11. Recommendations

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies must be reformed to operate autonomously and effectively. This includes logistical strengthening, capacity building, and protection mechanisms to safeguard electoral officers and materials from coercion and interference.
2. A dedicated electoral offenses tribunal should be established to fast-track the investigation and prosecution of electoral offenders. Political actors who sponsor violence must be held accountable regardless of party affiliation, and legal reforms should eliminate loopholes that allow impunity.
3. Community leaders, religious figures, and traditional rulers must be actively engaged in peace-building processes. Civic education campaigns should be introduced to promote peaceful participation in elections, and community-based monitoring groups should be empowered to identify and report electoral violence.

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THEMATIC CATEGORIZATION OF IJỌ OWU (MASQUERADE) SONGS AS ORAL POETRY

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Abstract

This study examines masquerade (Owu) songs as a form of African trado-religious poetry among the Izón-speaking people, using both formalist and sociological literary approaches. The research evaluates the internal structure and artistic form of the songs alongside analyzing their socio-cultural significance within the community. Drawing on Awoonor's model of classification, the study categorizes the songs into three functional types: social, occupational, and religious. The formalist theory emphasizes the intrinsic aesthetic and linguistic features that characterize Owu songs, while the sociological framework explores the reciprocal relationship between the songs and the social milieu from which they emerge. By blending both critical perspectives, this study highlights the cultural vitality and literary richness of African verbal art forms.

Keywords: Masquerade, Owu songs, Izon, Trado-religious poetry

1.0 Introduction

The content of masquerade songs, as a form of traditional poetry, is largely shaped by the social and cultural experiences of the artist within their society. Folk songs are deeply influenced by social, cultural, and political institutions, and the physical environment of a community informs the sensibilities and expressions of its people. Poetic expressions thus serve as a medium through which individual experiences and societal value systems are interpreted. The artist exists within a society that both influences and is influenced by various socio-cultural and socio-political forces. As Warton observes, "Literature has peculiar merits of faithfully recording the features of the times of man in the society and of presenting the

most picturesque and expressive representation of manners and customs” (Warton, 1). These manners and customs are embedded in the traditions that poetry seeks to reflect.

Therefore, to fully understand and appreciate poetic expressions as part of a people’s socio-cultural system, it is essential to explore the cultural background from which they emerge. Cultural knowledge provides the foundational source material for this study. Trado-religious poetic expressions represent the attitudes and modes of communication shaped by a society’s economy, philosophy, and psychology. In this context masquerade (owu) songs are performed to mark various events. These songs serve multiple functions: they critique individuals, provide instruction, convey moral values, and entertain. Based on their thematic content, these songs can be broadly categorized into three groups: social, occupational, and religious. Their analysis as poetic expressions of cultural identity, rehabilitation, and preservation informs the focus of this study.

Furthermore, a review of relevant scholarship reveals how oral poetry has historically drawn upon their environments to reflect the way of life in their communities. The masquerade (Owu) songs, as a form of trado-religious poetry, are composed and rendered in the Ijaw language, which is spoken widely in Southern Nigeria. According to Alagoa, the Ijaw language forms a distinct group within the "Kwa-branch of the Niger-Congo family in the Niger Delta" (Alagoa, 43). Today, Ijaw speakers are found across Ondo, Delta, Rivers, Edo, Akwa Ibom, and Bayelsa States. A common language enables communication either through local dialects or an agreed standard form.

Despite dialectal variations, the cultural life of the Ijaw people remains largely homogeneous. This shared culture, belief system, and customs lend Owu songs—considered trado-religious poetry—a common meaning that reflects the cultural environment. This position aligns with the view that there exists “a subtle but quite defensible relationship between art and the landscape out of which it grows” (Okpewho, 47). For instance, if the surrounding vegetation is clean, the legends and songs derived from it will reflect that cleanness. As Raymond puts it, “culture is an essential revolution, the true interaction between patterns learned and created in the mind and patterns communicated and made in relationships, conventions, and institutions” (30). This study focuses primarily on the Kolokuma dialect of the Ijaw language, although the songs analyzed may span various Ijaw dialects.

The abundance of water bodies in the region has made fishing a central economic activity among the Ijaw people. Consequently, songs that reference marine life and fishing practices are prominent in masquerade (Owu)

performances. These songs are typically marked by a fast, almost martial rhythm, established by the steady marching and powerful voice of the lead singer. They are closely associated with masquerades (Owu) through myths about their origin and often explore diverse social themes.

