

**THE UGBO-MAHIN CONFLICT AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN
ILAJE SOCIETY**

BY

AJIGBADE, IKUEJUBE
B.A. (Ado-Ekiti), PGDE, M.A. (Ibadan)
Matric No: 64274

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research work was carried out by Ajigbade Ikuejube in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan under my supervision.

Date

SUPERVISOR

O. B. OLAOBA, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Ibadan)
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of African Studies,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan,
Nigeria

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Glory of the Almighty God, the Giver of knowledge and wisdom and also to my wife, Blessing, and children: Bukola, Seun and Victor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.O.	Assistant District Officer
C.S.O.	Chief Secretary's Officer
C & S	Cherubim and Seraphim
D. O.	District Officer
DIV.	Division
F.G.D.	Focus Group Discussion
J.H.S.N.	Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria
N.A.I	National Association for Advancement of Knowledge
N.C.E.M.A.	National Centre for Economic Management and Administration
N.D.D.C.	Niger Delta Development Commission
OMPADEC.	Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission
OSOPADEC	Ondo State Oil Producing Area Development Commission
Prov.	Province
Vol.	Volume

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GLOSSARY OF YORUBA WORDS

<i>Aja</i>	Traditional symbol of authority
<i>Alagboro</i>	Member of the highest traditional judicial court
<i>Akase</i>	Fishing spear
<i>Amapetu</i>	Title of Mahin king
<i>Arubeji</i>	Traditional symbol of authority
<i>Awo</i>	Fishing net
<i>Ayelala</i>	Traditional goddess
<i>Baale</i>	Head of village
<i>Eporo</i>	Bamboo pole
<i>Ibatan</i>	Relation
<i>Iyanma</i>	Fishing basket
<i>Ọba</i>	King
<i>Ọko</i>	Boat
<i>Olugbo</i>	Title of Ugbo king
<i>Oluweri</i>	River goddess
<i>Olukun</i>	Friends
<i>Ọmọ baba</i>	Paternal sibling
<i>Ọmọ iya</i>	Maternal sibling
<i>Ọmọ lebi</i>	People from the same family
<i>Ọpa</i>	Staff
<i>Ọpa Ilaje</i>	Symbol of Ilaje statehood
<i>Otu</i>	Age grade
Okorobojo:	The goddess, which provides fertility to barren women

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ABSTRACT

Available literature on Ilaje society has been concerned with the legal framework of colonial rule, indigenous political structure, economic development and missionary activities. There has not been any extensive study on the Ugbo-Mahin conflict and its implications for social development. This study, therefore, examined the Ugbo-Mahin conflict in Ilaje area of Ondo state with specific focus on its implications for social relations, oil exploration and compensation, infrastructural development, kingship and religious institutions. The study also investigated and interrogated the pre-conflict pattern of interactions between the Ugbo and the Mahin and how they have been affected.

The principal instrument of data collection for the study was the unstructured interview. In-depth interview were held with fifty community and opinion leaders from each of the two communities. Four Focus Group Discussions were held with persons knowledgeable about the conflict. Archival materials, petition and letters of protest and photographs were used. Data were also collected from reports of government commissions of inquiry, books, journals, newspapers and internet materials. The data were then subjected to content analysis.

The Ugbo and Mahin had friendly relationship before the advent of colonial rule. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict dated back to the colonial period and is carried into contemporary times. The conflict has led to destruction of lives and property in the area. Different ethnic unions of parallel functions have emerged in the two communities. These unions have used their rivalry to stall industrial development by demanding separately for improved social life. The Ugbo-Mahin incessant conflicts have, thus, undermined development in the two communities such that there are no industrial estates, manufacturing companies and large business investment. The conflict has further put stress on marital harmony between the two groups. However, the conflict has not escalated into unmanageable situation because of the activities of the Ilaje Youth Forum, the National Association of Ilaje Students and *Egbe Omo Ilaje* who are responsible for peace building and reconciliation of all aggrieved parties in both communities. In spite of the efforts of these associations, the marginalization of the Mahin in the compensation on oil spillage and other ecological problems occasioned by the oil exploration in Ugboland and the discrimination against them in appointment of representatives to oil commissions are some of the factors inhibiting sustainable peace and development.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict over the years had done incalculable damage and has not allowed harmonious relationship between two ethnic groups. There is a need for the promotion of non-violent means in managing the conflict and facilitation of peace education in the society. Both of which aim at psycho-social healing and psychological transformation towards peaceful co-existence in the two communities. There is need for the encouragement of inter-marriages and cultural re-integration of the two groups.

Key words: Communal conflict, Social relations, Ilaje society, Ugbo, Mahin.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Ethnic conflict is a continuation of centuries of primordial hatred among various communities in Nigeria. The Colonial records in the national archives and records available in traditional palaces reveal that ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, could be related to socio-political discords occasioned by land and boundary matters. During the colonial period, the colonial administration was involved in managing some of these conflicts. Sometimes, local leaders extended invitation to colonial governments to assist them in resolving ethnic conflicts. The colonial government often embarked on different strategies to manage various ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. An important aspect of colonial strategies of conflict management was to concretely define boundaries between different clashing groups (and groups that might clash). In addition, traditional rulers were to act on behalf of the British crown over people within a clearly defined jurisdiction in the area of conflict monitoring, prevention, management and resolution. As part of their agenda, the colonial authority was strictly committed to boundary demarcation between ethnic groups¹. The process was, however, more than drawing borderlines. It was carried out in such a way that guaranteed identification of the limits of each political unit. Thus, any group of communities or people who proved disloyal or opposed to the boundary adjustment, was dealt with and traditional rulers such as the *Olugbo* of Ugbo, *Nana* of Itsekiri and *Jaja* of Opobo, who failed to recognise the artificial boundary created by the colonial government, were summarily dismissed.²

Ethnic boundaries were created arbitrarily. The boundary between Jukun and Tiv was an example of boundaries created by colonial government that were unacceptable to ethnic groups. The boundaries of some ethnic groups were extended over areas they had no traditional control. Hence, the traditional political system became complicated through alien imposition, distortion and breaking up of existing large ethnic groups (such as the Yoruba people that were segmented

into various divisions) and forcing some independent small ethnic groups (Ugbo and Mahin, Ondo and Ile-Oluji) into inconvenient unions. Ikime illustrates this point by stating that colonial rule was a paradox, which engineered positive and negative relations among diverse ethnic divisions³

Similarly, Mustapha points out that the historical process of integration was brought to an abrupt halt, and that segmentations of colonised ethnic groups were very prominent features of the colonial experience⁴. This indicates that ethnic identity was directed towards exclusion, competition and authoritarianism. Indeed, the colonial administrative policy on the demographical configuration of ethnic groups, created numerous crises and contradiction which still haunt post colonial Nigeria. It is, therefore, not a surprise that immediately after colonial disengagement, ethnic conflicts, including very violent ones, ensued.

At independence, Nigeria inherited series of ethnic conflicts. As a result of the multi-ethnic nature of the country, ethnic cleavages remain a critical problem and they alarmingly erupt. Within the past four decades, Nigeria had experienced dangerous scares of incessant dysfunctional conflicts, which occurred between communities, ethnic groups and religious groups. It is noteworthy that these conflicts were not confined to any specific geo-political region of the country. The situation had become extremely worrisome even before the beginning of the new democratic dispensation (that is, Nigeria's Fourth Republic inaugurated on May 29, 1999). In fact, Nigeria has witnessed the outbreak of several violent communal or ethnic conflicts both in the past and even in the present. Some have been resolved, while some old ones have gained additional potency⁵. Examples of conflicts in Nigeria in recent times include those between: Yoruba-Hausa community in Shagamu, Ogun State; Eleme-Okrika in River State; some groups in Kano, Kano State, Zangokataf in Kaduna State; Tiv-Jukun in Wukari; Taraba State; Ogoni-Adoni in Rivers State, Chamba-Kuteb in Taraba State; Itsekiri-Ijo in Delta State; Aguleri – Umuleri in Anambra State and Ijo-Ilaje in Ondo State. They also include the ones between: Bassa-Egbura in Nassarawa State; Hausa-Fulani in

Sawaya, Bauchi State; Fulani-Iriwe and Yelwa-Shardam both in Plateau State; Hausa-Yoruba in Idi-Araba, Lagos State; Ife-Modakeke in Osun State⁶; Itsekiri-Urhobo in Delta State; and Ugbo-Mahin in Ondo State (which this present study addresses).

One of the oldest intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. It began in 1885 and re-occurred in 1921, 1938, 1976, 1992 and 2008. The causes of the conflict are many and varied, dealing with cultural identity, economy and politics. These causes have been identified in the literature as important elements in ethnic conflicts.

The statements by the Ugbo claiming the status of aborigines and referring to the Mahin as their tenants did not go down well with the Mahin people. For the Ugbo, the basic problem appears to be the desire to recapture and regain the superiority over the Mahin and the land given to them because the Mahin claimed equality of right in the land. The Ugbo could not sit idle, while the Mahin seized the legitimate owner's right and, in addition, posed a serious threat to her leadership status in Ilajeland. It is this supremacy tussle that makes the Ugbo people continuously refer to Mahin as their tenants. On the other side, the Mahin usually resent the insult by the Ugbo hinging on the Land Use Act of 1978⁷.

The advent of colonial rule was intended to establish a political system that would cut across the Ugbo and Mahin. This attempt was to breed discontent and it strained the existing peaceful relations between the two groups⁸. The colonial government changed the old order, that is, the tenant-landlord relationship. The primary reason for this change, was perhaps, due to the different receptions which the two groups gave to the colonial officers. For instance, while the Mahin were receptive of the British and largely cooperated with them, the Ugbo did not submit to the British rule. That is, the Ugbo forcibly opposed the colonial penetration of their territory. In response, the British not only deposed the Ugbo king, but also banished him. The end result was the super-imposition of the Mahin on the Ugbo by the colonial government. This development consequently ignited the conflict

between the two communities. The present conflict in the area is not far from the constant recollection and perception of this episode.

Closely related to the above is the inordinate expansion of Mahin to every part of Ugbo territory. This has resulted into claims and counter claims from both sides regarding the ownership of land⁹, which has led to series of dispute. The continuous counter claims by the Ugbo of all lands in all kingdoms in Ilajeland has been described by the Mahin as irrelevant. Observably, land case has deepened the conflictual relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin since the colonial period. Thus, the conflict arising from the issue of land can be traced to the fact that, as an economic value and as a factor of production, land itself has become a source of status symbol and of social and political influence.

In recent times, the Ugbo and the Mahin formed ethnic unions in the quest for who controls what in Ilajeland. These unions are Ugbo Central Organization and Mahin Descendants Union¹⁰. The Ugbo Central Organization emerged in Ilajeland among the Ugbo with the purpose of espousing the notion of cultural nationalism. The Ugbo Central Organization was motivated by the desire to control Ilaje politics and also frustrate the Mahin influence. In other words, the Ugbo Central Organisation was inspired, founded and nourished by ethnic chauvinism and parochialism. The ethnic origin of the Ugbo Central Organization forced the Mahin to also form the Mahin Descendant Union. Its membership was restricted to only the Mahin people. It was formed for the Mahin by the Mahin people for the pursuit of the objectives limited to the Mahin. It is abundantly clear that the activities of the Ugbo Central Organisation and Mahin Descendants Union continuously ignited conflictual relationship between Ugbo and Mahin. The situation is such that any appointment that does not reckon with ethnicism is often criticised as another form of marginalisation. In fact, the situation in Ilajeland has reached an alarming stage such that the Ugbo and the Mahin people have started to de-emphasise Ilaje solidarity in preference for ethnic instinct¹¹.

In addition, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict is an aftermath of what can be regarded as the siting of Ilaje Local Government headquarters in Mahin Kingdom¹². The creation of Ilaje Local Government without answering the question of land ownership has always been the bone of contention between Ugbo and Mahin. It could be recalled that the military created Ilaje Local Government in 1976, with headquarters at Igbokoda, one of the principal towns in Mahin Kingdom. The arrangement was strongly opposed by the Ugbo. This resulted into prolonged conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

Furthermore, the marginalisation of the Mahin in the compensation on oil spillage and other ecological problems occasioned the oil exploration activities¹³ in Ugboland. The Ugbo people did not allow the Mahin to fully benefit from the mineral resources. The Mahin believed that they have not enjoyed adequate compensation on oil spillage and other environmental hazards that emanated from the activities of oil companies in Ugbo; the Ugbo people had been feeding on oil money. Oil spillage and environmental degradation are a major cause of disagreement between Ugbo and Mahin, especially when the Mahin discovered that their land has been affected by sea incursion.

Closely connected to the above is the discrimination against the Mahin in the appointment of representatives to oil commissions¹⁴. The oil commissions are created by the federal and state governments for the oil producing communities in Ilajeland. The commissions are empowered to rehabilitate and develop the oil producing areas of Ondo State and also to carry out developmental projects as may be determined from time to time. Since the establishment of various oil commissions, the Mahin were denied adequate representation. The Mahin became uncomfortable with this arrangement because the Ugbo regarded the Mahin as people who were meant to be seen but not to be heard, as far as oil politics was concerned. The determination of the Ugbo to prevent Mahin's representation in the oil commission led to resentment and further fuelled the Ugbo-Mahin conflict.

Finally, the construction of Igbokoda – Aiyetoro Road and the location of a motor park at Ode-Ugbo further aggravated the conflictual relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin¹⁵. The violent clash between the Ugbo and the Mahin, as a result of this arrangement, was a continuation of an age-long conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The conflict involved members of Ilaje road transport unions dominated by the Mahin. Members of this union cut across the two ethnic groups, with the Mahin occupying prominent positions. The location of motor park is very significant because of the financial gains. The siting of the motor park at Ode-Ugbo, against the expectation of the Mahin fuelled inter-ethnic clash between the two groups. People see the conflict from different perspectives. There are those who see it simply as consequences of the legacy of the previous conflicts in the area. To another set of people, the root cause of the conflict could be traced to the leadership tussle within the Ilaje road transport union.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has a remarkable effect on social relations. The *otu* (age grade) institution was a uniting force between the Ugbo and Mahin in the pre-conflict era¹⁶. It was often a tradition for the youths in the two areas to organise themselves into an age grade (*otu*) at the age of twenty. In other words, the *otu* from Ugbo who were of the same age with the *otu* from Mahin, often saw themselves as *olukun* (friends). These groups exchanged innovative economic ideas, and promoted competitive economic activities, honesty, diligence and above all dignity of labour. They equally attended ceremonies organised by their fellows. The *otu* from Ugbo and Mahin in some cases, settled issues that could create enmity between themselves. However, during the British administration in the area, the British government did not give the *otu* institution any opportunity to demonstrate its qualities. Consequently, the *otu* institution collapsed and disappeared. Acknowledging the non-existence of age grade in 1937, Curmen observed that “--- Today, no new *otu* is being formed. Hence, the entertaining and unifying inter-community wrestling competitions among the *otu* institutions,

which facilitated cordial relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin, ceased to exist”¹⁷.

Today, such inter-cultural unions are not in existence. The two groups no longer trust each other. This has led to the formation of different fora and associations, where issues of ethnic importance are discussed and defended to the letter. There are Ugbo Central Organization and Mahin Descendant Union. These groups were formed to champion ethnic issues. Any action from one ethnic group is always quickly resented by the leaders of the other group through ethnic associations. Apparently, there are evidence, of distrust between the two groups.

