

**A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE OWHE PEOPLE
1896 – 1962.**

BY

OWHEFERE, OGHAE MATTHEW

**DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY,
ABRAKA.**

OCTOBER, 2015.

TITLE PAGE

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE OWHE PEOPLE, 1896 – 1962.

BY

**OWHEFERE, OGHAE MATTHEW
MAT. NO.: PG/07/08/134160**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POST
GRADUATE STUDIES, FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF ARTS (M.A)
DEGREE IN HISTORY OF THE DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY,
ABRAKA, NIGERIA.**

OCTOBER, 2015.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr. Matthew Oghale Owhefere in the Department of History and International Studies, Delta State University, Abraka- Nigeria.

Prof. (Mrs.) Edith Osiruemu Odeka
Supervisor.

Date

Prof. (Mrs.) Edith Osiruemu-Odeka
Head of Department

Date

DEDICATION

To my mother, Mrs. Esther Ariojaduigho Owhefere-Etor, who toiled to give me Western Education: But for her, I could not have gone to school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to appreciate Jehovah, not only for the gift of life but for his infinite mercies during the course of this work. My thanks also go to Professor (Mrs) Edith Odeka who supervised this work, Dr. Emmanuel, N. Mordi who advised and encouraged me to enroll for the Masters Degree Programme and Dr. Chukwemeka Ojieh who kept assuring me that it is achievable.

I am thankful to Professor Obaro Ikime for provoking a historical study on the Isoko People. His works remain source materials to researchers on Isoko history. I am equally full of thanks to Mr. Alfred Edigbe Onosakponome(Late), and Dr. Uwomano Benjamin Okpevra from whom I got some relevant secondary source and also to the family of late Chief Oghale Godson Ononeme for allowing me to use his library.

I am highly indebted to Dr. Jude Asenime for finding time to proof read and restructured this work. To Mr. Paul Opone who always encouraged me never to give up on the programme, Dr. Ebere Richard Adigbuo for his constructive criticism of the work at the proposal stage(this of course has made the work better) and the other Lecturers and Staff of the Department I say thank you. I express my profound gratitude to all those I interviewed, too numerous to mention for their co-operation during the interviews.

My indebtedness to my wife and children is immeasurable for their encouragement and prayers. Though it endured, it has "come to pass".

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
Certification-		-	-	--	-	-	-	-	-	ii
Declaration-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Dedication-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Acknowledgement-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
Abstract-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vi
Table of Content-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vii
List of Tables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the study-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Statement of the problem-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Aims/objectives of the study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Scope of the study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Significance of the study-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Limitations of the study-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 7

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS AND METHODS

Location of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
The History of the Area	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
An Overview of the Traditions of Origin of the Owhe People	-	-						20
The Age Grade System	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Type of Survey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
Data Collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28

CHAPTER FOUR: OWHE: FROM PRE-COLONIAL TIMES TO AD 1962 30

Pre-colonial Political Structure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
The Pre-Colonial Judicial System-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
The Centralized System of Government-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
The Osewho-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
The Functions of the Osewho-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
The Office of the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
Legibility and the Enthronement of the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo)	-	-						37

Functions of the Odio-Edhe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38
An overview of the Offices of the Osewho and the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo)-								39
Owhe under Colonial Rule (1896-1926)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41
The Native Court System-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
The British Punitive Expedition of 1911 to Isoko	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
The Warrant chiefs-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	51
The Court Clerks and the Court Messengers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52
Functions of the Native Courts-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53
Grievances against the Native Court System-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
Administrative Changes and Reforms 1927-1947	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55
Direct Taxation of 1927-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55
Causes of the Anti-Tax Riot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55
The Anti-Tax Riot-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57
The Re-Organization of the 1930s and 1940s-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59
The Re-Organizations-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59
Native Court Reforms of 1956-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63
Customary Court Law 1957	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
Party Politics In Owhe Clan 1950-1962-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
The Local Government Law of 1952-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65
The Isoko District Council-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66
The Succession Dispute and the Emergence of the First Government								
Recognized Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) of Owhe Clan in 1962	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68
Basis for the Contest of Odiologbo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	69
Effects of British Administration and Party Politics on the Political History of the Owhe People	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Conclusion-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	74
Contribution to Knowledge	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
Recommendation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
References	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77
Appendixes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	86
List of Abbreviations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	101

LIST OF TABLES

Table I: A Comparative Language Chart of English, Benin (Edo) and Isoko	21
Table II: Tax Collected from some Isoko Clans, 1931 -1932- - -	85
Table III: Number of Cases in Isoko Reorganized Area 1932 - -	85
Table IV: Comparative Revenue Before and After Reorganization - -	85

LIST OF APPENDIX

Appendix A: Treaty with the Chiefs of Owhe-	-	-	-	-	86-88
Appendix B: Owhe Clan Council, 1931	-	-	-	-	89
Appendix C: Iluelogbo (now Owhologbo) Village Council, 1931	-	-			90
Appendix D: Uruovo (now Otor-Owhe) Village Council, 1931	-	-			91-92
Appendix E: Achiewhe (Akiewhe)	-	-	-	-	93
Appendix F: Wards in Isoko District Council Area 1955-1960-	-	-			94
Appendix G: List of President and Councilors in Isoko District Council 1956					95
Appendix H: Court Clerks Shared to Isoko in 1955	-	-	-	-	96
Appendix I: List of Customary Court Members, 1958-	-	-	-	-	97
Appendix J: List of Punitive Expeditions and Military Patrols to Isoko Towns					98
Appendix K: H.R.H. Ogbaifo Agbroje-	-	-	-	-	99
Appendix L: H.R.H Romanus Ejirememe Inana-	-	-	-	-	100
List of Abbreviations	-	-	-	-	101

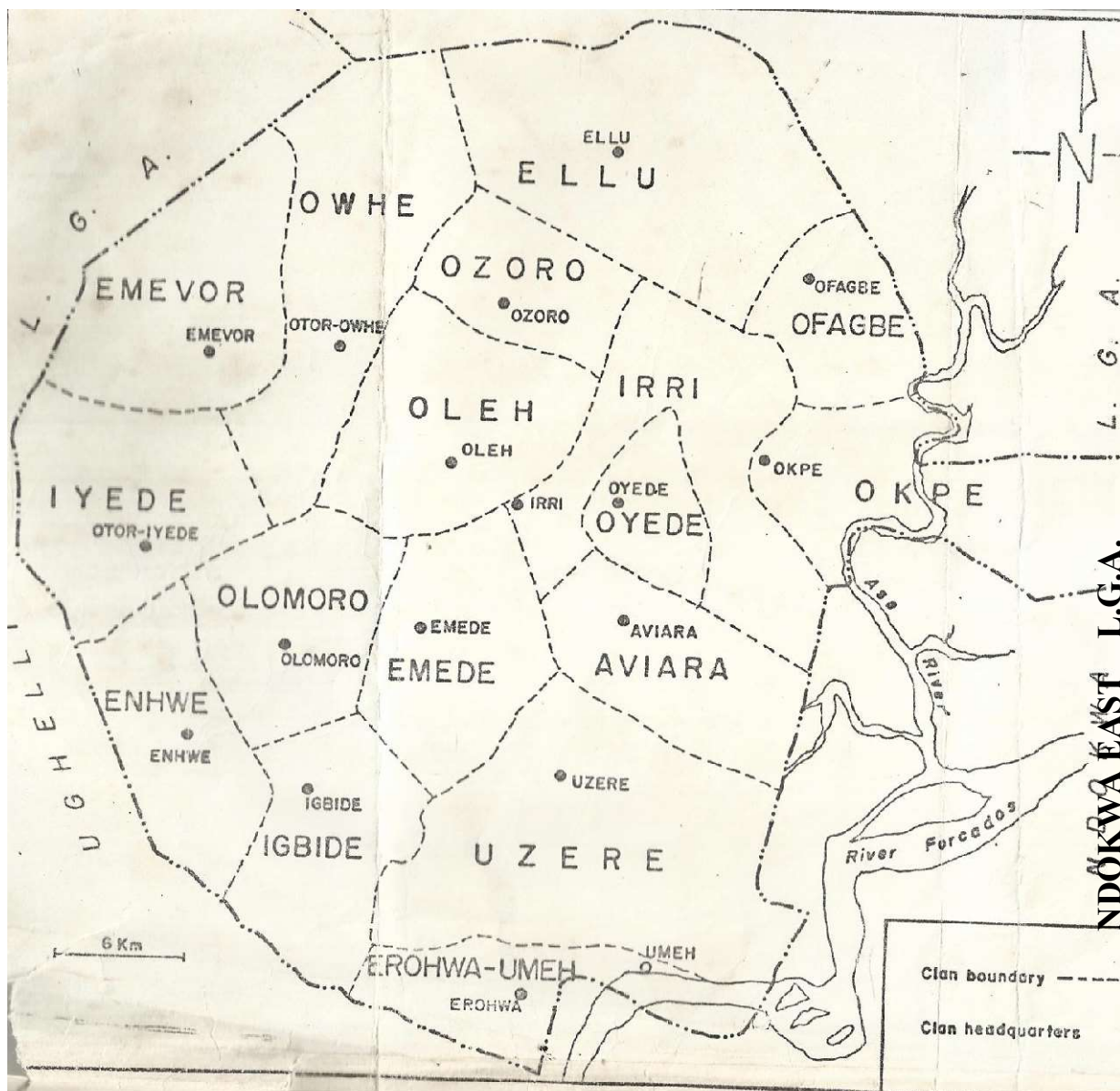
ABSTRACT

This work is a study of the socio-political system of the Owhe people from AD 1896 to AD 1962. In recent years, there has been a crisis of leadership controversy between the office of the Osewho and that of the Odiologbo in Owhe clan. This leadership controversy is blamed on the interference of the colonial government on the traditional political institution of the Owhe people. Pertinently, this work examines the precolonial traditional political system and political structure as necessary prelude to ascertain the changes, alteration, and the challenges it underwent during our period of study. Investigation into the Owhe socio-political structure reveals that the leadership controversy is engendered by the imposition of colonial administration through the instrumentality of the Native Court System and the introduction of party politics into the socio-political life of the people. This largely more than any other factor, subverted the indigenous political organization. This seems to have provoked the rivalry, between the office of the Osewho and that of the Odionlogbo as most of the relevant observable in the smaller politics of the pre-colonial time has disappeared in the colonial arrangement. The research methodology used for this work includes the narrative, descriptive and analytical methods. Primary sources such as archival materials and oral interviews were conducted, as well as secondary sources were subjected to the above-mentioned methodology.

MAP OF ISOKO NORTH AND SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

NDOKWA WEST L.G.A.

UGHELLI NORTH L.G.A.



SOURCE: Isoko North Local Council Ozoro, 2014.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Over time, man has been confronted with the problem of knowing whom he is, how he has come to be where he is, what factors have affected and influenced his situation, his identity and his association. Consequently, man is constantly challenged to find solution to these situations. This can only be achieved through the study of his past. As Sir Sidney Philipson and Chief Simeon Adebo, in (Olaniyan,2003: xv) puts it “...Every situation has its root in the past...the past survives in the present, the present is indeed the past undergoing modification”. Therefore, “a study of history is essentially a study of change in society overtime” (Ikime,2006: 151).

It is against the above backdrop that a study of the political history of the Owhe clan of the Isoko ethnic nationality in the Western Niger Delta is seen essentially as a study of the changing patterns in their socio-political organization overtime. The Owhe people evolved their own political system, which was initially gerontocratic in nature. The society was stratified into various age-grades called *Itu*, which were saddled with specific responsibilities.

In this precolonial arrangement, the highest among the age-grades was the Edio (the elders) age-grade. This age-grade was the highest decision making body in the society and it was headed by the Odio (the eldest or oldest man), who in consultation with the other members of the Edio age-grade ruled over the people. The Oge / Ivrawha (Youth) age-grade executed the decisions taken by this age-grade while the Ekpako (men) age- grade supervised them.

At a point in their history, the Owhe people opted for a more centralized system of government, perhaps as a response to societal needs and aspirations. This new political system had the Osewho and the Odio-Edhe, which metamorphosed into the Odiologbo at the centre of the political affairs. In today Owhe, the Odiologbo an equivalent of an Ovie or king is the clan head and the traditional ruler, while the Osewho functions as the Kingmaker. However, leadership controversy has been thrown up between the Osewho and the Odiologbo as to who should be the head of the centralized system of government at its inception. Various schools of thought have emerged each postulating various claims of paramountcy. The Osewho school of thought maintains that the title of Osewho was conferred on one Osue of Iluelogbo, (now Owhelogbo) one of the communities that make up the Owhe clan, by an Oba of Benin to rule over the Owhe people. The power of the

Osewho was usurped later due to Osewho's old age and the imposition of colonial administration in the area (Kolo, 2008). The Odiologbo school of thought on the other hand argues that the centralized system of government was never stimulated from outside neither was there any conferment of any title that suggests paramountcy on any Owhe person by an Oba of Benin. This school posits that the Owhe people evolved their own system of government in response to the challenges and aspirations of the time and the Odiologbo was the head of government (oral interview with Romanus Inana, 2013).

The British incursion into Owhe clan could be traced to 1896, when a treaty of protection was signed between the British officers and some Owhe chiefs (Ikime, 1972: 155). This was suppose to be a trade protection treaty, which was later interpreted to be a total surrender of the people's rights, privileges and sovereignty to the British officials. Although the Owhe people detested of it they had not what it takes to sustain a stiff resistance. From this moment henceforth, the political history of Owhe became a story of the struggle between the indigenous political system and the colonial political administration, which was imposed on the Owhe people in the form of the Native Court System. The said treaty of protection brought Owhe clan and by extension, the whole of Isokoland under British sphere of influence (Ikime, 1972: 155). The British subsequently established the Native Court System of government in the area. The Native Court was judicial and administrative in nature.

The Native Court Ordinance of 1901 was the legal instrument that established the Native Court. The ordinance forbade the Edio (Elders) council from arbitrating and adjudicating (C.O. 558/1, 1901). The Owhe and the other Isoko people who were therefore unwilling to submit to the British authority resented this vexed issue. At this time, the Owhe people attended court at Kwale, Iyede, and Ase as there was no Native Court in Owhe. The disobedience of the Owhe people to the British constituted authority provoked the British punitive expedition on Owhe in 1911 (Ononeme, 1969: 17). Apart from the vexatious ordinance of 1901, the high handedness and the over bearing attitude of the court officials was another reason for the resentment of the Owhe people towards the Native Court System of government (Hubbard, 1948: 74, N.A.I. C.S.O 26/2. 11857, Vol. IV, 1906, also Ughelli papers file 26/1919). However, British rule was firmly established in Owhe after the punitive expeditions of 1911 and 1914, and the establishment of Native Court in Owhe. The people were thus coerced into accepting the alien rule, and they started taking their cases to the Native Court for hearing. The people's will was therefore suppressed; and the traditional leadership subverted. As it were there was no other instance of open rebellion in the area until that of 1927.

Trouble broke out again in Owhe in 1927, when direct adult taxation, (the British government mechanism of generating fund internally) was extended to the Delta (Warri) Province (N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2,11857.Vol. V, 1927). The protest that accompanied this tax regime is generally referred to as the Anti-Tax Riot. The manner in which the protest was coordinated beat the imagination of the British. This compelled Rutherford, the British officer incharge of the province to order an investigation on the Anti-Tax Riot. The investigation revealed that the indigenous political structure was still powerful, effective, and influential on the people. Consequently, the power of the pre-colonial political organization was restored but to operate in the dictates of the British administration. In the re-organization that followed in the 1930s and 1940s, traditional heads were appointed as members of the Native Authority. This was to a great measure, a revival of the pre-colonial political organization.

As Nigeria marched towards political independence, and the implementation of the Macpherson constitution, there was the need for elected representation of the people both at the federal and at the local levels. In this regard, some Owhe indigenes were elected into the Isoko District Council and at the Regional levels on political parties' platforms. The dominant political party in Owhe at this time was the Action Group (A.G) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C). As usually, competition brought rivalry, thus, between 1955 and 1962, Owhe witnessed politics of bitterness and rivalry. The clan was divided along the lines of political parties, loyalty was shifted from the people to political parties and party men, support, and empowerment was no longer based on laid down procedures and merit but on political lineage. This new order of things adversely affected the indigenous political system of Owhe clan (CH.47/2,1968). The climax of this political rivalry was the politicization of the Odio-Edhe title and the promotion of the succession dispute into the Odio-Edhe position between Ogbaifo Agbroje and Okpewho Atunu in 1958. This succession dispute was however given a political resolution in 1962, when Ogbaifo Agbroje was recognized as the Odiologbo of Owhe by the Western Nigeria Regional Government (Western Nigeria Gazette, No.23, Vol.11,1962).

From the forgoing, it become imperative to study the political history of Owhe clan in the period under review, 1896 -1962 to ascertain the socio-political melodrama that engendered the crisi of relevance and rivalry in the post colonial political institution of the Owhe people and the attendant implication for the future of the people. There may have been a noticeable element of internal rivalry and subversion in the political hierarchy of the Owhe people, much of the changes and challenges were colonial creations. To this end, one can not over emphasize the dislocation and erosion colonialism inflicted on the socio-

political life of the Owhe people. As Olaniyan puts it “Indeed colonialism seriously subverted the political life of the people thereby making a revert to the pre-colonial arrangement at best a tantalizing possibility” (Olaniyan, 2003:XV). Although a profound awareness of the political history of the Owhe people may not necessarily revert to the pre-colonial political arrangement, it is hoped that it would help to mould human attitude and human action (J.H. Plumb, in Ikime,2006:144).

Structurally, this work has five chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction this consist the background to the study, the statement of the problem/justification of the work, scope of the study and limitation to the study. Chapter Two of the work deals with review of related literature. This exposed this researcher to the related works of earlier researchers to identify the gap to be filled. In chapter Three, there is the location of the study; and the history of the area. It includes the type of survey carried out, how the data were monitored, collected, and analysed, or the nature of sources: both primary and secondary and how they were collected. The materials and the methodology with which this work was carried out is discussed. Chapter Four is the main body of the work. This chapter using the pre-colonial political organization as a necessary prelude to the study, the socio-political organization of the Owhe people is examined with a focus on the changes and alteration it under went between AD 1896 to AD1962. Chapter Five is the conclusion, which deals with the findings and recommendation, contribution to knowledge and conclusion.

Statement of the Problem

The Odiologbo and the Osewho are the two major prominent position in the political organogram in Owhe political organization. The Odiologbo as we have it today is the head of the structure while the Osewho is the king maker (He crowns the Odiologbo). Both personalities complement each other. Unfortunately, the synergy between the duo has collapsed consequent upon the claim that the Osewho was the paramount ruler of the Owhe people before his power was usurped

Two schools of thought have emerged, the first holds that the title of Osewho was confirmed on one Osue of Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) by the Oba of Benin to rule the Owhe people, but his office and powers were usurped by the Odio-Edhe (now Odiologbo) during the period of colonial rule. The second school of thought argues that the Owhe people evolved their own political system without external stimuli and the Odiologbo was the head. This controversy portends great danger for the peaceful coexistence of the clan, as the Owhelogbo community has requested the creation of an autonomous Owhelogbo clan from the extant Owhe clan, where the Osewho can reign.

This leadership controversy and the 1957 succession dispute erupted because there is paucity of literature on the socio-political organization of the Owhe people. The desire therefore, for a detailed study on the evolution of the socio-political organization, the alterations, and changes it had undergone over the years is imperative and thus, makes this work compelling.

Aims/Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research is to identify the socio- political organization of the Owhe people and the alterations and changes it had undergone over time. The overall objective of this work is to provide a basis for the understanding of Owhe political history.

The work provides a source material to future researchers on Owhe history.

This work also serve as a reference for the eligibility and the procedure for the enthronement of the Odiologbo.

This work emphasizes the ties between all the communities in the clan with a view to promoting the spirit of oneness and peaceful co-existence.

Scope of the Study

This work is a study of the political history of Owhe people from AD 1896, when the British signed a treaty of protection with Owhe people, to AD 1962, when the Odiogbo (now Odiologbo) was recognized by the Western Regional Government of Nigeria vide the Western Nigeria Gazette Vol. II No. 23 of 29th, march, 1962.

It focuses on its socio-political organization and changes over time. As a necessary prelude to this study, the traditions of origin and the socio-political organization of the people in pre-colonial times are examined, with a view to highlighting the fundamentals of the evolution of the political system of Owhe clan during this period.

Significance of Study

This work provides a new source material for future researchers on the political history of Owhe. This work puts Owhe history in another perspective as it promotes understanding and emphasizing the bond that exist and so as to reduce rancour among the Owhe people.

Limitation of Study

A study of this nature can not be without challenges and limitations. Some of such limitations are the hoarding, distortion and the interpolation of information and issues by

the respondents. It is a truism that most Africans record historical events in their memories and these cannot be recalled accurately after a long period, given that most of the elders we have today were born during the colonial era. It is also very difficult to periodize oral evidence. Most historical events are rather narrated in a holistic manner with out recourse to periods. The existing intelligence report is also problematic as some issues were misrepresented and reports were written from certain perspectives geared towards specific interests and authorities. There was also the problem of reconciling claims in some secondary sources with oral claims from respondents. In the face of these limitations, this researcher collected his information, sieved them, analyzed, and reconciled them to make this work an interesting reading.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature on Owhe history is still very scanty; however, some related works are reviewed below. Hubbard's *Sobo of the Niger Delta*, groups Owhe among the Sobo clan who trace their origin to the ancient Benin kingdom (Hubbard 1948:131). He associates the foundation of the Owhe clan to refugees from the ancient Benin kingdom thus:

During the seventeenth century, the empire of Benin was at a very low ebb and human sacrifice and other atrocities had been instituted. In consequence, many people left the city in order to escape being sacrificed. In the first half of this century, a man called Owhe therefore left Benin with his family and journeyed south. The name of his four sons are known, they are Uruovo, Uruogbe, Urutato and Ellu (Hubbard, 1948:51, 74).

Hubbard adds that Owhe people had no central government, the clan was the social unit and government was in the hands of the elders (Edio). With this arrangement, the population of the clan was divided into four major age grades namely: young boys (Emaha), the youth (Ivrawha/Ogeh), Ekpako (men) and the elders (Edio) age grades. He claims that this indigenous system of government was sub-verted by the British who administered the area. The Owhe people were resentful of the Native Court system because of the corruption and the oppression of the Warrant Chiefs and other Native Court Officials who were "men of no standing in the clan".

This work misrepresents the gender and identity of Owhe, the founder of the clan was. The work also misrepresents the numbers of Owhe's children as well as the relationship between Ellu and Akiewhe. All these misrepresentations needed to be connected. The work fails to give any account of the quasi-centralized system of government, which was headed by the Osewho and the Odio-Edhe.

The misrepresentations in Hubbard's work could be traced to his source of information. The Edio who were the custodians of the traditions and customs refused to give him (Hubbard), the required information so, he commissioned the C.M.S church agent to source for information for him. He admits that the information his church agent, B.P. Apena gave to him about the tradition of origin of the clan has certain gaps and Hiatuses (Hubbard, 1948:74-76).

Ikime's (1972), work on the Isoko people, of which Owhe is a part seems to corroborate Hubbard's claim regarding the traditions of origin of Owhe clan. He states that

a Benin refugee called Owhe, who named the settlement after himself, founded the clan. In his account, Ikime maintains that:

Owhe, the founder of the clan, was driven from Benin by an Oba who was jealous of Owhe's wealth or power. Owhe and his entourage moved off until they came to a place they called Owhe – Otor (land of Owhe), near Iyede where they settled for a long time ... some claim that Owe had four sons – Uruovo, Uruogbe, Akiewe and Ellu... (Ikime, 1972:10).

Ikime also informs us that Owhe clan, like other Isoko clans in the pre-colonial times operated a socio-political system of government based on age-grade (Itu) which was headed by the Itu Edio (elders). The government was run by consultation among the elders and the consultative process gave the government its essential conciliate nature. This communal system of government was altered with the establishment of the British administration in the area in form of the Native Court (Ikime, 1972: 28-30,51). The work depends more on Hubbard's work reviewed above as its source materials therefore, Hubbard's misrepresentations identified above reflect in this work. Secondly, the work was done in a hurry as the writer was under pressure from the Isoko elites who wanted him to publish a history of the Isoko people. (Ikime, 1972:xii). This may have affected the quality of the investigation, as it would seem much time was not devoted for the research.

In another work, Ikime (1965), affirms that the Isoko people did not acknowledge a centralized system of authority. Power was not concentrated in the hands of one person. Government was through consultation among the elders and the dispensation of justice was a corporate affair. He avers that government and justice later became an affair of the few as the Native Courts that were established made it illegal for any other body to exercise any form of authority. The codes of laws were gradually changed (Ikime, 1965:285-298). Ikime, is not explicit on the roles of the political personalities of the Odiologbo and the Osewho, and whom among the duo the head of the political structure was. For example, he writes, "since there was no Ovie in Owhe and Emevor clans, the Odiologbo was the head and was the same person as the Osewho" (Ikime, 1965:187). This of course was not the practice in Owhe clan.

Ikime (1980), in his study of the people and kingdoms of the Delta Province, identified six groups; the Aboh, the Ukwuani, the Urhobo, the Isoko, the Ijaw and the Itsekiri as the inhabitants of the area. He opines that while some of these people may have originated from Benin, some others may have originated from Ibo while a few others may have emerged from the fusion of Benin and Ibo elements. He states that all groups that

inhabit the Delta Province, save the Aboh and the Itsekiri, who had organized kingdoms, had socio-political institution anchored on the age-grade system. This system of government according to him collapsed in the face of imperialism and this made the history of these people so different from the centuries before. This work treats the Isoko in generic terms and thus, cannot be regarded as a study on the Owhe people per se.