Although many Owu songs reference water spirits, they vividly reflect the everyday realities of Ijaw life. Another widespread economic activity is canoe carving, which arises naturally from the region's aquatic terrain. The need for transportation across water led to the development of canoes as a principal means of communication between communities. Farming also exists but is generally subsistence in nature. The primary crops cultivated include plantain and water yam. Cassava is produced in small quantities due to frequent flooding. The relative accessibility of village settlements also contributed to the historically aggressive and warlike nature of the people. "The large number of linguistic sub-groupings can also be associated with the environment. Local dialects developed as a result of the difficulties in inter-group communication. The isolated nature of village settlements due to these communication challenges helped breed linguistic differences" (Sorgwe, 17).

2.0 Theoretical Framework

Numerous critical approaches have been applied to the study of African folk literature. For this study, the formalist and sociological approaches are deemed most appropriate for analyzing African verbal art forms. This choice is guided by the centrality of folk practices in African culture and their expression through language. Formalist critics argue that art derives its meaning, purpose, and value from its internal structure, independent of external contexts such as science or society. This approach is "more interested in analysis of form, structure of texture of language, rather than in the content" (Carter, 13). Formalism is both a methodology and a practical tool for literary analysis, focusing on how words, phrases, and images convey meaning. According to this view, literary works should be judged by how well they unify their components, with artistic meaning considered an intrinsic quality of the work itself.

In contrast, the sociological approach posits that "art's relationships to society are vitally important, and that the investigation of these relationships may organize and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art" (Scott, 126). Sociological critics examine the connections among the artist, the artwork, and the surrounding social environment, recognizing the implicit judgments embedded within these relationships. They view the relationship between literature and society as reciprocal. In this context, the present study explores masquerade (Owu)

songs as trado-religious poetry, analyzing both their formal characteristics and their function within

3.0 Classification of masquerade (Owu) Songs

In making a classification of Owu songs, it is a desire to use a functional approach. Also, it is the desire of the researcher to adopt Awoonors model of classification. The Owu songs as trado-religious poetry are divided into three broad groups which are social, occupational and religious songs.

3.1. Social Songs

The group classified as social songs comprises dirges, Praise/Abuse and war songs. The Owu songs of the Ijaw people, hinges on diverse themes. The dirge in the tradition of the Owu songs is philosophical; seeks the meaning and purpose of life; has expected tone of solemnity; and is portrayed through the miming of the characteristics of aquatic, forest and even domestic animals. It reveals the loneliness and sorrow of death, fear and uncertainty of what the next stage of the journey is, and finally a message. These features can be shown from the dirge that follows:

Dirges

Ye inegha

Obiri you mo You ghaeee
 Obiri you mo You ghaeee
 Obiri you you mo ongolosei
 Keni yenghibo arau fikpo erimoYoughae
 Keni daubo owei fekpo erimoYoughae
 Obiri you you mo ongolosei.

Translation:

No Endurance

Dog is crying and not crying
 Dog is crying and not crying
 Dog has cried until he is dehydrated
 He has seen the death of a half-sister and did not cry
 He has seen the death of half brother and did not cry.
 Dog has cried until he is dehydrated.

The dirge is a picturesque representation of the pains and sorrows of losing a brother or sister to the cold hands of death. The song presents dog as an animal that does not have a sense of endurance or patience. These features are portrayed through the song and the dog masquerade. Importance is attached to the words over the simple melody, which serves only as a vehicle to convey the basic ideas of the poetry. The melody of the song/poetic expressions gives a persistence that tends to relieve the audience of their burden of sorrows. For example, in the poetry, words such as “ongolosei” (dehydrate), “keniyengi” (the same mother), “kenidau” (the same father), reveal the sorrows and melodious effects to keep the audience’s attention to ease their burden.

3.2 Praise Songs

The largest sub-group under social songs is praise songs. Since it is obvious that, within the masquerade (Owu) song tradition, the transition from praise to abuse is swift. Praise singing is part of Owu song tradition. Bird observed that:

Speech itself is considered to contain this energy as denotes the expression: Nyamabe kumala. The energy of action is in speech. When a praise song is sung for someone, his energy to act is augmented thus forewing him to act.(98)

The spirits have their own laudatory epithets which refer to the characteristics of the masquerades. In addition, when the Owu or masquerades are to be called, the praise songs are sung one after another until they take possession of the performers. The praise songs are addressed to the spirits which the masks represent. “The bulk of their masquerades however represent manifestations of water spirits whose identity may be known, are possessed by the spirits they are representing” (Onuora quoted in Ogunbiye, 133). Therefore, the scope of the songs includes legends, mythology and history, which make the delivery ceremonial and elaborate. The legends, myth and history could be illustrated from the following song as an example of praise songs.