The social interactions between the Ugbo and the Mahin were also altered by the destructive influence of the conflict. For instance, Ugbo-Mahin social relations, which was further cemented by inter-marriages in the pre-conflict period, were adversely affected. There was a considerable breach in inter-marriages between the two groups. The breach became noticeable when the Ugbo and the Mahin felt reluctant to marry each other. As a result of the conflict, many marriages involving the two groups were pressurised to divorce¹⁸.

In addition, traditional political institutions in the area was seriously affected by the conflict. The harmonious relationship between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* came to an end when the British effectively negotiated and signed the treaty of protection with the Mahin in 1885, which negated the treaty earlier signed with the Ugbo in 1884¹⁹. Hence, the *Amapetu* enjoyed full colonial patronage to the detriment of the *Olugbo* whose title was downgraded²⁰. This development led to encroachment of the Mahin people on an area of land that traditionally belonged to the Ugbo. When the British government terminated its control over Ilajeland, chieftaincy imbroglio between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* ensued. The activities of the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* were radically politicised. Each of them believed that the interest of his people should take precedence over the interest of the other group. In fact, their activities have brought deprivation,

nepotism, hatred, suspicion and discrimination between the Ugbo and the Mahin people.

The conflict has constituted impediment to the flow of investment and economic transformation of Ilaje society. Most of the infrastructure to be found in real towns of the world, such as industrial estates, manufacturing companies and huge business investment, are conspicuously absent in Ilajeland. In fact, the conflict has hindered infrastructural development of the Ilaje society.

The adoption of contemporary methods during conflict over land, natural resources and political positions in Ugbo and Mahin breed bitterness, tension and unending court proceedings. It also creates fear, instability and disorder which makes peaceful co-existence between the two ethnic groups impossible. Apparently, this has undermined social development in Ilaje society. The mediating roles of indigenous institutions in conflict management seem hardly questionable. The Ilaje people made peace and resolved conflict which threatened to tear their societies apart, so as to minimize the disruptive effect such conflicts may have on inter-personal, inter-community and inter-group relations. Obviously, before the advent of Western education, Christianity and modernisation, the people had traditional mechanisms of monitoring, preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. They also had their peculiar ways and manners of effecting peace-making, peace-building and confidence-building. Institutions such as *Alaghoru*, *Oba in council*, *Dosun*, *Erunoja*, *Olori-ebi* as well as *Alajobi* played symbolic roles in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Also, consultation and oath-taking in traditional sanctuaries are critical components of peace-making and conflict management. Beside the ritual performances, festival celebrations also played prominent roles in mediating political conflict. It is not out of place to say that the Ugbo-Mahin conflict has lingered on till date because of the abandonment of indigenous methods of bargaining and conflict resolution for Western models of living²¹.

Nwolise laments the prevalence of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and the failure of contemporary methods, which are essentially Eurocentric, and pleads that Nigeria should adopt new ways of conflict management and resolution, which will be more effective and efficient than what now operates, the one inherited from the British colonizers. He recommends Africa's traditional methods of conflict monitoring, prevention, management and resolution.

The methods of peace-building in Ilaje society championed by Ondo State Government and non-governmental organization (NGO) methods, which are geared towards constructive transformation of conflict and building sustainable peace, do not fit into the cultural and traditional practices of the Ilaje people. Consequently, this study investigates the triggers of Ugbo-Mahin conflict and the implications of the conflict for social development in Ilaje area of Ondo State.

Available historical evidence indicates that the Ugbo and the Mahin migrated to the present area in 900 A.D and 1500A.D, respectively. Thus, the Ugbo settlement predated Mahin in the region²². The Ginuwa's migration and subsequent protracted wars that ensued between the Itsekiri and the Mahin in the Benin area led to the movement of Mahin to Ugbo territory¹³. The Ugbo started receiving the Mahin from Benin area by the beginning of the 16th century. Traditions claim that the first set of Mahin were received by *Oba Akereti*, the tenth *Olugbo* of Ugbo²⁴. The Mahin people found Ugbo area attractive not only because of the reverence paid to it as a formidable settlement, but also because both Ugbo and Mahin claimed common origin from Ile-Ife. It is difficult to assess the degree of truth in this claim.

Certainly, there seems to be little reason to believe in the veracity of the story, since there were similarities in kingship institutions and cultural traits between these people. In the words of Robin Law, Ile-Ife was the first place in the Yoruba area where the institution of kingship emerged, and princes of Ile-Ife carried the institution to other places²⁵. According to Akinjogbin and Ayandele, the Ugbo people predated Oduduwa in ancient Ile-Ife. They pointed out how the

Oduduwa group overpowered the Ugbo by the wiles of a beautiful woman called Moremi and how reconciliation were finally arrived at²⁶. On the surface, it can be concluded that at Ile-Ife, long before the period of Oduduwa, a monarchical form of government headed by the Ugbo with perhaps, a high degree of cultural attainment, had developed. Perhaps, Oduduwa at the head of a small but highly organised band, who might or might not have been new migrants from outside, took over authority from Ugbo.

Bajowa argues that the conflict between Oduduwa and the Ugbo led to the exodus of Ugbo people from Ile-Ife to their new settlement in coastal Yorubaland²⁷. The population of Ugbo area not only became swollen, but the area also became cosmopolitan, with inflow of the Mahin. The Mahin demanded land from the *Olugbo*, *Oba* Akereti. The request of the Mahin was given favourable consideration by the *Oba*. The newcomers took the land with gratitude and started to build houses. The hospitality of *Oba* Akereti, led to the lease of part of Ugboland to the Mahin. Contrary to Yoruba practice, *Oba* Akereti did not impose any tribute to be paid by the Mahin²⁸. The land was given freely and politically as a way to prove them as a distinct and autonomous group within Ugbo territory. The Mahin organised themselves under a different monarchical government independent of Ugbo. Thus, relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin became stronger after they had settled down²⁹. Since then, the Ugbo-Mahin relations apparently started to become cordial and peaceful. There was no record of war involving the groups until the time of colonial rule, when the relative cordial relation, began to wane. The relationship between the Ugbo and Mahin in the pre-colonial era was characterised by mutual understanding and cooperation. The mutual cooperation was manifested chiefly in the spheres of social interactions, such as marriages, traditional festivals and commercial understanding.

Certain factors opened avenues of greater inter-group relations between Mahin and Ugbo in the pre-colonial era. The geographical factor appears to be

potent for their close interaction because of the relative ease with which people moved from one place to another. Secondly, during the celebration of some traditional festivals (such as *Malokun* and *Oluweri* festivals) there were occasions when the Ugbo and the Mahin exchanged presents. The celebration of these festivals served as a means of bringing the Ugbo and the Mahin together very intimately.

The greatest area where interaction was amply demonstrated between the people was hospitality. Gifts were freely exchanged between the Ugbo and the Mahin usually during annual festivals. Friendships were renewed and new acquaintances made during festival celebrations, while issues of general interest or those that affected the life of the two groups were discussed. This relationship was further enhanced by inter-marriages between the two groups.

Lastly, trade also provided the opportunity for close interaction. The markets in Mahinland were important commercial centres, where the Ugbo traded not only with Mahin people, but also with those from other parts of Yorubaland. Hence, with wide range of commercial interactions, they were able to borrow ideas from each other. This facilitated cultural transmission.

The above factors were important contributory elements to the growth of political, economic and socio-religious interactions between the Ugbo and the Mahin prior to the colonial era. However, things changed with the advent of colonialism.

1.2 **Statement of the Problem**

There has been an age-long communal conflict between the Mahin and the aboriginal community of the Ugbo. The cause of this conflict is partly social and partly political. The original cause of the conflict has been forgotten by the two communities, a new one has emerged. A cursory look at the nature of the conflict suggests that the issues that propelled the conflict have to be handled one after the other and that the implications of the conflict for development in Ilaje society needs to be addressed. The first conflict started in 1885, when the British

negotiated and signed a treaty of protection with the Mahin, which negated the treaty earlier signed with the Ugbo in 1884. The subordination of the authority of the Ugbo king to that of the Mahin king and other British administrative policies, which tend to abrogate the independence and status of the Ugbo created tension between the Ugbo and the Mahin³⁰. The advent of the British brought much change, a radical political kind to the Ugbo. To facilitate effective administration, all the neighbouring Ugbo towns and villages were brought together and ruled indirectly through the *Oba* of Mahin, whom the British felt was the superior³¹.

This indirect rule system had effects on Ugboland, changing its traditional political system and ushering in a new one³². For instance, the *Olugbo* was demoted to a village head or *baale* under the *Oba* of Mahin. The primary reason for this was that the Ugbo people were the last ethnic nationality in Ondo province to submit to the British. The *Olugbo* forcibly opposed the colonial penetration of his territory. In response, the British sent military expedition to pacify Ugboland. The system was mostly beneficial only to Mahin, where the British embarked on the construction of social infrastructures and communication system, but wielded minimal influence over the construction of social infrastructures in Ugbo. One of the greatest contributions of the colonial government in infrastructural development in Mahinland was the building of secondary and modern schools and modern health services. According to available records, the first set of secondary schools, modern schools and hospitals in Ilajeland were built in Mahin kingdom to the detriment of Ugbo. The conflict orchestrated by the British was still haunting the Ugbo and the Mahin till the dawn of the 21st century.

With the extension of the law of the colony of Lagos to the Ilaje area in 1895, a new era of continuity, change and adaptation to the challenges of the British rule began. Socio-economic and political relationships between the Ugbo and Mahin were largely determined by various aspects of British administrative policies. During colonial rule, the political status of the Ugbo was downgraded³³. The British policies resulted in the elevation of the power of Mahin traditional

rulers, who probably served as subordinates to colonial officers, while undermining the power and authority of some traditionally recognised Ugbo rulers.

At first, tension and conflict ensued as a result of the native court established in Mahin and the full European patronage enjoyed by the Mahin King (*Amapetu*) to the detriment of the Ugbo King (*Olugbo*), who claimed seniority over the former³⁴. The siting of the native court in Mahin was necessitated by the willingness and readiness of the Mahin to accept colonial rule in contrast to the hostility of the Ugbo, of which troops were drafted to enforce British control.

Besides, the colonial authority seemed to have carried the sympathy for Mahin people too far. This was done without proper understanding of the Ugbo-Mahin pre-colonial pattern of relationship³⁵. Before the imposition of colonial rule in the area, as mentioned earlier, the Ugbo regarded the Mahin as people who were meant to be seen, but not to be heard. The superimposition of Mahin on Ugbo ignited the conflict. The Ugbo continuously opposed the British presence and the appointment of the *Amapetu* as the Native Authority. The British regarded the *Olugbo's* position on colonial policies as insubordination and this led to his deposition and subsequent deportation to Calabar in 1921³⁶. Thus, the British systematically laid the seed of conflict and destroyed the long-existing cordial political relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The indirect rule system associated with British administration further ignited Ugbo-Mahin conflict. It was necessary for the working of this system that there should be traditional rulers or paramount chiefs to rule their own people along the lines dictated by the British administrative officers³⁷. In the absence of paramount chiefs, the British government forcibly created one. Such a paramount chief was declared legal native authority and given certain powers. The gazette of the Mahin King as Native Authority further fuelled the crisis between the Ugbo and Mahin. The Ugbo people were unwilling to recognise the *Amapetu* as a Native

Authority appointed by the British. The conflict for supremacy between Ugbo and Mahin was significantly pronounced.

Apparently, the *Olugbo* of Ugbo exercised political supremacy over the other *Obas* (kings) in Ilajeland during the pre-colonial period. In fact, before the coming of Mahin to the region, the Ugbo had established a formidable kingdom. Indeed, the *Olugbo* contributed to the settlement of Mahin on their present location, where he did exercise political supremacy over them. Jeje and Oyenusi also lent credence to the *Olugbo*'s claim of superiority. They stressed that:

If any *Olugbo* of Ugbo had claimed to be superior by virtue of his title over the other kings of Ilajeland, nobody should have clamoured for his head to be put on a platter of gold. As history has demonstrably proven, the Ugbo ruling dynasty predated in the ancient city of Ife the emergence of even Oduduwa from Oramfe hill. In fact, the *Olugbo* is the only king in the entire Yorubaland that had been crowned right from Ife. Therefore as far as Ilajeland is concerned the *Olugbo* is the political and cultural head, although this is not to suggest that the other *Obas* bow to him. By implication, the superiority of the *Olugbo* is that of position³⁸.

The above revelation by Jeje and Oyenusi represents the political status of the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo* in the pre-colonial era.

During the colonial period, the Ugbo believed that the colonial government deliberately subjected them to the Mahin, because of their nationalistic stance and vehement criticism of colonial presence. This aspect of the workings of the British administrative policy, whose patronage Mahin enjoyed while the Ugbo were downgraded, resulted in undermining cordial political relations, which had hitherto existed between the two groups. The British appeared more concerned with the need to increase the power of the Mahin king³⁹. They failed to realise that in the waterside district, there were two distinct groups of people, each guarding its independence jealously and that the Ugbo settlement predated that of the Mahin

in the region. The Ugbo resentment to a new order continued to lead to conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

In view of the ever recurring conflict between these people, this study tries to provide answers to the following questions.

- * Why did the British lay the foundation of Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
- * What were the features of British policies that fuelled Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
- * Why did the British undermine the sovereignty of the *Olugbo* and increase the power of the Mahin king?
- * How consequential are the developments on Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
- What are the repercussions of oil exploitation on Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
- * Who were the agents of peace in the Ugbo-Mahin conflict?

1.3 **Aims and objectives of the study**

Ethnic conflict is a legacy bequeathed by the colonial government and the alarming rate it has assumed calls for prompt attention and urgent resolution, in order to move the nation forward. There is the likelihood that the realisation of the country's national interest in the immediate future may be hampered if communities are still bedevilled by ethnic conflicts. Ethnic conflicts have led to significant loss of lives and properties in many communities and have become a major element of impoverishment and undermining human security and social development. Ethnic conflict has serious implications for socio-economic and political relations between ethnic groups. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict particularly created serious disillusionment in the minds of the people, not only within the two ethnic groups, but also in the minds of other ethnic groups in the riverine area of Ondo State. Socio-economic and political cordiality and development cannot thrive where lawlessness and conflict prevail. It is evident that the conflict has done incalculable damage to decades of cordiality and peaceful co-existence⁴⁰.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has constituted an impediment to the flow of investment and economic transformation of the region.

From the foregoing, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict needs to be treated with dispatch and the urgency it deserves, so that the conflict does not degenerate into an unmanageable situation. In fact, many violent ethnic clashes in the country could have been prevented or nipped in the bud, had timely and proper attention been given to the fundamental issues culminating in them. The Ugbo-Mahin question in the riverine area of Ondo State is a special case and as such, it deserves special focus. The peculiarity of the region holds serious implications for the corporate existence of the nation.

The broad purpose of this study is to examine Ugbo-Mahin conflict and its implications for social development. The specific objectives of the study, however, include among others:

- examining the causes of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict,
- investigating the historical antecedents of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict,
- assessing activities/roles of ethnic unions threatening public peace and security in the area,
- examining the effects of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict on social development,
- evaluating the impact of oil exploitation on Ugbo-Mahin relations; and
- articulating the strategies that will encourage social integration, social healing and psychological transformation that anchor sustainable peace and development.

1.4 Scope and limitations of the study

The time frame of the study is between 1885 and 2008. The period 1885 was chosen as the beginning of the study because that was when the Ugbo-Mahin conflict started. The harmonious relationship between the Ugbo and Mahin came to an end in 1885, when the British negotiated and signed a treaty of protection with Mahin. In 2008, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict reached its peak, when the two

communities engaged one another in a violent clash which caused deaths, several injuries, and destruction of several houses and properties.