Bradbury's (1964) work on the *Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South- Western Nigeria* says "Owhe was founded from Benin by people who first settled at Igbide then on Iyede land before moving to their present site." He also states that the socio-political organization of the Owhe people was the age grade system. Of all the age grades, the Edio age grade or society was the highest. This was the decision-taking cadre and the Odiologbo who was the senior member of the group headed it: seniority was determined by the time of initiation into the society. He informs us that every Odiologbo was taken to the Osewho for installation. The Osewho while installing him presented him with the ovo sticks which represent the spirits of the dead edio. After the installation, the Odiologbo becomes the priest of the collective ancestors of the community. He sacrificed first during the annual ancestors sacrifices to the ancestors before each man can sacrifice to his individual ancestor. This work though touches an aspect of Owhe history can not be accepted as a detailed work on the Owhe people. The scanty presentation of his work suggests that a detailed research was not carried out on the subject matter. Bradbury confessed not have carried out any fieldwork outside Benin, hence Ikime cautions that those who use this source need to remember this drawback (Ikime, 2006:64).

Foster (1969), study on Isoko in the pre-twentieth century and its later growth, holds that the people originated from Benin and their socio-political organization was the age grade system. He claims that the Edio society was the highest decision taking body and the Odiologbo headed it. The Osewho according to him was the eldest male in the clan. He was a member of the clan council whether he was a member of the Edio society or not. In what looks contradictory, he submits that either the Odiologbo or the Osewho or the Ovie was the head of the clan council depending on the practice in the clan, and that the "Osewho and the Odiologbo were the same person, but if not, the Osewho in theory was the head, and council meetings were always held in his compound". The account in this work can not be accepted wholesale as its focus was not on Owhe.

Imonikebe's work attempts an account of the origin of Owhe clan. Like the early researchers, he also associates the origin of the clan to the ancient Benin kingdom. He asserts that after the foundation of Owhe, at a point in time, the need to have a king arose and Osue led a delegation of Owhe people to the Oba of Benin to confer the title of an

Ovie on him. The Oba instead conferred the title of Osewho, which means “the father of the town” on him, and he was thus regarded as the head of Owhe clan. He ruled over the clan until his subordinate usurped his power. (Imonikebe, 1974:16). The focus of this work was on Iluelogbo (Owhelogbo) community and not the whole of Owhe clan. As such, it can not be regarded as a detailed work on Owhe clan. Moreso, the sources of information were not cited in the work for verification.

Ononeme (1969)'s work on the punitive expeditin to Isoko in 1911 is basically on the confrontation between the pre-colonial Isoko Code of Laws and that of the British which culminated into the Punitive expedition in Isokoland. It never went beyond that theme for the Isoko in general and left the political history of Owhe aside.

Onosakponome's study on the Isoko people posits that the Isoko people have evolved their own political system before colonial rule. He claims that government during the pre-colonial times was in the hands of the elders (Edio) and the head of Owhe clan was designated as “Oodio-Edhe” (Onosakponome, 1987:19,59). He states further that Owhe people did not simply comply with a treaty of protection with the British in 1896, and that British administration was firmly established there after the British punitive expedition to Owhe in 1911. This new form of government stripped the elders of the powers and authority to govern and adjudicate (Onosakponome, 1987:70-78). He informs us that the traditional government was revived after the anti tax riot. The reforms of the 1930s and the 1940s established the village and clan councils which were presided over by the Odiokauru (the eldest man in the village) and the clan head respectively (Onosakponome, 1987:90,93). He submits that colonial rule affected the lives of the people of Owhe clan in all ramifications. Although this work discusses the pre-colonial socio-political organization of Isoko clans, it fails to tell us about the evolution and the sustenance of the centralized system of government that was later practiced by the Owhe people. Moreso, the scope of study goes beyond Owhe clan; as such, it cannot be seen as a detailed study on Owhe clan.

A feature that permeates the traditions of origin and migration among the Isoko people is the claim to early settlement. Patently, Egbare in his study on the Emede clan claims that at a point in time Eweri; the founder of Emede squatted the Owhe people at Uruowhe in Enuto quarters, in Emede. The cruelty of Eweri to the Owhe people compelled them to move out of Emede to found their present abode (Egbare, 1985:21). In what seems like a contradiction of the above claim, Egbare states that some Emede people in search of a greener pasture left Emede to found settlements like Iyede, Owhe, Emevor, and Imode. He used his work to announce Emede military might, exploits and dominance over other Isoko clans (Egbare 1985:10). Egbare's work fails to establish the link between Owhe and

Emede. He did not seem to have collected information from the other Isoko clans mentioned in the work. He may have relied solely and wholly on the information he got from Emede indigenes.

Similarly, Ejovi (2006) writing on Iyede, tries to establish Iyede supremacy and lordship over the Owhe people (Ejovi, 2006:1-2). He contends that Iyede is the second oldest clan in Isoko next to Erowha and the oldest kingdom in Isokoland (Ejovi 2006:20). He also claims that. “The people of this (Iyede) kingdom at a time included those of present Owhe and Emevor” and that the cruelty of Ovie Atua led to the disintegration of the kingdom (Ejovi, 2006:3).

Ejovi claims that Iyede who was one of the six brothers that escaped the cruelty of the Oba of Benin founded Iyede. At a point, his brothers left their settlements to join him at Iyede. He posits that Emevor was given Uzobe quarters to settle while Owhe was given a street named after him to settle. In another instance, he avers that Owhe and Emevor were the original inhabitants of Iyede (Ejovi, 2006:9). This seems a contradiction of his former claim that Owhe and Emevor left their settlements to join Iyede and was given Owhe and Uzobe quarters to settle respectively. Caught in the webs of his contradictory claims, he appeals to his readers to accept his accounts as a matter of belief as founding personalities and witnesses are dead (Ejovi 2006:9). One limitation of this work is that there are missing links between events narrated and the oral traditions of origin of Owhe. These needed to be reconciled and re-appraised.

Okolugbo (2004) in his study on the Ukwuani and Ndosumili People of the Niger Delta focuses on the traditions of origin of the people, their pre-colonial socio-political institution to the advent of colonial rule up to 1960. He tells us of the clash between the traditional system of government and the forces of imperialism, and the risings it generated and how the British force summarily crushed such risings. Although this work reveals some aspect of inter group relations between the Ukwuani people of Abbi and Owhe, it is basically not a study on the Owhe people.

Anene’s (1966) work examines the traditional political structure of the people of southern Nigeria on one hand and the British new political order on the other hand. He submits that the Native Court System of government that was introduced into Southern Nigeria by the British did not only overthrow the indigenous authority and consolidated British rule but also gave rise to a new crop of leadership.

Isichei (1973), writing on the relationship between the Ibos and the Europeans, explains the pattern of the relationship of the Ibo culture and the the Europeans presence, the introduction of colonial administration, the response of the Ibos to imperialism as well

as the effects of colonialism on the Ibo society up to 1906. Although this work is a related literature to this research, its focus was not on the Owhe people.

The literature reviewed above reveals that there are fallacies and misconceptions in the traditions of origin of Owhe. Very little has been written on the evolution of the socio-political system of the Owhe people and the changes it has undergone over the years. This therefore calls for a detailed study of the political history of the Owhe people.

CHAPTER THREE MATERIALS AND METHODS

Location of the Study:

Owhe clan is one of the nineteen clans that constitute the Isoko ethnic nationality. Geographically, they inhabit the area enclosed (roughly) between longitudes 6°5 and 6° 25 East and latitude 5°15 and 5°40 North (Ikime 1972), in what is today Isoko North Local Government Area of Delta state of Nigeria. The clan is inhabited by a people who claim a descent through a known line to a common ancestor who is probably the founder of the clan (Nana, 1999, in Okpevra, 2014). Owhe clan is made up of ten communities namely; Owhelogbo (formerly Iluelogbo), Otor-Owhe (formerly Uruovo), Akiewhe (also spelt as Achiewhe), Otibio and Erawha. Others are Aziaro, Eniagbedhi, Canaan, Otie, and Edhomoko-Okpesia. Owhe clan has three basic Quarters called *Iru*. These are, Uruogbe, which refers to Owhelogbo, Uruovo, which refers to Otor-Owhe, and Uruthatho, which refers to Akiewhe. These Iru (Quarters) are named after the three sons Ogbe, Ovo, and Uthatho respectively, of the founder of the clan. The remaining communities listed above are offshoots of these three. Edhomoko-Okpesia is said to be an offshoot of Owhelogbo, Eniagbedhi is from Akiewhe while Otibio, Aziaro, Erawha and Otie are offshoots of Otor-Owhe (Otor-Owhe and its offshoots are referred to as *Uruovo du eki*. Each of the ten communities has its own socio-political organization headed by the Odiokaro who is the oldest man in the community. The communities are allowed to develop at their own pace; only very serious matters are referred to the central.

Owhe clan is bounded in the North by Abbi in present day Ndokwa West Local Government Area, in the North West by Orogun in the now Ughelli North Local Government Area, and in the South by Oleh and Olomoro in Isoko South Local Government Area. It also shares boundary in the West by Emevor, in the South West by Iyede and in the East by Ozoro in the now Isoko North Local Government of Delta State, Nigeria (N.A.I. C.S.O. 26:27989:15). Oil palm trees, raffia palm trees, Mahogany, Obeche, and iron wood trees dominate its vegetation. The outstanding physical feature of the clan is the swamp system- the Owhe Swamp System, roughly NNE and SSW (Hubbard, 1948:63-64).

A study of the Isoko people is better appreciated when done within the context of the various clans, for the Isoko are organized into clans, hence this study of the Owhe clan. The clan here referred to in some cases may consist of a number of villages. In such a situation, there are often two levels of government; that of the village and that of the

corporate group i.e. the clan. In other words the basic principle of socio – political organization among the different clans could be referred to as kinship and descent. Thus, a clan is made up of people of a common descent. As Hubbard (1948) notes, “this clan organization is reminiscent of the Scottish clan, the members all belong to one great family descended in the male line from a common ancestor who lived in the remote past.”

However, within the context of the Isoko people, a clan may be defined as: “a socio-political unit made up of persons who claim a descent through a known line to a common ancestor who is the founder of the clan and who sometimes gives his name to it.” Nana (1994). Ifeka and Stride (1977) further highlight this concept of clan as follows:

Several villages were joined together into a group by a mythical charter of common descent from a founding ancestor, whose sons were believed to have established the constituent villages of the group. In other words, territorial divisions were thought of as kinship units, all to have descended from one ancestor ... kinship links were sometimes invoked to create special relationships with neighbouring village groups or villages.

Meanwhile, it is not easy to identify which is a sub-clan or not, as the case in some instances could be very sensitive to the clans, it all bothers on which was founded first give rise to the other. While this is easy in some cases, it is inconclusive in some others.

The area occupied by Owhe is low- lying and criss-crossed by streams and rivulets. A sizeable part of the territory is subject to floods whenever the rains come down heavily. Their economy is based on subsistence farming and the production of palm oil and kernels. The main food crops are yams and cassava, supplemented by corn, beans, pepper and groundnuts. Yet because of the rivulets, and streams, some degree of fishing is also carried out. Fish are important for food and for certain sacrifices, Okpevra (2008).

The different Owhe villages hold regularly scheduled markets of every four days intervals in which food, local products, and imported goods are exchanged. More importantly, Owhe clan is one of the key providers of present day Nigerian nation’s wealth-crude oil petroleum as there are present a handful of oil wells.

The cultural life of the people in the area *viz-a-viz* her Ukwuani neighbours are interwoven, probably due to long period of co-existence in terms of history, dressing, religious worship and intermarriage. This is exemplified in their beliefs, food, and other ancestral beliefs. They are mostly Christian, though traditional religion and ancestral worship is also prevalent. The social and cultural life are interwoven with the beliefs and religion and have their historical antecedents linked up with empires such as Benin

centuries ago as well as Christian Missionary movement that existed in the nineteenth century.

The land is generally flat as a result of its formation largely by alluvial basins separated by levees deposited by creeks. Flooding occurs frequently during the rainy season. In the area, two separate and distinct floods are distinguished both by their course and by period of occurrence. The first is due to the heavy local rainfall, while the other is caused by floodwater coming down the Niger. The people call the rain flood *Evo* and it is caused as stated earlier by local rains, which are concentrated into few months of the year. Aghalino (1993).

The second annual flood, i.e. the river flood that the Isoko people called *Owe*, is caused by the arrival in the area of the black flood from the upper reaches of the Niger. Udo (1975). At the local confluence, it is joined by the Benue flood caused by the current year's rainfall in that River basin. Together, the flood moves down the lower Niger valley, sub-merging sand banks. The implication is that the low-lying area of South of Aboh and the Isoko community are exposed to the full force of this flood. It is therefore this flood that surge down the Niger tributaries, bursting their banks and flooding the lowland and consequently inflicting economic hardships on the people. Udo(1975).

Nonetheless, the flood problem in the region is compounded by the nature of the soil which is largely sandy – loam interspersed with hydromorphic clay which varies from fair to good quality. Oyaide (1991) suggests that about 25 per cent of the soil is unsuitable for agriculture without some modification. The land has an interesting flora and fauna. The vegetation is generally light forest dominated by palm (oil palm on the drier and higher grounds, and *Raphia* in the Swamps and a few valuable trees. The fauna consists mainly of monkey, ducker, antelopes, grass-cutters, porcupine, African Rabbits, snails, snakes, squirrels and a host of other small animals. Most common fishes are catfish, tilapia, lungfish, and other freshwater fishes. Oyaide (1991).

Prior to the advent of British administration and the concomitant development of motorable roads, bush paths provided the main means of transportation within both the clan and neighbouring communities as well. Otite(1973). The physical features discussed above suggest that there would be little land available for intensive agricultural practices. Therefore any modification of the land would naturally have untold effect on the people. Consequently, any encroachment either on land or on water may pose a potent source of conflict between and among the Owhe and her neighbours.

Two main climatic seasons exist in this tropical area: the dry season, from the month of November to March, during which most of the stream dry up and the rivers ebb;

and the wet season; from the month of April to October when all the rivers and stream are full and parts of the land flooded. A short dry spell in August has the effect of creating too long and too short periods each of rainy and dry season. Udo (1970).

According to Okpevra (2014), the geographical location of the Owhe people and their neighbours has been one of the most importance determinants of the relationship between and amongst them, which cuts across commercial, cultural, and political contacts that date to very early times. These intercourses were both hostile and cordial as evidence in pre-colonial intergroup relation. In other words, the Owhe did not exist in isolation. Within their location, they maintained relations with their immediate neighbours: Kwale (Ukwuani), Urhobo, and other distant neighbours such as Western Ijaw, Benin, and Eastern Nigerian Igbos. Owhe relations with these named neighbours varied in form and scope at any given moment since the pre-colonial period. Such relations were borne out of the realization that co-operation with other groups would be of benefit to them. The benefit of such inter-dependence between Owhe and her neighbours were mostly felt in the political, diplomatic, and economic and socio – cultural realms.

The History of the Area

It is the view of Okpevra, (2014) that Owhe, like their other Isoko kith and kin have a very rich cultural heritage that has defied the monstrous colonial influence on much of African culture. With a culture that could be classified as highly advanced in terms of its richness in moral values, they are highly religious and are great lovers of strangers and humanity in general. They are a peace loving people and very hospitable too. Honesty and hard work is the important attributes of the Owhe (Isoko) man. They are also an egalitarian people who cherish integrity and human freedom. Yet one common but good fault of the Isoko man is that he does not know how to hide his disgust for injustice and oppression, Okpevra(2005).

Invariably the belief that most of the Isoko groups are of Benin origin were views held and expressed in the 1960s and 1970s. These views were “decidedly simplistic and were based on British Intelligence Reports of the 1930s” and Ikime’s fieldwork of 1961-1963. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isoko_people. Retrieved 14/09/2011. It is therefore the contention of Okpevra (2014) that at lesser instances the factor of amnesia has overwhelmed the people’s abilities to account for their origins thus claiming autochthony or a greater antiquity. On these issues of migration and traditions of origin, a lot of thought provoking questions have been left unanswered. It is against this background that Ikime states, “If there is any aspect of the history of the various peoples of Nigeria about which

no one can speak with any exactitude, it is that which deals with the origins of our peoples”.

http://www.waado.org/Organizations/UHS/AnnualConferences/sixth/ikime/Ikime_urhobo.htm. Retrieved 10/0/2011.

The dominant theme of the traditions of origin today passed on within the Isoko clans pertaining to the reasons why a particular individual or group came to the Niger Delta would agree with what Cornevin (1956) termed “Refugee theory”. Alagoa (1964) also avers that the Delta served as a refuge for people who sought to escape the power of Benin. In other words in virtually every case where the claim to Benin is made, the reason given for migration is either the oppression of a reigning Oba of Benin or escape from punishment after committing some offences against the norms of Benin society. The reasons are obviously stereotypical and need not represent the real reasons for the initial migrations.

It is against the above that Okpevra, (2014) states that historically speaking; migration and socio-political ideas are usually not unidirectional. The significance of this claim to the origins and formation of state cannot be overemphasized. In that light one can dare contend that the area, these later immigrants, who are now being considered as the progenitors of the Owhe people moved into, was never a *Tabula Rasa*.

The tradition of origin of the Owhe people is told in various versions. Few literature exist on the traditions of origin of this people consequently, the bulk of the information on their origin is derived from oral sources.

Hubbard, one the early researchers on the Owhe people wrote: ‘Owhe originally came from Aka (Benin) with his family owing to trouble of human sacrifice when the Oba, king of Aka who was ready to serve his dead father’ (Hubbard, 1948:111).

Owhe first settled at Owhe- Otor (near Iyede), probably with his four sons namely – Uruogbe, Uruovo, Achewhe (Akiewhe) and Ellu and that Akiewhe and Ellu were children of the same mother. The whole family probably deserted Owhe- otor after the death of their father (Owhe) to found a new settlement where Uruovo (Otor- Owhe) stands today in circa 1615 AD (Hubbard,1948:161). Ellu did not settle in this new abode but rather moved hinterland to found a separate settlement named after him (Ellu).

This account also claims that Achewhe (Akiewhe) stayed at Uruovo briefly before he was compelled to found a new place named Achewhe (Akiewhe) owing to a case of murder and partly because he was helpless as his brother; Ellu had left him to found a separate abode. Uruogbe also left his brother; Uruovo to found another settlement known

as Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) because of the troublesome nature of a warrior called Oneroha. Uruovo on his part remained in the first settlement having strongly resisted Oneroha (Hubbard, 1948:111-112).

Hubbard in another study on the Isoko People contends that:

The Isokos like the Ibos, Ijaws and the Edos are a Sudanese (not Bantu) people. Their original home was much farther north in the Sudan. Presumably at the time of Arab expansion some centuries ago these Sudanese tribes were driven by the Arabs from their homes. They therefore moved southward into the equatorial forest region. When they arrived there, the strongest tribes seized the best country and the weaker was left to occupy the country where conditions of life and the struggle for existence would be of the hardest (Hubbard, 1930:116).

The above view has been laid to rest by Okpevra(2014) who contends that it rudely emphasises the infamous Hamitic hypothesis, which has become trite in explaining the origins and migrations of Africa peoples south of the Sahara. However, viewed from another clime, Okpevra (2014) also posits that it is probable that the Hubbard's contention could be one of the reasons why the Isoko clans (including Owhe) are tucked up in the inclement region of the Niger Delta where they will be far away and free from further aggression by the so called strongest tribes. In another vein, Ikime who may have copiously relied on Hubbard's work has this to say that:

Owhe, the founder of the clan was driven from Benin by an Oba who was jealous of his wealth and power. Owhe first settle at Owhe- Otor (land of Owhe), near Iyede where they settled for a long time and became close to Iyede people and apparently used land in common. The need for more farmland ultimately made Owhe and his four sons to move out of Owhe-otor to found Uruovo (Otor- Owhe), from where Ellu left to found his separate settlement named after him. Due to family dispute, Uruogbe and Akiewhe later founded Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) and Achewhe (Akiewhe) respectively (Ikime,1972:10).

Bradbury on his account also supports the above when he states that Owhe was founded from Benin by people who settled first at Igside then on Iyede land before moving to the present site of Uruovo (now Otor- Owhe) (Bradbury,1964:131).

However, there exist a tradition of origin that is most accepted by the Owhe people as being handed down by their progenitors. This version claims that Azagba the founder of Owhe once lived in Benin but later left Benin under the leadership of his father; Igide Iyewo after fighting a fierce battle with the Benin army who tried to stop them from

leaving the kingdom. This migration was said to be occasioned by the cruelty of an Oba of Benin; Oba Ewuare, the Great, in circa 1440 AD, who lost two of his sons in one day and therefore, decreed against sex and the bearing of children in the kingdom until he had other two new sons. Egharevba (1968:14-15), attests that calamity befell Oba Ewuare the Great in C1440 AD, with the death of his two sons; Kuoboyuwa and Ezuwarha. He therefore promulgated a draconian decree, which forbade his subjects from bearing children, and this led to mass migration of people from the kingdom.

Having migrated from Benin, Igide Iyewo and his group first settled at or near Evro-Oto (Effrun-Otor). The rumour that the Oba had sent his army to force all who have migrated from the kingdom back to Benin made them to migrate farther into the hinterland. This was with the realisation that '*Afiemo Aka isiava ha*' meaning "it is dangerous to fight a second battle with the Binis". (Interview with Peter Odukpolo at Otor-Owhe, 2006, Godwin Etor, Michael Awere at Akiewhe, 2013, Columbus Abada, Oghole Ovie at Owhelogbo, 2013). They therefore decided to migrate farther southward. Their migration into the hinterland landed them near Iyede. Before now, Igide Iyewo had died in the course of migration and the leadership of the group had fallen on Azagba. It was from here they left for Emede where Azagba took for a wife an Emede daughter called Owhe; an ardent worshipers of the Oniowise deity. The Oni - owise sent one of its children (Owise-Owhe) to go with Owhe to protect and guide her in her new settlement with her husband. The Owhe people still worship the Owise- Owhe deity as the principal deity of the clan. The marriage was blessed with three children namely Ogbe, Owo, and Uthatho.

After a period of time at Emede, Azagba decided to move back to his former settlement; near Iyede with his new family perhaps because of the need for more farmland. The settlement was named Owhe-Otor after Owhe. While at Owhe-Otor, there arose a leadership tussle between Azagba and Atua the founder of Iyede but the latter emerged as the ruler. He ruled so cruelly and his cruelty coupled with Azagba's unwillingness to accept Atua's over lordship made the former to found a new abode (Interview with Samson Oletu at Akiewhe, 2013, John Emaziye at Otor-Iyede, 2013, Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio (Otor-Igho) (2013), which he also named after Owhe his wife.

The present day Otor- Iyede has expanded to occupy Owhe-Otor hence there are "Uruowhe which means Owhe quarters and Uruthatho which means Uthatho quarters" in present day Iyede. Azagba's sons had their different quarters (Uruogbe, Uruovo and Uruthatho) in the new settlement. The family lived happily together here until the rise of a warrior known as Oneroha, the grandson of Owo. Oneroha's troublesome attitude made Ogbe and Uthatho to migrate and founded Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) and Akiewhe

respectively. Some members of Akiewhe left on a later date to found Ellu (Agatemor, 2004:1 also oral interview with Fred Ikpaawona, Ellu,) while Ogbodu one of Uthatho's children refused to relocate to Akiewhe with his father but rather fought and defeated Oneroha hence there still exist Ogbodu quarters of Akiewhe in present day Otor-Owhe (Interview with Freeborn Oletu, Akiewhe, 2013). After the relocation of Ogbe and Uthatho, Ovo and his offsprings occupied the whole area except where Ogbodu was. The place was referred to as Uruovo meaning Ovo quarters. It was later changed to Otor-Owhe in 1975, to reflect that it was the headquarters of Owhe clan (Oral interview with Julius Efenudu at Otor-Owhe, Apollus Ogbaudu at Otor-Owhe and Omodavwe Efi at Akiewhe, 2013). Some other members also left Akiewhe to found Eniagbedhi (Hubbard, 1948:111-112 also oral interview with Moses Okoh at Eniagbedhi, 2013, Michael Awere at Akiewhe, 2013).

An Overview of the Traditions of Origin of the Owhe People.

The dominant theme of the various traditions of origin of the Owhe people is that of "refugee" (a people who fled from the dominance and the cruelty of an oba of Benin). Peek in his "refugee area thesis" opines that the people who settled in the Niger Delta could not have done so freely but must have been in search of refuge from others (Peek, 2002:167). He attempts to use kaolin (native chalk) and coral beads to establish the close relationship between the Binis and the Isokos. He reports that kaolin was used for the worship of Olokun deity in Benin and kaolin and coral beads were prestige items used by the Oba of Benin and it remains a ubiquitous element in ritual life. Its link to the Oba of Benin and the Binis in general was unique. For example, the initial public announcement of the demise of an Oba was the statements - "*Oto rio orhue*" which means the earth ate native chalk, or "the chalk is broken" (Interview with Eguase Edosomwan, Nohinoke Osula, Catherine Airhuleyefe, Benin-City, 2013). The smashing of a huge piece of kaolin followed this. He contends that though the Isokos do not worship olokun they use kaolin elaborately in their rituals and worship. The Isoko also value coral beads as a key feature of royal regalia as well as cowry shells, which were also lavishly used in the Obas court (Peek, 2002:172).

Etymology gives some support to the claim of Benin origin. For example; Azagba the name of the founder of Owhe means a "public place or square" in Edo language. In addition, the names of his sons; Ogbe and Ovo mean "a quarter and envy or jealousy" respectively (oral interview with Eguase Edosomwan and Nohinoke Osula, Benin- City, 2013). "Language is said to be a determinant factor in considering ethnic group identity because it is the means of communication..." (Atanda, 1980:65). There are many similar

words in the Edo (Benin) and the Isoko languages. Using the linguistic evidence in interpreting the traditions of origin of the Owhe people therefore, a comparison of some Benin (Edo) and Isoko words are illustrated below:

Table I: A Comparative Language Chart of English, Benin(Edo) and Isoko.