Owu Ebiye Ama

Beni perekpoebi
Kimi kpoebi
Isele bibi bein

Ahan Owu ebiye ama
Uh! Uh! Uh!

Translation:

Splendid Masquerade
King of the river is handsome
Handsome is the man too
A mouth full of red
Splendid is the masquerade
Uh! Uh! Uh!

3.3 (a) Abuse Songs

The song of abuse has been a regular feature of the Owu songs for a very long time. Some of its features include verbal agility, exaggeration, and elaborate use of imagery. The song of abuse becomes the material through which the singers and the drummers control the Owu when they are becoming too wild and stubborn. For example, in the following song recorded in Olobiri and Burudani communities; Yemobowei Igarando and Perekeme Appah both had the puppet heads for the masquerades “Ibeze” (Dolphin), was abused in the song that was sung for the masquerade performances. In different arena, people said, their fathers had originally invented the songs and it has now become the signature songs for the masquerade (Ibeze) dolphin.

Sei Owu

Kuei ba da meni_doo timi
Ibeze sei owu kuei ba da meni_doo timi
Owube sonuma, sonuma.
Ibeze seiowu kuei ba da meni_doo timi.

Translation:

Ugly Masquerade
(Ibeze) should kill and rest
Ibeze, the ugly masquerade should kill and rest
The masquerade in seven, seven (seven in group)
The masquerade (Ibeze) should kill and rest.

The expression is recognition of social experiences that cover the activities of the masquerade spirits. The masquerade is vested with spirit possession, use of proverbial language and prophecies. This is what J.P Clark calls “two vision”. “The

possessed person sees the invisible world and prophesies and like her Greek counterpart, Cassandra, she speaks in tongues, in a language scarcely understood by the other person”(Egbe,13).

3.4 War Songs

War songs are fast and brief. The songs are accompanied by a chorus of yells. The songs are calculated to frighten, in still the spirit of bravery into the heart, and recall the heroic deeds of killing a strong animal or fish in the past. Apart from the defiant voice of bravado and boasting in the songs ,a general deep sense of sorrow or happiness as a result of the encounter is anticipated .For example, in the following songs, that attitude is portrayed.

Lolo Ogidi

Lolo ogidio, lolo ogidiee

Eee Owu lolo ogidi

Aru sai na toru bein beriba pelebo tubaka

Owu lolo ogidi.

Translation:

Wild Machete

Wild machete, wild machete

The masquerade is a wild warrior

Who will cross the river with canoe loaded

To cut plantain?

The masquerade is a wild machete.

Lolo Buo

Ugu beriberi Owueee

Owueee Ugu beriya

Owu bii lolo buo timi tamu torufa

Owu bii lolo buo timi tamu torufa

Ofrima Owu, uguberiya

Owu bii lolo buo timi tamu torufa

Translation:

War like

Uguberi is a masquerade

The masquerade known as sawfish

The masquerade is war like and got lost

The masquerade is war like and got lost
Shark or is it sawfish?
The masquerade is war like and got lost

War songs are some times more of an expression and reinforcement of the martial strength of the masquerades rather than a direct incitement to the fight or a part of the battle itself. However, “ several of the poems involve glorification, the expression of high morale, and very often, refer to the value relating to the war” (Finnegan,28). The songs in Owu tradition are eulogies and a challenge to other masquerades for a fight. “Lolo Ogidi” means war like or wild machete;“ Aru sai” means a canoe loaded and “torufa” means lost in the river.“Bein” Means cross.“Bereiba-pele” means cut or harvest plantain. Thus, in this context, the word means to kill, since“ tubaka”(who are you? Is a challenge in Owu song tradition and the language of the people.

3.5. Occupational Songs

The group listed as occupational songs includes songs that are peculiar and specific to certain trades. These songs are identifiable by the lore and tradition. They are hunters’ song, fishermen’s songs and farmers’ songs. Example of occupational song is as follows:

Fani

Fani nanabo fani kan
Fani nanabo fani kan
Abadi torubo fani nanabo fani kan
Safuaghaye Biapele Ibado woooee
Owuoye Eferumoweni ibado woooee.

Translation:

Fence

The owner of the fence should destroy it
The owner of the fence should destroy it
In the ocean, fence owner should destroy it
I am not indebted; the masquerade (Biapele) has killed me
The masquerade named Eferumoweni has killed me.

3.6. Hunter's Songs

The hunter's songs contain imageries drawn from all aspects of forest life as a result of the core associated with the animals. The points can be illustrated from the Buffalo masquerade (Ogori) Song which has a long history. The masquerade is represented by an enormous carved wooden puppet head with great wooden horns and as a solitary figure. As it hums slowly into the arena, it is accompanied by this song:

Bou duo bo

Ogori bou bou duo bo

Ogori bou bou duo bo

Mani ileimo dein singhain kpo bunugha

Opu toru duo bo you kpo numugha

Bou bou duo bo.