The study covers the entire Ugbo and Mahin communities. Historical accounts indicate that the Ugbo and the Mahin migrated from Ile-Ife and the Ugbo were the first settlers. The protracted war that ensued between the Mahin and the Itsekiri in their former settlement witnessed the movement of the Mahin to their present location in the Ugbo territory. Thus, the relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin became stronger after they had settled down. There was no record of war involving the two groups until the period of colonial rule in the area, when the relative cordial relationship which hitherto characterised Ugbo-Mahin relations began to wane. The colonial incursion into the territories occupied by the Ugbo and the Mahin marked the beginning of an age-long communal conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict is depicted as a conflict between the 'landlords' (the Ugbo) and the 'strangers' (the Mahin)'. In the words of Toyin Falola, "it is misleading to assert that the strangers had equal and limitless opportunities like the indigenes to land, wealth and power". There are restrictions and discriminations against the strangers which formed centre sources of conflict⁴¹.

Geographically, the Mahin and the Ugbo people inhabit the riverine area of Ondo State. The area lies roughly between latitude 6°N and 6.30°N and longitude 4.45°E and 5.45°E. It is bounded to the north by the Ikale and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by the Ijebu and to the east by the Itsekiri and Ijo⁴² (fig.1).

The study area is deeply dissected by a number of lagoons and creeks, with most parts, especially the coastal area, made of clay soil. The main physical features are the Atlantic Ocean, and between three and four hundred miles of rivers, creeks and lagoons, the most important being the Mahin Lagoon. Between the black mud of the beach and forest swamps, there is a curious narrow strip of submerged dry lakes on which grow reeds full of grasses and dwarf white

mangrove trees. Within these submerged swampy areas run creeks which serve as means of transportation in the area. There are large numbers of rivers which are navigable and therefore, provide water and support the people's fishing occupation. Besides, the banks of the rivers are fertile and are adequately utilized for farming purposes. The presence of numerous rivers and creek network facilitate movement and interactions of the people²⁹.

The available population statistics on the two ethnic groups collected in 2006 reveals the relative numerical strength of the people as 289,838 (Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette)³⁰. The Ugbo lived mostly along the coast. They spread from Abetobo where they shared boundary with the Mahin in the west, and to Oghoye on the Benin rivers in the coast. The Ugbo build their houses on stilts, since during the wet or rainy season, the whole area is flooded. The inundation, in most cases, wreaks appalling havoc but also support the people's fishing occupation. On the river banks, there are continuous lines of Mahin towns and villages from Sheluwa, where it shares boundary with Ugboland. Inland, there are some Mahin towns and villages, which have road outlets to cities and urban centres. Some of these Mahin towns serve as commercial centres. The relative absence of commercial centres among the Ugbo people, as a result of non-availability of road outlets to cities and urban centres facilitate trading relations among the Mahin and the Ugbo people.

The limitations of this study include the respondents who treated the research with suspicion, hence, they were unwilling to supply sufficient information. In addition, the difficult terrain of the riverine environment hampered constant penetration. However, to overcome the limitations and to enhance the validity of the result, data were obtained from reliable sources such as archives, civil organisation groups, reports from government panel of enquiry and other official sources. The problem of the terrain was surmounted through hiring of professional paddlers that transported the researcher to various towns and villages within the Ugbo and Mahin communities.

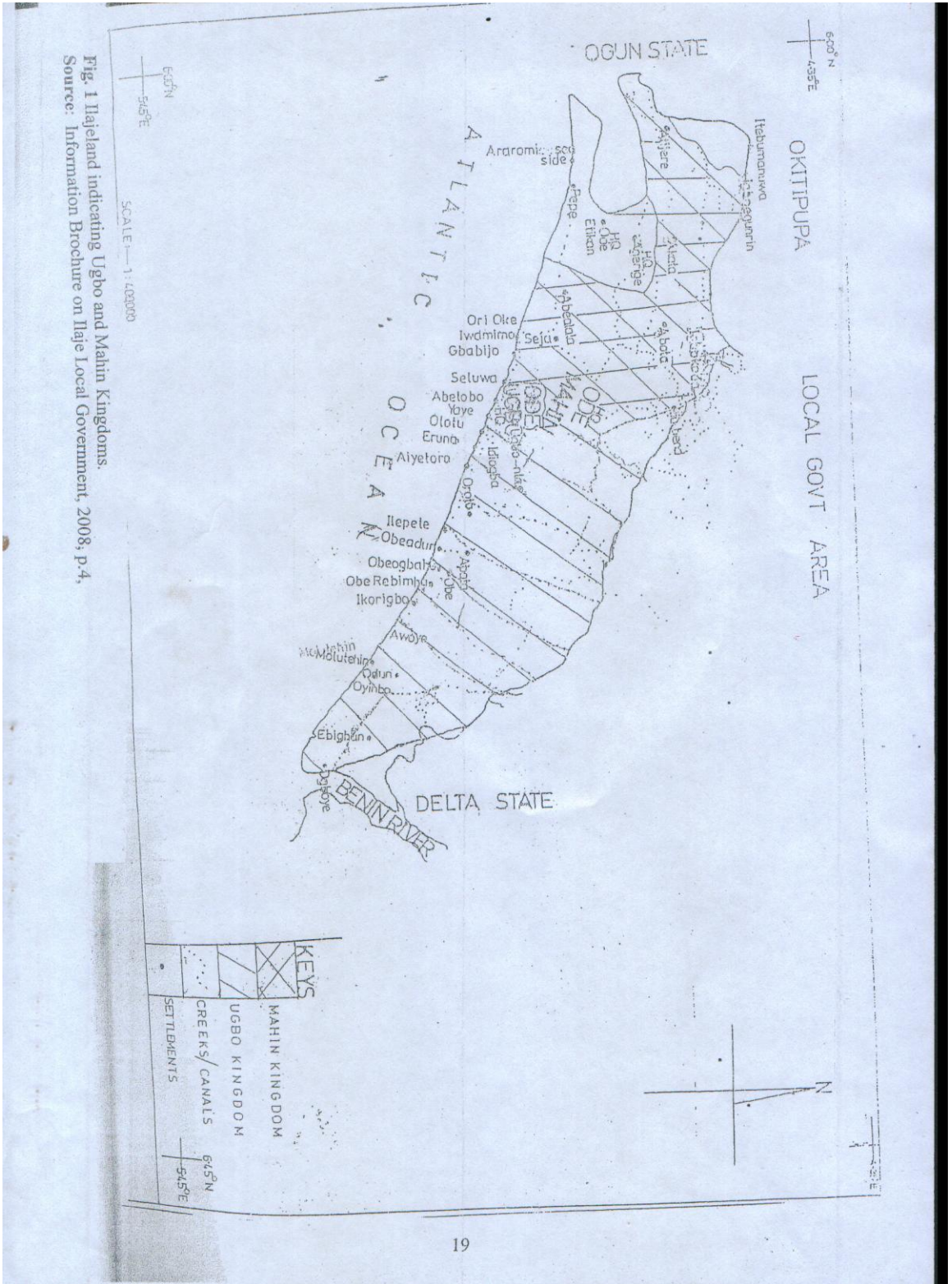


Fig. 1 Map indicating Ugbo and Mahin Kingdoms.
 Source: Information Brochure on Ijale Local Government, 2008, p.4.

1.5 **Justification of the study**

The study is important as it avails policy makers and conflict managers the opportunity to understand and appreciate the real nature of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. This study enables conflict managers acquire a deeper understanding of specific context in which the conflict occurred. The study widens the ability to evaluate and apply better conflict management strategies. This work is of great benefit to conflict managers in devising means of preventing future conflicts and thereby promoting peace in the area. The study plays a crucial role in the settlement of chieftaincy imbroglio between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*. It is also beneficial to the contemporary indigenes of the two communities whose memory about the past pre-conflict interactions might have been dimmed. In addition, the study consolidates the peace process in the area. Finally, the study serves as a reference material for sociologists, conflict managers, political scientists, anthropologists, other researchers and the general public.

Endnotes

1. The process of boundary creation was in early colonial period, done with little participation from Africans whom the exercise would affect.
2. For details on how colonial government dealt with traditional rulers who proved disloyal to colonial rule see J.A. Atanda, (1970) *Indirect rule in Yorubaland Tarikh II Vol. 3, No. 3*.
3. O. Ikime (1987). "Toward understanding the national question", *African events* April, p.20.
4. A.R. Mustapha, (1998). "Identity boundaries, ethnicity and national integration in Nigeria", in Nnoli O. (ed.) *Ethnic conflicts in Africa* (London: Russell Press, p.38.
5. I. O. Albert (2001). "General Introduction" in Albert, I.O. (ed.) *Building peace, advancing democracy: Experience with third party interventions in Nigeria's conflicts* (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, p.1.
6. A.M. Oladoyin (2001) State and Ethno-communal violence in Nigeria: The case of Ife – Modakeke (Electronic version) *Journal of Africa development*. Vol. XXVI No. 1&2 2001 Retrieved April, 2010 from <http://www.AfricanDevelopmentOrg./articles:htm>.
7. The Land Use Act was enacted by the Obasanjo administration in 1978. The ultimate aim is to regulate and democratize the use of land: to discourage exploitation and imperialism; and conflict between communities and Government.
8. B.A. Omogbemi (2007). *Ilaje nation and her cultural heritage* (Ondo: Grace Excellent Publishers. p.80.
9. Ibid.
10. Evidence derived from Chief Kalejaye, former Regent Ugbo Kingdom on 26th February, 2010.
11. Interview with Chief Dr. Ali Secretary, Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission, on 28th February, 2010.
12. Evidence derived from Hon. Aladetan member Ondo State House of Assembly representing Ugbo constituency, on 20th February, 2010.

13. <http://www.waado.org/Environment/oilcompanies.gasflare.politics.htm>.
retrived May, 2010.
14. Evidence derived from His Royal Majesty *Oba* Omowole, the *Amapetu* of Mahin Kingdom on 23rd February, 2010.
15. This conflict involved Ugbo and Mahin Youths. The pervasiveness of the conflict has been attributed to the recollection and perception of past conflicts in the area. The violence that erupts has given rise to inter-ethnic clashes between the two groups.
16. R. J. M. Curmen (1937). *Intelligence report on Ilaje district of Ondo province* NAI OK file No.436.
17. Ibid p. 18
18. Interview with Hon. Oyebo Aladetan conducted by the researcher, Ode-Ugbo on 20th February, 2010. Hon. Oyebo Aladetan is a member of Ondo State House of Assembly, representing Ugbo constituency; and evidence derived from Prince Lomiye Executive Chairman Ilaje Local Government and confirmed by Oba Omowole, the *Amapetu* of Mahin, Ode-Mahin on 23rd Februry, 2010.
19. L.C. Gwam, (1937) ‘A preliminary inventory of administrative record assembled from Ondo province NAI. p.10
20. NAI CSO 26/06452, Chieftaincy Matters.
21. O.B.C. Nwolise (2006). “Traditional model of bargaining and conflict resolution”. In Albert, I.O. (ed.) *Perspectives on peace and conflict in Africa* (Ibadan: John Archers Link, p.154.
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23. W. A Moore (1970). *History of Itsekiri F.C and Co.* p. 13. Also see Ikime, O. 1980 “The people and kingdoms of the Delta province” in Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigeria History* Ibadan: Heinemann, p.90.
24. B.A. Omogbemi (2007). *Ilaje nation and her culture heritage* Ondo: Grace Excellent Publishers, p.25.

25. R.C.C Law (1973) "The heritage of Oduduwa. The traditional history and political propaganda among the Yoruba" *Journal of African History* XIV, 2, p.211.
26. I.A Akinjogbin. and E.A. Ayandele (1980). "Yorubaland up to 1800" in O. Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian history* Ibadan: (Henneman Educational press.
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31. Ibid.
32. O. S. Iyodo (1985). "The changing role of traditional chiefs in Ugbo District of Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State", B.A. long essay Department of History, University of Ibadan, p.12.
33. R. J. M. Curmen (1937). *Intelligence report on Ilaje district of Ondo province* NAI OK file No.436.
34. Ibid.
35. Evidence derived from Chief Bolaji Igbayisemore, The Aro of Ugbo Kingdom, 20th February, 2010.
36. File No OK 251 16452, Olugbo of Ugbo Deportation.
37. Atanda, J. A. (1973). *The new Oyo empire: Indirect rule and change in Western Nigeria 894-1934* London: Longman, p.43.
38. A. Jeje and W. O. Oyenusi . (1999). *The gorillas invasion: An eye-witness account of Ijaw/Ilaje genocidal war*. Lagos: Scalar Publication, p.46.

39. File No OK 536 VI, *Amapetu* of Mahin Personal File.
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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual discourse

In this study, it is necessary to conceptualize the following terms: ethnicity, ethnic groups, ethnic conflict, social development and development for proper understanding and to offer insights into different concepts and their implications for peace and conflict dynamics. Conceptual discourse entails detailed explanation of the very concept used in the study. The relevance of conceptual discourse in this study is to provide deeper explanation of the nature of ethnic conflict and social development. This enables the researcher to be better equipped to arrive at valid research findings, conclusion and recommendations.

Ethnicity

The concern here is not to theorize the concept of ethnicity, but to establish a relevant background for the discussion of ethnic conflicts. To start with, ethnicity is a consequence of multi-ethnic existence. In the views of Otite, it is the contextual discrimination by members of one ethnic group against another, on the basis of some exclusive criteria. Ethnicity refers to how ethnic criteria are mobilized to foster and advance the cause of individuals and groups. It takes on a greater meaning in competitive situations and where available resources are scarce, relative to the interest which grows around them¹. According to Mukoro, three elements of ethnicity can be identified and these are quite relevant in this context. First, it is a culture-specific and unique practice of a set of symbols and beliefs, especially the way in which an ascribed identity is given contemporary construction, through socialization and mobilization in cultural and political movements. Second, it is a belief in common origin involving sometimes the existence or imagination of a common past always underlined by a myth of a

common origin. Third, it involves a sense of belonging to a group defined in opposition to others².

In addition, five characteristics of ethnicity can be identified. One, it involves contextual discrimination and exclusive practices and claims, which seek to edge out members of other ethnic groups. Thus, it is fostered and nurtured on the common consciousness of being one in relation to others. This is a situation of 'we' versus 'them'. Two, by its very nature, ethnicity tends to generate conflicts, since it is an instrument for individual and group competition. It is in this context that ethnicity is viewed as a negative and reactionary force in the social process. Three, ethnicity is primarily a political phenomenon, in so far as it deals with the central issue of authoritative allocation of values. The fourth characteristic of ethnicity is that there exists a close interaction between the concept and other social terms, such as class and religion, because they all cut across and penetrate one another at various levels of social formation. Lastly, ethnicity is flexible and situational. Ethnic identity is never fixed, as group definition, identities and alliance are largely contingent on what is at stake.

According to Nnoli, ethnicity may be regarded as a social phenomenon, associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups³. Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by communal character. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture or both. In Africa, language has clearly been the most crucial social variable. As social formations, however, ethnic groups are not necessarily homogenous entities. Nnoli also delineates some characteristic features of ethnicity. He observes that ethnicity exists only within a political society consisting of diverse ethnic groups. Second, ethnicity is characteristically a common consciousness of being one in relation to other relevant groups⁴. This second distinguishing factor can further be explained in terms of ethnic group itself. The former is understood in terms of its linguistic and cultural similarities, but without a common consciousness or identity. Nnoli concludes that the

relationship between ethnic groups within the same political system produce ethnicity.