S/N	English	Benin(Edo)	Isoko
1	Hand	Obo	Obo
2	Water	Ame	Ame
3	Town	Evbo	Ewho
4	Pandemonium	Olighi	Ozighi
5	Two	Eva	Ive
6	Market	Eki	Eki
7	Kaolin (chalk)	Orhue	Orhe
8	Palm oil	Ofigbon	Ofigbo
9	World	Agbon	Akpo
10	Fowl	Okhokho	Oyoho
11	Death	Uwu	Uwu
12	Ground/Land	Oto	Oto
13	Happiness	Oghogho	Oghogho
14	Goat	Ewe	Ewe

Source: Authors Field Investigation(2013).

Another important issue to be raised is the “refuge theory” which explains the founders of the Isoko as those seeking to escape trouble from Benin, Foster (1969). In reaction to Foster's postulation Okpevra (2014) queried:"if the progenitors or founders of the Isoko clans were refugees or fugitives as it were from Benin, at what point did they reconcile with Benin that they have to go back to Benin to obtain title to Ovieship and title to the land without reprisals from Benin? This again brings us to the popular Benin mirage, Afigbo(1981). However, the answer to the above question should be left for further research.

Having laid claim to Benin origin, one would had expected that the Owhe people and the other Isoko clans that equally claim Benin origin would have been speaking the Benin (Edo) language but this is not the case. To this Welch (1931:160), argues that: the Isoko language originated as a result of the contact of the Isokos with their Urhobo neighbours. That contact and eventual isolation led to the loss of their original language. Language is dynamic and not static and the continuity of any language depends on the social and cultural factors that have overlapped with the changes in the activities of man over time and space. This implies that the migration of the Owhe people from one geographical area to the other (as told by the various versions of the traditions of origin) added to or deducted from its language. It is a truism that when two or more languages meet either they interwove or the most dominant over shadows the other.

It would be illogical to submit to Benin (Edo) origin of the Owhe people on the basis of the above postulations without first considering and analyzing some other arguments put forward by scholars. Afigbo (1981:18,19) who relied on the archaeological

findings of Shaw avers that humans occupied the Niger Delta area (which Owhe belongs) as far back as circa 770 AD, as such the land was not *terra ingonita* and devoid of human occupation until the supposed migration from Benin. This brings us to Okpevra (2014) postulation that "migration and social political ideas are not usually unidirectional" as such the Owhe/Isoko area was never *tabular Rasa* before the arrival of the Benin emigrants.

The Isokos, Binis (Edo), Ijaws and the Ibos are said to have migrated from the same root. It is therefore a possibility that the Isokos (which include Owhe) arrived and settled in the Benin area from the Sudan earlier than the Binis. Egherevba (1968:1), attests to earlier settlers from the Sudan. The Binis on arrival may have settled near the Isoko people and referred to them as "Isoko-Edo," which means those living in the neighbourhood or outskirt of Edo (Hans Melzian, 1937:101, also oral interview with Eguase Edosomwan, Nohinoke Osula, Benin-City, 2013).

The Benin Kingdom at its apogee in the 15th century attempted to bring the Isokos under their domain. The Isokos detested this plan and were not prepared to surrender their sovereignty as such they migrated farther into the hinterland. This group came with their culture and language and they referred to themselves as "Isoko"; a name their Benin neighbour referred to them. With the passage of time, the whole area became known as Isoko (Ugboma, 1984:36-42). The new language interwove with the language of the early settlers and it was also referred to as "Isoko".

Owhe claim to Benin origin is better explained in the words of Alagoa that "where a group no longer remembers its place of origin it is likely to choose one that was powerful enough to confer on it a kind of prestige or legitimacy while not posing an immediate threat to its political independence" (Alagoa, 1970:119-29 and 1971:268-78). More so, Isoko was said to be a source of slaves to the Ijaws. Considering the spate of raids lunched on them, to associate or identify with the then more powerful Benin kingdom for protection was the wisest thing to do. It is a common human habit to seek to identify with the great and successful as a result of which people generally like to trace their pedigree to great families and empires (Afigbo, 1981:18). The Isoko may have identified with the more powerful Benin kingdom so as to ward off the attack and the raid for slaves that was incessantly lunched on them. Appositely, the relationship between Benin and Isoko/Owhe was more of social than of origin.

Oral interviews carried out by this researcher on the foundation of Owhe reveal that the founder of Owhe was Azagba and not Owhe as claimed by the early researchers (Michael Awere, Godwin Etor, Ovuwhoyen Ukpovo, and Thomas Emezana). Owhe was a woman and wife to Azagba and not a man and the founder of "Owhe" as being represented

by early works. It was also revealed that Azagba and Owhe had three children namely Ogbe, Ovo, and Uthatho. Some children of Uthatho left Akiewhe to found Ellu (Agatemo, 1994:1 also oral interview with Fred Ikpa-wona at Ellu 2013, Thomas Emezana, Michael Awere at Akiewhe, 2013). Therefore, the names Uruogbe, Uruovo and Uruthatho and Ellu suggested as Owhe children cannot be accepted as “Uru” in Isoko language means quarters. The founder of Owhe partitioned his settlement into three “Iru (plural for Uru) among his three children. He would have partitioned the settlement into four to include “Ellu” if he was one of his children.

The above fallacies may have occurred from the source(s) of Hubbard’s information, which other early researchers also relied on. Hubbard graphically states that his relationship with the natives became strained with the introduction of adult taxation into the Delta province in 1927, by the colonial government. The Isoko people accused him for advising the colonial government to impose taxation on them, because of the success of the “class fees” he had imposed on his church congregation. As a result of this, the natives became weary of him. He therefore, commissioned some of his church headmen to collect information about the Isoko clans for him (Hubbard, 1948:73-76). Some of these headmen collected information from clans outside theirs and may not have met the custodians of the clan traditions who were mostly Igbu (warriors), who regarded Christianity as alien and bad omen.

On the foundation of the clan, the circa 1615 AD, date of foundation of Owhe clan and circa 1677 AD, foundation date of Iyede clan suggested by Hubbard cannot be accepted as true. Iyede is said to be one of the earliest Isoko settlers who together with some other clans constituted the Sobo people who had long settled before the coming of Ginuwa (the founder of Itsekiri) from Benin in circa 1480 AD (Foster, 1969:292). Going by Hubbard’s suggestion, Owhe was founded sixty- two years before Iyede was founded. If this be the case, there would not have been any time the Owhe people lived near Iyede and used land in common.

Although it is axiomatic among the Owhe people that they originated from Benin, the contestation that those Isoko clans that claim Benin origin may have migrated from the neighbourhood of Benin- City rather than Benin- City itself cannot be wished away. More so, using the name Isoko (which means those who live near Benin) to establish the origin of Isoko/Owhe is *a priori*.

The Age Grade System

Owhe clan is made up of ten communities. Each of these component communities had its own separate councils, which governed it. General meetings of the federating units (clan meeting) was called only when the need arose. In other words, the clan government was channeled through the village councils.

The society was therefore stratified into various Itu or Edhe (Age grades). Each age grade was made up of children who were born in a specified age and they associated together for life. Those older than them taught them the laws and societal norms. (Welch, 1934:167 also oral interview with Monday Ogbo, Job Owhefere at Akiewhe, 2013) The male population was divided into four major Itu or Edhe (Age grade). These were the children (Emaha), the youth (Ivrawha or Ogeh), the men (Ekpako), and the elders (Edio) (Ikime, 1972:28). These various age grades were saddled with specific functions and responsibilities.

The children (Emaha) age grade was the least in the age grade system. It was made up of young boys of between the ages of twelve and sixteen years. This naturally is the formative stage and their education in civil responsibility began at this age. Their duties were the sweeping of the village paths, meeting places and running simple errands (Ifediora, 1994:68).

Next to the children, age grade was the youths (Ivrawa or Ogeh) age grade. Members of this group fell within the age bracket of seventeen and thirty-five years. This group was the labour force of the village. As a result of their energetic build up at this stage of their lives, they were assigned to carry out the most tedious work in the village. Such works like building of roads and bridges, markets and public meeting places as well as the construction and harvesting of communal fishing ponds and generally carried out other duties assigned to them from time to time. The Osogba headed this age grade. (Interview with Ovuewhoyen Ukpevo, Akiewhe, 2013)

The Ekpako (men) age grade was made up of men between the ages of thirty-six and sixty years. Men who were between the ages of thirty-six to fifty years within this group constituted the village armed force. They were charged with the internal and external security of the village. Among them, ministers (Iletu plural for Oletu) were appointed and the head- minister was known as Oletu – Ologbo) prime minister. He was the supreme commander of the armed force (N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/27989, 1931:26). The Edio (Elders) usually chose the Oletu-Ologbo. The criterion for the choice includes his proven valour in medicine, battles, and similar feats. He led this group of energetic and able body men in the village/clan in war and equally ensured that the decisions of the elders were carried out

(Ikime, 1965:291 and 1972, 29). This group also provided guard against fire and thieves, investigated disputes and collected fines and levies. Owing to the nature of their duties and responsibilities, there was the need to emphasize discipline as such laws governing them were very strict and members who failed to turn up at its exercises were sanctioned.

All the quarters that made up the village had their own councils of Iletu known as Iletu- Iyera (Quarters Ministers). Each of these councils was a miniature extended family and matters affecting family farmland or they (oral interview with Owhoatake Okpofi, Freeborn Oletu at Akiewhe and Edward Eture at Otor- Owhe, 2013) dealt with cases between husbands and wives and cases between members of the quarters. (Oral interview with Owhoatake Okpofi, Freeborn Oletu at Akiewhe and Edward Eture at Otor- Owhe, 2013)

The Edio (Elders) age grade was at the helm of the age grade system. It was made up of men above seventy years of age. This group was the repository of the village laws and traditions and the Odio -Okaro who was the oldest man in the village, headed it. Members of this group were usually exempted from communal labour because of their age. This group formed themselves into council where matters affecting them as well as the community were discussed and decisions were taken. This group was the highest judicial court in the village. A dissatisfied person could take appeal of his case to the clan head which served as the highest and final judicial court in the clan only after the case had been heard by the council of Edio (Godwin Etor, Ovuewhoyen Ukpevo and Michael Awere at Akiewhe, and Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio, 2013). This age grade was also saddled with the responsibility of dealing with internal affairs of the community, like trying cases of land, witchcraft, opening and closing of season for fishing in the community waters as well as making rules with which the village was governed. (Welch,1934:167 also oral interview with Akpore Ojaigho, Ohwatake Okpofi at Akiewhe, 2013). The Odio-Okaro with due consultation with other elders were responsible for the governing and adjudication of laws in this group. Therefore, government at this stage was a corporate affair and gerontocratic (Ikime, 1980:90). Apart from the Odio -Okaro, the Edio council had some other officials who served under the Odio-Okaro. They were the Otota- Odio (Odio's spokesperson), Uko- Odio (Odio's messenger), *Alakpa* (police), and the Oworuworo or the Awowo (Town crier).

The Otota-Odio was the official spokesman of the council of Edio. He was an influential personality within the village and was chosen due to his eloquence and oratorical powers. The Uko-Odio (Odio's messenger) on the directives of the Odio-Okaro summoned the Edio to meetings. It was him that ran errands for the Odio-Okaro and the

council of Edio. Another officer of this group was the Alakpa-Ọdịọ (Odio's police officer) or Sergeant at arm; he was to maintain peace during meetings and to arrest culprits as directed by the Odio-Okaro and the council of Edio. The Oworuworo or the Awowo was responsible for the dissemination of information from the Edio council. He informed the entire village of the decisions of the council of elders (Ononeme, 1969:2-3 also oral interview with Monday Ogbo, Godwin Etor, Freeborn Oletu, Samson Oletu, at Akiewhe, 2013).

Another group worthy of mention in the governance of the village although it is not among the four male age grade is the women folk (Eweya). There were three sub-groups within this group. These were the Otu- Emete (Young girls), the Eya (women), and the Ekpako-Eya (old women). The Otu - Emete (Young girls) consisted of the uncircumcised girls who have not attained the age of marriage. They were not assigned any specific communal duties outside the compound.

The Eya (women) was made up of married women within the age of child bearing and up to sixty years. This group was the guardian of all rituals surrounding childbirth. Its duties also included the enforcement of laws concerning market and farming. Members of this group, together with the old women, were responsible for safe guarding the fertility shrines and to ensure that taboos affecting women nudity were kept (Interview with Comfort Oletu, Rebecca Ebogbare at Akiewhe, 2013).

The Ekpako-Eya (old women), were women of seventy years and above. Their major assignment was offering the sacrifices to the women fertility shrines (goddess). The Odio-Eweya (oldest woman) headed this group. She, like the Odiokauru, had her own officials who worked with her in the discharge of her duties (Bradbury, 1964:139 also group interview with Rebecca Emezana, Mary Okpokpo, Comfort Oletu at Akiewhe, 2013). The entire Eweya (women folk) carried out their duties/activities responsibly under the surveillance of the Edio (Elders') council (Interview with Otiti Ithulebe at Akiewhe and Obonometehe Imoh at Owhelogbo, 2013).

Ikime (1972) presents a case of the Eweyae in his villager Anibeze in Erowha clan who threatened in the 1950s to dance round the village in the nude owing to a rumour that the women were to pay tax. On that occasion, the men folk had to summon an emergency council meeting to allay the fears of the women. Okpevra, (2014) also presents a case that in the early 1980s, the Eweyae of Ozoro kingdom also in their challenge and revolt danced nude before the king in protest against moving to the newly constructed market site, which, they considered too remote from the town, having been used to the old site, which is centrally located. It is painful to say that the king did not find it funny until he

died a few years later. In other words, it is believed that if the women folk were to be seen in the nude the person or persons responsible for causing them the grievance would be visited with dire consequences. Consequently, the views of the womenfolk were given full attention whenever these were made known.

For the Owhe clan like their other Isoko group, the centuries prior to the advent of British rule were a time for migration, consolidation, and integration. They had not only begun to evolve a common pattern of government from diverse roots, but they were building the basis for a more stable, growing community. This was the case until the imposition of foreign rule, which was to transmogrify their traditional systems and value.

Ethnic survival became not only a fervent passion but an urgent objective. This was achieved in 1963 when Isoko became an autonomous division as it were in the political arrangement in Nigeria. They were hitherto treated as belonging to the Urhobo group of clans - to be precise part of Eastern Urhobo division - and the struggle to free themselves from this misapplication greatly contributed to the rise of "Isoko Nationalism" culminating in their getting a separate division in 1963, with the creation of the Mid-West Region in an independent Nigeria.

Type of Survey

The historical research method was used in this research. The historical research method is that method which enables the researcher to learn from the past events, and cognate human activities, discoveries and mistakes and to avoid what needs to be avoided. The historical research method generally involves:

systematic search for documents and other source that contain facts relating to the historian's question about the past to have better understanding of the present and perhaps to predict the future situation. It is also a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts: an unending dialogue. Adetoro, (1997).

This method is based on library information, Archival materials/sources and fieldwork. From these sources, relevant information were provided to the problem. The core of this historical investigation is search and evaluation leading to generalization. This perhaps is why Curtin (1968) believes that "any sources that exist must be taken into account, but no source is to be accepted uncritically."

The fieldwork was the next type of survey method that was carried out. It is a method of carrying out the historical research investigation. This is the stage at which the historian goes out to get or obtain information from persons or people who are expected

to know or have relevant knowledge on the research problem. This is when “the researcher or historian changes his/ her role as an archive creator” Curtin (1968). This source however was used to verify and authenticate facts, information and opinions of people collected/ obtained from secondary sources for critical assessment and logical conclusion.

The research methodology used in this work consists of analysis of primary sources such as archival evidence and oral interview as well as diverse literature on intergroup relations and inter-ethnic conflicts and their resolutions. In other words the study employs many methodologies or what could be called multi-dimensional approach in order to investigate thoroughly the subject under discussion. It utilizes the historical and descriptive methods when treating the inter-group relations and peace conflict situation and their resolutions.

As mention above, some form of anthropological method (fieldworks- visit to some frontier communities that deals directly with other neighbours within the study area, to conduct oral interviews) was employed. Comparative methods were also employed to improve the overall quality of the research. Primary data were obtained from fieldworks, direct oral interviews with individuals and groups of persons. The secondary data came from several literatures: books, articles, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, and the internet. Finally, data collected were collated, subjected to critical analysis and synthesized in order to determine their relevance and validity.

Data Collection

The main sources of this research are primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include oral evidence/interview, archival documents, and government publications. The secondary sources include, textbooks and journal articles and other unpublished materials, which have been consulted extensively. As the period of study transcends the pre-colonial and colonial times, extensive use of oral evidence was employed.

This has become necessary because a number of works have shown rightly, that it is better to base our development on our cultures rather than on the quick sand of foreign importations. This means that adequate attention should be paid to the pre-colonial period when our culture was free from European importations. The problem of research into pre colonial period is that it is a preliterate one requiring archaeological and (especially) oral records for its study. But the elders who are the main sources of information on this period are fast dying out. It is therefore important that urgent emphasis be placed on Nigerian pre-

colonial inter group relations before its source materials become extinct, as they are fast becoming. Okpevra (2002).

The fieldwork or oral interview method was employed for the following reasons:

- It guaranteed immediate feedback;
- It helped the research check the reliability of data supplied; and
- It elicit in-depth information which though went beyond the questions raised by the researcher, also went a long way to help in better interpretation of data collected.

By and large the oral sources served as a means of corroborating the written sources and also served as valuable source materials for the analysis of the intergroup relationship between the Isoko and her neighbours in peace and conflict situation.

At the national archives, Ibadan hereafter referred to as NAI; numerous files relevant to this study were collected and consulted. Document on Owhe people and other Isoko people are also available at the Directorate of Chieftaincy Affairs, Asaba, as well as public and private libraries. Archival materials are kept in files with different classification marks like C.S.O, Cal. Prof. W.P, and Ughelli Papers. C.S.O. Refers to documents from the office of the Chief Secretary to the Nigeria Council Government. Among the C.S.O files are the Intelligence Reports on Owhe clan and the various Isoko clans. Cal. Prof. treats Calabar Provincial Administration while War' Prof., W.P. In addition, Ughelli Papers treat the Warri Provincial Administration. And lastly in view of recent developments in the electronic media, sources available in the internet were obtained for the study.

Moreso primary field data (Oral interviews) was extensively undertaken with individuals and groups in the study area. In addition, data was also collected from frontier villages and communities in the study area on their knowledge of the inter group relationship between the Isoko and her neighbours with emphasis on how conflicts that manifested were resolved and how they lived in period of peace. The method employed here includes focused group discussions, and participatory observation. Some well-informed members of the communities were singled out as informants for collecting useful information that could not be gotten through normal participation within the communities. The researcher critically scrutinized the data gathered. Data collected was sifted and analysed to establish their objectivity. A thematic approach was however adopted in this study without losing sight of its chronological perspective.

There was the problem of paucity of up-to-date data. Where they exist, they fall short of the research theme. Through the perseverance of the researcher and with constant

informal discussion, which involved asking of leading questions, we were able to elicit useful information having assured respondents on the subject matter of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

OWHE: FROM PRE-COLONIAL TIMES TO AD 1962

Pre-colonial Political Structure

Generally speaking, the impression one gets from the description of the people inhabiting the southern most parts of Nigeria by European writers is that of 'primitive' people without any form of socio-political organizations. The people were described either as "primitive" "bush" or inferior culturally, politically and intellectually, Ikime (1969), especially when compared to their Muslim brothers up north. Moreover, among the "primitive pagans" the Isoko amongst others were considered to have "occupied the lowest rung of the ladder of racial classification".

The Isoko unlike their Itsekiri and Aboh neighbours never developed a central authority; there was no one ruler that wielded authority over the entire Isoko. The Isoko nation was, as it is, a collection of social-cultural units more popularly known as clans. Each clan or polity was and still is independent of the other. Nevertheless, each of the clans had a traditional head in the form of *Ovie*, or *Odion-Ologbo*. In some of the polities, the titles are hereditary while in others, they are not. In other words most Isoko clans like the Owhe clan were organised in the past as consular governments headed by weak Priest-Kings or Edion (Chief Elders). Over the years, even once powerful Ivies (Kings) have become little more than titular heads. With the loss of the power and grandeur that used to be theirs, the sense of cohesion, which they had fostered, has considerably weakened.

The Pre-Colonial Judicial System:

During the pre- colonial period, both the political and judicial bodies were the same the village/clan laws were not new. They were handed over from generation to generation orally. (Ononeme, 1969:4).

According to Ikime:

The Ekpako and the Edio-in-council did not declare and lay down new laws. They merely applied to varying circumstances already existed and theocratically immutable laws – which had received the irrevocable sanction of the quick and the dead. Such application of the law to specific circumstances did, in practice become or to be regarded as new laws in themselves and so constituted part of unwritten "code of clan law" (Ikime, 1965:293).

Offenses were either against the individual, the whole village/clan or the village/clan ancestors. The Itu (Age grade), the village and clan council had judicial or

quasi-judicial functions. Disputes between individuals or groups, if not settled by arbitration and agreement between their respective families would, come before the quarters council made up of family heads. Failure to reach any settlement at this level would bring the dispute before the village council. Offenses like murder, robbery, violence were regarded as crimes committed against the clan. Consequently, such cases were referred to the clan council for trial. The clan council was composed of all the Ediokaro (the oldest men) of the federating villages, the Oletu-Ologbo (Prime Minister), the Etota – Edio (the Elders Spokesmen) of all the federating villages and the Iletu (Ministers). The Edio council had the final say while the Otota (Spokesman) acted as the interpreter and the Oletu- Ologbo together with the other Iletu arrested the culprits and policed the court during trials.

The procedure for trial was open. The Iko (Council Messengers) brought the parties in the disputes before the councils and they were made to state their cases and to call witnesses. Both parties and witnesses were interrogated and cross examined by members of the council while the Otota echoed the questions and the answers for all present to hear so as to get public opinion. After the case had been heard, the Odio and some members of the council withdrew into an inner chamber to consult among themselves on the facts of the case before verdict was passed. This consultation was necessary so as to avoid error of judgment. The decision reached at the consultation was announced on behalf of the council by the Otota (spokesman). Refusal of the guilty to adhere to the verdict of the council resulted in the offender being ostracized, sold into slavery or had his properties confiscated (Ononeme, 1969:6).

If however the truth of any matter was doubtful and difficult to ascertain, they resort to oath taking by the parties involved in the case. The belief was that a condign punishment meted out by the gods awaited the lairs. The punishment took the form of the offender or member(s) of his immediate family getting unduly bloated initially and leading to death (Group interview with Ovunuwoyen Oletu, Owhoatake Okpofi, Freeborn Oletu at Akiewhe, 2013).

In some cases, they resort to an ordeal called “*eta ozo*” or “*erho duo*” (ear or tongue piercing ordeal). In this ordeal, a needle or a feather dipped in some concoction was used to pierce through the lobe of an accused ear or tongue. Easy penetration and withdrawal without injury signified innocence while the inability of either the needle or the feather to pierce through the ear or tongue means guilt (Judge Oletu, Thomas Emezana, Benson Ogbaifo, 2013). Other forms of ordeal practiced in Owhe and Isoko generally were picking cowries from boiling water in the fire or picking of a red-hot Axe head from the

fire after the accused hands had been smeared with some concoction and made to walk a distance of about 50 metres. Innocence was proven when no burnt occurred. For witches, the sasswood (*ewoli*) ordeal was used. The belief was that no witch could survive the drinking of sass-wood mixture and so, survival after the drinking of the sass-wood mixture was a proof of innocence. Those who were confirmed to be witches were usually sold into slavery. The most popular ordeal for witches in Isokoland was Eni juju ordeal. This was the annual witch-finding juju at Uzere, one of the Isoko clans. In this ordeal, suspected witches were thrown into the Eni Lake after their bodies had been smeared with concoction. It was the belief that a witch cannot swim ashore of the Eni Lake. Therefore, a safe swim ashore of the Eni Lake was a proof of innocence. The Eni juju ordeal was however abolished by Mr. Copland Crawford who was the District Commissioner of the colonial government residing in Warri in 1903 (Okpevra, 2013a:318-323 also Ikime, 1972: 48). Through this ordeals and the concomitant juju swearing fear was instilled into the minds of the parties or the accused and truth was elicited.

Justice among the Isoko people followed a basic pattern. No punishment was pronounced on an offender without his right to fair hearing. Punishment was meted on an offender in proportion to the crime committed. For example, the punishment for murder was death by hanging. There usually was a special tree in the forbidden bush (Aho or Ufiobo) from which the hanging was done.

Manslaughter, which meant murder by accident to the Isoko, attracted hanging or payment of compensation to the family of the murdered if the family of the murderer was quick to plead for leniency. The family of the murderer gave one of their daughters to the family of the victim to replenish it with children to make up for the loss.

Theft was another serious offense. Thieves were usually blinded by pouring of boiling oil in their eyes (Ononeme, 1969:7). Arson was another offense but it was very rare. The penalty for this offense was the rebuilding of the house burnt and the payment of compensation for the properties that were destroyed and the payment of a fine as determined by the elders.

Adultery was said to be committed if a man had sexual relations with another man's wife. The penalty for this offense was the payment of compensation to the family of the husband by the offender. The husband of the woman or his relations could, soon after the offense, take vengeance by committing adultery with a wife from the family of the offender if he could get the opportunity. The woman on her part appeased the ancestors with sacrifices if the man was still interested in the marriage. The man whose wife committed adultery was forbidden to share from the compensation paid.

Incest, which is having sexual relations with a close relation, was an offense among the Owhe/Isoko people. The punishment for it was the propitiation of the ancestors by both parties. In the case of defilement, compensation as determined by the father of the girl defiled was paid to him (Ikime, 1972:153 also oral interview with Monday Ogbo, at Akiewhe, Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio, 2013).