Translation:

Come from Forest

Buffalo comes from the forest.

Buffalo comes from the forest.

It does not allow me to sleep in the night.

The big eye did not come from the physical realm.

It comes from the mythical realm.

The triumph and excitement of a successful kill and its aftermaths, the motions of pride and grief and the thrill of pursuit are made manifest through the Owu songs and macabre or frenetic dance steps. The hardship and dangers of hunting are not forgotten, and they too are common subjects. The diction of the hunting song is simple and direct. They involve the glorification of the Owu and not humans; an expression of the fact that hunters show callous bravery. Hunting activities and the remembrance of the hunting episodes are reflected upon at a time removed from the actual hunt. The songs are most frequently performed on public occasions. All members of owu cultural society or tradition, and not just the individual heroes, are involved in the performances. According to the 'hunter core', the condition of the Buffalo in the song refers to old bulls who stand alone, leave the herd and move independently through the forest to destroy plantains. The "Ogori", "Oputoru" and "Bou duobo" are verbal images that portray the size and power of this solitary animal. In singing this line, the lead singer stretches the

words “Ogori bou bou duobo” to achieve a sonorous effect. This particular kind of song is only heard during owu masquerade performances.

3.7 Fishermen’s Songs

The fishermen’s songs are sung in invoking the water-spirits (masquerades) and ceremonies pertaining to specific nets. These songs go beyond being just mere fishing songs. The songs are part of the cultural reportorial accumulation used in specific functions pertaining to the group calling. This point can be illustrated from the following song:

Isoun Walai

Aru fa bo Isoun tjeagha

Aru fa bo Isoun tjeagha

Isoun mo walaiee

Aru fa bo Isoun tieagha

Isoun mo walai

O’dada Isoun mo walai.

Translation:

Masquerade (Isoun) Spread

An individual without canoe cannot go fishing Isoun.

An individual without canoe cannot go fishing Isoun.

The masquerade should disperse.

An individual without canoe cannot go fishing Isoun.

The masquerades (Isounmo-Plural) should disperse.

Father, the masquerade should disperse.

The structure of the song is simple depending functionally on repetition. Each of the owu songs is brought to an end by a long drawn final note, followed by a long low note, not really a part of the song itself.

3.8 Farmer’s Songs

The farmer’s songs are common in the owu songs as trado-religious poetry of the Ijaw

Translation:

Sweet Potato

If you eat me and praise me.

You teach me to be wicked.
 Plant me as a good farmer.
 I will grow big like yam.
 If you throw me away, I will still grow well.
 If you hang me on the branch of a tree, you become enemy.

In singing the lines, it appears as if the farmer is communicating with the crops. The potato crop is telling the farmer how it should be handled. This singular feature correlates with what an elderly woman in the tradition; Ikitiba who forbids eating and planting of sweet potato has to say:

Ari ugborogha, kuku-nduku mee ugbelekumo
 Ari wa akina tinou gbanaba, barabi
 Numugha; Sweet potato said, I should not plant him.
 I hanged him on a branch of tree, didn't I know that, it is killing?

This is what she was told by the crop as if a human being was talking to her. Hence she stopped eating and planting potato crops. These farmers' songs exist in the Owu tradition because of the prominence given to the occupation.

3.9 Religious Songs

The third categories of songs are religious songs which include cult, healing, and oracular songs. The religious songs are ritual chants which dwells on lowly status; both physically and financially, but express thanks to the water-spirits. These groups of songs comment on the conditions like poverty, hunger, illness among others as conditions that are temporal. The songs are sung to musical accomplishment of drums and dance steps. Among the category of religious song are also cult songs. These songs are sung by a society of men who have killed men or dangerous animals such as leopard, tiger, lion, crocodile etc. and the songs are accompanied by rituals. The belief is that failure to perform chants, incantations and rituals is likely to cause havoc in the family. This fact can be illustrated from the song that follows:

Nama ba
 Irowo nama bame.
 Irowo keme bame.
 Zini ama ko bamo.
 Miebo miebo teiye.
 I-kpo mieda teiye.

Translation:**Kill Animal**

Praise, I killed an animal.

Praise, I killed a person

In different towns, I killed.

One is free if you have done it.

You should do and free yourself.