Attah-Poku, argues that the issues of ethnicity in Africa should be subjected to more open discussions. It is only through such brainstorming and dialogue that the real nature and magnitude of the African ethnic issues can be realised by all. He identifies three main models to explain all facets of African ethnicity and conflict. The first is imperialist interpretations. Imperialist theorists claim that African people rally around their ethnic affiliations to struggle and battle for limited supply of goods, services and other resources⁵. He opines that rivalry for economic and political power or wealth, prestige and influence (which, according to him, are highly scarce in Africa) by ethnic groups are the main reasons for ethnic conflicts in Africa. He concludes that economic and political realities in contemporary times are the main sources of ethnic conflicts in Africa.

The second is Marxist interpretations. The Marxist theorists of African ethnicity present a counter argument. They base their position overwhelmingly on external factors. They firmly believe that Africans have never been allowed to develop along their own path and space by external forces, which have never shown any genuine concern for the progress of Africans. They argue that slavery, imperialism, colonization and neo-colonization and the activities of multi-national corporations, which are only profit maximization oriented, are the causes of ethnic and other major problems in Africa. To them, the capitalist mode of production, which is propelled solely by profit-maximization motives, led to and fuelled ethnic problem in Africa. To Attah-Poku, economic and political legacies that have been left behind by the colonialists hinder growth, development, peace and imperialist stability⁶. The current situation in Nigeria cannot be far from this.

The third model for the study of ethnicity, as identified by Attah-Poku, has to do with the liberal approach. The liberal sometimes called ethno-methodologists, put almost equal weight on external and internal forces, to explain ethnic issues in Africa. They, for example, almost equally blame imperialism and

colonization with its capitalist mode of production and internal wrangling when discussing the ethnic puzzle of any specific African country.

The liberal perspective that explains ethnicity in Africa is well articulated by Attah-Poku as:

The contemporary African ethnic conflicts and other problems both in the political, economic and social systems developed and encouraged by colonization and patterns and identities which have been in place since the colonial era⁷.

The above quotation blames imperialism, colonization and neo-colonization for the ethnic conflict in Africa. Therefore, ethnicity is a phenomenon associated with competition, exclusiveness and conflict in relations among ethnic groups, which are members of a political community.

Ethnic groups

In order to properly situate ethnic conflicts in its proper context, it is necessary to define ethnic group. Ethnic group, according to Nnoli, refers to the largest inclusive group, which is characterized by communal boundaries⁸. The basis of the communal boundary may be language, culture and/or way of life. In addition, and above all, there is a common consciousness of seeing one in relation to the others. The latter trait is particularly important in explaining the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. The Ugbo and the Mahin are not separated by language or culture, but over the years they have developed feelings of separateness and different identities. Each is identified essentially by the common consciousness of its people and their sense of common identity.

Ethnic groups are fundamental units of social organisation, which consist of members who define themselves or are defined by a sense of common historical origin that may also include religious beliefs, a similar language or shared culture. Their conformity over time as a distinct group is achieved through the inter-generational transmission of culture, tradition and institution. The sociologist, Max

Weber, provided one of the most important definitions of ethnic groups as human group, which cherish a belief in their common origin.

There are two competing views on ethnic groups. The first asserts that ethnic groups are inherently distinct social and cultural entities that possess boundaries, which delineate their interaction and socialisation with others. The second view regards ethnic groups as self categorisations that determine their social behaviour within and outside the group. In short, while the second view argues that ethnic group should be defined on the basis of self-identification, the other view adopts the idea that ethnic groups are characterised by cultural and historical traits, that have been passed down from generation to generation rather than on pure self-conception.

Ethnic conflict

Ethnic Conflict is a conflict between ethnic groups often as a result of ethnic nationalism. Ethnic conflict is man-made. It develops from conditions of contested claims over access to or control of scarce resources. According to Otite, ethnic conflict can be caused by different or opposing perceptions by multiple users or potential beneficiaries of limited resources and politico-economic dividends of government and governance⁹. The more the frequency of group and individual interaction in a multi-ethnic polity, the more the phenomenon of ethnic conflict.

Intellectual debate has also focused around the issue of whether ethnic conflict has become more prevalent since the end of the cold war and on devising ways of managing conflicts. It is imperative to establish here that the concept of ethnic conflict is not a recent development; it is a concept that featured prominently in medieval Europe and pre-colonial Africa. Empires in Europe during this period, fought one another for various reasons and the same thing happened in Africa. Great empires, like Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kush were said to have invaded many territories for economic, commercial, political and even religious reasons.

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that ethnic conflict is not a concept that can be verified and argued in absolute terms, in the sense that all through human history, ethnic conflicts have shaped human existence, and they have influenced issues like state formation, boundary consolidation, cultural harmonisation, identity definition and commercial relations. The question then arises, what are the causes of ethnic conflicts? This question has attracted the attention of scholars and several causes have been advanced for ethnic conflict. For instance, Otite has identified some important causes of ethnic conflict such as disputed territorial claims, the imperatives of culture-bound occupation, scarcity of resources, multi-culturalism and strategic use of symbols, religion, class consciousness, structural basis of ethnic conflict, internal colonialism, unintended consequences of political development and external forces¹⁰.

Social development

Social development cannot be separated from social change. In fact, social change and social development are influenced by similar factors. Social development occurs when there is positive change in the provision of services, welfare services, ideas, political stability, economic process and demographic process. In other words, where social developments exist, there will be provision of social amenities, such as motorable roads, dependable communication networks, welfare services, facilities, good governance, high standard of economic development and so on.

There are two competing views on the effects of ethnic conflicts on social development. The first view emphasises positive effects of ethnic conflicts. It states that it is not every ethnic conflict, that involves violence. It claims that ethnic conflicts, violent or non-violent, could bring out positive changes. An example of the positive effect of ethnic conflict was the outcome of the so-called French Revolution. Before the revolutionary conflict in France, the society was divided into three main classes, namely, the upper, the middle and the lower classes. After the war, there was a change from class society to classless society.

But the question arises: who are usually the beneficiaries of ethnic conflict? It has been agreed that prior to the independence of African states, the colonialists were the most obvious beneficiaries. In the post-colonial Africa, such conflicts do not benefit anyone except the elite and those in power.

The second view asks the question: 'can there be any social development where there are ethnic conflicts?' This view does not see anything good in ethnic conflict. This position can be corroborated by the statement of President Olusegun Obasanjo, while addressing the issue of the Niger Delta. "It should be noted that the process of reconstruction and community development cannot be pursued seriously in an atmosphere of violence and anarchy¹¹". This second view gives various ways through which ethnic conflicts have undermined social development, which has been emphasised in this study.

It is noticeable that one of the elements of social development is population, which has been negatively affected by ethnic conflict. It is undeniable that, during ethnic conflict, many lives are lost. It observed that, at least, several thousands of people perished in the Niger Delta crises. This also happened in other places, such as Ile-Ife, Jos, Kano, Kaduna, Ijoland as well as Ugbo and Mahin areas.

Development

Having conceptualised social development, it is pertinent to explore some newer ideas and approaches that have emerged in recent years in the area of development as related to society. Development in a society refers to ways in which society is qualitatively and quantitatively transformed from one state to another. The term development has become quite common in the social sciences that there does not appear to exist any generally accepted definition of development.

Isamah, however, argues that, notwithstanding the considerable diversity, most definitions share substantial common ground. He claims that there is broad agreement among proponents of development theory¹². For example, human

development brings together the production and distribution of commodities and the expansion and use of human capabilities. It focuses on choice of what people should have and do to be able to ensure their livelihood. Essentially, therefore, the development process has its overriding objective, the enhancement of the quality of people's lives and livelihood. According to Walter Rodney, development in human society, is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, "it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being"¹³.

A number of important paradigms of development have emerged over the years. Some of these are virtually moral categories and they are difficult to evaluate, depending, as they do, on the age in which one lives, one's class origin and one's personal perception of what is right and what is wrong. However, what is indisputable is that the achievement of any of those aspects of personal development is very much tied to the state of the society as a whole. For instance, the relationship which develops within any given social groups, are crucial to an understanding of development. In the words of Rodney, development at the level of social groups implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Much of human history has been a fight for survival against natural hazards and against real and imaginable human enemies¹⁴. To this end, development in the past had always meant increase in the ability to guard the independence of the social groups and, indeed, to infringe upon the freedom of others. These are some of the things that often came about irrespective of the will of the persons within the societies involved.

2.2 Conflict and conflict management

In social relationship, conflict is an inevitable phenomenon. One could easily admit the fact that conflict is an unavoidable part of human interaction. Conflict, in one form or the other, seems to be an inescapable aspect of human condition, which is very necessary. However, a continued and poorly managed conflict, may have negative influence on the interaction between two groups.

When conflict arises, it is shocking; yet conflict is a part of life in any ongoing relationship. When people come together regularly, especially when it involves issues of personal significance, differences often emerge. When conflicts occur between people, they often become angry, bitter or defensive. A similar thing occurs when it is between one community and the other or even one country and the other.

There is no community which is conflict free. This is based on the reality that as long as human beings interact with one another, conflicts are bound to happen. There are many factors that generate conflict in the society such as: misunderstanding, selfishness, failure to honour promise, discrimination, cheating, trampling upon human rights, denial of justice, denial of amenities and breakdown in communication. Conflict also arises when there is land dispute or problems of boundary definition between communities. Nnoli observes that conflicts occur as a result of contradiction arising from differences in interest, ideas, ideologies, orientations, perceptions and tendencies¹⁵.

To Nnoli, conflict is so ubiquitous in social life that it is the basic unit for understanding social existence. Similarly, the Marxian interpretation of the history of the society reveals that understanding society is understanding social conflict. It is often difficult to conceive history outside the resolution of conflict. There can be no progress without conflict and conflict resolution. This, to some extent, means that conflict is inescapable in human affairs. It is inherent in social existence and social progress. However, according to Nnoli, conflict can explode into violence. This is the consequence of the inability or failure to accommodate and resolve contradictions in society, through arrangements and procedures that eliminate their negative effects and maximise their positive outcomes¹⁶.

According to Otite, conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interest, goals and aspirations by individuals and/or groups in defined social and physical environments¹⁷. Changes in the social environment, such as contestable new political position or perception of new resources arising from development in the

physical environment, are fertile grounds for conflicts involving individuals and groups who are interested in using these new resources to achieve their goals. By recognising the inherent nature of conflict in heterogeneous and competitive situations, people with more or less compelling situations sustain societies as an ongoing social system through the resolution, transformation and management of conflict. Albert, however, views conflict as a confrontation between individuals or groups¹⁸.

A study by Coser revealed that conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals. In this sense, conflict may be conceptualised as a way of solving problems originating from opposing interests in the society¹⁹. Agun avers that conflict arises where there is a difference of opinion between group leaders or in situation where one group tends to be exploiting the other²⁰. Conflicts between personalities may lead to group quarrel and the division of a village or a town into several factions. An environment where disturbances, fights, hostilities, discord and the like occur, could be easily described as a conflicting environment. Asaju delineates four types of conflict²¹.

The first is intra-personal conflict. This type of conflict is that which is felt within a person and it is caused by being pushed into two or more directions at once. There is also inter-personal conflict. This involves strained relationship between two or more people in an organisation at the same or different levels. It has to do with two or more individuals arguing over different goals, values, tasks or assignments. The third is intra-group conflict. This conflict results from disharmony in the working together of a group. It occurs among members of a group or between two or more sub-groups within a group. Finally, there is the inter-group conflict. This conflict frequently erupts between groups when competing for scarce resources. One may conclude that conflict arises from domestic altercation, disturbance of personal comfort, socio-cultural and economic problems. It also includes power struggle in political arena from opposing camps,

religious intolerance and disputes over interest on land. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict is an example of inter-group conflict.

Conflict management may be perceived as a wider concept involving institutionalised provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts whenever they occur. People must learn to manage conflict productively, as its effects on the development of society are overwhelming. In some respects, the concepts of conflict resolution, conflict transformation and conflict management overlap both in content and practice.

Conflict resolution is essentially aimed at intervention to change or facilitate the course of conflict. In a broader term, conflict resolution provides an opportunity to interact with the parties concerned, with hopes of at least, reducing the scope, intensity and effects of the conflict. During formal and informal meetings for conflict resolution, a re-assessment of views and claims is done as a basis for finding options to crises and to divergent points of view. Those who organise conflict resolution exercises usually constitute the third party in a triangular arrangement and consist of traditional rulers, outstanding opinion leaders and experienced key members of the public, who are capable of producing new ideas, conditions and actions that could bring reconciliation. Organised arrangements to tackle conflict are expected to alter the perceptions, images and attitudes of the parties in conflict and widen range of options. According to Otite, participants at a conflict resolution meeting are expected to take conflict de-escalating proposals and ideas home to members of their groups. In other words, conflict resolution boils down to the creation of the conditions that will enable conflicting parties to accept proposals and ideas²².

Albert enriches our understanding of the concept of conflict transformation, when he opines that conflict transformation is an integrative approach to conflict resolution that focuses on how human perceptions, communication and structural problems producing conflict situations can be altered. Conflict transformation is a long-term development agenda specifically targeting three major areas²³. The first

is causing a change in the entire context of the conflict. The second is influencing a change in the conflict parties relationship. The last one is precipitating a change in the conflict. The argument here is that conflict transformation is aimed at changing unjust social relationship.

Wilmot and Hocker have identified thirteen methods for managing conflict²⁴. These include: speaking out what is in one's mind or heart, listening carefully; expressing strong feeling appropriately; remaining rational; asking questions; maintaining a spirit of give and take, avoiding harmful statements; and asking directly what is going on. Others are telling the other one's opinion; looking for flexible shades of solutions; recognising the power of initiating a cooperative move; identifying conflict patterns; and engaging in negotiations of agreement and settlement. Wilmot and Hocker aver that appropriate communications skill and channel are crucial in conflict management.

Although these methods identified by Wilmot and Hocker are the cheapest and most available strategies for dealing with conflicts, they have a number of problems, barriers and pitfalls. Human emotions, anger, arrogance, perception of conflict in zero sum term and the degree of polarization in the conflict situation, often make it difficult for some conflicts to be resolved through these strategies.

So far, this study has addressed adversarial and non adversarial conflict handling styles. Conflict management can also involve the mobilisation of cultural expectation, or imperatives, such as African hospitality and belief system. These instruments can be utilised to resolve at least intra-family and intra-ethnic conflicts in the open glare of an attentive audience in town or village square or at the shrine of common deities and ancestors. Nwolise asserts that indigenous African system of conflict management appears to have stronger potency of handling conflicts with more lasting effects than modern ones²⁵. Both adjudication and mediation reduce protracted conflict and help everyone in making right decision. They also reduce the occurrence of conflicts. Those involved must be capable of demonstrating patience, sincerity, wit, physical endurance, wisdom and probing

skills. Whereas these attributes involve trained specialists in some cases, the African conflict management profile generally involves almost everybody with authority in several areas of life in the social structure.

In summary, African conflict management involves corporate efforts among responsible and reliable personalities. These personalities are seen as principal characters in conflict management. Olaoba succinctly captures this thus:

The drama of adjudication requires characters with open mind, trustworthiness, transparent integrity and honesty, historical frame of mind and good sense of humour. These qualities have overbearing influence not only on the detection of crime and culprits but also in the determination of the course and end of justice. Without the ethics and virtues of the African judges, justice will not only be delayed but it could also be outrightly denied, thereby leading to the annoyance of the gods and the ancestors²⁶.