Consequently, village and clan councils perform a number of political and judicial functions. The councils look into all cases brought before him. Cases that would not be decisively handled at the village ended in the clan court which is the highest courts in Owhe. However, cases that concern witchcraft can go as far as the Eni Cult or Oracle of Uzere whose verdict was final and whose reputation was dreaded. Okpevra, (2013). Cases began from the family, through the ward and quarter to village or town before getting to the clan's court. They range from breaking of religious taboos, murder, and adultery through manslaughter and witchcraft to larceny.

As it implies, justice was seen as a body of absolutes hence Ikime (1965) states that "the law of the clan was regarded as having been declared once and for all by the ancestors; there could be no law as new ones thereafter. It was the duty of the leaders in this socio-political set up to apply the immutable law of the ancestors to the particular case.

The gerontocratic nature of clan government in Owhe notwithstanding the practical functioning of the arms of government involved everyone. While age was important, it fetched greater prestige if matched with membership of the Odio society. An Okpako who belonged to a council but was not an Odio was simply referred to as *Okpako – Igheghe* (ordinary elder) and would be treated as such. Ikime (1972).

The Centralized System of Government:

At a point in time in the political history of the Owhe people, they opted for a more centralized system of government perhaps, as a response to the growing complexity of societal needs, problems, and aspirations. This new system of government had the Osewho (which literally means the father of the town and the oldest man from the Osue lineage of Iluelogbo, now Owhelogbo), and the Odio- Edhe (which literally means the most senior member of the Edhe society/cult. The title "Odio-Edhe" was later changed to Odiologbo, the highest Odio at the helm of affairs. The offices of the Osewho and the Odio-Edhe, now Odiologbo have thrown up a controversy as to their origin, hierarchy, and functions.

This new system of government never abolished the age long Age grade system but was rather cohesion of the old and the new systems of government. Although the offices of

the Osewho and the Odio-Edhe were established, the clan government was still channeled through the village councils which were headed by the Ediokaro. Only very serious cases were referred to the clan council which served as the central government. (Interview with Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio, Samson Oletu at Akiewhe and Columbus Abada at Owhelogbo).

The Osewho

The Osewho was regarded as the father of the clan. This office was a reserved right for the descendants of Osue family of Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) and was usually ascended by the oldest member of the family (Interview with Simeon Imonikebe at Owhelogbo, 2006 also with Ovunuwhoyen, Oletu Samson at Akiewhe, 2013).

The origin and the status of this office are still in contention as various versions of its origin and status are told. One of the versions claims that Osue led a delegation of Owhe people to the Oba (king) of Benin to seek his investiture as the king of Owhe clan. Instead, the Oba invested in him the title of Osewho which means father of the town (an equivalent to the Bini title of Odiowere which means the first or oldest in an area, who was usually the political head of the area) (Kolo, 2005:1-2, also interview with Simeon Imonikebe at Owhelogbo, 2006, Oghole Ovie at Owhelogbo, 2013). The Oba also conferred on him the authority to install the Odio-Edhe (Agbaza, 1969:4). The Oba handed over to him a staff of office, which included the usu (Mace) which was the symbol of authority, the ovo sticks that signified the presence of the clan ancestors, a small box that he sat on, and a small cup made of elephant tusk (*Akperhe*) which symbolized royalty. When he returned home from Benin, he built a small palace at Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) where he ruled over Owhe, and his subjects paid tributes to him (Kolo, 2002:1-2).

He engaged the services of young boys as palace guards and messengers. The longest serving boy who may not necessarily be the oldest among them, as seniority was determined by the date of service, headed this group of young boys who were mostly of the same age bracket. The head of this group of young boys was addressed as the Odio-Edhe, the most senior in the age grade. This was the beginning of the edhe society/cult (Interview with Imonikebe at Owhelogbo, 2006, Goodlife Okpobrisi at Owhelogbo, 2013).

Another version is that it was one Emeha from Uruede in Uruovo (now Otor-Owhe) that led a delegation of Owhe people to an Oba of Benin for the purpose of being crowned as king over the Owhe people. He did not realize his desire as he could not meet up with the requirements of the Oba. He therefore bought a juju called edo (Interview with Peter Odukpolo at Otor-Owhe, 2006). This juju was in charge of those who were adjudged

to have died a bad death like committing of suicide, death with pregnancy or during childbirth. Other bad deaths included those who died with swollen abdomen, hands and legs as these conditions were regarded as abnormal and as taboos. Those who died under these conditions were thrown into the evil forest (Aho or ufiobo) and their properties brought before the edo juju in its shrine. Some Uruede street people are still worshipping this juju today.

There is yet another argument that no Owhe delegation visited the Oba of Benin at any point in time, and that the Owhe people evolved the office of the Osewho on their own (Romanus Inana). The title was conferred on Osue based on him being the first grandson of Azagba/Owhe as well as being the eldest male as at when the office of the Osewho was evolved. The office was therefore exclusively reserved for him and his descendants. The Osewho was thus, the head of the socio-political organization while the Odio-Edhe was his Otota (spokesman)(Interview with Samson Oletu at Akiewhe, 2013).

To be eligible to become an Osewho, the candidate must be the eldest descendant of the Osue family of Iluelogbo (Owhelogbo). Some of the Esewho (plural for Osewho) who reigned were: Osue Ogbe, Oyeye Akpede, Omojabo Onoduwe, Ogwosi Evru, Adha Umufowo, Osaine, Oso Akpede, Ekokofe Obo, Enajedu Oso, Umubigho Obo, Omugbe Ogwozi, Obieroma Adha (Monday Ogbo, 2013).

The Functions of the Osewho

The duties and functions of the Osewho are given in different versions along the various contests regarding the origin of the office. Those who associate the origin of the Osewho to the Oba of Benin contend that the Osewho was the paramount ruler and the custodian of all traditions/customs of the Owhe clan. He advised and settled all land disputes and matters pertaining to witchcraft. In due consultation with the Owise - Owhe Chief Priest, he ordered for the commencement of the Owise-Owhe festival. The Osewho appointed all the chiefs in Owhe clan including the Odio-Edhe (now Odiologbo) and his decision in any matter was final (Interview with Obieroma Imonikebe at Owhelogbo, 2006, Kolo, 2002:1-2 and 2008:4). This school of thought graphically informs us that the Odio-Edhe who capitalized on his (Osewho) old age and the support from political affiliates in later years usurped the powers and some of the duties/functions of the Osewho during the era of colonialism.

On the other hand, those who argued that the office of the Osewho evolved indigenously without any external stimuli assert that the Osewho was the father of the clan

and his functions/duties were the serving of some of the clan gods and the crowning of the Odio Edhe (Interview with Benson Ogbaifo, 2013).

Bradbury on his part states that the Osewho was:

The priest of Oto, the land and probably the tribal founder... the Osewho, whose title means father of the town, is the oldest man in the lineage of the founder's eldest son. He advises on land disputes and it is he who installs the Odiologbo, presenting him with the Oṣostick, which represents the spirits of the past edio (Bradbury, 1967:145).

Apart from sacrificing to the Oto (land) deity on behalf of the clan for peace and bountiful harvest, he also called village/clan council meetings to his house to discuss village/clan politics (N.A.I. C.S.O.26, 27989, 1931:25).

The Office of the Odio- Edhe (Odiologbo)

The Odiologbo, which literally means the biggest, or the highest elder, in most Isoko clans is the head of the Odio association (Bradbury, 1964:140, also oral interview with Joshua Emego at Oyede, Lucky Orife at Emevor, 2013) and the head of the clan council. He attained this post by virtue of being the eldest man in the clan.

In Owhe clan, the Odiologbo was not necessarily the eldest man in the clan rather he was the most senior member of the Edhe society/ cult; from where the Odiologbo metamorphosed. (Interview with Romanus Inana at Otor-Owhe, 2010, Samson Oletu, Freeborn Oletu, at Akiewhe, 2013, Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio (Otigho) 2013, Okotie, Oghole Ovie at Owhelogbo, 2013). The origin and the political status of the Odiologbo have generated a lot of controversy as proponents of the various opinions put up arguments to give credence to their views.

A school of thought claims that Osue having been installed as the Osewho of Owhe clan ruled over the clan and the demand of his office made him to employ the services of young boys to run errands for him in his palace. He constituted them into groups according to the date of initiation, the most senior member or the first initiate into the palace irrespective of his age was the senior and the head of the group and was referred to as the Odio- Edhe. It was the Odio Edhe that later metamorphosed into the Odiologbo and the paramount ruler of the clan. This school of thought blames the turn of events on the usurpation of the Osewho's powers by the Odio – Edhe who caught on the old age of the Osewho and the appointment of traditional heads in the Native Court in the re-organized

Native Authority (Assessment Report of the Re-organization of Isoko Clans, 1932: 30. Also interview with Obieroma Imonikebe at Owhelogbo, 2006 also with Oghole Ovie at Owhelogbo 2013).

Legibility and the Enthronement of the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo)

The Edhe society or cult was opened to only the male. To become an Odio-Edhe, a person must first be initiated into the Edhe society/cult. Membership of the society did not *ipso facto* make every initiate an Odio- Edhe. A man may be initiated into the Edhe society either by his mother or by himself after a payment of a customary entrance fee of seventy cowries referred to as *Igwele*, kola nuts, a keg of palm wine, and kaolin (native chalk). The new initiate was marked with kaolin (native chalk) from the forearm to the wrist to signify that he has been initiated into the *Edhe* society.

Every interested female married to an Owhe man could apply to be initiated on behalf of her first child during pregnancy or her first child which she might bear in the future. If the child was a male at birth he was automatically a member of the Edhe society but if the child was a female, the initiation by the mother was deemed to have elapsed (Interview with Rebecca Emezana, 2013).

There was the council of *Edhe* within the *Edhe* society which was made up of the nine most senior members living at any time. If a vacancy existed in the council as a result of the death of a member, the next in seniority in the *Edhe* society was promoted into the council of nine. Seniority was determined by the order of initiation. The Odio-Edhe was the head of the council while the next senior member was the spokesman (Otota) of the council. The Odio- Edhe remained the head of the council for life. When an Odio-Edhe dies, there is usually an interregnum of three years. During which his eldest son living or his next of kin if there was no living son acted as a regent. (Interview with Akpore Ojaigho at Akiewhe, 2013). At the end of the third year, the regency period had elapsed and a new Odio Edhe installed.

Before a new Odio-Edhe was enthroned, he paid tribute to the regent. On an appointed day, the Osewho, the Ediokauru (the oldest men in Iluelogbo (Owhelogbo), Uruovo (Otor-Owhe), and Akiewhe, the Oletu-Ologbo (Prime-Minister) and other Iletu (Ministers) and members of the Edhe society would converge at Ogbodu quarters for the *Elui* (oil) ceremony by the most senior member of the Edhe. If there was any contest about the seniority, the *eberio* ordeal was resorted to by the elders present to determine who the most senior member was. In this ordeal, a kola nut with nine cotyledons was broken and given to the contestants to eat after the spirits of the ancestors and the gods has been

invoked into the kola nut. It was believed that the gods and the spirits of the ancestors would strike dead the liar among the contestants. The contestant who was not too sure of his claim withdrew for fear of the wrath of the gods/ancestors. By this ordeal, the most senior among the edhe members and the Odio-Edhe elect was determined.

The Odio-Edhe elect would perform the elui (oil) ceremony by providing a small pot of oil called *anama* with which the *OSU* juju was served. He also presented *udhe* (₦10:00) and drinks each to the regent Odio-Edhe, the Edhe Council and the three principal communities (Iluelogbo (Owhelogbo), Uruovo (Otor-Owhe) and Akiewhe after which a day for his installation was fixed.

On the fixed day, the Osewho leading the Ediokaro and the Iletu uprooted the usu and the ovo sticks from the regent Odio-Edhe. The usu and the ovo sticks were carried in a ceremonial procession to the compound of the Odio-Edhe elect. Once the usu has been uprooted it was not allowed to touch the ground until it is planted in the Odio-Edhe elect's compound. On arrival of the traditional procession at the Odio-Edhe elect's compound, he presented *udhe* (₦10:00) to the Osewho. The Osewho would plant the usu in a hole that has been dug for that purpose. After this, the Odio-Edhe elect provided a big female goat to the Osewho, which was slaughtered to serve the usu and the ovo sticks. Having served the usu and the ovo sticks, the Osewho crowned and proclaimed him as the Odio-Edhe of Owhe. Once an usu has been planted, it was not uprooted until after the death of the Odio-Edhe and a new Odio-Edhe was about to be installed (Interview with Romanus Inana at Otor-Owhe, 2010, Samson Oletu, Job Owhefere, Michael Awere at Akiewhe, 2013, Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio, 2013). This implies that the Odio – Edhe tenure of office was for life; he was never to be dethroned once he has been installed.

After the installation ceremony, the Odio-Edhe constituted his cabinet, which assisted him in the administration of the clan. He appointed traditional chiefs as well as honorary chiefs. The former was made up of men who were role models in the clan and must be the indigenes of Owhe while the latter were people who had impressed the Odio-Edhe in one way or the other and were made to pay a fee (fees were determined by the Odio-Edhe) before they were conferred with a chieftaincy title. Although he was the political head, each of the villages that made up the clan was still under the rulership of the Edio-Okaro and it was only serious cases that were referred to the Odio-Edhe.

Functions of the Odio-Edhe

The Odio-Edhe ensured among other things that there was peace among the component villages of the clan. He adjudicated on matters that were referred to him from

the village councils. His court was the highest and the last court of appeal in the clan and his verdict was well respected. The judicial system and the code of conduct were the same as were in the gerontocratic era.

He sacrificed first during the annual sacrifice to the ancestors before each man made sacrifice to his individual ancestor (Bradbury, 1964:140). He together with the Osewho and the Chief Priest of Owise-Owhe deity (*Ozere Owise- Owhe*) fixed the date for the celebration of the Owise- Owhe festival. He sat in the shrine together with the Osewho, the chief priest of Owise – Owhe, the Oletu-Ologbo, and the Otota during the festival.

It is said that twelve Edio- Edhe and two Ediologbo (plural for Odiologbo) had so far ruled. Those who fall within our period were:

Iniawo of Iluelogbo, Edukeye of Otibio, Isoje of Iluelogbo, Ekere of Otibio, Aghata of Iluelogbo, Ekpeye of Uruovo, Oso of Otibio. Others are Ikre of Uruovo, Ezakede Omavuowho of Akiewhe, Ebriku of Uruovo, Ajoke of Erawha, and Olomu of Uruovo who was never installed apparently because he was not interested or he could not finance the installation ceremony. (Interview with Ogbaifo Benson, Samson Oletu, Michael Awere, Freeborn Oletu, 2013) and Ogbaifo Agbroje who was the first to be recognized by the government and the first to be addressed as Odiologbo (Clan Head of Owhe clan (Western Nigeria Gazette, Vol.II, No.23,1962). Inana Ejiremem Romanus succeeded Ogbaifo Agbroje in 2002(D.S.L. N. 5 of 2003; Delta State of Nigeria Gazette,Vol.13. No.7,2003:B4) after a protracted succession dispute.

As Olomu was not installed, there was a long period of interregnum as he was the most senior edhe alive and as such, no new Odio-Edhe could be installed until he died. Ajoke was however installed as the Odio-Edhe after his death (Agbaza, 1968).

An Overview of the offices of the Osewho and the Odio- Edhe (Odiologbo)

The arguments put forward by all the contending parties tend to suggest that the office of the Osewho predates that of the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo). The major areas of disagreement are: the Osewho investiture by the Oba of Benin, his rule over Owhe and the claim that the edhe society was instituted by the Osewho.

The claim of Osewho's investiture by the Oba of Benin is not too convincing because there is no evidence or information that the Osewho or the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) ever paid any form of tribute to the Benin monarch as would have been expected for being his source of origin and power. More so, the political system of the Owhe people would have been model along the Benin monarchical arrangement where succession is hereditary from father to son since the Oba wouldn't had given to the Owhe people a system that is

completely different from his (Ifediora, 1994:69-70). Oral traditions of the Owhe clan like most other Isoko clans claim that they fled from the oppressive rule and dominance of a tyrannical Oba of Benin. If this was the case, at what time did they reconcile with Benin and what time did they go back for the title (Okpevra, 2013). It is instructive to remark here that there were three major personalities (The Osewho (father of the town), the Oletu-Ologbo (Prime Minister) and the Ozere (chief priest) in Owhe clan at this time. These personalities were appointed from Iluelogbo (Owhelogbo), Uruovo (Otor- Owhe), and Achewhe (Akiewhe) respectively. The Osewho was Iluelogbo slot of the three major personalities and was given to Osue in recognition of him being the founder of Iluelogbo as well as being the oldest man at that time and first grandchild of Azagba/ Owhe and not because he purchased the title from the Oba of Benin. It is most probably therefore, that the origin of these offices was associated to the Benin monarch who was the most powerful ruler in the area at that time so as to attract credibility and reverence.

The Osewho who was regarded as the father of the town and the oldest man was the head of the odio society and thus the head of the gerontocratic government. Considering the age of the Osewho, one can but accept that he needed some messengers (Iko) who were usually young men to run errands for him. These messengers (Iko) were accorded much respect as they were regarded as the emissaries of the father of the town (Osewho) (Interview with Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio, 2013).

From all the arguments that have been advanced, the Osewho predates the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) and as the titles suggest, Osewho was the father while Odio-Edhe was the most senior member of the Edhe society. The Osewho being the head of the gerontocratic government may have constituted the Edhe society into which he initiated intending members. It was him who installed the most senior member of the Edhe society as the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo). This is perhaps what Badbury attests to when he wrote "...the Odiologbo was taken to the Osewh who installed him by providing to him the ovo sticks which represented the spirits of the past Edio (Bradbury, 1964:145). Foster appears to have corroborated the headship of the Osewho when he submits that "... The Osewho and the Odiologbo were the same person, but if not, the Osewho in theory was the head and council meetings were always held in his compound" (Foster, 1969:300). The Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) could not have been the political head of Owhe clan from *abinitio* as there is no evidence that suggest that. The Odio-Edhe as it were wielded little or no power as such the position was unattractive. This could be the reason why Olomu did not perform the installation ceremony to become an Odio-Edhe. Were it to be as powerful and influential as it later became either Olomu or his family members would have performed the

installation ceremony at all cost. The Odio-Edhe became powerful, influential and attractive after it was politicized and recognized by the Western Nigeria Government (Western Nigeria Gazette, Vol.II. No. 23, 1962).

Government at the initial time was more of service to the people than personal aggrandizement. Every office complemented the other and there was no serious contest for leadership. Too much power was not concentrated in the hand of any one person. No one person took decision without consultation with the other key figures (Ikime, 1972:35), therefore, government was a corporate affair (Interview with Vincent Jonney at Achewhe, 2013, Erebuke Alodia at Otor- Owhe, 2013, David Emeigho at Owhelogbo, 2013).

Owhe Under Colonial Rule (1896 – 1926)

The treaty making of the Royal Niger Company in the 1880s brought the whole of the Niger Delta under the company rule, but the effect of the exercise was not felt in Isoko until 1888 (Ikime, 1965:195), when a company warehouse was opened at coastal towns of Ase and later at Ivrogbo respectively. Even at this, there was no attempt to penetrate inland since the company got palm oil easily from Ivrogbo.

It was the appointment of Sir Claude Macdonald in 1891, as a Commissioner and Consular- General for the Oil River Protectorate, which was proclaimed in 1885, that gave fillips to the penetration into the hinterland and the establishment of British rule there. For effective organization of penetration into the hinterland, Vice- Consuls were stationed at Warri and Benin, and at the end of 1891, Sapele was made a Vice- Consulate and it was from here penetration into the hinterland was organized.

In the years 1891- 1896, the Vice – Consuls in Warri, Benin and Sapele undertook series of tours into the hinterland. It was during one of these tours by Hugh Lecky, an Assistant District Commissioner, Sapele that the Owhe treaty of Protection was signed on 31, August, 1896 (F. O. 2/168). Owhe therefore became the only Isoko clan to enter a formal “Protection Treaty” with the British while the rest of Isoko clans became British territory by default. This treaty gave the British the legal rights to take over control of Owhe and possibly other parts of Isoko when the need arose. The Isoko people were mandated to intensify the production of cash crops and to always take their disputes to the Vice – Consuls for settlement.

Article 1 of the treaty states that “the chiefs of Owhe requested to enter into a treaty with the British” (F. O. 2/168). This statement is misleading because no African leader or people willingly signed off their rights to the colonialists. It seems the Owhe people were deceived into signing the treaty or in their bid to get protected from their hostile and more

powerful neighbours signed the treaty without knowing the full contents and the implications of the treaty.

One other striking thing about the treaty is that nobody signed as the Osewho or the Odio – Edhe or the Odiologbo (see treaty in Appendix A of this work). This lends credence to either Afigbo's assertion that, "the British selected certain natives who they thought were traditional chiefs and gave them certificate of recognition and authority called 'warrant' (Afigbo, 1972: 43).

The above assertions suggest that either the British officers may have undermined the offices of the Osewho and the Odio – Edhe (Odiologbo) as they did in some parts of Southern Nigeria where they appointed "warrant chiefs, or the Osewho and the Odio – Edhe/ Odiologbo were not constituted authority at this time. In any case, the unsuspecting Africans had signed off their rights, sovereignty, and territories, as we shall see later in this work.

On the 31 December, 1899, the Royal Niger Company lost its rights of administration as a chartered company and the territories which were formerly under its sphere passed over to what became known as Southern Nigeria Protectorate. The protectorate was divided into three divisions; western, central and eastern divisions. Consequently, some Isoko clans were placed under the Agberi District of the Central Division with the headquarters in Warri while Owhe clan and the other Isoko clans were in Sapele District. (Cal. Prof.10/3 Vol.1.1900 also Warri District Quarterly Report ending 31 March, 1900). It was after this development that serious attempt was made to penetrate into the Isoko hinterland so as to put it under regular British Government control.

This penetration was constrained by two major factors as reported by Sir Ralph Moore, the High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. He reported in his plan for penetration of the hinterland in the dry season of 1902 – 1903, that two problems that needed urgent solutions. These were the pacification of the people who inhabited the area around the Ase creek who were very troublesome from the days of the Royal Niger Company and latterly to the government. Secondly, the abolition of the "trial by ordeal" of the Eni juju of Uzere that was used for the trial of suspected witches (C. O. 520/15 to C. O. No. 388,1902 and Okpevra,2013). Sir Ralph Moore intended to send a military patrol to the area in the dry season of 1902-1903 but for the advice of Mr. L. Probyns that peaceful means should be used to bring the people under British control. Copland Crawford who was the District Commissioner in Warri and later the Assistant Divisional Commissioner following the advice of Probyns brought the people under control and the eni juju 'trail by

ordeal' was abolished through peaceful means on 9th December, 1903 (C. O. 520/24, 1903 Okpevra 2013). Thus, British administration has been brought into the hinterland.

One major problem that confronted the British administration in what became known as Nigeria was the shortage of work force. It became clear to them that if they were to administer the area successfully, given the strength of their staff, they would have to associate with the African people at some level of administration. This principle had earlier been practiced in the Consular Courts that were established by Sir Claude Macdonald in 1891. In these courts, Africans served as interpreters (Ikime, 1969:169), and by 1896 Native Councils on which Nigerians sat as judges replaced the Consular Courts (Southern Nigeria Government Gazette, No.8, 30 March, 1905:192-5). Equipped with this experience, the Native Court system of administration was recommended.

The Native Court System

It should be recalled that British administration was short of manpower due to inadequate finance and the difficulty in finding those willing to serve in the mosquitoes infested land that was referred to as the "white man's grave". In order to get some manpower, Courts of Equity made up of leading white and black traders were created at the coast to handle commercial disputes between the white and black traders on the one hand and to help the Consul in maintaining law and order. Between 1887 and 1888, the Acting Consul, Harry Johnston set up Governing Councils at given points along the coast to also help in the maintenance of law and order (Anene, 1966:92-4). The years 1891-1896 witnessed the creation of the Consular Courts and the Native Councils where Nigerians served as interpreters and judges respectively.

In 1900, the Native Court proclamation legalized and formalized the already existing courts and by 1901, Native Court Law proclaimed that it was illegal for village, clan councils, and the elders to hold court. Clause xii of the 1901 Native Court proclamation states:

Where a Native Court is established in any district the civil and criminal jurisdiction of such court shall as respects natives be exclusive of all other native jurisdictions in such districts, and no jurisdiction shall be exercised in such district by any other native authority whatsoever (C. O. 588/1, 1901).

This was a calculated and a conscious declaration to strip the Village, Clan Councils and the elders of their powers to adjudicate.

In 1904, a Native Court was established at Uzere, one of the Isoko clans but the people of Owhe, Emevor and Iyede attended court at the far away Okpare in the Urhobo clan of Olomu and this was resented by the people. In 1905, a Native Court was opened at Iyede (N.A.I.C.S.O.26/27994:9) and thereafter Emevor (these are two neighbouring clans to Owhe) which served the environs. (Ikime,1972:51, also oral interview with Japhet Edeki at Otor-Owhe, 2013, Benson Ogbaifo at Otibio, 2013). The Native Court served dual purpose of judiciary and administrative institution. It combined the functions of the present day Local Government Council and the Customary Courts.

Due to the shortage of British manpower, Nigerians called warrant chiefs were appointed as members of the Native Courts. By this development, a new set of leaders had been enthroned in the villages/clans. The Warrant Chiefs were in law appointed by the High Commissioner and could be sacked only by him. By implication, the warrant chiefs became more of the agents of the central and the provincial governments than the representatives of the people. The warrant chiefs took the advantage of their new status and capitalized on the ignorance of the natives to make themselves masters over the people (Ikime, 1972:52). As was with the other people in the province, the Owhe people were detested of this new order by the British whereby, they do not only have to take their cases to other towns for trial but also had to contend with the powers of the court officials who had transformed from servants to masters. This coupled with the fact that the Edio and the Iletu did not quite understand the mode of the constitution of members of the court and perhaps not aware of the Native Court proclamation law, they ignored the Native Courts and continued to try cases in their traditional ways. Offenders were punished in accordance with the Isoko legal system. This was unacceptable to the British colonial government. The government tried to dissuade the people from taking laws into their hands rather they should take their cases to the Native Court but to no avail.