Ordinarily, an Ijaw man is allowed to say “Erowo”, but not “Erowo keme bame” (I killed a person). The ordinary people can only sing a refrain in the song “Okome”. This simple cult song is an ablution song to rid the members of the blood they have shed. “The burden of all this brought out in the song the victorious head-hunter is Timor dances to during his purification ceremony. We have offered the sacrifice to appease you. Your spirit may now rest and leave us at peace...” (Clark,9).

Healing Songs

The healing songs are sung to invoke the spirits and forces to parley and commune. These songs are sung in relation to prayers or request for good health. The words have both the mythical power of inducing confusion in the enemy and calling on the spirits to come into the midst of men. They are sung toward off sicknesses. “Requests, and prayers for good health, plentiful harvest, wisdom, especially children are made before the masquerade”(Emiemokumo 46). Here is a brief example:

Teme Ofin

Ofin yanrau_oyooou you (Kolokuma/Opokuma) people. The songs have a direct connection with agriculture. The occasions for the songs include clearing, hoeing, weeding, and harvesting. These points can be illustrated from the following song:

Kuku-nduku

Yeifideni imani_iseridaba

Ari itolumo bolou seidou
 Ebisi owei barani Igboro
 Enibi ari burubara dubadou
 Itangbeikpo, arisouni ebimongmi
 Enighakpo tinbarabo isolobo bei ndiokowei.
 Owu diri seimo maece.
 Ofin yanrau o you o you o.
 Owu diri seimo.
 Kala ind iowouo.

Translation:

Spiritual Sweep

Sweeper of the arena
 Douse charms in the masquerade arena
 Sweeper of the arena
 Cleanse the masquerade arena
 Where small fishes are confined

This song is a form of purification and sacrificial rite that results in the magical cleansing of the society of illnesses and evil deeds in the masquerade arena. It is a clear testimony that this song is sung to put the masquerades in good humor. The rituals usually follow immediately by a cleansing song. A beautifully attired masquerade sweeps the length and breadth of the town using a broom accompanied by song sixteen (16). The song is traditionally sung to douse any evil that awaits the masquerades and the entire community. In the words of Ekanpou, “the ritual consists of throwing garri mixed with red oil across the length and breadth of the town by a gorgeously dressed masquerade” (21). What is impressive is the allusive nature of the song. Symbolic expressions are used to hide the real meanings of the song. “Ofinyan-rau” means sweeper. Symbolically, it reveals a spiritual sweeping or cleansing of the arena and the people. “Owu diri seimo” means to neutralize charms done by evil men within and outside the masquerade arena. “Kalandiowou”, refers to small fishes.

Oracular Songs

This is the third group classified under religious songs. The oracular songs are generally rendered in a heightened voice since they are part

of magic and share some similarities with the cult songs. The songs are sung sometimes to rebuke the masquerades. In the process of singing, libation is poured to the masquerades and ancestors who are invoked to give succor to the living. This is illustrated below:

Owu ama

Owu ebiebiama
Owu kp_oebi
Kimi_kp_oebi
Orubiri seibu_o gbadiowuama
Tememo_meni_beni duobo
O, seidiowuama
Uh! Uh! Uh!

Translation:

The Masquerades

Masquerades are splendid
Masquerades are beautiful.
The human beings are good.
Orubiri Masquerades speaks through dance-steps.
The spirits should come from the river.
All the masquerades can dance perfectly.
Uh! Uh!Uh!

Isoun Walai

Owu mo_walaiyo
Isoun walai.
Owu mo_walaiyo.
Isoun mo_walai.

Translation:

A specie of small fishes (Isoun) should disperse.

The masquerades should disperse.
Small fishes (Isoun) should disperse.
The masquerades should disperse.
Small fishes should disperse.

The language of this song is incantatory and invocative. The quality of the song manifests in the economy of the words used in expressing the origin of the owu tradition of the Ijaw people. They are simple incantations used in nearly all owu songs invoking and cleansing of the arena before and after the performance. Song eighteen (18) is a special song, sung to denote the end of performance. This is mostly recited during performance and the last line is interrupted with characteristic yells from the singers to signify agreement and emphasis.

Conclusion

The study of Owu songs through both formalist and sociological lenses has revealed their rich literary and cultural significance. As trado-religious poetry, the songs are not only artistic expressions of language and form but also powerful conveyors of communal values, beliefs, and practices. The classification into social, occupational, and religious categories provides a functional understanding of the diverse roles these songs play within the Owu community. The formalist approach has underscored the structural beauty and linguistic craftsmanship embedded in the songs, while the sociological perspective has illuminated their role in shaping and reflecting social realities. Together, these approaches affirm that African oral traditions, such as Owu songs, deserve scholarly attention both as literary artifacts and as social documents that continue to shape cultural identity.

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