One more reference to the potency of indigenous African system of conflict management is the contribution of Oguntomisin to African traditional jurisprudence. Oguntomisin has unearthed the place and importance of peacekeeping and peacemaking in pre-colonial Nigeria. According to him, African pre-colonial societies established elaborate mechanism for the maintenance of peace²⁷. Each person, family head and community or kingdom leaders were held responsible for the maintenance of peace. Hence, pre-colonial African societies had strong natural desire for peace, orderliness and social harmony in the society. Oguntomisin further delineates appropriate sanctions against any breach of community laws and customs. He identifies three broad types of sanctions: moral, legal and ritual sanctions.

In the words of Nwolise, African pre-colonial societies established mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution and made very determined, deliberate effort to maintain peace and social harmony between individuals and groups²⁸. Contemporary literature of conflict management has identified four strategies of conflict management mechanism. The first is

avoidance. Here, one group attempts to divert attention from the conflict or simply ignores it. This also includes moving from the conflict or denying its existence. This produces win/lose situation. This position is a dangerous form of conflict handling style. It implies that you are weak in finding solution. This will make the situation to continue permanently and expand. Avoidance may be a first strategy to enable one find an alternative method of handling a conflict situation. But when it is used permanently, it is dangerous and it could lead to bad relationship.

The second mechanism is confrontation. In some conflict situations, parties may choose to slog it out with one another. This may involve the use of violent attack. Sometimes the two parties may lose or in some situations the stronger party may win everything. This conflict handling style leads to conflict escalation, a kind of lose/lose situation. Such a style reduces capacity and wastes resources.

Third-party decision making is the third mechanism. Albert asserts that the basic interest in this approach is to promote negotiation or mediation among the conflicting parties²⁹. The third-party mechanism may involve that the matter be referred to a third person, who has the power to provide how the matter will be resolved, for example, law court or the police, which are basic instruments in conflict management. They are established institutions for the purpose of hearing disputes and giving decision or judgement on such disputes. The police and the law court serve as agencies of remedying grievance and assuring hope. The institutions are relevant in our resolve to live together despite the prevalence of conflict of varying nature. These institutions also function as great instruments of conflict management. They serve as methods of social engineering and means of balancing conflicting interest in the society. These institutions, however, are not transparent in resolving conflict. They are problematic and their decisions are often manipulated. This becomes lose/win situation when it is supposed to produce win/win. It has been argued that the police and the law court do not pursue reconciliatory judgment; people go home humiliated and look for possible means to embark on vendetta³⁰.

Finally, there is the joint problem-solving device. This can help in the resolution of all types of conflicts in a more effective and mutually satisfying way. This is done in a manner that enables the conflicting parties to work together towards generating a lasting solution to the problem. Albert has identified seven stages through which conflict could be resolved using the joint problem-solving approach³¹. The two parties jointly acknowledge that a problem exist, develop appropriate conditions, define the problem, generate alternative and viable solutions, evaluate and select solution, and finally implement the agreement.

In the above explanation, attention is drawn to the conceptual clarification of conflict and conflict management. This, perhaps, helps to clarify the issue that, although conflict management may appear co-terminous with conflict transformation, the former, which is better than the latter, describes structural and procedural dimension which deals with issues of conflict.

2.3 Review of related literature

This section reviews the literature that were related to the focus of this study. The review concentrates on issues germane to ethnic conflict

2.4 The nature and causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria

Nigeria, like many African countries is bedeviled by a number of crises which hinder its developmental aspiration. Among the multitude of problems faced by Nigeria is that of ethnic conflicts. Intra-and inter-ethnic conflicts have seriously affected Nigeria. In fact, the Nigerian society and politics are marred by intra-and inter-ethnic misunderstandings. No ethnic group can live in isolation; there is bound to be interaction among groups living in close neighbourhood. But the peace and interaction are often jeopardised by misunderstanding and conflicts, which could have serious repercussions on social development.

Prior to British colonialism, for centuries, Nigerians inter-related and established harmonious relationship without taking into cognizance their ethnic backgrounds³². Ikime has shown how the Igbo smiths of Awka and the Edo traders of Benin were able to traverse with their wares in many parts of Nigeria, thus

trading with the Idoma, Igbo, Nupe, Urhobo and so on. They carried their commerce and religions unmolested³³. In corroborating this assertion, Isichie opines that trading activities led to the development of many trade routes, such as the ones from Kano to Kastina, and from Nguru in Bornu to Bilam, thus facilitating commercial cordiality³⁴. In fact, this made it possible for commercial relationship to be established among many people. It helped to foster greater understanding; the trade routes and water ways developed by Nigerians facilitated trade and helped in strengthening peaceful co-existence. By the use of these water ways, many centres, like Raba in Nupe and Kalfu Market in Kontagora emerged. In this market, as hinted by Asiwaju, people from virtually all sections of Nigeria transacted business³⁵.

Many pre-colonial towns and cities contained elements not indigenous to the area and they lived peacefully with one another. For instance, Nsukka located in northernmost tip of Igboland, was able to harbour Igala elements³⁶. These people penetrated and established settlements in predominately Igbo communities. As argued by Afigbo, the Igala lived peacefully with their hosts; they benefited from each other in terms of political institution, language, craft, religion, ideology and so on³⁷. The savannah cities, such as Kano, due to its position as centre point in the Trans-Saharan trade, had a large number of immigrant population, like the Yoruba, Kanuri, Berber/Arabs carrying out commercial and clerical activities peacefully. According to Isichie, these have their appointed leaders, who related with Kano authority on their behalf³⁸. Both the Kano populace and their leadership derived benefit from the activities of these traders and clerics, which made them to be reckoned with in Kano economic, political and religious spheres. Borno also encouraged peaceful co-existence among the people particularly those who live in its cities. Traders, as indicated by Isichie, had special quarters created for them in order to conduct their businesses peacefully³⁹. In this connection, traders from West, North and Central Africa were all accommodated in the cities. They inter-related and conducted their business with their hosts unmolested.

However, during the colonial period, the colonial government pursued certain policies which heightened ethnic tension between communities in Nigeria⁴⁰. In the first place, in their erroneous belief about the distinctiveness of Nigerians, the Europeans came up with indirect rule. The system reinforced communal and ethnic identity. Secondly, there was the separation of southerners from northerners in residential accommodation, leading to the establishment of Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada (strangers quarters). This created tensions and misunderstanding. Regionalism and the emphasis placed on the distinctiveness of the regions assisted in balkanizing Nigerians along ethnic and regional divides⁴¹. Furthermore, the colonial government policy of exploiting and making the colony self-sufficient created serious adjustment crises. Many people were forced to leave their homes and look for jobs in booming places, such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kaduna and Kano. The consequences of this was the formation of ethnic unions, whose major aim was to cater for the need of a particular ethnic group living in the urban centres. This contributed to ethnic conflicts.

The crop of politicians that struggled for power and later took over the mantle of leadership from the Europeans were unable to build on the harmonious relationship existing among Nigerians in the pre – colonial era. They failed to create understanding among the various ethnic groups. In fact, some of them saw the political era as providing an opportunity for factionalising themselves on regional and ethnic divides. They operated on that basis in order to dominate the wealth of their regions to the detriment of the larger segment of the society.

The Nigerian ruling elites and their cohorts, be they military or civilians that followed, continued the same trend of hiding under the canopy of ethnicity to advance their own course. From what has been observed, we can deduce that ethnicity is the creation of the colonial and post-colonial order, which, as Nnoli has observed, is manipulated by those who control power or are aspiring for that order to realise their economic and political objective.⁴² Consequently, in post-

colonial Nigeria, the creation of states and local government councils has been a major source of ethnic conflict.

Otite points out that the new territorial boundaries and political positions that were created have become sources of conflict between ethnic groups. Such intra-and inter-ethnic conflicts generated from protested inclusion or exclusion from the jurisdiction of certain local government councils cause the location and relocation of the headquarters of councils, such as in Ile-Ife – Modakeke and Warri⁴³. Similarly, location or relocation of markets, hospitals, motor parks, schools, and so on, could lead to protests over these otherwise good aspects of development, leading to inter-and intra-community conflict⁴⁴.

Otite has shown that, owing to the interaction of a group's heritage, ecology, technology, population movements and physical environmental resources, members of certain ethnic groups have learnt to survive on certain occupations in which they have also achieved some preserve. There is a pluralism of indigenous economics, which is a source of both conflict and complementary living⁴⁵. Examples are the oil palm industrial technology of the Urhobo, the Isoko and some members of the Igbo ethnic group in the eastern part of Nigeria, the Akwa Igbo metallurgist, the Bini and Ile-Ife Yoruba craft, bronze and iron workers, Tiv farmers, the Ijo experts in fishing and fishing harvesting and the Fulani-Hausa specialists in animal science and animal husbandry in Nigeria's northern states. All these are expected theoretically, to be essentially complementary, occupationally; this promotes harmony.

But, Otite has pointed out that ethnic conflicts occur when members of different ethnic groups engage in multiple usages of the same valued land or water resources⁴⁶. Ethnic conflicts have arisen from disputed claims over fish ponds, creeks and fishing rights among members of various ethnic groups in the riverine areas of the Niger Delta and inhabitants of south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria⁴⁷. Similarly, Otite has opined that cattle rearers in need of essential supplies in the north-east and north-west geo-political zones of Nigeria have not

only got into conflict with one another over scarce and diminishing pastures and water spots, but they have also had serious and devastating conflicts with farmers over crops destroyed or eaten up by their animals as they move south-wards often as far as Kwara State and northern fringes of Oyo State. Losses of human life and property have been recorded in these cases of individual and ethnic clashes.

In addition, Ogunsan and Popoola have noted that the conflict between the Yoruba farmers and the Fulani herdsmen in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State was as a result of the refusal of the Fulani to pay compensation to the Yoruba farmers, whose farmland were destroyed by Fulani cattle⁴⁸. The dynamic processes of these identified conflicts may be seen in the imperatives of culture-bound occupations. It could thus be argued that ethnic conflicts occur when different ethnic groups within a zone or community engage in the same usage of land or water resources⁴⁹. In fact, a number of violent conflicts have erupted in many parts of Nigeria owing to struggle and control of environmental resources. It has been observed in this respect that farmers and pastoralists, fishermen and pond owners, foresters and timber loggers, and so forth have clashed in various parts of Nigeria, over controversial uses or exploitation of land and water resources⁵⁰.

A key factor in ethnic conflict, as identified by T.A. Unobigbe, Bassey Asuni and others, is land dispute⁵¹. In Nigeria, there are recurrent conflicts over land and water space and their resources. Inter-ethnic and communal clashes have occurred within and across the politico-administrative boundaries of Nigeria's states and local council areas⁵². In the words of Otite, statements by people claiming the status of original settlers or aborigines are frequent and strengthened by historical facts, genealogies and kingship symbols or by created and recreated myths and official histories⁵³ on the basis of other contesting claimers and users of land and water are warded off usually after serious quarrels, fight, destruction of property etc. In many cases, peace is achieved through negotiated tenancy, usually involving some agreed periodic (yearly) payment to symbolise ownership/tenancy relations⁵⁴.

The conflict arising from issue of land has been traced to the fact that, as an economic value and as factor of production, land itself has become a source of status symbols and of social and political influence⁵⁵. Hence, land is said to have become a major source of conflict among economic and social groups in the community. Examples of ethnic conflicts occasioned by land and other related matters include the Zango-Kataf, Jukun-Tiv, Umuleri-Agulari, and Ijo-Ilaje conflict. The ancient town of Warri once exploded in violence between hitherto co-existing communities over the ownership of Warri. This explosion left some scars, visible and invisible. Some of the visible scars were corpses and burnt houses that were no more than hollow shells⁵⁶. The streets had a desolate outlook, as businesses closed down and people fled the town in panic. This was the outcome of clashes between the three ethnic groups that make up Warri – The Ijo and the Urhobo on the one hand and the Itsekiri and Ijo on the other hand. The scale and ferocity of the destruction were quite alarming – with hundreds of lives and properties lost.

The antagonism among these ethnic groups is not new. It is a festering sore; it is merely increasing in frequency⁵⁷. The conflict, for years, has been an interrupted process of violence, killing, maiming, destruction of property and so on. During the mayhem, life became extremely difficult, people were homeless and starving, there was no way of selling or buying needed commodities, as people had to run and leave their jobs, businesses and so on. In addition, communication with the outside world became impossible and commercial activities virtually came to a halt and hospital did not open, as workers ran for safety⁵⁸.

In Ondo State, it was a replay of Warri mayhem, as the Ijo and the Ilaje went for each other's throats over the ownership of Akpata, a border town. Consequently, there was loss of lives and property in every clash between the two ethnic groups. The war also led to waste of human resources. Today, people live in

fear and insecurity, while the two ethnic groups are apprehensive of possible resurgence of conflict.

In the farming communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, the story is the same. The conflict over land is a central factor that produced the crisis. This conflict occurred in 1963, 1964 and 1995. But, the recent one in 1999 assumed a dangerous dimension with thousands of lives and property destroyed, as more sophisticated weapons were used⁵⁹.

All across Nigeria, there is an ever-lengthening tread of ethnic violence: Ife - Modakeke, Ogoni - Adoni, Hausa - Yoruba in Sagamu Ogun State, Zango - Kataf, Jukun - Tiv and so on. As part of strategies to mitigate ethnic conflict occasioned by land dispute, Nigerian government enacted land use Decree of 1978, whose aim is to regulate and democratise the use of land; to discourage exploitation and imperialism; and conflict between communities and Government in urban areas⁶⁰.

Looking at the spate of ethnic violence across the country since independence, it will not be an overstatement to say that Nigeria is almost under siege. Ethnic conflict have spread across the country like the proverbial forest fire, producing internal upheavals of almost unprecedented dimension. There were ethnic clashes in Lagos, Ogun, Delta, Ondo, Kano, Kaduna and Abia States, among others. The carnages produced by these clashes were horrifying. Many innocent people were killed, maimed and property worth of millions of naira was destroyed. It would be nearly impossible to quantify the materials and human cost of these crises. It is, indeed, very worrisome, that while the Western world have passed the stage of maintaining internal tranquility and is moving towards greater regional cooperation through the formation of European Union and trade Zones, Nigerians are threatened by the possible break up of the country. This is because of ethnic tensions and conflicts. The conflicts could have serious repercussions on social development.

Development only succeeds in an environment that promotes internal and external investment. It is this that helps in creating job opportunities and improved living standard. However, capital investment can only be realistic where peace reigns. For instance, an investor will feel secure with his capital when the possibility of conflict erupting is not in existence. Therefore, inadequate investment, because of insecurity of capital, will no doubt hinder government from getting enough resources to play its constitutional roles. Provision of social amenities for citizens, as pointed by Rodney, is an important ingredient for the success of development projects⁶¹. This can never be achieved in an atmosphere of confusion and anarchy.

Violence, particularly with ethnic dimension, will create another serious disillusionment in the minds of the people because lack of law and order in a country that lays claim to being developed, will make the people to see development as an irrelevant concept. This could be as a result of its inability to provide them with adequate security for their lives and property⁶².

The long-term effects of conflict may be the positive side of conflicts, after the short-term losses of human and material resources. Ethnic conflict serves as a means of identifying the imperfection of a plural society, and of suggesting remedies to remove or solve the problems of inequality, marginalization, exploitation, internal colonialism and the misuse of ethnic majority democracy and national development⁶³. Conflicts are, thus, signs of ills in society, with the potential of functioning as catalysts for equitable national development. Conflicts put rulers and leaders on the alert to respond to the structural and operational defects and shortcomings of a plural society such as Nigeria.