In 1909, it was reported that certain Isoko clans were resisting British authority and refusing to obey court orders by holding court and meting punishment on offenders according to traditional laws. Court officials who tried to enforce court orders were attacked and brutalized. For instance, Court Messengers and Court Clerks were attacked, wounded and chased out of the court at Oleh. The disobedience to the court orders and the inherent disturbances continued to spread in Isokoland. Messrs. H. W. Cook and Captain Richardson who were British Commissioners were sent to investigate and give report about the disturbances with a view to making the Isoko people obey court and government orders.

In their report, it was advised that the visits to the natives should be intensified to hold discussions with them and persuade them to give up the continued holding of their court, and the punishing offenders in the traditional ways. On this ground, Owhe Ozoro and Oleh were visited. Owhe and Ozoro agreed to give up the blinding of thieves and the killing of witches and to take their cases to the Native Court but Oleh vehemently refused to give up the act. The people of Owhe were also turned out of Kwale court on 10 October 1910, when it was discovered that they did not keep to their earlier promise to give up the eye cutting but instead continued with it as the only condign punishment for thieves (N.A.I .C.S.O 418/10, 1909-1911:2 also Onosakponome, 1987:50). The Owhe people may have gone back on their promise to stop the blinding of thieves when they discovered that the District Commissioner was handling Oleh carefully on the same matter. Hence Messr Cook and Captain Richardson reported that unless Oleh is handled with force, it would be most difficult for the District Commissioner to put a stop to the recrudescence of the practice in Owhe and Ozoro (N.A.I. C.O.S. 418/10, 1909-1911:2). Corroborating Cook and Richardson's report, Copland Crawford in his annual report for the year 1910, stated that stronger measures were required to properly bring Isoko towns under British control (N.A.I.C.S.O. 119/VIII, 1910:136). It thus appear that the Owhe people reluctantly agreed to give up the blinding of thieves. Richardson while commenting on the attitude of Owhe people as regard the blinding of thieves said both the chiefs and the people of Owhe maintained that thieves had been their perennial headache and therefore were bent on blinding them. After much persuasion from Richardson, Owhe people agreed to take thieves to the courts to be punished on the condition that after the term of imprisonment, government should keep the thieves and prevent them from returning home (Ononeme, 1969:14). The people's disobedience to court and government orders may have been the people's way of protest against British rule having realized that they have been deceived into signing off their sovereignty ignorantly in a 'treaty of protection' they had no need for.

As the confrontation persisted, it became obvious to the government that the only method left to bring the Isoko clans to their terms was the use of force. It did not take long before military option was taken to get Isoko to succumb in what became known as the British Punitive Expedition of 1911, to Isoko.

The British Punitive Expedition of 1911 to Owhe

The punitive expedition of 1911, was not the first military attack by the British on Isoko. In 1904, a military force under Captain Wally and accompanied by Mr. Wordsworth, then the District Commissioner at Agbari visited Ozoro, Ofagbe and Oleh to

bring them under British control. In this attack, part of Ozoro was burnt down consequent upon the refusal of Amawhe, the head chief of the town to surrender to the invading army a man who had committed murder. Ozoro was revisited by a military patrol in 1905, on the excuse that they (the British) wanted to maintain law and order (N.A.I.C.S.O.26/27991). After Ozoro had been dealt with, Iyede was marched upon in 1908. This was a retaliatory measure taken by the British against the Iyede people for assaulting and sending Mr. Cheke, an Itsekiri man who was appointed as a political agent by the British and was attached to Iyede Native Court away from the town.

Since these military patrols had not completely compelled the Isoko people into accepting the new method of administration that had been introduced by the British, a full-scale military option was canvassed. Letters were exchanged between the officials in Warri, Lagos, and London to approve the military option and to be lunched on Isoko in the dry season months of January to March. The approval was given by the Foreign Office and Mr. A. G. Boyle, the Colonial Secretary Lagos in a letter dated 6th February, 1911 wrote:

His Excellency has approved of the District Commissioner, Aboh to be furnished with escort from the Agbor Garrison to visit the towns in the south western part of the Aboh District, this part of the District has been visited previously by the District Commissioner with an escort consisting of three sections and a maxim gun and it is considered advisable that the escort on this occasion should be of the same strength (N.A.I.C..S.O.418. Vol.10, 1909-1911:1-3).

The details of the military arrangements were left for Mr. Bedwells, the commissioner for Central province to handle while Mr. Richardson was made the political officer of the expedition.

On the 23rd February, 1911, a force composed of Lt. W.G. Mansergh as commanding officer, Lt. Rose, Colour Sgt. Mannion, I. BNCO, 3 sections of the Southern Nigerian Army, a maxim gun and 86 carriers were dispatched from Onitsha (NAI.C.S.O.418. Vol.10, 1909-1911:21) to Utchi when it was discovered that the Agbor Garrison had only three sections. The political officer, Mr. Richardson, joined the escort at Utchi on February 25. Anticipating serious resistance from the Isoko people, Dr. Adams was drafted from Sapele to join the expedition for further reinforcement. The fear of serious resistance may have arisen from the experienced they had in their previous tours. It is instructive to state here that use of words like "Tours, "Visits" or "Patrols" by the British in the documents were actually military forces sent to Isokoland to force them to submit to British authority. The British administrative officers to cover the brute force with which

they coerce the Isoko people under British control used these words euphemistically. Having been reinforced, the Force marched through Iselegu, Ashaka and Emu- Uno. The force arrived at Owhe on 1st March, 1911 at 8.00 am. On arrival, Richardson summoned a meeting of the Owhe people at Uruovo-Owhe (now Otor-Owhe) to inform them that the government has decided and determined to put an end to the blinding of thieves and any other practice it considered barbaric. Some chiefs and *juju* men were taken as hostages and gave the people up to 4.00 pm to produce those who were involved in the blinding of thieves or face severe consequences.

At 4.00 pm, a few people came to Richardson to plead with him to give them up to three months to produce the eye cutters as they have been sent on exile many months ago. To their astonishment, Mr. Richardson produced Adheyiriughe, Orioka, and Ichofu (Edemo Julius Awotu, Igbuku-Owhe, 2015), some of the thieves whose eyes were recently blinded. When the Owhe people realized that their lies and tricks have been exposed, they took to their heels in fear. Mr. Richardson seeing that the people were not willing to co-operate with them, he called on Lt. Mansergh to undertake full military operation on the people of Owhe.

As the onslaught was being carried out at Uruovo-Owhe (Otor-Owhe), Richardson sent for the people of Achowhe-Owhe (Akiewhe), Otibio-Owhe (now Otor-Igho) and Erawha-Owhe. The people refused to honour the invitation, and so Mr. Richardson decided to march on them on the 4th of March, 1911. But to his surprise, the villages have been deserted and everything including food items were removed in a manner that could be likened to the “scorched earth” policy of King Agaja Trudo of Dahomey in the 18th century during the invasion of Dahomey by the powerful army of the Oyo empire. The people decided to wear the British military troops down through desertion and starvation knowing that a fighting army without food is a weak army. However, the Owhe people like the Ezionum people in 1905 (Okolugbo, 2004:58), could not sustain their resistance for a long time because majority of them have fled to the neighbouring villages while those within were almost running short of food supply. These factors couple with the superiority of a well-prepared British army over run Owhe in a military expedition that lasted from the 1st to the 18th of March, 1911 (Ononeme, 1969:17-19 also Onosakponome, 1987:45-52).

After Owhe has been subjugated, Mr. Richardson invited the people and chiefs of Oleh and Ozoro to meet him at Owhe. As they also refused to honour the invitation, Mr. Richardson, and his troops marched to Ozoro and Oleh on the 10th and 14th of March, 1911, respectively. Like the other villages that have been dealt with, Ozoro and Oleh were deserted with all valuables removed before the army arrived. The army of occupation took

over Ozoro and Oleh while expecting the natives to return and surrender to them. Some of the people of Owhe, Ozoro, and Oleh did not return to surrender to the army as the neighbouring communities of Emevor, Iyede, Olomoro, Emede, and Okpe in Isoko and Orogun, Abbi, Igbuku and Emu- Unor in the Kwale District gave shelters to the Isoko refugees while some others fled to Warri. When the District Commissioner, Mr. Buchanan Smith noticed this he did everything to turn the Isoko refugees from their hideouts. Those who fled to Warri were equally forced back by Mr. Gardener, the District Commissioner. As the natives gave shelter to the Isoko people in order to shield them from the British army so did the European officials co-operated whether they were directly involved in the military operations or not to ensure that the Isoko were defeated and the whole of the area placed under complete British control and administration.

From all indications, the task of subjugating the Isoko people through this military operation was so difficult so much, so that Mr. Richardson graphically reported that:

My work as a political officer... is being seriously put back owing to the fact that all surrounding towns are sheltering the people of Oleh, Owhe, and Ozoro. It is also being put back owing to the lack of spies. I have therefore instructed the Court Clerks of Uzere and Aboh to send me three and four Court Messengers respectively. Owing to the facts that all the towns; are refugee places, I think you will agree with me in saying that for the present, court ought not to be held... all districts round the towns dealt with have shown themselves to be decidedly against the government. None of the chiefs has come to see me at all and have made no attempt(sic) to give information and thus show themselves to be unfriendly to the government (N.A.I.C.S.O.4/3 Vol.10, 1911:7).

The invading army was not happy with the co-operation that Owhe, Ozoro and Oleh got from the neighbouring communities. Consequently, the scope of the expedition was extended to cover many more Isoko clans. Like with the Ekwumekwu uprising (Obi, 2004:124), many Owhe people as well as some other Isoko people were killed and properties destroyed and some others were arrested, tried and committed for making war on her majesty's government. Fines, which amounted to over four hundred goats, were imposed on the natives.

Satisfied that the people have been subdued, the invading army left finally for Onitsha on 28th April, 1911, nevertheless, the British did not feel at ease and so they recommended that courts be opened at Owhe and Ozoro as well as constant visits to Isoko areas as a means to sustaining the people's submission. In this vein, by the end of 1911, R.

A. Robert, the Divisional Commissioner in charge of the Central Division was able to claim that Isoko area was under British control.

At the end of the expedition, it was clear that the Owhe people and some other Isoko visited by the British force lost more because the war was fought on their land. Their houses and barns were burnt down, the "*Oyibo juju*" and the "*inyabu juju*" which was suspected as the eye-cutting juju was destroyed, while chiefs Ubrufi, Abugo, Osu, Adhazor, Obi, Amawhe, Ikpire, Owere and Egware were arrested and committed to trial. Various fines were placed on them and their guns were confiscated and thereafter the British administration was firmly established (N.A.I.C.S.O. 4/3.Vol.10,1911:24-27).

On the other hand, the expedition cost the British a huge sum of money and time. It also demystified them before the natives, as they too were afraid of being cut down by the bullets. The resistance put up by the people was so stiff that Richardson asked for the extension of time on the realization that the three weeks period assigned for the expedition was a gross miscalculation. The natives by their resistance have proven to British that they were not as docile as they thought.

Having subjugated the people, the British concentrated on the details of establishing their administration in the area from 1912. Although the British officers who undertook the expedition did recommend the establishment of Native Courts at Owhe and Ozoro, the courts established in 1913, were in Oleh and Enwhe (N.A.I.C.S.O.26/27285,1931).

After the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, Sir Fredrick Lugard who was the Governor of Northern Nigeria in the years 1900-1908 became the Governor-General of the amalgamated Nigeria. While he was Governor in Northern Nigeria, he introduced a Native Administration known as the Indirect System of government, which worked well for him because of the constituted native administration headed by the Emirs that was already in place. Lugard constituted the Emirs as Native Authorities and were given some powers for the purpose of local government. Some other institutions in the Native Administration (Indirect Rule) were the Native Courts, Native Treasuries, and Native Prisons. Lugard desirous of introducing the Indirect Rule system of government in Southern Nigeria promulgated the new Native Court Ordinance in 1914. This was because of all the above-mentioned institutions of indirect rule; it was only the Native Court System that was already in operation in the south. (C.O.656/1.Vol.VIII, 1914).

The Native Court Ordinance stipulated that only Nigerians were to sit as Presidents in the courts while the British officers ceased to be members of the courts but be confined

to the supervision of the courts only. Sir Fredrick Lugard approved the establishment of more courts so as not to give any room to the natives not to take their cases to the Native Courts. In line with this ordinance, mass opening of Native Courts were experienced; Native Court were opened in Owhe, Ozoro and Ivrogbo (C.O.656/1.Vol.VIII,1914). As more Native Courts were established, more Court Clerks, more Warrant Chiefs, and more Court Messengers were appointed to operate the new courts. In the Owhe Native Court, no clan head was recognized rather Native Court members were regarded as village heads. Most Native Court members were Iletu chosen by the villagers to represent them in the Native Court (N.A.I.C.S.O.26/27989, 1931:31-32) These court officials became increasingly aware of their powers (as they checkmate the elders from holding 'illegal courts') and they began to intimidate, harass and molest the people (Ikime, 1972:98).

The seat of the Owhe Native Court at inception was in Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo) but was later relocated to Otibio after the killing of Mr Okotie, the Owhe Native Court clerk and his family at Iluelogbo in 1914, and the subsequent punitive expedition of 1914. Security of the Native Court officials and the equi-distance location of Otibio to the component communities of Owhe clan are some of the reasons deduced for the relocation of the Native Court.

It should be recalled that the Owhe people were already resentful of the court official even before a Native Court was established for them. Given that the attitude of the newly established Owhe Native Court officials were not different, it was clear that a clash was imminent in no distant time. Many factors could be said to have led to the 1914 rising, which culminated in the punitive expedition. There was the peer group influence and the usual allegation of high handedness and the impunity of the court officials. 1914, witnessed a rising in Abbi, a neighbouring Ukwuani community that spread to Emu, Utagba, and Owhe. The immediate cause of the rising at Abbi was the issue of sub-poena in an alleged slave dealing case against Ine, the Onotu of Abbi and the arrest of his son. The confrontation that followed led to the murder of the court clerk and members of his family. The attack and the killing of the court clerk at Abbi perhaps instigated that of Owhe. The immediate cause of the Owhe rising was the allegation and the killing of one Mr. Ewhofobe by court officials.

In those days traveling across or within Isokoland was a difficult task this was due to the swampy terrain and the non-availability of motor vehicles and motorable roads. Movement of goods therefore was by head portorage. It was a common practice by the court officials to force especially young men to provide carriers to the Whiteman whenever he traveled. The natives fondly referred to this as *owaikaria*, a word fashioned from

carrier, and refusal to carry the white man's luggage was usually met with brute-force. Mr. Ewhofobe was said to have refused to carry the white man's luggage and he was thus tortured to death by the court officials. This infuriated the already aggrieved people, and like a keg of gunpowder, the suppressed anger of the people exploded with attack on any court officials at sight. Mr. Okotie and members of his family were murdered and court building and properties were destroyed.

As to be expected, the colonial government responded through military action. Two and half companies of the Nigeria Regiment and one hundred policemen led by Captain Armstrong were dispatched from Abraka to Owhe (Okolugbo, 2004:60) to punish the offenders. At the end of the expedition, properties were destroyed, Omughele Imoniaro, his son Akpokaino, Edaisu, Ematilue and other assumed war leaders were arrested and taken away as captives by the colonial army, and never returned (Interview with Edemo, Julius Awotu, 2015). It has been observed that outrages were always punished with draconian severity, and haven been severely punished in 1911, one would have expected that the Owhe people will steer clear off what could invite the wrath of the British but the Owhe people seem to say that although risings were savagely quelled, it could not prevent them. This was indeed a naked show of resilience in the face onslaughts.

The Warrant Chiefs

Appointment of members into the Native Courts was one aspect the British subverted the people's pre-colonial socio-political organization. As already stated, the administration of the villages and the clan was in the hands of the Ekpako and the Edio before the advent of British administration. When the Native Courts were instituted, young men were appointed members of the court rather than the traditional rulers. The totality of this error of judgment cannot be put on the British officers because in most cases, it was the Edio and the Ekpako that nominated the young men to represent the villages and the clan in the court. They thought these young men were the representatives of the villages and clans who will always report back to them and who could be removed or changed at will. Little did the Edio and the Ekpako knew that they were making a mistake. Isichei seem to align to this submission when she wrote "... Warrant Chiefs were not the traditional elders in the town; the elders suspected the Greek bearing gift and put forward junior members of the community..."

Warrant Chiefs were court members who were issued with certificates of warrant dully signed by the High Commissioner who alone can sack them from office (Onosakponome, 1987:65). The Warrant Chief by this became the local agents of the

central and provincial governments and not representatives of their villages and clans. By this stroke, they made themselves masters over the people and even their former rulers. These men came to have great power and great wealth from bribes (Welch, 1931:565). In 1926, for example one Agadama demanded and collected two hundred and ten Pounds from a family at Otibio to help them through the District Commissioner to redeem a piece of land that was in dispute. When he could not redeem the land he was accused of stealing two hundred and ten Pounds. (N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 118857, Vol. IV, 1926, also Ughelli Papers, file 26/1919). As the Edio and the Ekpako were contending with this situation, they least expected that the worst situation was yet to come.

With the establishment of new Native Courts in 1914; of which Owhe Native Court was among, more Warrant Chiefs and other court workers were needed. Rather than getting recommendations from the village and the clan head for one to be appointed a court member, the British Political Officers relied on the existing Warrant Chiefs for the selection of candidates to be made court members. The existing Warrant Chiefs capitalized on this development and began to extort money from prospective candidates seeking appointment into the Native Court. Prospective candidates in all parts of the province were said to have sent loads of gifts and presents to Chief Dogho; the British appointed Paramount Chief of Warri Province and the President of the Native Court of Appeal holding in Warri to secure his support for appointment into the Native Courts (Ikime, 1972:199). This was the practice till 1920 when it was discontinued. This no doubt eroded the power of the elders and perhaps led to usurpation of their authority. Some Owhe indigenes who were appointed Warrant Chiefs were: Adaka, Erero, Agboge Ovia, Agbawe, Akpisi, Agadama Uvo, Onoke, alias Ugboro, Owhehen Owodai, Obodo and Otobo (Author's personal interaction during field work with Edemo Julius Awotu, Bennet Alukagberie, 2015).

The Court Clerks and the Court Messengers

Other members of the court apart from the Warrant Chiefs were the Court Clerks and the Court Messengers. They owe their appointments to the High Commissioner just as the Warrant chiefs. And were only loyal to him. The primary duty of Court Clerks was to keep records of all cases heard, summonses taken out, and the fees received. Added to this duty was that he summoned members of his court to attend court whenever the court was to sit. Anybody who wanted to take a summons or to get a copy of judgment had to do so under the supervision of the court clerk. The court clerk traveled to the Divisional headquarters on every first day of every month in order to submit his reports and returns to the District Commissioner. The District Commissioner passed out information to the

people through the Court Clerks. While the District Commissioner was occasionally around, the Court Clerks lived with the people and they arrogated to themselves the *de-facto* District Commissioner (Supplement of Government Gazette No.10.1904:187 also Onosakponome, 1987:67). The power of the Court Clerk arose to from the fact that they were usually only the member of the court who spoke and wrote English Language. Given that the European officials did not speak Isoko those who controlled the channels of communication came to wield great power. They therefore became the most important agents, as they were government interpreters (Isichei, 1973:161).

The Court Messengers who were like the Iko (Messengers) in the pre- colonial era were made to serve summons on the people and to effect arrest. The court officials were well respected and feared by the people because of the duties they performed, more especially their closeness with the District Commissioner. These court officials capitalized on these opportunities to exploit and extort money from the natives with the pretense that they can influence the District Commissioner to give judgment in favour of their victims; this they could seldom secure. In 1904, for instance, the District Commissioner at Warri sacked the Court Clerk at Bogidi for indiscipline and arrogating to himself the status of a kind of Native Consul in the area (Gazette, No.10, 1904:187). For these reasons, the presence of the court officials became detestable not only to the Owhe people but also to other Isoko clans and beyond so much so that in 1914, a Court Clerk and his family were murdered and their bodies thrown into a well at Iluelogbo-Owhe. This act provoked Captain Armstrong and he had to lead an attack on Owhe in retaliation (Welch, 1931:564).

Some the Native Clerks and Messengers during our period were; Ogaide, Ogagagboro, Nana,Ogbimi Okpabor, Stephen Erume, Esajabor, Ogbegu, Efenudu Etete, John Emu, Okwe and Okaeme (Edemo, Julius Awotu 2015). Mr. Victor Egho, and Chief Iduku Onowighose (I.D.C. File Nos.55, 57 58 and 59).

Functions of the Native Courts

The functions of the Native Courts were set out in the ‘warrant’ establishing them. The ‘warrant’ states that;

The said court shall subject to the limitations imposed by the Native Courts Ordinance or herein after appearing, have jurisdiction over: All causes or actions arising, and all offenses committed, within the district or towns and villages (and the districts surrounding them) set out in the first column of the schedule to this warrant. (b) All actions and criminal charges brought against a person ordinarily resident in such area, although the cause of

action or any part thereof may have arisen, or the offenses may have been committed outside such area (NAI.CSO.26/27089).

All the courts established this time were grade 'C' Native Court (NAI.CSO.26/27989:60). This category of courts had powers over civil actions in which the debt, demand, or damage did not exceed fifty pounds. The courts also had powers over criminal cases that could be adequately punished by six months imprisonment or twelve months of imprisonment if the case involved theft of farm produce or livestock, twenty-four lashes of the cane or a fine of ten pounds for minor offenses committed.

Owhe Native Court had nine members and the Resident of the Province appointed its president. The court sat for two or three days in a month and it performed the duties specified in the warrant that established it. This court like all other courts handled both civil and criminal cases. A Court Clerk was attached to the court to issue summons and to take records of all proceedings in the court. The record of proceedings was taken in English but evidence was not because the Court Clerks were semi- illiterates and this impaired proper hearing of cases. To surmount this impediment, the court spokesman (Otota) at the conclusion of hearing would summarize the evidence taken (mentioning witnesses) in the presence of the entire court who could check his words. The clerk would then take the summary down at the dictation of the spokesman (Otota) and at the end verdict was given (Onosakponome, 1987:70).

Grievances against the Native Court System

Owhe people like other Nigerians were resentful of colonialism. They saw the new system of government which was in the form of Native Court as a power which has taken their society from them (Welch, 1931;565). This was because before the advent of the British, the elders adjudicated among the people but the Native Court proclamation law forbade them to hold court (C.O.588/1.1901). In spite of the Native Court proclamation Law, the elders kept on holding courts and meting punishments on offenders according to Isoko code of customary laws.

One other grievance against the Native Court was that of distance. It should be recalled that before 1914, Owhe people were made to take their cases to Okpare, a town in Olomu clan of Urhobo. They attended court at Iyede, Oleh and even Warri when a Native Court of Appeal presided over by Dogho and his co-Itsekiri judges was established. The Owhe people and all other Isoko people were resentful of this court as no Isoko judge who knew their customs was appointed as such they declared the court alien and thus requested

for the establishment of Isoko Appeal Court. Their request was granted when an Appeal Court was opened at Ase (though it is not an Isoko town, it was closer to Isoko than Warri) in 1926, (File 98/1929, 1926).

As already stated elsewhere in this work, court officials were unruly and unassuming. They capitalized on their powers and their closeness to the British officers to harass, oppress, exploit, and extort the natives. The over bearing influence and impunity of the court officials made the people to totally detest of the British system of administration in the form of the Native Court.

Administrative Changes and Reforms 1927 – 1947

This period witnessed changes and reforms in the administrations of Isoko land of which Owhe is a part. The government of direct taxation (Osa-uzou) in 1927, was saluted with protest referred to as “Anti-Tax Riot”. The riot forced the government to re-examine their administrative policies. At the end of it, the traditional system of government which had been relegated to the background with the introduction of the native Court System of government for almost three decades was somewhat revived.

Direct Taxation of 1927

Direct taxation was imposed on Nigerians by the legal instrument of the Native Revenue Ordinance. Direct taxation was first introduced in the Northern Region, the Yoruba, and the Benin Province of the Southern Region, which included the former Eastern Region and the former Warri Province, were not taxed. However, the amendment of the Native revenue Ordinance in April 1927, imposed direct taxation in the Southeastern Province of Nigeria, and the Warri Province which Isoko was grouped. (N.A.I.C.S.O 26/2. file 11857, Vol V 1927:5).

Direct taxation was said to have been introduced into Nigeria so as to generate revenue internally for developmental purposes both at the central and local government levels. It was thought that direct taxation will put an end to the high and indiscriminate imposition of fines by the Court Judges. Thus, direct taxation was regarded as the very pivot on which the success of the native Court Administration revolved.

Causes of the Anti-Tax Riot

Although the Native Revenue Ordinance was promulgated in 1927, tax collection did not commence until 1928. This was because the British Officers reasoned that it was necessary to enlighten the Natives about direct taxation, they therefore used the rest of

1927 to tour the province for the purpose of educating the Natives on the need to pay tax as well as to compile names of eligible tax payers. Though the reasons given for the introduction of direct taxation were good in intention, the innovation was bound to be unpopular because the Isoko people were not used to direct taxation. The Isoko people were vexed on the issue because they were not consulted before tax was imposed on them. They only heard in a rumour that they would pay tax to the government. The complaints of not being consulted before the proclamation of the Native Revenue Ordinance did not infuriate the people as much as the translation into Isoko of the word “taxation” (Osa-Uzou) did. (Interview with Ovuewhoyen Ukpevo Akpore Ojaigho Enamivwori, James Owisi).