It can be argued that a conflict may be regarded as a natural announcement of an impending reclassification of a society with changed characteristic and goals with new circumstances of survival and continuity. It has been realized from empirical experience that a society is expected to emerge from conflict with its identified imperfections removed or reduced. Thus, theoretically, at least, a society

or community that survives conflict is expected to be in a better position of equitable development, social justice and social well-being. Similarly, it may be assumed that ethnic groups and individuals develop better mutual understanding and accommodation after surviving the shackles of inter-ethnic conflict. Well-managed conflicts may, therefore, be regarded as catalysts for development in multi-ethnic societies⁶⁴.

2.5 Ugbo-Mahin relations

That there has been a rising wave of ethnic conflicts including alarmingly violent one in contemporary Nigeria is, by now, a generally accepted observation. Ethnic conflicts had occurred in Nigeria in the pre-colonial period. Some of these conflicts escalated as a result of the attitude of the colonial government to managing them. When the colonial government terminated its control over Nigeria, ethnic conflict took a dangerous dimension.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict in the Ilaje area is an example of such unending ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. This conflict had its roots in the 1885 Mahin treaty, which negated the earlier treaty signed with the Ugbo in 1884⁶⁴. The British systematically laid the seed of the conflict. Through colonial rule, the power of the Ugbo was downgraded. In fact, the general administration of numerous towns and villages in the area was vested in Ode-Mahin and that the Mahin King, the *Amapetu*, was recognised as the Native Authority for the District, which included Ugboland. This gave the Mahin a upper hand, as the implication was that the *Amapetu* had control over Ugboland. This meant that the Ugbo were expected to be subservient to Mahin. Throughout the colonial rule, conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin continued to escalate. Today, the Mahin look on the Ugbo as people whose political right had been downgraded by the colonial government. At the same time, the Ugbo look on Mahin as a tenant that she assisted to settle in her present location, who have refused to accept their tenancy status⁶⁵.

An outsider might find it odd that the people who refer to themselves as Ilaje and have lived together for more than five centuries would still divide

themselves into two opposing groups. In Nigeria, this phenomenon is not an uncommon situation. The attempt by the colonial government to raise the status of Mahin was the cause of the conflict, with which the Ugbo and the Mahin have become identified. It could be correct to say that the Ugbo-Mahin conflicts have colonial antecedents.

The study of Ugbo and Mahin history has suffered terrible neglect in the hands of researchers. This is not unconnected with the difficult terrains which must have been hampering serious research endeavours. The only source of Ugbo and Mahin history was the Ilaje intelligence report compiled in 1937 by R.J.M. Curmen⁶⁶. However, the result of colonial presence in Ilaje area is that colonial records are available for the study of Mahin and Ugbo history. Some of these records include memoranda, the assessment and re-assessment reports and minutes. In addition, there are research projects, which were conceived as academic exercise. Many of these research works have been concerned largely with the history of either Ugbo or Mahin.

Atanda points out largely the opposition of the *Olugbo* and the Ugbo people, to the attempt of the British administration to strengthen the power of the *Amapetu*, Mahin King in the name of paramount or Native Authority in the waterside District of Ondo Province⁶⁷. He also demonstrates that the *Olugbo* of Ugbo, who was unwilling to recognise the sovereignty of the *Amapetu* in the Ilaje District of Ondo Province, was deposed by the government. Following the deposition of the *Olugbo*, the *Amapetu* became president of all courts in the area. The arrangement was unsatisfactory to the Ugbo. These colonial policies in Ilaje District bred discontent and troubles between the Ugbo and the Mahin. While the work of Atanda focuses on the deposition of the *Olugbo*, the work does not address certain crucial issues, such as how was the British occupation of Ugbo and Mahin accomplished? Why did the federation of Ugbo and Mahin prove extremely difficult? The work also fails to address the repercussion of the deportation of the *Olugbo* on Ugbo-Mahin relations.

The colonial government outlined the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* conflict in the Ilaje intelligence report. They argued that the *Olugbo*'s failure to acknowledge the *Amapetu* of Mahin's Native Authority had presented the British administration with a complex problem⁶⁸. Thus, in 1919, the Resident of Ondo Province, Captain Walter Buchanan Smith, reported the *Olugbo*'s insubordination to British government. Curmen pointed out that after several warnings, the *Olugbo* persisted in violating the *Amapetu* authority. He claimed that the *Olugbo* was charged for repeatedly preventing the execution of the British administrative policies⁶⁹. Consequently, in June 1921, a judicial enquiry into the *Olugbo*'s behaviour was held at Gbekebo by Sir Benard Carkeet, District Officer, Ondo Province. The colonial government revealed that the *Olugbo* refused to make any defence on his claim of seniority and independence of Mahin unless the *Ooni* of Ile-Ife, the *Osemawe* of Ondo and *Oba* of Benin were called as witnesses. Curmen also revealed that the court, therefore, held that the government had refused to recognise the *Olugbo*'s independence and claim of seniority of Mahin as relevant and he was consequently deported. Curmen concluded that the grudge that subsequently followed the *Olugbo*'s deportation affected Ugbo-Mahin relations.

In addition, there is virtually nothing on the Ugbo-Mahin conflict in S. O. Logo's *Ugbo-Mahin relations, a study in inter-communal relations in Ilajeland*. Unlike any of the works which have concentrated exclusively on colonial ordinances, memoranda and how the ordinances worked in practice, the impact they made on the existing political structure and the reaction of the Ugbo and Mahin people to colonial presence, the study provides evaluation of the nature of pre-colonial Ugbo-Mahin relations.

The work of Jeje and Oyenusi⁷⁰ is a triumph of Ilaje history with a wider coverage. The major aim of the authors is to document and preserve necessary information for future generations, so that they may learn from it and appreciate the role the Ilaje people played in Ijo/Ilaje genocidal war of 2008. However, the study has ventured far beyond historical descriptions of the war. In fact, most of

the pages are devoted to the patterns of migration, settlement, re-creation of relationship and building of social, economic and political institutions in the different kingdoms that constitute Ilajeland. The study also brings to life, the obscure event that precipitated the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. Hence, this work is very relevant to the present study. In addition, the book is a collection of the history of different kingdoms in Ilajeland and its environs. Thus, the study has added significantly to the collection of literature not only on the Ugbo and the Mahin, but also other kingdoms in Ilajeland. The study reveals, to a great extent, the pre-colonial and colonial patterns of relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The study points out clearly that the *Amapetu* did not undermine the supremacy and sovereignty of Ugbo Kingdom until the extension of the law of Ondo province to the area. Jeje and Oyenusi declared thus:

...the subjugation of the entire Ilajeland to the power greedy absolutism of *Amapetu* – informed by the blatant lie to the British that he was the sole King of the area and that all the other heads of the other towns and villages were in fact his paramount chiefs and that his arrival on the coast pre-dated every other persons’ – gullibly believed and perpetrated by the British although in ignorance⁷¹.

The above development, in no little way, put the *Olugbo* and his jurisdiction under the *Amapetu* suzerainty. The British did not verify and interpret the history related to them and thus lacked proper objectivity. This was, however, due to the lack of documentation, which the British Administrators would have relied on.

Jeje and Oyenusi successfully explained the rise of the *Amapetu* to prominence, which they attribute to the advent of the British as power broker in Ilajeland⁷². They noted that the appearance and emergence of the the British on the political scene of Ilajeland jeopardised the cordial relationship existing between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*.

Omogbemi provides a clear historical origin of the evolution of the Ugbo and the Mahin in his study⁷³. He makes a bold attempt at re-examining the evolution of the name Ilaje. He claims that the name Ilaje is associated with Ugbo cult of *oro* and that the Mahin received the insignia from the Ugbo and hence began to call themselves Ilaje. One major achievement of Omogbemi's work is the reconstruction of the history of the Ugbo as the proud builder of the political system that paved way for the emergence of Mahin. Omogbemi has successfully explained the emergence of the Mahin in relation to the hospitality gesture extended to them by *Oba Akereti*, the 10th *Olugbo*, which facilitated the settlement of the Mahin in Ugbo territory. According to Omogbemi, the Ugbo was the cradle and the birth place of the entire kingdom that emerged in Ilajeland and its environs⁷⁴. In other words, the Ugbo is the birth place of Ilaje civilisation and the point at which the Ilaje acquired the consciousness of belonging to the same stock of humanity. Omogbemi categorically mentions that the Ugbo-Mahin conflict emanated as a result of the Mahin inability to accept their tenancy status. The fundamental cause of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict has been articulated by Omogbemi thus:

From all indications what is more relevant is that Amapetu (Mahin King) is at a time a subordinate to the Ugbo throne. It is, however, within the tentacles of historical facts that Amapetu betrayed Olugbo's headship as he claimed to be the ruler of Ilaje environment during the visit of the colonial masters (British representatives) in 1885 to Mahin thereby undermining the Olugbo authority and supremacy which hitherto settled them at their present location. He (Amapetu) was in the process given a British crown as a symbol of supreme authority and an insignia of rulership. This led to prolonged disputes between Ugbo and Mahin, in fact, the scars are still visible⁷⁵.

The current situation in the Ugbo and Mahin relations cannot be far from constant perception or recollection of the above incident.

On the other hand, Magi's work solely addresses the issues that led to the war. It is clear from his writing, as an Ijo man, that the book dedicated more pages to eulogizing the Ijo as peace builders⁷⁶, Magi is more concerned about the Ugbo-Ijo crisis. He focuses more on the nature and features of the war and its effects on socio-economic development. All he does is to protect the interest of the Ijo and blame the Ugbo for the war. Magi hardly makes reference to the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. Hence the book reveals the true nature of Ugbo – Ijo crisis⁷⁷.

A cursory look at the available literature reveals that the Ugbo-Mahin conflict has not been emphasized. Another important area which the scholarly works have neglected is the implications of the conflict for social development in Ilaje society. The Ugbo-Mahin conflictual relations are faintly documented. Nearly all the scholarly works available for the study of Ugbo and Mahin history do not address the Ugbo-Mahin conflict, let alone identify the implication of the conflict for social development. The reviewed literature on the Ugbo-Mahin relations does not adequately document the historical antecedent of the conflict, which still triggers the conflict in the contemporary times. The effects of the conflict on oil exploration and exploitation, infratrural development, kingship institutions, and social relation as well as strategies for managing the conflict are conspicuously absent in the reviewed literature. Thus, the reviewed texts and available materials have neglected the salient issue of peace management in Ilaje society. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has been totally neglected by researchers. In fact, until quite recently, not much has been written on the two ethnic groups let alone the conflict between them. This neglect might not be unconnected with their difficult terrains, which might have been hampering serious research endeavour. The waterlogged nature of the area constitutes an impediment to the study of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. The result is already manifesting in the scantiness of published works on the Ilaje people.

The Ilaje society needs peace and security, promoting cordiality between the Ugbo and the Mahin has become a herculean task. The correlation between

conflict management and transformation and sustainable peace in the Niger Delta area of Ondo state has not been given any scholarly concentration. Analytical ways of preventing, managing and resolving conflict in Ilaje society, have not been examined by scholars that worked on the Ugbo and the Mahin. This present study fills the gap and also provides as well as enhances knowledge on the Ugbo-Mahin conflict in the Ilaje area of Ondo state.

2.6 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study derives from the nature of the materials, the aim of the inquiry and also the ways in which the research problems are posed. While the primary concern is to try to unravel the triggers of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict and the implications of the conflict for development in Ilaje society, it should be emphasised that it is impossible to separate the conflict from history and culture of Ilaje society. The conflict is rooted in the people's culture and tradition. As a result, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict cannot be studied in isolation from its socio-cultural context. The nature of the study makes the application of a single paradigm inadequate. This is because while some aspects of the study are well explained by one or more perspectives, no single perspective or framework may provide sufficient explanation for all aspects. The nature of the materials and scope of the study, therefore, make the study to adopt the structural conflict theory and relational theory. This framework makes it easy to understand the conflict, especially its causes, the conditions under which it occurs and the implications of the conflict for social development in Ilaje society.

2.7 Structural conflict theory

The structural conflict theory traces the root of conflict to the particular ways societies are structured and organised. This theory looks at social problems such as political and economic exclusion, injustice, exploitation and inequity as sources of conflict⁷⁸. The structural conflict theory maintains that conflict occurs because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies and domination of one class by another. It predicts that the competing interest of groups as well as

nature and strength of social networks within and between community precipitate conflict. The exponents of this theory (Karl Marx, Engel, Lenin, Ross) noted that in situations where social, political, economic and cultural processes are monopolised by a group, conflict is inevitable.

The actions of either Ugbo or Mahin support the position of the structuralists. The structural theory offers useful perspective to the understanding of ethnic conflict. The structural basis of Ilaje society predisposes ethnic groups toward conflict. Since resources are always limited and scarce, the contest between socio-cultural unions (such as Ugbo Central Organization and Mahin Descendants Union) under various leaders makes conflict inevitable. The conflict is generated over access to the limited politico-economic resources. Thus claims to the control of the land, monopolisation of political position and control of oil resources as well as the divergent perception of co-existence in Ilajeland provide grounds for the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. The opposing views, which the Ugbo and the Mahin have of one another also predispose the two groups to conflict.

The structural approach to conflict tries to unravel the innate dynamics involved in the conflict. It holds that, to consolidate peace by preventing conflicts, it is necessary to move towards structural stability based on socio-economic justice. It directs attention to forces which can make a society more or less prone than another to particular levels and forms of conflict and violence. In other words, the structural explanation for conflict, violence and warfare focuses on how the organisation or society shapes action.

Some scholars observe that structural conflict has also been used to describe the impact of institutional dynamics upon the creation and perpetuation of the conflict. It can be argued that a conflict can be generated by the rigidity of institutional perspective and procedures, communications and feedback from their external environments in terms of what will enhance their own survival, normally at the expense of others.

The structuralists agree that a society's capacity for adaptation, accommodation and tolerance towards its various groups is essential to its stability. For instance, the government and non-governmental organisation methods of peace-building in Ilaje society, which are geared toward constructive transformation of conflict and building sustainable peace, do not fit into the cultural and traditional practices of Ilaje people. This accounts for the fading out always of their involvement after few years of operation. Obviously, for an institution to survive, it must be rooted in the people's culture and tradition. Arguably, the inability to adopt strategies that would reflect the lives of the people is a source of conflict. It is within this context that Otite and Ogionwo asserted that, in culturally plural societies characterised by fragile and unstable political structures, violent conflict can result easily to political instability and social dislocation⁷⁹. Therefore, the structural conflict theory plays a vital role in explaining the Ugbo-Mahin conflict.

2.8 Relational theory

The discourse of relational theory is on the historical antecedents of conflict and what causes conflict within a particular society. The relational theory emerged out of sociology of conflict and relationship between ethnic groups. The theory attempts to provide explanation for conflict between ethnic groups by exploring sociological, political, economic and historical relationship between such groups. However, ethnic conflict is better understood through a historical microscope. In other words, history plays a significant role in unravelling the triggers of conflict. For instance, a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups⁸⁰. Relational theory thus states that a history of negative exchanges between groups may make it difficult for efforts to integrate different ethnic groups within the society to succeed because their past interactions make it difficult for them to trust one another. Hence, the resurgence of ethnic conflict is a sign of past negative relationship.

Judging from the relational theory, which emphasises historical explanation for ethnic conflict, it can rightly be argued that the Ugbo-Mahin conflict requires great deal of historical mirror. It is indeed right that historical explanation be adopted in order to understand the triggers of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. The relational theory would not only be applicable to the causes of the conflict, but it can also throw a great deal of light on and enrich our understand of the implications of the conflict for social development. The relational theory will make in-depth studies and analysis possible, which will provide fruitful case studies relevant and necessary for a general understanding of the different phases of the conflict. Thus, relational theory identifies cultural and value difference as well as group interests all of which influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways.

At the sociological level, differences between cultural values are challenge to individual or group identity formation processes and create the tendency to see others as intruders who have to be prevented from encroaching upon established cultural boundaries. For instance, on the part of the Ugbo, the basic problem appears to be the desire to recapture and regain their traditional land occupied by the Mahin. Their desire to prevent the Mahin from further territorial expansion posed a serious threat to peace in Ilajeland. It is within this setting of territorial expansion that the Ugbo continuously refer to the Mahin as their tenants. On the other hand, the Mahin resented the insult by the Ugbo, who have refused to accept the colonial arrangement and the Nigerian constitutional interpretation of the Land Use Act.

Since the colonial period, boundary dispute between the Ugbo and the Mahin has deepened conflictual relationship between the two groups. The relational theory further claims, that the fact that others are perceived as different, makes the other group feel they are entitled to less or are inferior by reason of cultural values. This disrupts the flow of communication between ethnic groups and by extention the trust and perceptions that they have about each other. In the

same way, the knowledge that two or more groups have to compete for the same resource creates conditions that increase the chance that interactions between ethnic groups will produce conflict over how to share resources.

The idea behind the relational theory is that the historical antecedent of conflicted relationship is the source of tension. For instance, in Nigeria, it has been difficult to get ethnic groups to see themselves as partners in progress, because they have a past history of conflict woven around control of resources and political supremacy. For example, in Ilajeland, between the Ugbo and the Mahin this has been the situation. Therefore, the relational theory provides an especially valuable framework for analysing the data on the Ugbo-Mahin conflict.

In the foregoing discussion, an attempt has been made to come up with theories to assist the study in appraising the nature, causes and implications of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict for social development in Ilaje society. The two theories discussed above are very fundamental in explaining the dynamics of the conflict and also serve as useful guide to the study. While the structural conflict theory assists the study in understanding the causes and their implications for the conflict on development, the relational theory provides a lead way in understanding the historical antecedent of the conflict. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict could be understood in the light of historical context and origin. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has lingered on because of the lack of proper understanding of the history behind the Ugbo-Mahin agelong relationship, which was that of tenant (Mahin) and landlord (Ugbo) relationship.

For there to be long-lasting peace in Ilajeland, in addition to relational theory option, there is the need for structural transformation, which would allow for a more effective infrastructural development for the benefit of the two ethnic groups. Hence, the two theories adopted for this study should be applied in effective collaborative manner.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method entails the techniques used in finding a solution to an identified problem¹. In other words, it is a method used in carrying out a study. A research method is a plan or blueprint, which specifies how data relating to a given problem are collected and analysed². It provides the procedural outline used for the conduct of field-work. This involves the method of collecting data, method of data analysis and problem of data collection³. The most common approaches adopted in data collection include observation, interview and focus group discussion. These approaches guide and control researchers in field-work investigations. In view of the importance of research method to the solution of an identified problem and especially to this study, this chapter deals with the method of collecting data, the design of the research and method of data analysis. It also discusses the problems of data collection.

3.1 Study population

People in ten towns, made up of five towns from each of Ugbo and Mahin were selected. This choice was made because the ten towns are core towns in Ugbo and Mahin⁴. The bulk of the oral information was derived from direct interviews with individual and groups in the ten selected towns. The informants in the two areas covered by this study are broadly classified into three.

The old people were the first group. The evidence from this group is rated high because of experience and knowledge usually associated with old age, as old people are custodians of family tradition. Some of the old people interviewed witnessed colonial rule, some had accounts of past events covered by this study, as handed over to them from those who took part in them. Another category of people interviewed in the selected towns were local historians. The importance attached to the evidence obtained from the group arises from the fact that they had, at one time or the other, carried out field investigation into the past history of their

people and this makes them generally knowledgeable. Some of them have written books. Others are not literate, but they are usually held in high esteem for their oral historical knowledge and for their high retentive memory. Finally, the title holders were also interviewed. By virtue of their positions, the *baale* and chiefs were useful sources of oral information. These title holders were relied upon for information on the indigenous administration and judicial system as well as the mechanism for conflict management. The selected towns in Ugbo and Mahin lands were randomly chosen. They included Ode-Ugbo (administrative headquarters of Ugbo Kingdom) Aiyetoro, Idi-ogba, Abeotobo and Ikorigho, others were Ode-Mahin (administrative headquarters of Mahin Kingdom) Saluwa, Gbabijo, Igbokoda and Atijere.

3.2 Sources of data collection

Data for the research were collected from two main sources namely; primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered through direct interview. The secondary data were collected from books, journals and unpublished works in the two areas of study. Similarly, information derived from newspapers, official documents from governmental agencies and so on were used.

3.3 Method of data collection

Data were collected through focus group discussions (FGDs). The focus group discussions were held among major stakeholders. FGDs were also conducted with community leaders, youths and women groups. Two focus group discussions were conducted in each kingdom. Each focus group discussion was made up of twenty people with similar backgrounds. The aim was to enable the researcher to elicit information on areas of agreement and disagreement among respondents⁵. A small number of people, usually from the two areas covered by the study, were arranged in groups under the guidance of a moderator to talk about the causes and implications of Ugbo-Mahin conflict. The participants were grouped according to specific characteristics that are relevant to the subject matter of discussion. In order to achieve a good result, the participants were

homogenously organised. In other words, the discussion was held in different locations of the study. Also, the study generated part of its data through in-depth interviews⁶, both telephone and personal interviews. Officials of government agencies in Ilaje Local Government were interviewed. Other groups included youths, ethnic unions such as National Association of Ugbo Students, National Association of Mahin Students, the Egbe Omo Ilaje, the Ilaje Patriotic Front, and Ugbo Central Organization. Also, interviews were conducted with traditional and spiritual leaders. Data were also collected through photographs⁷. It must be emphasized that field-work historians and anthropologists have accepted photography as an integral part of their field research. The researcher used photographs as supplement to other data⁸. Without doubt, historical photographs aided the researcher to understand class of development and patterns of changing relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

3.4 Method of data analysis

The emphasis in this study is on the responses of the people to the Ugbo-Mahin conflict and its implications for social development. Such responses are only partially represented in the documentary accounts. To fill the gaps and to cross check information contained in the available written sources, oral evidences had to be relied upon. The bulk of the oral information was derived from direct interviews with individuals and groups in the two locations covered by the study. The scientific techniques of collecting information from local sources were adopted. Such information was reviewed and reconstructed in order to produce coherent and comprehensive, intelligent and satisfactory research. The researcher ventured far beyond the task of narrative and description in the data analysis. The researcher made use of certain techniques of analysis such as explanation and interpretation in order to elicit the sequence of recent happenings in Ugbo and Mahin areas. The researcher performed the task of explaining historical events in their own terms of sequence.

The pre-occupation of the researcher is to find out the truth about the conflict and to be as objective as possible. The researcher made every attempt to divorce himself from prejudices. Also, no relevant evidence was omitted by the researcher. The researcher gave account of all the views.

3.5 Problems of data collection

The greatest difficulty encountered during the study was lack of cooperation from the people at the initial stage. The researcher was also regarded with suspicion by those from whom the researcher sought information, especially considering the nature of the study. Besides, the two communities (Ugbo and Mahin) are currently working toward building lasting peaceful relationship. Hence, the persons interviewed were extremely careful about the kind of information they gave out. The general distrust of both communities towards the researcher and the possible use to which a study like this could be put, made some people interviewed to answer questions with great reservation and caution.

In addition, little or no records were kept on the extent of the destruction of the Ugbo-Mahin relations by the informants. Hence, the researcher had to rely heavily on archival materials. One other difficulty encountered during the study was the nature of the environment. The researcher found the riverine environment a little difficult to penetrate. Hence, the study was limited to ten selected towns in Ugbo and Mahin. Another problem encountered was request for gratification by the informants. The researcher bought drinks to entertain some people before useful information could be obtained. In addition, the problem of the timing of the schedules prolonged the days spent on the field. Many informants did not honour the time earlier scheduled for interview. The researcher patiently waited for days before interviews could be granted.

The problem of illiteracy featured prominently during the field-work. The illiterate elders thought that the study was out to cheat or enslave them considering the nature of the topic. In a situation like this, the only way to ensure the flow and reliability of the information was to inspire in the informants a feeling of

familiarity which, in turn, generated some degree of confidence. Also the researcher patiently interviewed as many people as possible in each locality so that the information from one informant could be corroborated by those from the other. Another area where difficulty was encountered was that of exaggeration. In an effort to re-establish their past, informants distorted history by giving exaggerated accounts of their supremacy. Hence, some oral accounts conflicted with historical facts when one tried to correlate one piece of information with another one. But the available written documents such as textbooks, archival materials and unpublished dissertations served as invaluable source materials to corroborate or counter the oral account obtained.

Another area where some problems were encountered was loss of memory and incoherence of facts by the informants. The failure of human memory may be caused by fatigue or lack of knowledge on the part of the informant concerning materials being transmitted. It may also be caused by old age. But this form of failure was alleviated through rigorous questioning of the informants, with a view to establishing the consistency of the transmitted account. Also, the researcher interviewed the informants more than once on the same subjects, at different times and then compared their views with various accounts given at various occasions.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE UGBO-MAHIN CONFLICT

4.1 Pre-Colonial Ugbo-Mahin relations

Historical antecedents

The Ugbo and the Mahin migrated to their present area in 900 and 1500A.D respectively. From available record, it was discovered that the Ugbo settlement predated that of the Mahin in the region. The Ginuwa's migration and subsequent protracted war between the Itsekiri and the Mahin in the Benin area necessitated the movement of the Mahin to the Ugbo territory.

The Ugbo started receiving the Mahin from Benin area by the beginning of the 16th century. Traditions claim that the first set of the Mahin were received by *Oba Akereti*, the tenth *Olugbo* of Ugbo¹. The Mahin found Ugbo area attractive not only because of the reverence paid to it as a formidable settlement, but also because both Ugbo and Mahin claimed common origin from Ile-Ife. The population of Ugbo area not only became swollen, but also became cosmopolitan with inflow of new migrants. The Mahin demanded land from the *Olugbo*, *Oba Akereti*. The requests of the Mahin were given favourable consideration by the *Oba*. The new comers took the land with gratitude and started to build houses. The hospitality posture of *Oba Akereti* led to the lease of part of Ugboland to Mahin². Contrary to Yoruba practice, *Oba Akereti* did not impose any tribute on Mahin. They gave the Mahin land freely and politically as a way to make them a distinct and autonomous group within Ugbo territory. They organised themselves under a different monarchical government independent of Ugbo³. Thus, the relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin became stronger after they had settled down⁴. It would appear that since then, the Ugbo-Mahin relationship had started to become cordial and peaceful. There was no record of war involving the groups until the period of colonial rule, when the relative cordial relationship which hitherto characterised Ugbo-Mahin relations, began to wane.

The relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin during the pre-colonial era was characterised by mutual understanding and cooperation. The mutual cooperation manifested chiefly in the spheres of social interactions, such as marriages, traditional festivals as well as commercial interaction⁵. Viewed in a broader sense, certain factors opened avenues of greater inter-group relations between the Mahin and the Ugbo. The first was geographical factor. The geographical factor appears to be a potent factor for their close interaction because of the relative ease with which people moved from one place to another. Secondly, during some traditional festivals, there were occasions when the Ugbo and the Mahin used to exchange presents. This relationship was further cemented by inter-marriages between the two groups. Lastly, trade also provided the opportunity for close interaction. The markets in Mahinland were important commercial centres where the Ugbo traders met not only the Mahin, but also those from other parts of Yorubaland. With a wide range of commercial interactions, they were able to borrow ideas from each other, which facilitated cultural transmission. The above factors could be seen as important contributory factors to the growth of political, economic and socio-religious interactions which evolved between the Ugbo and the Mahin prior to the colonial era.

Political culture

The Ugbo-Mahin relationship in the pre-colonial period could be better understood by considering the similar features of their political organizations. The Ugbo and the Mahin seemed to have evolved a common and elaborate political system, ranging from the *oba* (king) the head of land to the *Baale* (the provincial administrator of a small village). The supremacy of elders as family head, *Ijoye*, was recognised in the society. The *Olugbo* of Ugbo was the acclaimed *Oba* of Ugbo, while the *Amapetu* of Mahin region exercised power over the Mahin. They were regarded as divine kings. In theory, they had absolute power. The attribute of *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*, like their counterparts elsewhere in Yorubaland, was *Alase ekeji orisa*, ruler and deputy of the deity. The *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*

became the pivot around which all the aspects of political administration revolved. They were seen as reincarnation of the entire ancestors. Both the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* settled disputes among village heads, families and individuals. The *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* had advisory councils. In Ugbo the advisory council were known as *Egharefa* while in Mahin, they were known as *Dosun*. Both in Ugbo and Mahin, the *Egharefa* and *Dosun* performed identical functions.

In the hierarchy of chieftaincy institution, both in Mahin and Ugbo, there was also an institution known as *Eghare*. The vastness of the kingdom led to the creation of this institution who were quarter chiefs. The *Eghare* were involved in the day-to-day administration of the two kingdoms. The *Eghare* performed the same function. They attended meetings with the *Olugbo* or the *Amapetu* as the case may be. The institution forwarded their complaints or opinions of people in their quarters to the kings. They acted as intermediaries between the *Oba* and their people and also oversaw the development of their quarters and settled political disputes.

The institutions of *oro* and *opa Ilaje* were remarkable in the policy initiation among the Ugbo and the Mahin. The institutions determined criminal offences. Other instruments of power similar in the two kingdoms included *opa*, *aja* and *arubeji*. Obviously, the Mahin received the institution from the Ugbo⁷. An indigene of Mahinland or Ugboland residing in either side of the kingdoms, received approved punishment for violating these institutions.

The smallest unit of administration in Ugbo and Mahin was the *oja* or the town or village. The various *oja* or *ilu* in Ugbo and Mahin were brought into the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* administrations through the appointment of *baale*. The *baale* so appointed by the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo* in their respective kingdoms served as a representative of central government. The *baale* occupied a liaison position between the *oba* and the people. The *baale* had an informal court where minor cases were attended to⁸. This provincial administrative system of the two kingdoms gave room for cordiality and mutual cooperation.

In other words, for administrative convenience, it became imperative for both the *Olugbo* of Ugbo and the *Amapetu* of Mahin to have representatives in the villages, so as to maintain administrative, executive and judicial ties between the *Oba* and the villages. However, there were certain villages, under Ugboland with mixed Ugbo and Mahin population. In such villages, the Mahin elements took orders from the *Olugbo's* representative without any hesitation. But this did not prevent the Mahin in those village from demonstrating loyalty to the *Amapetu* in their mother town. This situation encouraged cordial relations between the Mahin and the Ugbo in the pre-colonial period.

The Ugbo and the Mahin evolved similar institutions like *Alaghoru*. This institution adjudicated on cases referred to it by the king. Members of this institution were wise men. They were drawn from various zones of the kingdoms. They were the most valuable advisers to the king. Some members of the *Alaghoru* were always with the king when he wanted to pass judgment. Whatever judgment was passed could not be reverted⁹. The power of the *Alaghoru* cut across the two kingdoms. The essential rapport which this system brought about between the Ugbo and the Mahin could not be ignored. For instance, one could lay the report of any accused Ugbo citizen before Mahin *Alaghoru*, who could handle the case without any partiality.