The Court Clerks and Court Messengers translated tax as *Osa-Uzou*, literally, “Head Fees” to the people. In Isoko, such “Head Fees” were associated with the annual redemption fees slaves and pawns paid to regain their freedom. Therefore, to the Isoko people, paying tax amounted to accepting the status of slaves, which they were not.

As it was during the Aba Women Riot, there was also the rumour that government intended to introduce the plantation system into the palm oil industry which would make the oil they produce valueless and that their palm trees would be cut down (at this time when the prices of oil was low and prices of imported good were high). The call to resist the payment of tax was more vehement when the people further heard that the province was to become a licensed area and anyone who wanted to engage in local gin trade would have to pay a fee (N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857. Vol. V, 1927: 5&27, also Nigeria: Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry, Lagos, 1930).

The Isoko people were also incensed by the feeling that the Church Missionaries Society’s Missionary; Reverend John W. Hubbard may have advised the British government to impose tax on them so long he had experimented on it (and it was successful) with his congregation. Hubbard comments on this thus:

Ever since the Church Missionary Society had had European Missionaries in the Sobo Country, that is to say from about 1918 -19, it had been its policy to make the Sobo Church self-supporting in so far as the salaries and expenses of native agents and teachers were concerned. ... with this object in view, Converts were invited to subscribe to the funds of their church a sum amounting in all to not more than six Shillings a year per person. This Payment was given the unfortunate name of “class fee” ... in about 1926-26, taxation was introduced into Sobo-land; there were strong feelings roused over this, and it was firmly believed by many Sobo that C.M.S. European Missionaries had told government officers about the class

fee system and what a paying proposition it was, and advised them to adopt a similar system... so firmly was it believed by the Sobo, that an attempt was made on the life of a C.M.S. European Missionary, who only narrowly escaped being murdered.(Hubbard, 1948: 73-74).

There was also the rumour that the local court officials who had been exploiting them were going to be made to collect the tax and ten percent of the proceeds collected would go to them. With this mindset, the call to resist the payment of tax met with a ready response.

Mr. Mackay, the District Officer at, Kwale put the causes of anti-tax Riot thus:

The causes of the outbreak can be traced back to many things of which the almost entire lack of a system of Administration and inadequate touring of the administration are two of the most important. The present system of Native Court (most of them are far from the Native in reality) means that the District Officer is merely peripatetic Judge completely out of touch with the people. He does not know the native language but he is surrounded by a ring of interpreters, so far as my experience goes, and many of whom are corrupt..... The gulf between the real elders of the clans and the warrant chiefs has recently become greater owing to doubts as to who will have positions in the new Native Administration. By means of petitions and court cases the warrant chief are trying to get the elders still further into the background and into the bad odour (N.A.I C.S.O 26/2 file 11857. Vol. V 1927:17).

With this mindset, the call to resist the payment of tax met with ready response.

The Anti-Tax Riot

The rumours making round sparked off what became known as the Anti-Tax Riot (*Ozigh–Osa-Uzou*). The Anti-Tax agitation was more or less spontaneous. The courses of the riot included a general trade boycott; a boycott of the Native Courts, rescue of prisoners from jail, hostility to and attack on Warrant Chiefs, Court Clerks, / Messengers, forbidding people from cutting palm fruits and to a lesser degree, hostility to the British administrative officers (Ikime, 1966).

The Iletu and the Ivrawa/Ige on the instructions of the Edio (elders) carried out the forceful closure of Native Courts. At Owhe, Warrant Chiefs, Court Clerks, and Court Messengers were beaten up in the presence of Policemen sent there to effect arrest.

The Anti-Tax Riot was not limited to Isokoland. As the riot was ranging in Isokoland, so also was it in other parts of the province especially in Urhoboland. The Anti-Tax Riot dislocated the social and economic activities of the people. Government therefore decided to act so as to bring normalcy to the province. Police officers were dispatched to Isokoland and other parts of the Province affected by the riot. From August 1927 to early January 1928, the police worked assiduously to return normally to the Province. They patrolled from town to town trying to halt all forms of agitation. People who were identified as ringleaders of the Anti-Tax Riot as well as other partakers were arrested. Chief Kagho Omamodia and a host of others over one hundred persons were arrested. They were charged for intimidating the government, demanding money by menaces from court officials, and holding illegal courts. Those convicted were given sentences varying from three months to three years in prison. Apart from individuals dealt with, the towns that took part in the riot were also punished. The Collective Punishment Ordinance was invoked on Owhe and Enwhe. Owhe was fined one hundred Pound for damaging the properties of Warrant Chiefs and other court officials while Enwhe was made to pay a fine of two hundred Pounds for war-like preparations to resist the approach of the Assistant District Officer, Ase. They were also made to refund all the fines they forcefully collected from the Warrant Chiefs and the other court officials. Prisoners who were forcefully released from jail were re-arrested and sent back to jail (Ughelli papers file SD 41/1928, 1927, also NAI CSo, 26/2 file 11857. Vol. V, 1927:15).

By the end of 1927, the police had succeeded to restore normalcy to the Isokoland and the other parts of the Province, and the stage was set for the collection of taxes in 1928. The Police force which had been under the control of Major Walker, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police was disbanded as it had completed its assignment (N.A.I C.S.O 26/2: 11857. Vol V, 1927: 12-13).

The dispatching of military or police force by the British to deal with various “troublesome” areas during the period of British rule was one of the ways by which the government instilled fear into the people so as to coerce them into submission. The military and the police force were thus, the veritable tools with which colonial policies were enforced.

When it became clear to the people that despite their resistance to direct taxation, the British intention to impose tax was irrevocable, the people began to agitate for those who were to collect the taxes. This was because the pre-colonial political structures have been relegated to the background during the era of the Native Court System and the court officials had become so unpopular with the people. This means that the British had to find

an acceptable way of collecting the tax. The British Administrative Officers therefore turned to the elders (Ekpako/Edio) to collect the tax in 1928. (Onosakponome, 1987: 80-6).

As the investigation on the Anti-Tax Riot revealed that the translation of the word “direct taxation” as “Osa-Uzoa” was abhorrent to the Isoko people, the British therefore adopted lump sum assessment instead of personal assessment. The towns were allowed to pay their tax in lump sum. The tax was calculated on the amount per head multiplied by the number of taxable adults. The efficiency with which the elders collected the tax confirmed to the British officers that the traditional system was still powerful, effective and still accepted by the people despite its three years of relegation.

Consequent upon the riot, the British officers decided to investigate the social and political organization of the Isoko people with a view to locating where power ought to lie so that Native Administration could be rightly established on in. The British Administrative Officers between 1928 and 1930 carried out the investigations, (the investigations carried out led to the intelligence report of the various clans). In the interim, village elders (Ekpako/Edio) were encouraged to settle cases in their communities, and by the end of 1927, it was reported that effective control of the town was in the hands of the traditional council (Ikime, 1966: 566).

The Re-Organization of the 1930s and the 1940s

The Revival of Traditional Institutions and Organs:

By 1930, the extent of the investigation done into the traditional social, political and judicial institutions of the people by the administrative officers had shown that the most effective socio-political organ among the Isoko people of the Province was the village. They also discovered that within the village authority resided with the council of elders, which had its agencies in the age grades (Itu) (Onosakponome, 1987:89).

The investigation into the Anti-Tax Riot discredited the Native Court System and as such there was need for urgent departure from it. When this departure came, it was known as Native Administration. In other words, the title “Warrant Chief” was abolished in 1928 and was replaced with Court Member and the elders (Ekpako) were encouraged to accept Court Membership. Thus, Ezakede who was the Odio of Owhe became one of the court members (N.A.I C.S.O 26, 27989, 1931:39).

One other area overhauled was the powers the Court Clerks and Court Messengers had arrogated to themselves. Inquiries carried out by Mr. J.W. Rutherford; the Resident of Warri Province, into the relationship between the Native Court officials and the people revealed that the Court Clerks and the Court Messengers had made themselves “masters”

instead of servants. It was therefore, thought that for the new Native Administration to worth its onions, and for the traditional heads to have and maintain their prestige, the Court Clerks and Court Messengers had to be brought to their natural position of servants of the court, and by such, subordinate to the traditional heads. To achieve this, the District Officers were to have their own messengers different from those of the Native Administration (Ughelli papers, file 64/1928: 8 also Onosakponome, 1987:89).

The Re-Organizations

The cardinal point of the re-organization was to divide the province into Divisions along the lines of ethnic groupings and the Native Administration was to be based on the pre-colonial socio-political arrangements. In line with this principle, four Divisions were created in the Province: the Western Ijaw, Jekri (Itsekiri)-Sobo, Sobo and Aboh (N.A.I C.S.O 26/3 file 26767 Vol. I. 1930:28). This was a clear departure from what was practiced in the Warri (Delta) Province prior to the 1930, re-organization. Divisions and Districts in the Province were not created along ethnic grouping but were created for the administrative convenience of the British officers.

The Ijaw Division was homogenous in so far as it was made up of only ijaw clans. The Aboh Division was being regarded as being homogenous as it was made up of all Kwale and Aboh speaking clans. The Jekri (Itsekiri) – Sobo Division was made up of the Itsekiri plus five Urhobo-speaking clans of Udu, Okpe Ogharefe, Evhro (Effurnu) and Agbon. The Sobo Division was made up of the remaining Urhobo clans and all the Isoko clans.

Each of the new divisions was to be organized into a Native Administration made up of the village and clan councils. The village and clan councils to be established were to become the new Native Courts, since the village council combined judicial, political and social functions in pre-colonial times. The clan councils were to act as superior Local Authorities as well as Courts of Appeal (N.A.I C.S.O 26/2, file 26767 Vol. 11:31).

The Owhe clan council was made up of Ezakede Omavuowho of Achiowhe, as the Odio, Aruowo, Okpesia, as the Otota (spokesman), Ugobi Illue as Okpoho, Obriku Uruovo, Oye Illue, Okpanwa Uruovo, Itio Otibio, Ekemu Achiowe, Okoro Achiowe, Akohwa Erawha and Otobo Arawa who were all Edio-Edhe . Other members were Enajedu who was the Osewho and Okpomo Uruovo who was the Oletu.. (N.A.I C.S.O 26, 27989, 1931:39).

The new Division did not have an Appeal Court in the first eight years. The District Officer at Ughelli handled all appeals. The envisaged superior Native Administrative

Council for the Division, which was to administer the Isoko and Urhobo people, was not immediately achieved. In its place a finance committee which had representatives of various Isoko and Urhobo clans as well as educated people who were nominated by the sitting District Officer and duly approved by the clans was established. Membership of this committee was not permanent as members could be changed from time to time. The major function of the committee was to draw up financial estimate for the division together with the District Officer. (N.A.I C.S.O 26/2, 11857, Vol. X 1931:35, also Ughelli Papers, 1932:11). The British government deliberately refused to establish the Native Administrative Council so that the local administrations of Villages and Clan Councils could found their feet before considering the establishment of a proper Native Administrative Council. Consequently, administrative responsibility was placed on the village and clan councils, which were seen as the new Native Courts. These councils became the proper and legal Native Authorities, though with the supervision of the District Officer (Assessment report of the Re-organization of Isoko clans 1932:30).

The village councils were constituted with members from all quarters of the village and was headed by the Odiokauru (The eldest male). The clan council was made up of members within the clan under the headship of the clan head (Odiologbo) (N.A.I. C.S.O 26/2, 11857 Vol X. 1932: 35, also Ughelli papers 1932: 11). The Owhe Village Council was granted the power of “D” grade Native Court and the Clan Council, which included Ellu was accorded the power of a “C”, grade Native Court. The court was peripatetic, sitting once a month at Otibio, Iluelogbo, Uruovo and Achiowe (Akiewhe) at intervals (N.A.I. C.S.O. 26, 27989, 1931:1), for six months before it was made to remain at Otibio because Otibio was equi-distance to the three major villages (Iluelugbo, Uruovo and Akiewhe) that made up the Owhe clan.

The Village and Clan Councils performed among other duties, the collection of taxes. The Iletu became the Chief Tax Officers. The efficiency of the tax collection convinced the British Administration that the machinery for local government was well handled. Sixty percent of the total tax collected was given back to the local administration of the area from where the tax was collected plus forty percent of Native court fees. This money was made for the payment of executive and judicial salaries who sat in the council as well as council staff. Part of this money was also meant to finance public works (Assessment Report of Re-organization of Isoko clans, 1932:30)

The appropriation and the distribution of this money were left to the council to handle according to custom. Executive salaries were paid in lump sum equal to ten percent (10%) of the general tax collected from the clan. This was later changed to quarterly lump

sum payments. The total charge of Native Administration Estimate under head II and III was equal to forty-two percent (42%) Tax Revenue. This money was divided among the villages. The Village Council Clerk who prepared the Nominal Rolls under the supervision of the council had two percent (2%). This was paid immediately the Nominal Rolls were satisfactorily completed. The clan got forty percent (40%) in four equal quarterly lump sum (N.A.I.C.S.O.26,27989,1931:34).

In the division of this money (salaries), everyone of working age was entitled to remuneration according to his rank whether as a council member or one of a body of the Ivrawa. The senior Odio received five percent (5%) of the money while the Otota got two and half percent (2 ½%). The third Odio had two percent (2%) and the Osewho one percent (1%). It is not clear why Osewho percentage was lower than the Edio despite his status in Owhe clan politics. The remainder was divided into three parts for Iluelogbo, Uruovo and Achiewhe in amount proportional to the tax paid by each village respectively. At the village, the Odiokauru (the eldest male) got eight percent (8%) and the remainder was shared by the quarters according to the tax collected respectively. Likewise, the head of the quarter received five percent (5%) of what accrued to the quarter. The remaining was divided into lump sums one per class of individual, like the Iletu and working age grade (N.A.I C.S.O 26, 27989, 1931:36). A total sum of seven hundred and seventy-six Pounds, thirteen Shillings (£776.13.0) was collected as tax in Owhe in 1931, while in 1932, a total sum of eight hundred and twelve Pounds, fourteen Shillings (£812.14.0) was realized as tax (Assessment Report of the Re-organization of Isoko Clans, 1932:1).

Judicial function was another important assignment of the Village and Clan Councils. The Village Council which had the powers of a Grade “D” Native Court had jurisdiction over civil actions in which the debt, demand or damages did not exceed five or ten Pounds and criminal cases which could be adequately punished by imprisonment for three months or twelve lashes of the cane or a fine of five Pounds or ten Pounds. The Clan Council with a Grade “C” power had jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases. Civil actions in which the debt, demand or damages did not exceed fifty or one hundred Pounds were handled. In criminal cases, it handled cases, which could be punished adequately with six months imprisonment, or twenty-four lashes of the cane or a fine of ten Pounds or twenty Pounds in the case of theft of farm produce or livestock. The headman of the Otu-Aso (Night Sentry) who was assisted by his henchmen executed warrants of arrest within each village. The Iko (Messengers) who did not wear uniforms but carried their customary staff of office served summons. These Iko had no authority outside their clan area. In case

they were to have official assignment outside their clan areas, they wore one of the brass breast badges (N.A.I C.S.O 26, 27990:30, 1932).

All intra village cases which fell within the powers of the Village Council were heard in the Village Court and were not allowed to go to the Clan Court unless for special reasons and with the consent of the District Officer. Cases between parties who were from different villages were tried in the court of the defendant where both parties agreed; otherwise the case was heard in the Village Group Court or the Clan Court.

In village cases, process was oral and fees were paid to the village head who issued receipt for all payments. Before a case was taken to the Clan Court, from the village, the village head in writing must grant permission after the payment of a fee (N.A.I, COS 26, 27989, 1931:63). Both civil and criminal cases heard in these courts were subjected to the review of the District Officer, who got reports of all the cases heard and gave confirmation to every sentence before it became effective.

The establishment of the Native Authorities did not affect the clan council. The Clan Councils became known as the Local Councils. Its members were elected on tax payer's franchise-one member for every one hundred tax payers and were to hold office for six years. Traditional rulers sat on the District Council as members. Each Local Council elected members to the District Councils and the two District Councils were each to elect members of the Federal Council. Traditional rulers were not appointed into the District or Federal Council but could be members by election through the normal process. In 1949, three set of elections were held and the result favoured the younger and literate persons against the traditional rulers. In what was a surprise to the British Officers, no protest came from the traditional rulers (N.A.I. C.S.O 11857. Vol. XIII. 1957: 8-11). This shows a level of sportsmanship and democratic consciousness among the African rulers. The traditional rulers may have realized too that western education was needed to adapt properly to the new complexity and dynamics of the society.

Native Court Reforms of 1956

The Native Court reforms became necessary so as to conform with the new government system resulting from the Local Government Law 1952. This was to ensure better dispensation of justice. The instrument that brought about these reforms were two circular letters one from the Provincial Adviser with Reference Number: 232/2/82 dated 2nd June, 1956 and the second from the Senior Divisional Adviser with Reference Number: 126/3/62 dated 6th June, 1956. Both letters requested the council to make recommendations for the reform of the Native Courts in its council area.

In line with this request, the Isoko District Council recommended eight Native Courts for the council area to replace the Village Group Native Courts and the Clan Native Courts. Out of the eight Native Courts recommended, the Provincial Adviser approved five. These were: Owhe – Okpe – Ozoro Native Court, Uzere – Aviara – Oyede – Oleh – Irri Native Court, Iyede – Emevor – Olomoro Native Court, Enwhe/Opkolo – Igbide – Erowha-Umeh Native Court and Isoko District Appeal Court. These courts formed the nucleus of the Customary Courts that were established in 1958.

One person was elected from each council ward as a member of the courts while the traditional Clan Head and the Otota (Spokesman) was Ex- Officio member of the courts. In the case of the Isoko District Appeal Court, one member from among the elected member in a clan area was a member. The membership of this court was split into two sections, each having its own President. The appointments of these officers were subject to the endorsement of both the council and the Provincial Adviser. (Oral interview with James Owisi). Members from Owe, Okpe, Oleh, Ellu, Ozoro, Emevor, Iyede and Olomoro clan area formed one section while Erowha-Umeh, Emede, Enwhe/Okpolo, Uzere, Aviara, Oyede and Irri clan areas formed the other section. Each Native Court sat alternately in each of the clans that constituted its area of jurisdiction while in the case of the Appeal Court, each section sat alternately at the District Council headquarters (Minutes of the Isoko District Council held on 16th August, 1956). The courts were entirely separate from from the District Council as against Clan Councils that were also judicial tribunals. They were however not separate from Area Committees as members of Area Committees could also be court members.

The Native Courts operated along this line until 1958 when Customary Courts were established in Isoko District Council Area, in accordance with the Western Region Customary Court Law, 1957. None of these courts had final jurisdiction in any case. The Isoko District Appeal Court heard appeals from the Native Courts while appeals from the Isoko District Appeal Court went to the Magistrate Court at Ughelli.

Customary Court Law 1957

The Western Region Law 1957 stipulated the establishment of Customary Courts throughout the region. These courts were empowered by the law to execute customary laws. The law stipulated that all court duly established by laws or ordinances are deemed to be Customary Court likewise, members of these courts automatically became members of the Customary Courts. The law further stipulated that any case heard or pending in any Native court whether as of first instance or appeal, in the appropriate Customary Court

established by this law and any judgment, order or sentence given may be enforced in the same manner and the same appeal (The Customary Court Law 1957 part XII:64).

The Customary Court Law was not operational in The Isoko District Council Area until 1st of September, 1958. When the law came into effect in 1958, it defined the new Customary Courts as: Isoko Grade 'B' Customary Courts to include Iyede-Emevor-Olomoro while Grade 'C' Customary Courts comprised Owe-Okpe-Ozoro, Uzere-Aviara-Oleh, Enwhe/Okpolo-Emede-Igbide-Erowha-Umeh Courts. Chief Victor Egho of Otor-Owhe was elected a member of the Owhe – Okpe – Ozoro Grade 'C' Customary Court and later President Isoko Appeal Court (W.N.R.L.362 of 1958, 8606: Isoko District Council Customary Court).

Party Politics in Owhe Clan – 1950 – 1962.

The reforms that brought the Isoko clans and some Urhobo clans together for administrative convenience had some far-reaching effects. It is not that Isoko was only treated as a junior partner of the fusion but all the Isoko clans were treated as one unit. The consequence of this therefore, is that it is difficult to discuss any Isoko clan in isolation at this stage of agitation for the separation of Isoko from Urhobo. It means therefore, that Owhe clan would be properly focused after the attainment of separateness of the Isoko from the Urhobo.

Although some administrative concessions had been granted to Isoko, the agitation for the separate division did not end. The election of 1951 that sent Chief J.E. Otobo to the Western House of Assembly generated grievances among the Isoko and thus intensified the call for the creation of Isoko division. The Isoko had two major grievances. The first was that, going by population, the Isoko deserved more than one seat that was given to them out of the six seats meant for the division. Secondly, they resented their representative being referred to as member for Eastern-Urhobo Division, instead of for Isoko. The Divisional Officer of Ughelli commenting on the allegations in his Annual Report confirmed that the Isoko were cheated in the allocation of seats in the House of Assembly. He argued that Isoko ought to have two seats out of the six seats based on its population (N.A.I. C.S.O, 26/2/11857 Vol. XVIII, 1941-51:50)

The agitation for separateness was not peculiar to the Isoko, the Urhobo clans that were in the Jekri-Sobo Division agitated for their own division and it was granted to them when the Western Urhobo Native Authority was created in 1938. The Ndokwa people also agitated to be separated from Aboh dominance (Ikime, 1972:115). These agitations were

bound to arise because before the advent of the British, these people related among themselves on their own volition and as equals.

The new relationship fostered by the Europeans created a new pattern of inter-group relations, which had created inequality among the various groups. The groups at the coasts or nearer the coast were advantageous than those in the hinterland in both academically, economically and socially. Their early contact with the Europeans exposed them to western education and large scale commercial activities. This contact therefore transformed their lives tremendously and this made them more advanced in all spheres of life than those in the hinterland who had direct contact with the Europeans lately. The inequality created by this new pattern of inter-group relation in the Province endured until date. The journey to the realization of the desire for separateness started in earnest in 1952, with the proclamation of the Local Government Law by the Western House of Assembly.

The Local Government Law of 1952

In 1952, the Western Regional Local Government Bill was passed into law. The law stipulated that Democratically Elected Divisional, District and local councils, should replace the Native Authorities. The law also introduced a new system of Local Government Councils and abolished the Local and Clan Councils, membership of which was based more on old age than on popular elections. Each of the new councils was to indicate the method of the election or appointment of elected and traditional members. The law also introduced new fiscal measures, which included rates, rents, and licenses to generate revenue for the newly established Local Government Councils. This Local Government Law was in operation until 1957, when a new law came into effect. (Western Region of Nigeria: Local Government Law 1952). Although the Isoko people did not benefit from this law immediately, it seemed that a journey of one thousand kilometers had started with a step.

In 1955, the Urhobo-Isoko Federal Administration was dissolved and two autonomous Rural District Councils – Central Urhobo and Isoko District Councils were established with headquarters at Ughelli and Oleh respectively. This implies to a large extent that a break from the Urhobo by the Isoko had been achieved.

The Isoko District Council

The instrument that established the Isoko District Council, Oleh, was contained in the supplement of the Western Regional Gazette No. 4. Vol. 4 of 21st July, 1955, Part B. It provided that the area of authority of the council shall be the Isoko District Council made

up of Emede, Igside, Okpolo, Erowha Umeh, Olomoro, Iyede, Emevor, Owhe, Ozoro, Okpe, Aviara, Uzere and Oleh clans. It also specified that the council shall have a President and forty elected members representing forty wards into which the District Council was delineated. Those who were eligible to vote were those whose names were in the voters' register of the wards. The instrument further states that the Isoko District Council was to be an ALL – Purpose Rural District Council. The election to the council was to hold on 15th of September 1955, and the first meeting of the council was to hold on the 21st September 1955 with at least twenty members forming the quorum. (Western Region of Nigeria: Local Government Law 1952)

For the effective take off, the two newly created Native Authorities – Central Urhobo and Isoko District Councils from the defunct Urhobo – Isoko Federal Council, there was need for the sharing of the staff, assets, and liabilities. A committee was set up for this purpose and the committee met on Friday, the 5th of August, 1955 for the sharing. Forty-three staff under Mr. J. Asidi as secretary left Ughelli to start the Isoko District Council as Pioneer staff. The siting of the headquarters of the newly created Isoko District Council generated disagreement. While the siting of the headquarters was yet undecided, Uruovo-Owhe (now Otor-Owhe) was used as a temporary headquarters for two weeks before the choice of Oleh as the headquarters of the Local District Council was made. (Onosakponome, 1987: 113, also, Interview with, Japhet Edeki and Samson Oletu)

In accordance with the instrument establishing the District Council, elections were held on the 15th of September, 1955 in all the forty electoral wards. The election was by direct method and Multiple Ballot Box System. The Federal Register of voters was used for the election. Eligible voters were adults of twenty-one years of age or above who resided in the area of the electoral ward. The tenure for elected councilors was three years and representation was based wherever possible on five hundred voters per ward (Onosakponome, 1987:111).

Out of the forty electoral wards, Owhe had six electoral wards. Two of the six wards returned Ellu councillors, while one was for Akiewhe-Owhe, two for Iluelogbo – Owhe (now Owhelogbo) and one for Uruovo – Owhe (now Otor-Owhe). The councilors that represented Owhe clan were; F.O. Omodior, Agbroje Ogbaifo, S.O. Edegwa and S.O. Erume. They all won their elections on the Action Group (A.G) platform. On the 16th, January, 1960, Mr. F.O. Omodior was elected chairman of the council as a result of Mr. J.E. Otobo's (who was chairman) appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Planning in the Western House of Assembly. During the period before 1960, Mr. J.U.E. Agbaza of Owhe also served as Secretary to the Isoko District Council (Minutes

of Isoko District Council Meeting, 04/01/1956). Party politics at this point started creating its allies and foes in Owhe clan. Although the Action Group was the dominant political party in the clan, some elements belonged to the opposition National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C), which later became known as the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C) (Oyakhilome, 1968: also, interview with Benson Ogbaifo and Samson Oletu, 2013)

Although the Local Government Law provided for the inclusion of traditional members in Local Government Councils, the instrument that established the Isoko District Council did not provide for any. Traditional members were appointed into the council after the approval of the Council's resolution to that effect by the Honourable Minister of Local Government in 1960. The instrument that established the council was amended on 1st of June, 1960, and it provided that the council shall consist of fifty-four members. These included the President, thirteen traditional members, and forty elected members. It added that of the thirteen traditional members, ten members should continue to hold office and their tenure of office should not terminate with the tenure of elected members. These ten traditional members shall be persons at the time holding the traditional titles of Clan heads of Irri, Owhe, Ozoro, Okpolo, Emede, Igbide, Uzere, Erowha-Umeh, Aviara, and Okpe. The clan head of Owhe by this arrangement became a member of the council. Thus, party politics and affiliation, found its way into the traditional setting of Owhe clan. The squabble and rancour this new development smuggled into the traditional headship of the clan is better imagined – the stage was now set for succession dispute.

Similarly, the entry into party politics of two young enlightened Owhe indigenes – J. Igbrude and J.U.E. Agbaza of the N.C.N.C and the A.G, respectively opened another page in the political history of Owhe clan. Mr. J. Igbrude returned from England where he went to study law in late 1960. On his return, he was appointed a Legal Adviser to the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), in the Isoko area while Mr. J.U.E. Agbaza was an Action Group Honourable Member of the then Western House of Assembly. These two later became political rivals and antagonists, both with his followership. The various role-played by them in the event to be unfolded, will be subsequently revealed.

The Succession Dispute and the Emergence of the First Government Recognized Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) of Owhe Clan in 1962.

What culminated into the first succession dispute to the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) of Owhe position was the claims and counter-claims by both Okpewo Atunu and Ogbaifo Agbroje to the office. These claims generated serious tension and disaffection among the

Owhe people and this portend threat to the peace that existed in Owhe clan. In a bid to forestall the impending crisis and the break down of law and order, the Mid-Western Regional Government of Nigeria set up a Commission of Inquiry into the dispute in 1968.

In Owhe, the person who would succeed the reigning Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) was always known before hand. Seniority in Edhe cult /society to the ninth position was ascertained during the “Elui” (Palm Oil) Ceremony or the “kwova” (installation) ceremony. The person adjudged next in rank to the reigning Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) provided the palm oil with which the “*Osu*” *juju* was served during the “*Elui*” (Palm Oil) ceremony at Ogbodu quarters, Akiewhe. After the ceremony, he becomes the Otota-Odio, the Odiologbo’s Spokeman and he was then regarded as the successor apparent to the reigning Odiologbo. CH,47/2, 1968 :8).

Both contestants claimed that they were present at the installation ceremony of Odio Ejoke and participated actively in the “Elui” and “Kwovo” Ceremonies. They also claimed that their mothers initiated them both into the “Edhe” cult /society during the reign of Ekpeye. Although Okpewo Atunu was by age older than Ogbaifo Agbroje, seniority at the “Edhe” cult /society was determined by who was initiated first. Okpewo Atunu was the fourth child and proceeded by two male children of his mother, while Ogbaifo Agbroje was the first son of his mother. The actual contest to the throne started on the demise of Ejoke in 1957. At his death, Ologbo his son became a regent for three years as the tradition demanded. It was after the expiration of the regency period that both contestants put up their claim to the throne.

The dearth of written records and the not hereditary nature of succession (from father to son), the absence of established Ruling Houses in Owhe clan were some of the reasons for the succession dispute. In this situation, some mischievous elders and Iletu subverted laid down traditions for material gains. Secondly, political affiliation and patronage was also used to undermine due process of selection.

It should be recalled that the Macpherson constitution had given impetus to political activities, coupled with the fact that Isoko District Council was created in 1955, and Councillors were elected to represent Owhe clan at the council. These developments created political awareness in Owhe clan. At the peak of this contest, politics ate deep into the social fabric of Owhe clan. Every action was given political interpretation. According to Oyakhilome, ‘there were “two Owhe,” the Owhe loyal to the defunct Action Group (AG) and the other Owhe loyal to the defunct National Council of Nigerian citizens (NCNC). The two political parties were headed by J.U.E. Agbaza and J.O. Igbrude respectively in Owhe clan (CH,47/2, 1968:12).

Basis for the Contest of Odiologbo

Chief Okpewho Atunu made three claims that his mother was admitted into the ‘Edhe’ society of Odio Ekpeye and by the virtue of this initiation he (Okpewho Atunu) became a member of the “Edhe” society of Odio Ekpeye. Secondly, that he was the only surviving senior Edhe (senior member) of the “Edhe” Ekpeye. Finally, that he performed and fulfilled all the customary requirements pertaining to the installation after the death of Odio Ejoke and after the expiration of the three months period of regency; he was installed as the Odiologbo of Owhe.

Ironically, Mr J.U. Agbaza who was the Chairman of Isoko District Council submitted the name of his party man (Action Group), Chief Ogbaifo Agbroje. The Action Group led government of the Western Region then recognized him as the Odiologbo of Owhe ostensibly to compensate him, Chief Ogbaifo Agbroje for stepping down for him in the election to the Isoko District Council and to serve as punishment to Chief Okpewho Atunu for belonging to the opposition party (N.C.N.C.). This view was also corroborated by Ojaigho Akpore who claims that Ogbaifo Agbroje was never installed at any time as the Odiologbo (Odio- edhe) of Owhe (Ojaigho Akpore, 2013).

On the other hand, Chief Ogbaifo Agbroje claimed that his mother was initiated into the ‘Edhe’ Ekpeye on behalf of her unborn child. His birth as the first child and a male child conferred the status of ‘edhe’ on him. He contended that after Ejoke’s death and the expiration of the three years of regency, a date was fixed for the selection of the senior ‘Edhe’. At this meeting, it became necessary to find out how and when both of them were initiated into the “Edhe” society. Both of them claimed that they were initiated into “Edhe” through their mothers during the reign of Odio Ekpeye.

According to him the elders present, disqualified Okpewho Atunu because he was neither the first child nor the first son of the mother and as such his mother’s initiation was deemed to have elapsed. By this disqualification, Ogbaifo Agbroje was approved as the Odio- Edhe elect, therewith performed all the required ceremonies, and was subsequently installed as the Odiologbo (Odio-edhe) of Owhe clan.

Chief Okpewho Atunu became opposed to his installation as the Odio-edhe of Owhe only after his party member; John Igbrude was appointed as the Minister for Health. Having been made a Minister, he attempted to install his N.C.N .C. supporters to the traditional thrones of various clans in Isoko. He appointed some of them as Court Members and some others caretaker Committee Members of the Isoko District Council. He caused two chiefs; Chief Amukpo of Ellu and Chief England Ogodo of Okpolo-Enwhe to be

recognized and appointed into the House of chiefs. He deposed the Odio of Emevor through the Commission of Inquiry he caused to be constituted on the Odio of Emevor chieftaincy so that his N.C.N.C. supporter could become the Odio. Although the Odio was deposed, his (Igbrude) candidate could not ascend the throne because he died before he could be installed (Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Odio of Owhe Chieftiancy, 1968).

Ogbaifo Agbroje also claimed that though John Igbrude had the power to depose him, he did not venture into it because he was scared of the wrath of the gods. He therefore encouraged the writing of petitions by Chief Okpewho Atunu (CH,47/2, Exhibit 6, 1968:15).

It could be noted from the above that this was a peculiar type of succession dispute. Usually succession dispute erupts when the throne is vacant but in this case, the real dispute would seem to have started after Ogbaifo Agbroje had been installed and even after his recognition as the Odiologbo (Odio-Edhe) of Owhe in 1962, by the Western Regional Government (Nigeria Gazette No.23. Vol.II. 1962).

Mr. T.E Oyakhilome, the then Ag: Senior Divisional Officer, Ughelli and Sole Commissioner in the Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate the succession dispute in his confidential report recommended that:-

Chief Ogbaifo Agbroje the present and recognized Odio of Owhe is the rightful claimant. He should therefore continue to enjoy Government recognition as the Odio of Owhe as indicated in the Western Nigeria Notice No. 355 and published in the Western Nigeria Gazette No.23 Vol. II of 29th March, 1962 and that Chief Okpewo Atunu should be warned to co-operate and keep the peace (CH 47/2, 1968:14).

Consequent upon this report and the death of Chief Okpewho Atunu the dispute was laid to rest and Chief Ogbaifo Agbroje reigned as the Odiologbo of Owhe until his death in 1993 (Ojaigho Akpore, 2013).

Effects of British Administration and Party Politics on the Political History of the Owhe People

It would seem from all indication that the British craftily designed the Treaty of Protection between the British and the Owhe people in 1896. It did not only confer on the British the trading rights in the area but made them the overlords of the natives as well. This implies that the people had ignorantly signed off their sovereignty.

It should be recalled that the punitive expedition that was launched on Owhe in 1911, was claimed by the British to put a stop to the “barbaric” act of blinding of thieves. This expedition according to (Anene1966:61) more than the “Paper Protectorate established British rule in Owhe clan. Having subjugated the people, British rule was put in place in form of the Native Court. As was the practice in this part of Southern Nigeria in pre-colonial times, the village and clan government was in the hands of the elders (Ekpako). This new order forbade the elders from adjudicating as the traditional system of government was regarded as a naked display of primitiveness while the Native Courts that were arbitrarily established were portrayed as means of teaching the natives better ways of governing themselves (Anene, 1966: 263). By this new order, the entire indigeneous socio-political organization was replaced with the Native Court System of government. The District Officer ensured that the duties of the Edio and those of the Iletu were performed by the Court Clerks, the Warrant Chiefs, and the Court Messengers. By implication, power and influence shifted from the traditional structures to the Native Courts (Onosakponome, 1987:90).

This shift of power created a new class of Africans- the Court Clerks, Court Messengers and the Warrant Chiefs. They capitalized on their new status, their closeness to the British Officer to exploit their fellow Africans by extorting money from them under the pretext of getting favour for them from the District officer. This was seldom accomplished because the court workers lacked the courage and bravery to discuss such matters with their superior European officer. Basically speaking, their relationship was that of “master and servant”.

It has been pointed out in this discourse that in a bid to raise fund for Local Administration, the British introduced direct taxation in 1927. This sparked off riot in every part of the Delta Province. The riot compelled the government to investigate the socio-political organization of the native people in the pre-colonial time. Although this investigation restored the lost glory of the traditional system of government its power, authority, and influence were never fully restored. The traditional head even as a member of the court had no much influence on the decisions or verdict passed in the court. This was an abrogation of what was obtainable in the pre-colonial times, when the traditional heads and their councils served as the final Courts of Appeal.

Furthermore, the dislocation in traditional governance between the period of the establishment of the Native Courts and when the traditional institution was ‘restored’ created a vacuum. The long break from the traditional system no doubt affected the hierarchical order in the traditional political institution as well as the laid down procedures

for the selection and the installation of the traditional head. This may have been responsible for the succession dispute between Okpewho Atunu and Ogbaifo Agbroje and the recent leadership controversy between the Osewho and the Odiologbo.

In the pre-colonial time, government was a corporate affair as the elders consulted among themselves before decisions were taken but with the introduction of party politics, decisions were taken without any consultation with the elders rather consultations were held with political colleagues. The traditional head has thus lost his place of pride (Vincent Johnney).

In the pre-colonial times, the “Edio Council” who stuck strictly to the selection procedures as stipulated by the Owhe tradition determined the selection of a new Odio-Edhe. This is no longer so as the selection and enthronement of an Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) is influenced politically regardless of him being duly initiated into the ‘Edhe’ society or not. The traditional Staff of Office the “*Usu*” was no longer the symbol of acceptance and authority rather, government issued Staff of Office (Western Nigeria Gazette, No.23. Vol.11:1962) to whosoever they had affiliation with in the thinking that such favoured traditional head will help mobilize and deliver their domain for them during elections. The consequence of this is that traditional ruler no longer had the interest of their subjects and domain uppermost rather the interest of politicians and political party that installed him became paramount.

The government meddlesomeness in the selection and the enthronement of the traditional head made him answerable to the government and any act of autonomy or disloyalty to the government was met with a threat of either sack or outright sanction (Ujumadu,2006:10).Party politics apart from defiling the sanctity of the throne, divided the clan along political interest. This created misgivings and acrimony in the once united clan. Oyakhilome in his report of the inquiry on the Odio of Owhe chieftaincy dispute observed that:

“Politics has eaten deep into the social fabric of Owhe clan. Every action is capable of political interpretation in short there are virtually two Owhe; there is the Owhe loyal to the banned Action Group (AG) and the other Owhe loyal to the banned National Council of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C).(CH,47/2,1968:12).

What Oyakhilome observed years back has become fully entrenched in the political atmosphere of the Owhe traditional institution.The political undertone in this succession dispute between Atunu Okpewho and Ogbaifo Agbroje thus laid precedence for future contestants for the throne. Similarly, the succession dispute that erupted at the demise of

H.R.H. Ogbaifo Agbroje in 1993, cannot be said to be settled without allusion to political stratagem and chauvinism.

The changes the socio-political organization of the Owhe people underwent over the years cannot be said not to have had positive and far-reaching transforming effects on Owhe political history. It should be recalled that the immediate reason for the punitive expedition on Owhe by the British in 1911, was the conflict in the code of laws between the dispensation of justice among the Owhe people and that of the British. The British administrators considered some of the punishment meted on offenders to be too harsh for the offense. For example, thieves had their eyes blinded under the Owhe Code of Laws, but the introduction of the Native Court System of administration sanitized the judicial system. The District Officer heard cases and judgment was no longer given arbitrarily, punishments meted out on offenders were proportionate to the offense committed.

The office of the Odiologbo of Owhe has since become very attractive after the Western Nigeria Government gave recognition to it vide; the gazette of 1962. The Odio-Edhe, which was more of selfless service with little or no political authority, got a wider recognition, influence, and authority (Ojaigho Akpore 2013,).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION TO STUDY

Conclusion

This work is an attempt to write some aspects of Owhe history, which might be lost. From the study, there are manifestations that an Isoko immigrant from the Benin area may have founded the clan. Their initial form of political organization was the gerontocratic system of government, which was anchored on age grade. The village council, which was an assemblage of knowledgeable elders, was the political engine room. The highest decision-making and taking body of the village council was the Edio (Elders) council. The Odiokaro who was the oldest man in the village headed this council. The Odiokaro arbitrated and adjudicated in due consultation with the elders, and this gives the council its concillair nature. This system was later abandoned for a more centralized system, which had the Osewho and the Odio-Edhe (Odiologbo) as the key players.

Although this arrangement appears to be centralized, no Clan Council existed in the real sense of the word. Owhe clan was different from most Isoko clans, which lived in a single village. Government was through the Village Councils which though virile, nevertheless showed little cohesion. They had no regular meetings except few emergency meetings to discuss matters of urgent importance. It seems the title and the office of the Osewho predates that of the Odio-Edhe or the Odiologbo but none of these offices wielded any political power of note, they started becoming attractive after the reorganization of the Native Courts of the 1930s and 1940s which allowed for the appointment of traditional heads as court members. Nevertheless, the Owhe people for the purpose of peaceful coexistence, put in place their own code of laws and conduct with which they governed themselves before the advent of the Europeans.

In 1896, Owhe signed a Treaty of Protection with the British. This treaty put Owhe and by default the other Isoko clans under the British control. The conflict between the Owhe Code of Laws and that of the British provoked the punitive expeditions of 1911 and 1914. The establishment of the Native Court system of government relegated the indigenous socio-political organization to the background especially with the nomination of young men as representatives of the villages and the clan in the native court instead of the pre-colonial traditional heads. Although the traditional political system was revived following the recommendation of the committee that investigated the Anti-Tax Riot of 1927, it functioned not without the dictates of colonialism. There are also indications that party politics introduced another form of political rivalry into Owhe. Political Parties and

government support rather than the laid down procedures became the major determinants for the selection and the installation of the traditional head. The traditional institution was therefore no longer apolitical.

By and large, a relationship which started with a mere signing of a treaty between the people of Owhe and the British in 1896, has far reaching effects not only on its political history but on the entire history of the Owhe people. The British system of life has almost become a norm and reverting what colonialism has subverted is a tantalizing possibility.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research no doubt has deepened the understanding of Owhe political history and if its teachings could be interpreted and grasped, it would help to mould the character and action of the people to the betterment of the clan. This work also reveals that no matter how timid and primitive the pre-colonial socio-political organization of the Owhe people may have appeared to the British, it was capable of coordinating the people to operate under their own Code of Laws. This work has also explained the socio-political situation of the Owhe people and shall thus throw up challenge to find solution to the situation. This study shows that the Owhe people were resilient even in the face of the colonial onslaught. In this context, colonial rule did not totally subvert the pre-colonial socio-political institution rather it underwent modernization.

Recommendations

From the statement of the problem of this study, it is obvious that there is disaffection in the clan, which portends grave danger to the peaceful and corporate existence of the Owhe people. This disaffection emanated from the alleged usurpation of the Osewho by the Odio-Edhe (now Odilogbo) in time past. The protagonists of this allegation postulate that the Osewho was initially the paramount ruler of Owhe clan and so should revert to *status quo ante* or at best, Owhelogbo clan should be created from the present Owhe clan where the Osewho could reign. Arising from the above, it is appropriate to formulate some recommendations.

The people should be made to realize that change is of the essence. Some of the observable in the smaller socio-political arrangement of pre-colonial Owhe have disappeared in the new scheme of administration in the clan. Therefore reverting to the pre-colonial order is not only near impossible, but out of fashion and capable of opening a new can of worms which, could lead to an uncontrollable political upheaval.

Due recognition should be accorded the office of the Osewho being the father of the clan and the kingmaker. This will not only give him the sense of belonging but would dignify and put him in a pride of place.

There should be a renewed and increased synergy between the Odiologbo and the Osewho as this will replace mutual suspicion with mutual trust.

It was observed that the dearth of historical record on Owhe created historical lapses. This calls for urgent reconstruction of Owhe history. Detailed and accurate historical events should be kept in writing to serve as reference in the future.

The people's ancestral bond should be primordially awakened and ignited. Emphasis should be only on things that promote unity while those fanning ember of disunity and rancour should be de-emphasized.

It is hoped that if the process of confidence building is initiated and vigorously pursued, genuine reconciliation and acceptability is achievable. Until this is done, it can not be said that the people have adapted to the growing political trend and the challenges of this millennium.

REFERENCES

Primary Source

List of Informants in Oral Evidence

Name	Age in Years	Town	Status	Occupation	Date
Chief. Oletu, Samson	90	Akiewhe	Elder	Farming	03/03/2013
Mr. Awere, Michael	65	Akiewhe	Community Leader	Farming	03/03/2013
Mr. Omodavwe Efi	72	Akiewhe	Elder	Farming	03/03/2013
Mr. Ogbo, Monday	50	Akiewhe	Regent Odoiokauru	Civil Servant	21/05/2013
Mr. Okoh, Moses	45	Eniagbedhi	Community Chairman	Business	20/06/2013
Chief (Mrs) Oletu, Comfort	64	Akiewhe	Ex-Woman Leader	Farming	03/03/2013
Chief. Abada, Columbus	72	Owhelogbo	Elder	Farming	20/02/2012
Chief. Egwase, Edosomwam	70	Benin-City	Elder	Trading	11/10/2013
Mrs.Ebogbare, Rebecca	63	Akiewhe	Woman Leader	Trading	22/04/2013
Odukpolo, Peter	72	Otor-Owhe	Community Leader	Farming	16/07/2006
Chief (Mrs) Nihonoke Osula	68	Benin-City		Trading	11/10/2013
Mrs. Emezana, Rebecca	92	Akiewhe	Elder	Absentee Farming	08/11/2013
Chief. Ovie, Ogholo	60	Owhelogbo	Community Leader	Business	12/09/2013
Mrs. Airhuleyefe, Catherine	40	Benin-City		Civil Servant	11/10/2013
Mrs. Okpokpo, Mary	70	Akiewhe	Community Leader	Farming	04/07/2011
Mr. Ukpevo, Ovuewhoyen	95	Akiewhe	Elder	Absentee Farming	24/02/2012
Madam. Ithulebe, Otit	79	Akiewhe	Ex-Woman Leader	Farming	07/05/2012
Hon. Emaziye, John	62	Iyede	Community Leader	Business	11/04/2011
Mr. Emezana, Thomas	53	Akiewhe		Business	08/11/13
Madam Imoh, Obonometehe	58	Owhelogbo		Trading	25/11/2010
Chief Ogbaifo, Benson	85	Otibio	Regent Odiologbo of Owhe (1993-2003)	Retired Civil Servant	03/03/2013
Mr.Okpofi, Ohwatake	53	Akiewhe	Oletu	Farming	25/06/2012
Mr .Oletu, Judge	39	Akiewhe		Business	22/11/2011
Mr. Ikpawona, Fred	70	Ovode	Community Leader	Business	18/09/2013
Mr. Eture, Edward	53	Otor-Owhe	Oletu	Farming	13/10/2013
Chief Okpobrisi, Goodlife	54	Owhelogbo	Community Leader	Civil Servant	10/05/2012
Chief Oletu, Freeborn	53	Akiewhe	Community Leader	Business	03/03/2013

H.R.H. Romanus Inana	64	Otor-Owhe	The Odiologbo of Owhe (2003-	Absentee Business	17/11/2011
Chief Efenudu, Julius	82	Otor-Owhe	Community Leader	Trading	12/03/2011
High Priest. Ojaigho, Akpore	67	Akiewhe	Chief Priest of Owise Owhe Diety	Absentee Farming	09/04/2010
Hon. Owisi, James	76	Akiewhe	Community Leader	Retired Civil Servant	16/04/2010
Hon. James Otobo	80	Uzere	Elder Statesman	Absentee Business	04/10/2009
Pa. Simeon Imonikebe	84	Owhelogbo	Community Leader	Retired Civil Servant	19/11/2006
Pa. Adha, James	85	Owhelogbo	The Osewho of Owhe	Absentee Farming	19/11/2006
Chief. Emeigho, David	70	Owhelogbo	Community Leader	Business	08/02/2013
Chief Owhefere, Job	55	Akiewhe	Community Leader	Civil Servant	02/07/2013
Mr. Ogbaudu, Apollus	80	Otor-Owhe	Community Leader	Retired Civil Servant	16/12/2012
Chief. Etor, Godwin	82	Akiewhe	Community Elder	Absentee Farming	30/09/2011
Mr. Ovie, Elvis	66	Owhelogbo	Community Leader	Businessman	29/10/2012

Archival Materials

- Assessment Report of the Re-organization of Isoko Clans, 1932.
- Cal. Prof: 10/3. Vol 1: Warri District Quarterly Report ending 31 March, 1900.
- CH, 47/2: Commission of Inquiry on the Odio of Owhe Chieftancy, 1968.
- C.O. 520/15. No.388, 22 August, 1902.
- C.O. 520/24A Copland Crawford to Acting High Commissioner, 14 December, 1903.
- C. O. 520/24, Southern Nigeria Despatches, 1903
- C.O. 588/1: Native Court Proclamation Law, 1901.
- C.O. 656/1.Vol.VIII: Native Court Ordinance, 1914.
- C.S.O. 26/2/11857. Vol. V: Annual Report Warri Province, 1927.
Delta State of Nigeria Gazette Vol.13 No.7, 2003.
- F.O. File 2/168: Public Record Office, London
- Minutes of Isoko District Council Meeting held on 04/01/1956.
- Minutes of the Isoko District Council Meeting held on 16/08/1956.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 4/3. Vol.10: Report from Richardson to the Provincial Commissioner Warri, 13 March, 1911.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2. File 11857. Vol. IV: Annual Report Warri Province, 1926.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2, 11857. Vol.VIII: Annual Report Warri Province, 1930.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. Vol.V. X: Annual Report Warri Province, 1932.
- N.A.I. C.S.O.26/2/11857. Vol.IX: Annual Report Warri Province, 1931.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 26,27989: Intelligence Report on Owhe Clan, 1931.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 26, 27285: Intelligence Report on Enwhe Clan, 1931.
- N.A.I.C.S.O. 119/VIII: Annual Report Central Province, 1910.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 418/10: Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria Administrative Report on Tours in the Central Province, 1909-1911.
- N.A.I. C.S.O. 26,27990: Intelligence Report on Uzere Clan, 1931.
- N.A.I.C.S.O. 26,27991: Intelligence Report on Okpe Clan, 1931.
- N.A.I.C.S.O. 26,27994: Intelligence Report on Iyede Clan, 1931.
- N.A.I. C.S.O 26/2/26767, Vol. I: Broad Scheme for the Re-organization of Warri Province on Tribal line, 1931.

N.A.I, C.S.O. 26/2/26767 Vol II: Broad Scheme for the Re-organization of Warri Province 1932.

N.A.I, C.S.O 26/2/11857 Vol XVII: Annual Report on Warri Province, 1941 – 1948.

N.A.I, C.S.O 26/2/11857 Vol. XVIII: Annual report on Warri Province, 1949 – 1951.

Nigeria Government Gazette, No.8. of 30th March,1905.

Nigeria Gazette No.23. Vol.II, 1962.

Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry, Lagos 1930.

Supplement of Government Gazette, 10,1904.

The Customary Court Law 1957 part XII.

Ughelli Papers, file 26/1919.N.A.I. C.SO.26,27089: Intelligence Report on Olomoro Clan, 1931.

Ughelli Papers, 1932.

Ughelli Papers, File 98/1929: Annual Report, Warri Province, 1926.

W.P.3/15/48: Quarterly Report, Warri Division, 1932.

W.P. 115. Vol. I: Re-Organization of Urhobo Native Authority, 1949.

W.P. 115 .Vol. X: Re-organization of Urhobo Native Authority, 1949-1951. N.A.I.

Western Region Region of Nigeria: Local Government Law, 1952.

Western Regional Gazette No.4. Vol.4, 1955.

W.R.N.L. 362 of 1958, 8606: Isoko District Customary Courts.

SECONDARY SOURCES.

Text Books.

- Adetoro, S.A. (1997), *Research Techniques: For Projects, Proposals Report, Thesis, and Dissertation*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- Afigbo, A.E. (1972), *The Warrant Chiefs; Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929*. London: Longman.
- Agatemor, C. O. (2004), *History and Culture of Ellu*. Ughelli: Kabaka Press.
- Anene, J.C. (1966), *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1885-1906*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Bradbury, R. E. (1964), *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking People of Southern Nigeria*. London: International African Institute.
- Egharevba, J.U. (1968), *A Short History of Benin*. 4thed, Ibadan: University Press.
- Ejovi, P.E. (2006), *History of Iyede and its customs/Traditions*. Sapele: Sower Publication.
- Hubbard, J.W. (1948), *The Sobo of the Niger Delta*. Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation.
- Ifediora, A. (1994), *Western Niger Delta to 1900: Society, Polity and Economy*. Warri: COEWA.
- Ikime, O. (1972), *Isoko People, A Historical Survey*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Ikime, O. (2006), *History, The Historian and The Nation, The Voice of a Nigerian Historian*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Isichei, E. (1973), *The Ibo People and The Europeans: The Genesis of a Relationship to 1906*. London: Faber and Faber
- Melzian, H. (1937), *A Concise Dictionary of the Benin Language of Southern Nigeria*. London.
- Olaniyan, R. (2003), *The Almagamation and its Enemies: An Interpretive History of Modern Nigeria*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Otite, O. (ed) 2003), *The Urhobo people* 2nd Edition. Shaneson C. I. Ltd.
- Stride, G. and Ifeka, C. (1977), *People and Empires of West Africa*. Nairobi: Thomas Nelson.
- Udo, R.K. (1970), *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*. London: Heinemann
- Udo, R.K. (1975), *Migrant Tenant Farmer of Nigeria: A geographical study of Rural Migration*. Lagos: African University Press

Chapters in Books

- Ikime, O. (ed), (1980), "The People and Kingdom of the Niger Delta", *Groundwork of Nigeria History*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Okpevra, U.B, (2002), "Hunting in Nineteenth Century Isoko" in O.N.Njoku (Ed) *Precolonial Economic History of Nigeria*. Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Co.
- Peek, P. M. (2002), "Ways of the Rivers" in Martha, G. Anderson and Philip, M. Peek, *Arts and Environment of The Niger Delta*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
- Ikime, O. (2006), "Thoughts on Isoko-Urhobo Relations" in P.P. Ekeh (ed), *History of the Urhobo People of Niger Delta*, Lagos and Buffalo New York: Urhobo Historical Society Nigeria.

Journal Articles

- Afigbo, A.E.(1981), "The Benin Mirage and the History of South Central Nigeria". *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 137.
- Alagoa, E. J. (1970), "Long Distance Trade and State in Niger Delta". *Journal of African History*, Vol.II. Nos. 3 and 13
- Alagoa, E. J. (1971), "The Development of Institution in the States of Eastern Niger Delta". *Journal of African History*, Vol. XII, No.
- Atanda, J.A. (1980), "The Historian and the Problem of Origins of Peoples in Nigerian Society". *Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol .X. No.3.
- Curtin, P.D. (1968), "Field Techniques for Collection and Processing Oral Data". *Journal of African History* Vol. IX NO. 3 pp. 168-170
- Foster, W. P. (1969), "Pre-twentieth Century Isoko: Its Foundation and Later Growth". *African Historical Studies*, Vol. II. No. 2.
- Hubbard, J.W.(1930), 'The Isoko Country, Southern Nigeria'. *The Geographical Journal*. Vol. LXXVIII, London: Journal of the Royal Geographical Society.
- Ikime, O. (1965), 'Chief Dogho: The Lugardian System in Warri, 1917-32'. *Journal of the Isoko society of Nigeria, III*
- Ikime, O. (1965), "Traditional System of Government and Justice among the Urhobo and Isoko of Delta Province, Nigeria", *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 7. No.3.
- Ikime, O. (1966), "The Anti-tax Riot in Warri Province, 1927-1928". *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* No. 3 Vol.3.
- Okpevra, U.B. (2013a), "Religio-Ritual factor of contact and pre-colonial Inter-Group Relations in the Western Niger Delta of Nigeria: The Eni Oracle of Uzere" in *KIABÀRÀ. Journal of Humanities*, University of Port Harcourt, Vol. 19 No. 2. Pp.313 - 326.

Okpevra, U.B. (2013b), "Origins of the Isoko People of South-Central Nigeria Reconsidered". *Uniuyo Journal of Humanities (UUJH)* Vol.16 & 17, No.1. February 2011 - December 2013. Pp.132-153.

Onwuteaka, V.C. (1965), "Aba Riot of 1929 and Its Relation to the System of Indirect Rule", *Nigeria Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 7 No.3.

Welch, J. W. (1931), "Witchcraft and Christianity in Niger Delta". *Church Overseas*, Vol. IV.

Welch, J. W. (1931), "An African Tribe in Transition". *International Review of Mission*, Vol. XX. Welch, J. W. (1934), "The Isoko Tribe" *Africa*, Vol. VII. No.

Newspaper

Ujumadu, V. "Honour Pro-Third Term Politicians and Lose Your Throne Kalu Warns Monarchs". *Vanguard*, 05/07/2006.

Magazine

Okpevra, U. B. (2005), "Who Are the Isoko?" *Eme Unu Ho Ohwo*. Warri: A Publication of Isoko Elites Club of Nigeria.

Unpublished Work

Aghalino, S.O. (1993), "Isoko Under Colonial Rule, 1896-1949" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Ilorin.

Egbare, E.E. (1985), "Pre-twentieth Century, Emede: Origin and Later Growth", an unpublished B.A. Long Essay Submitted to the Department of History, University of Benin.

Ikime, O. (1965), 'Itsekiri- Urhobo Relations and the Establishment of British Rule 1884-1936'. A Ph. D Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Kolo, J. O. (2002), "An Address Presented on the Installation of a new Osewho of Owhe Clan".

Kolo, J. O. (2008), "An address presented on behalf of the Osewho of Owhe Clan on the Reception in Honour of Two Owhe Illustrious Son; Comrade O. S. Macaulay, Honourable Commissioner, Ministry of Power and Energy, Delta State and Honourable Tim. K. Owhefere, Chief Whip, Delta State House of Assembly.

Okpevra, U.B. (2014), "The Isoko and their Neighbours, 1800 - 1970: A Study of the Diplomacy of Conflict Resolution in the Western Niger Delta of Nigeria". Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma Nigeria.

- Ononeme, O. G. (1969), "The Punitive Expedition to Isoko, 1911". Unpublished Essay Submitted to the Department of History, University of Ife, Ile- Ife, for the Award of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History, 1969.
- Onosakponome, A.E (1987), "The Isoko under British Administration 1896-1960, A Socio-Political and Economic Analysis. Unpublished Dissertation Submitted to the School of Post Graduate Studies, University of Benin, Benin-City.
- Oyaide, W.J. (1991), "Economic Development in Urhoboland" Paper Presented at the Third Annual Late Mukoro Mowoe Memorial Lecture Organized by Urhobo Social Club of Nigeria at the Conference Centre Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) Effurun, 10th Aug.
- Ugboma, E.S. (1984), "The Traditions of Origin of the Isoko People of Nigeria". Unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to the School of Post Graduate Studies, University of Benin, Benin- City.

INTERNET SOURCES

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isoko_people. Retrieved 14/06/2015.

http://www.waado.org/Organizations/UHS/AnnualConferences/sixth/ikime/Ikime_urhobo.htm. Retrieved 10/06/2015.

TABLE II
Tax Collected From Some Isoko Clans, 1931 and 1932.

CLANS	ACTUAL TAX COLLECTED 1931	ACTUAL TAX COLLECTED 1932
Owhe	£776.13.0 (₦186,271.20)	£812.14.0 (₦194,913.00)
Ozoro	£491.15.0 (₦117,876.00)	£495.12.0 (₦118,828.80)
Uzere	£435.15.0 (₦104,436.00)	£756.14.0 (₦81,473.60)
Olomoro	£198. 2.0 (₦ 47,568.00)	£232. 8.0 (₦55,872.00)
Oleh	£221. 4.0 (₦53, 136.00)	£246.1.0 (₦59,064.00)
Okpe	£261.2.0 (₦62,688.00)	£292.5.0 (₦70,200.00)
Okpolo/Enwhe	£225.8.0 (₦54,192.00)	£231.14.0 (₦55,473.60)
Igbide	£350.14.0 (₦84,033.60)	£367.10.0 (₦88,104.00)
Erowha-Umeh	£102.18.0 (₦24,523.20)	£106.1.0 (₦25,464.00)
Aviara	£221.4.0 (₦53,136.00)	£235.4.0 (₦56,496.00)

Source: Assessment Report of the Reorganization of Isoko Clans 1932:31.

TABLE III
Number of Cases in Isoko Reorganized Area 1932.

Number of cases received	Number of cases heard	Civil	Criminal
1,655	203	74	129

Source: Assessment Report of Reorganization of Isoko Clans 1932: 14.

TABLE IV
Comparative Revenue Before and After Reorganization.

Revenue derived from Native Courts in Isoko Area, April to September, 1931.	Revenue derived from Native Courts in Isoko Area, April to September, 1932.
Fines: £122.5.0 (₦29,400.00)	£106.10.0 (₦25,464.00)
Fees: £421.14.0 (₦101,073.60)	£533.13.0 (₦127,951.00)
Total: £543.19.0 (₦130,365.60)	£639.23.0 (₦153,415.20)

Source: Assessment Report of Reorganization of Isoko Clans 1932: 15.

APPENDIX A

TREATY WITH THE CHIEFS OF OWHE.

ARTICLE I

HER MAJESTY QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, EMPRESS OF INDIA, in compliance with request of the Chiefs and the People of Owhe hereby undertakes to extend to them and to the territory under their authority and jurisdiction, Her gracious favour and protection.

ARTICLE II

The Chiefs of Owe agree and promise to refrain from entering into any correspondence, Agreement, or treaty with any Foreign Nation or Power except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Britannic Majesty's Government.

ARTICLE III

It is agreed that full and exclusive jurisdiction, civil and criminal, over British subjects and their property in the territory of Owe is reserved to Her Britannic Majesty, to be exercised by such Consular or other officers as Her Majesty shall appoint for that purpose.

The same jurisdiction is likewise reserved to Her Majesty in the said territory of Owe over foreign subjects enjoying British protection, who shall be deemed to be included in the expression 'British subject' throughout this treaty.

ARTICLE IV

All disputes between the Chiefs of Owe or between them and British or foreign traders, or between the aforesaid Chiefs and neighbouring tribes, which cannot be settled amicably between the two parties, shall be submitted to the British Consular or other officers appointed by Her Britannic Majesty to exercise jurisdiction in Owe territories for arbitration and decision, or for arrangement.

ARTICLE V

The Chiefs of Owe hereby engage to assist the British Consular or other officers in the execution of such duties as may be assigned to them; and further to act upon their advice in matters relating to the administration of justice, the development of the resources

of the country, the interest of commerce, or in any other matter in relation to peace, order, and good government and the general progress of civilization.

ARTICLE VI

The subjects and citizens of all countries may freely carry on trade in every part of the territories of the Chiefs party hereto, and may have houses and factories therein.

ARTICLE VII

All ministers of the Christian religion shall be permitted to reside and exercise their calling within the territories of the aforesaid Chiefs, who hereby guarantee to them full protection.

All forms of religious worship and religious ordinances may be exercised within the territories of the aforesaid Chiefs, and no hindrance shall be offered thereto.

ARTICLE VIII

(This article dealt with the duties of the Chiefs in the case of shipwreck and did not therefore apply to inland towns. It is accordingly cancelled in the original treaty.)

ARTICLE IX

This treaty shall come into operation, so far as may be practicable, from the date of its signature.

Done in DUPLICATE

.....

at OWE

.....

this 31st day of August, 1896

.....

(Signed) Hugh Lecky
Asst. District Commissioner,
Benin District.

(Signed) M. Crawford Corkburn Capt.,
N.P.C. Force.

Ogwara	x	His mark	Anofani	x	His mark
Afajoma	x	His mark	Afetuja	x	His mark
Bedwa	x	His mark	Amugelie	x	His mark
Amotieruwa	x	His mark	Ojoya	x	His mark

I hereby certified that I have fully explained and interpreted the above treaty to the Chiefs in question and they fully understand its meaning.

W
Corpl: m Opwenia
X
His mark

Source: Ikime, 1972: 155-7.

APPENDIX B
MEMBERS OF THE OWHE CLAN COUNCIL, 1931.

Title	Name	Village
Odio- Edhe	Ezakede Omavuwwho	Akiewhe (Achiowhe)
Otota (Spokes man)	Arurowo	Edhomoko - Okpesia
Okpoho	Ugobi	Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo)
Edhe	Obriku	Uruovo (now Otor-Owhe)
Edhe	Oye	Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo)
Edhe	Okpanwa	Uruovo (now Otor-Owhe)
Edhe	Itio	Otibio
Edhe	Ekemu	Akiewhe (Achiowhe)
Edhe	Okoro	Akiewhe (Achiowhe)
Edhe	Akoluwa	Erawha
Edhe	Otobo	Erawha
Osewho	Enajedu	Iluelogbo (now Owhelogbo)
Oletu	Okpomo	Uruovo (now Otor-Owhe)

Source: Intelligence Report on Owhe Clan, 1931.

APPENDIX C
MEMBERS OF ILUELOGBO (NOW OWHELOGBO) VILLAGE COUNCIL, 1931.

Title	Name
Senior Odio (Odiokaro)	Oye
Osewho	Enajedu
Otota	Ugbobi
Odio (Clan Otota)	Arurowo
Odio	Emedeme
Odio	Ojiye
Odio	Owaro
Odio	Ogbogbo
Odio	Erugba
Odio	Dedige
Odio	Ukwalogho
Odio	Idise
Olotu-Ologbo	Avuye
Oletu	Oboyano
Oletu	Atoma
Oletu	Egboro
Oletu	Alama
Oletu	Eghaire
Oletu	Abakoro
Oletu	Ego
Oletu	Awarota
Oletu	Okwe
Oletu	Owole
Okpako	Okoro
Okpako	Ogbuja
Okpako	Omonogare
Okpako	Onoria
Okpako	Alakperera
Okpakp	Agbawe
Okpako	Iye
Okpako	Omofatha
Okpako	Udevie
Otu-Asu Headmen	Aboge
Otu-Aso	Oba
Otu-Aso	Uzo
Ukor (Messenger)	Ogagagboro
Ukor	Owowo
Ukor	Agwo

Source: Intelligence Report on Owhe Clan, 1931.

APPENDIX D
MEMBERS OF URUOVO (NOW OTOR-OWHE) VILLAGE COUNCIL, 1931.

Senior Odio (Odiokaro)	Kpanwa
Otota	Okeli
Okpoho	Owhefere
Okpoho	Oge
Okpoho	Agbawe
Okpoho	Ogboru
Okpoho	Obriku
Okpoho	Edoja
Okpako	Efetomo
Okpako	Akarowa
Okpako	Oweibo
Okpako	Use
OKPAKO	Odede
Okpako	Okaro
Okpako	Egbure
Oletuologbo	Okpomo
Oletu	Onowighose
Oletu	Edhedino
Oletu	Esili
Oletu	Uvomata
Oletu	Eviano
Oletu	Olomu
Oletu	Ugekeye
Oletu	Ikelegbe
Oletu	Edeki
Oletu	Edereho
Oletu	Ologu
Oletu	Ikede
Oletu	Omovento
Oletu	Efenedo
Oletu	Emuekpe
Oletu	Agoro
Oletu	Omaduvie
Otu-Aso Headman	Edefiako
Otu-Aso	Ezile
Ukor	Ozaha
Ukor	Umukoro
Ukor	Utunedi
Odio (Erawha village)	Otobo
Otota (Erawha village)	Obibi
Okpoho (Erawha village)	Owe
Okpoho (Erawha village)	Ejebu
Okpoho (Erawha village)	Okporue
Okpoho (Erawha village)	Egigeme
Senior Oletu (Erawha village)	Obi
Oletu (Erawha village)	Agbawa
Oletu (Erawha village)	Ejoke
Oletu (Erawha village)	Ajugo

Oletu (Erawha village)	Etogove
Oletu (Erawha village)	Ine
Otu-Aso Headman (Erawha village)	Ogbolo
Otu-Aso (Erawha village)	Ologe
Otu-Aso (Erawha village)	Omokaro
Senior Odio (Otibio)	Itio
Otota (Otibio village)	Ejoboke
Okpoho (Otibio village)	Udi
Odio (Otibio village)	Akpoghene
Odio (Otibio village)	Ifuku
Odio (Otibio village)	Ejaku
Odio (Otibio village)	Iloho
Odio (Otibio village)	Ebara
Odio (Otibio village)	Ifowe
Okpako (Otibio village)	Okrode
Okpako (Otibio village)	Jaku
Okpako (Otibio village)	Ekrode
Okpako (Otibio village)	Owele
Okpako (Otibio village)	Akpothowa
Okpako (Otibio village)	Odegbe
Okpako (Otibio village)	Ukoli
Okpako (Otibio village)	Atabo
Okpako (Otibio village)	Uge
Oletuologbo (Otibio village)	Ugboka
Oletu (Otibio village)	Agadama
Otota- Oletu (Otibio village)	Ulebe
Otota-Oletu (Otibio village)	Okeige
Otota-Oletu (Otibio village)	Ogesele
Oletu (Otibio village)	Obatenya
Otu-Aso Headman (Otibio)	Ogba
Otu-Aso (Otibio village)	Ukwevo
Otu- Aso (Otibio village)	Ukpoku
Ukor (Otibio village)	Igbekuma
Ukor (Otibio village)	Igboku
Ukor (Otibio village)	Esajobor Ogbegu

Source: Intelligence Report on Owhe clan, 1931.

APPENDIX E

MEMBERS OF AKIEWHE (ACHIWHE) VILLAGE COUNCIL, 1931.

Senior Odio	Ezakede Omavuwwho
Otota	Oloko
Okpoho	Okoro
Okpako	Ekemu
Okpako (Eniagbedhi village)	Agbawe
Okpako	Omego
Okpako	Awawa
Okpako	Isuke
Okpako	Atukwafe
Okpako	Agbuje
Okpako	Upobi
Okpako (Eniagbedhi village)	Ugbogi
Oletuologbo	Omeke
Otota (Eniagbedhi village)	Oloko
Oletu	Eto
Oletu	Ogu
Oletu	Okoro
Oletu	Idireno
Oletu	Ovudhuyen
Oletu	Ogbogbo
Oletu	Onovoye
Oletu	Owaze
Oletu	Ogomima
Otu-Aso Headman	Okpofi
Otu- Aso	Edo
Otu-Aso	Etunye
Ukor	Akwaseba
Ukor	Ugo
Ukor	Bezekeleme

Source: Intelligence Report on Owhe Clan, 1931

APPENDIX F

Wards in Isoko District Council Area 1955 – 1960

S/N	Name	Village	No.of person to be elected
1	Owhe A	Ellu I	1
2	Owhe B	Ellu II	1
3	Owhe C	Akiewhe	1
4	Owhe D	Iluelogbo I (Now Owhelogbo)	1
5	Owhe E	Iluelogbo II (Now Owhelogbo)	1
6	Owhe F	Uruovo (nowOtor– Owhe)	1
7	Uzere A	Ezodo	1
8	Uzere B	Uheri	1
9	Irri A	Irri	1
10	Irri B	Ikpidiama	1
11	Irri C	Ivrogo	1
12	Irri D	Idheze	1
13	Oyede	Oyede	1
14	Ozoro A	Urude	1
15	Ozoro B	Etevie	1
16	Ozoro C	Erovie	1
17	Ozoro D	Uruto	1
18	Erowha-Umeh A	Umeh	1
19	Erowha-Umeh B	Erowha	1
20	Emede A	Uruare	1
21	Emede B	Enyuto	1
22	Emede C	Adaze	1
23	Oleh A	Uzokpa	1
24	Oleh B	Ukolobi	1
25	Okpe A	Ofagbe	1
26	Okpe B	Okpe	1
27	Emevor	Emevor	1
28	Aviara	Aviara	1
29	Okpolo A	Uluche	1
30	Okpolo B	Emaka	1
31	Okpolo C	Olade	1
32	Igbide A	Owodokpokpo I	1
33	Igbide B	Owodokpokpo II	1
34	Igbide C	Okporho	1
35	Igbide D	Urewre	1
36	Olomoro A	Ukoli	1
37	Olomoro B	Uruabe	1
38	Iyede A	Otor – Iyede	1
39	Iyede B	Oghenerurie	1
40	Iyede C	Oghara	1

Source: Minutes of Isoko District Council Meeting held on 04/01/1956.

APPENDIX G
LIST OF PIONEER PRESIDENT AND COUNCILLORS IN ISOKO DISTRICT
COUNCIL, 1955.

S/N	Names of Councillor	Name of Wards
	Ovie Egware (He was made President)	Ozoro
1	P.J. Ekokotu (Chairman)	Olomoro
2	J'E. Ootobo	Uzere
3	N.G. Odede	Uzere
4	J.K. Oziwo	Irri
5	I.D. Akpavie	Irri
6	J.G. Obaro	Ikpidiama
7	A.L. Odhogbi	Oyede
8	E. Amahwe	Ozoro
9	C. Onojerame	Ozoro
10	O. Ogbogbo	Ozoro
11	O. Ekpeke	Ozoro
12	F.G. Akiye	Erowha
13	O. Eworo	Ellu
14	O. Oliboku	Ellu
15	Ogbaifo Abgroje	Owhe
16	S.O. Edegwa	Owhe
17	F. Omodior	Owhe
18	S.O. Erume	Owhe
19	E. Ugie	Emede
20	J. Egi	Emede
21	A, Ige	Emede
24	J. Eziemohwo	Oleh
25	W. Odaje	Emevor
26	M.A. Marioghae	Aviara
27	E. Olomoro	Okpolo
28	G.A. Okokiakpo	Okpolo
29	R.I. Igbude	Okpolo
30	E. Odi	Igbide
31	O. Ezavighe	Igbide
32	D.C. Unuwovo	Igbide
33	O. Eruohi	Olomoro
34	S. Akpovi	Iyede
35	Orumor	Umeh
36	S.O. Muabor	Irri
37	O. Oweme	Oyede
38	Omoworemu	Iyede
39	O.F. Akpove	Igbide
40	M.F. Obi	Oleh

Mr. J. Asidi – Council Secretary

Mr. L.A. Ogero – Council Treasurer.

Source: Minutes of Isoko District Meeting held on 04/01/1956.

APPENDIX H
COURT CLERKS SHARED TO ISOKO IN 1955.

S/N	Name of Court	Name of Court Clerk
1	Owhe	O. Utoware.
2	Iyede	E, Birhiray.
3	Uzere	G.M. Okotie.
4	Igbide	P.U. Okotete.
5	Isoko District Appeal Court	S.O. Malaka

Source: Minutes of the Establishment Committee meeting of the Urhobo – Isoko Federal Native Authority held on 05/08/1955.

APPENDIXI
LIST OF CUSTOMARY COURT MEMBERS, 1958.

Owhe – Okpe – Ozoro Grade ‘C’ Customary Court:

	Name
1	Mr. Victor Egho
2	Chief Ode
3	Chief G.I. Onowighose
4	Mr. Elijah Erume
5	Mr. Ebireri – Court Clerk.

Source: I.D.C. file Nos: 55, 57,58 &59.

APPENDIX- J
LIST OF PUNITIVE EXPENDITIONS AND MILITARY PATROLS TO ISOKO-TOWNS.

S/NO	TOWN	DATE	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
1	Uzere	09/12/1903	CSO 1/13/20 Copland Crawford to High Commissioner
2 3 4	Ofagbe Ozoro Oleh	1904/1905	CSO 26 file 27990: Isoko Assessment Report compiled by J. T. Southern 1929.
5	Iyede	1907	COS 26 file 27994: Intelligence Report on Iyede Clan by E.A. Miller 1932
6 7 8	Owhe Ozoro Oleh	1911	CSO file 4/3 Vol. 10 Administrative Reports on Owhe, Ozoro and Oleh. 1909-1911
9	Owhe	1914	CSO 26 file 27990: Intelligence Reports on Owhe Clan 1931
10	Ozoro Ofagbe Okpe	1917	CSO 26 file 27990: Intelligence Report on Okpe Clan 1931

Source: Isoko- Sobo Assessment Report by J. T. Southern (D. O). P2.

APPENDIX K



APPENDIX L



The Odiologbo of Owhe Caln 2002-

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. A.D.O. - Assistant District Officer
2. A.G. - Action Group.
3. Cal. Prof. - Calabar Province.
4. C.M.S. - Church Missionary Society
5. C.S.O. - Chief Secretary's Office.
6. D.O. - District Officer.
7. D.S.L.N. - Delta State of Nigeria Legal Notice.
8. F.O. - Foreign Office.
9. H.E. - Excellency.
10. H.R.H. - His Royal Highness
11. I.D.C. - Isoko District Council.
12. J.A.H. - Journal of African History.
13. J.H.S.N.- Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
14. N.A. - Native Authority.
15. N.A.I. - National Archive Ibadan.
16. N.C.N.C. - National Council of Nigerian Citizens.
17. P.C. - Provincial Commissioner
18. War. Prof. - Warri Province.
19. W.P. - Warri Province.