The *Eronmi* served as a peculiar military organisation in Ugboland. The combined *Eronmi* forces were needed in the military campaigns¹⁰. Thus, the combined *Eronmi* forces were instrumental in maintaining peaceful relationship between the Mahin and the Ugbo. In Mahinland, there existed no standing army, but competent Mahin citizens engaged in some military adventurism, which was directed mostly towards slave trading. In the pre-colonial times, the Ugbo and the Mahin maintained military interaction through military cooperation. This cooperation made them to embark on joint military campaigns.

On the whole, the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo* regarded themselves as *Oba*, that is, they were independent chiefs and superior to all their people and each

group saw itself as sovereign. From the available evidence, the Ugbo-Mahin political relationship in the pre-colonial era was rooted in historical evidence. There were contacts and interactions between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The Mahin society, which emerged had the Ugbo political traits. In fact, the traditional political system that survived, however, could be likened to the Ugbo. This indicates that the Ugbo influence may have been considerable.

Also, the intimate relationship culminated in exchange of ideas and probably contributed to the overwhelming similarities in political system between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The Mahin had been successfully acculturated into the Ugbo culture. The Ugbo interaction with the Mahin also left some impact on the Ugbo. There were joint institutions like the *Alagboro*, which adjudicated or punished offences whether in Mahin or Ugbo. The influence of the Ugbo on the Mahin could also be noticed in chieftaincy institutions. In fact, most of Mahin chieftaincy institutions were borrowed from the Ugbo.

Although the *Olugbo* contributed to the settlement of the Mahin in their present location, he did not exercise political authority over them. Similarly, the *Amapetu* of Mahin did not undermine the sovereignty of the Ugbo kingdom. This political situation continued until the extension of the law of the Colony of Lagos to the area in 1895.

Economic networking

In the economic sphere, the Ugbo and the Mahin were actively involved in economic activities to enhance their livelihood. But in considering the Ugbo-Mahin economic relations in the pre-colonial period, one important factor stood out clearly, this was the factor of geographical proximity. This seemed relevant not only in pursuing similar economic ventures, but also in economic interactions. The Ugbo and the Mahin derived their wealth from three economic activities: fishing, manufacturing and trading. These serve as the foundation on which the economic relationships were built.

The primary basis of economic growth in Ugbo and Mahinland in the pre-colonial period was fishing. Adequate rainfall and the presence of numerous rivers, which caused inundation in the rainy season, supported the people's fishing activities¹¹. The Ugbo and the Mahin shared basic techniques and system of fishing. The Ugbo and the Mahin carried out their fishing activities in lagoon and coastal waters, through the use of four major items¹². The first was *Iyanma* (plate 1). This was basket shaped and placed in the stream, fixed to the bottom of the creek with sticks. They were mainly used in the lagoons. The second was *awo* (plate 2). This was a large net which was dropped perpendicular into deep water, float of wood were sprung along the top of the net and bamboo pole was tied to it. There was also the *akase* (plate 3). This was a long bamboo pole called *eporo* and a spear head was fixed loosely into a socket at the end of the pole and a spring attached to the butt, with the spear passing along the pole to the other end. Lastly, there was the *uwo* (plate 4). This was another fishing method used in the lagoon. It was a long piece of hollow bamboo tied horizontally between them. It was about two feet below the surface of the water. One end of the bamboo was stripped up and small fish would enter at the end.

In addition to sharing the same techniques of fishing, there was land tenure that promoted cordial relationship. The land included rivers, creeks and lagoons. On such land, citizens from both kingdoms were allowed to carry out their fishing activities after paying a token amount to the people that owned them¹³. For instance, the Ugbo carried out fishing activities in the lagoon that belong to the Mahin and vice versa. Fishing settlements were constructed in Ugbo-Mahin boundary. This development went a long way to strengthen the economic ties between them¹⁴. Since there was no restriction to the movement of the people, it was easy for them to settle among each other's towns and villages not only for fishing purposes, but also for other economic activities¹⁵.

However, the Ugbo-Mahin relations in the pre-colonial period were not extended to free acquisition of land. There were clearly marked boundaries and trespassers were usually punished. Land could be easily sold or freely given out, but it could be leased out to strangers for use within a specific period. Such strangers were expected to give some gift to chiefs, priests and to local families¹⁶. These gifts, which had no fixed amount, were very much like a rent.

The fact remains that not all the Ugbo and the Mahin engaged in fishing; some of them took part in the manufacturing industries. Weaving of fishing materials was the most important profession because of its link with other sectors, especially fishing. There were specialised craftsmen among the Ugbo and the Mahin who were delighted in producing weaving and fishing materials, such as nets and basket. The production of these materials was very significant because of their link with fishing. For instance, fishermen could not perform their fishing activities without using materials produced by the weavers. The materials, included *iyamma*, *awo* and so on.

Another prominent and significant industry was mat weaving. The Mahin and the Ugbo transported finished products, not only within themselves but also, to other parts of Yorubaland, through Mahin markets. Another important industry included local salt manufacturing. The Ugbo specialised in this because of their proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. As the major supplier of local salt, they exported their finished product to Mahinland and other parts of Yorubaland. All these industries ensured economic prosperity. The nature of the economic activities showed that none of the two groups was self-sufficient in all things. Thus, there was the need for interaction.

Trade promoted mutual economic relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the pre-colonial period. They interacted since there was nothing to inhibit their movement and transaction. Although a subsidiary to fishing and manufacturing, trading was an important arm of economic activities. As one of the major sources of income, trade must have begun as a result of the need to dispose

of some superfluous fish and manufactured goods such as mats. The Ugbo and the Mahin traded in local manufactured goods, like salt and woven materials, which included fishing materials and mats. In the pre-colonial period, the Ugbo were often exempted from paying high stall fees at Mahin commercial centres. The Mahin controlled all the big markets in the area. The Ugbo and the Mahin shared the same stalls and established trade union among themselves which often fostered unity. As a result of the geographical factor, the need arose to establish links with agricultural foodstuff producers, like the Ikale, their northern neighbours. The Mahin and the Ugbo united in establishing units for the exchange of their fishing produce with foodstuffs.

Evidences abound that commercial relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin could also be seen in the existence of clear market trade routes, which linked Mahinland with the outside world. Mention can be made of the major roads like the Igbokoda route through Okitipupa to other parts of Yorubaland, the route from Atijere to Lagos, and the route from Igboegurin through Mahintedo to Apoiland. Going by this, Mahinland appeared to be an centre port because many articles of trade came from various areas to Mahinland. The Ugbo traders penetrated into Mahinland to sell and purchase needed goods. Mahin kingdom became an economic centre because of population concentration and favourable geographical centre. Thus, Mahinland was once a great divide and link between diverse peoples.

Socio-religious impartation

The socio-religious relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin was remarkable. Evidence abounds that both of them were rich in culture and the similarities were, indeed, profound¹⁶. However, one needs to clearly understand the influences that brought about socio-religious relations. It appears that a series of related influences were at work. One of them was the geographical factor. It has been mentioned earlier on that the two groups occupied the same geographical zone and, as such, it was easy for them to interact. Hence, there was an intensive

socio-religious contact leading to inter-marriage. Among all factors, the cross-marital relations seemed to facilitate mutuality¹⁷. Another factor which can not be ignored was the commercial link between the two groups of people. With the wide range of commercial interactions, people were able to borrow ideas which facilitated cultural transmission.

The social relations among the Ugbo and the Mahin present a clear picture of similarities and borrowings. There was the social institution which bound the people together. The first noticeable among social institutions was the *otu* institution (age grade). It was often a tradition for the youths in the two areas to organise themselves into age grades (*otu*) at the age of twenty. The *otu* from Ugbo who were of the same age with the *otu* from Mahin often saw themselves as *olukun* (friends)¹⁸. They shared common interest and attended ceremonies organised by fellow *olukun*. The *otu* from Ugbo and Mahin in some cases settled issues that could create enmity between each other.

Another interesting area of Ugbo-Mahin relations in the pre-colonial period was marriage¹⁹. This appears to be a potent factor in the Ugbo-Mahin relations. One can easily identify many towns in Ugboland with mixed Ugbo-Mahin inhabitants. The towns are Oroto, Ikorigho and Odonla. Inter-marriage might have been responsible for socio-cultural similarities among the two groups. Among the Ugbo and the Mahin, marriageable daughters when given out in marriage were considered as the most valued gifts. Like in other parts of Yorubaland, marriage was an agreement between the family of the bridegroom and that of the bride. Before the solemnization of the marriage, sexual intercourse was forbidden between spouse. The bride must also remain a virgin before marriage. If she was found not to be one, she brought disgrace upon her family. The bride-price used to be food items especially cassava. The number of cassava tubers for one marriage was usually put at two hundred. Later, more items, such as two bottles of palm oil, two bottles of dry gin and plantains were added as a result of more access to external product mainly from Ikaleland. Cassava was very rare since Ugbo and the

Mahin were not agrarian societies. Hence, the provision of this scarce commodity symbolised the bridegroom and his family's commitment to the marriage proposal. In fact, this was one of the factors for cordial and peaceful relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin during the pre-colonial period.

The concepts of *alajobi* (common birth) *omo iya*, *omo lebi*, *omo Baba* which variously describe the relationship between individuals who consider themselves to be of common descent through female (*omo Iya*) and male (*omo baba*) lines, held the Ugbo and the Mahin together very intimately. The concept of *alajobi* was achieved among the Ugbo and the Mahin through intermarriages. The Ugbo and the Mahin were very conscious of these concepts, as they provided social and psychological satisfaction to them and sometimes helped to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and togetherness. They influenced social behaviour and arouse a sense of belonging to a defined social unit²¹.

Another genealogical tie, besides those mentioned above, which also influenced social relations, was *Ibatan*²². The *Ibatan* was the relationship derived through intermarriage. The Ugbo and the Mahin who intermarried considered the concept of *Ibatan* as a guardian of morality within the social setting. An emblem of unity and solidarity among the Ugbo and the Mahin, which favourably compared with the golden stool of the Ashanti, was the *opa Ilaje* or *Ilaje staff*³³. The *opa Ilaje* (plate 5) was regarded as the greatest single symbol of *Ilaje* statehood (which comprised the Ugbo and the Mahin). The possession of the *opa Ilaje* by the Ugbo and the Mahin served as symbol of ethnic unity.

In the pre-colonial period, there was the religious institution which bound the Ugbo and the Mahin together. Each group had its own traditional festival, but the celebration always took similar patterns. *Okorobojo*, *Ore-Ehare*, *Ogele* and *Malokun* festivals were the most important festivals throughout Ugboland while *Ere*, *Eje* and *Oluweri* festivals were prominent throughout Mahinland. The origin and the significance of some of these festivals were not very clear, but the week-

long celebration that accompanied them, were marked with songs and drumming²⁴.

The celebration of traditional festivals served as a means of bringing the Ugbo and the Mahin together occasionally. Perhaps the greatest area where interaction was amply demonstrated was the people's hospitality to each other. Gifts were freely exchanged between the Ugbo and the Mahin usually during the annual festivals. Friendships were renewed and new acquaintances made and issues of general interest of those that affected the life of the two groups were discussed.

The annual celebration of traditional festivals in Ugbo and Mahin aimed at revealing the social and historical aspects of the life of the Ugbo and the Mahin people as re-enactment of what happened in the past. Hence, the festivals served as sources of valuable data on the historical past of the two kingdoms. Some of the festivals brought back to mind how the Ugbo and the Mahin emerged in the area²⁵.

Traditional festivals as celebrated in Ugbo and Mahin also aimed at purgation and purification of the land. They formed the fora for open discussion of misconduct believed to be capable of bringing calamity to the land. The festival occasions allowed for the display and interplay of literary, cultural and artistic activities geared towards the effective correction of social ills through the use of song, music dance, poetry and acrobatic displays. The beauty and entertainment value of the music and songs often motivated and encouraged a communication process for verbalization of social discourse between the performer and the audience.

The celebration of traditional festivals in Ugbo and Mahin attested to the belief of the people in the ancestral spirits who needed be appeased so that the people could get favour. In the pre-colonial times, it was assumed that the existence and well-being of the two kingdoms depended on the pleasure of these ancestral spirits. Hence, the celebration of festival in Ugbo and Mahin was a means of appeasing the gods/deities and the ancestors for protection against

economic predicament, epidemics, diseases; to offer the citizens the opportunity for enjoying good government and to promote unity between the Ugbo and the Mahin. They also prayed to the ancestors to protect the living and look after their welfare. The people would carry wine, morsels of food and other sacred objects produced by traditional artists to the shrines and grave sides of their departed fathers. This was done to ensure that they did not lack in the world beyond. The devotees of traditional festivals in Ugbo and Mahin always killed sacrificial animals in honour of their ancestors or gods and prayed to them for protection from all evils and diseases.

Most of the traditional festivals celebrated in Ugbo and Mahin involved thanksgiving sacrifice to many divinities, acknowledged and worshipped by the people and believed to be dispensers of blessings. Thanksgiving sacrifice was always accompanied by feasting. The Ugbo and the Mahin would share common meal with which they ask for God's prosperity.

The celebration of traditional festivals in Ugbo and Mahin also aimed at initiating the people into the values, norms and ideals of a civil society for the preservation and continuity of culture and society. Thus, some offences or misbehaviours which were punishable legally, had to be sanctioned culturally, to promote harmonious co-existence among the people within the social environment to ensure cultural continuity. The songs that were sung during festival celebrations covered almost every aspect of the people's customs and tradition and constituted a major sub-genre of oral poetry of the people. The songs in the celebrations were not cultural show but poetically rich in contents and forms. On the whole, Ugbo and Mahin provided unique and cohesive type of society, with a complex array of norms and values that facilitated harmonious co-existence between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the pre-colonial period.

4.2 Historical antecedents of Ugbo-Mahin conflict

Colonial influence

The bombardment of Lagos and the eventual turning of the city into a British colony in 1861 created a fertile ground for the subsequent British occupation of Mahin and Ugbo in 1895²⁶. Whereas the British occupation in some areas in Yorubaland took the form of military subjugation, the British occupation of Mahin and Ugbo took diplomatic form, such as the signing of treaties of protection and friendship. But this was preceded by the period of informal influence during which the way was paved for the subsequent British formal control. Scholarly works on British conquest of African territories have identified three modes of penetration by the British into Africa. First, a trading company from a European country might establish itself in an area and later on declare that area a sphere of influence of his country of origin. Second, consuls might be stationed in an area by one European power or the other. Such consuls might make treaties for the purpose of stopping the slave trade and establish legitimate commerce. On the basis of these treaties, European powers annexed vast territories in Africa. Third, there might be the use of naked force by a European power leading to the conquest and the annexation of the area so attacked. Indeed, what served as the cornerstone of the British control of Mahin and Ugbo were the various treaties signed with the people from 1884-1895²⁷. These treaties systematically sowed the seed of conflict and destroyed the long-existing cordial relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The first of these treaties was the treaty of protection with the Ugbo on the 24th December, 1884. This was done in duplicate on board her Britannic Majesty's ship 'Alector' of the town of Erunna in the territory of Ugbo and signed by William A.G. Young, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gold Coast colony²⁸. A critical look at this treaty shows that the Ugbo entered into a treaty of friendship and protection with the European. However, this agreement came to a halt when the British effectively negotiated and signed another treaty with the

Mahin in 1885 negating the 24th December, 1884 treaty with the Ugbo. The 1885 treaty produced series of troubles between the Ugbo and the British on the one hand and Ugbo and Mahin, on the other hand.

From the above, it is evident that the Mahin treaty was signed with the British imperial government, a year after that of the Ugbo. It became the cornerstone of British further activities in the whole area. This was why it was Mahin king who negotiated with the British always. In the treaty with the Ugbo in 1884, the British representatives arrived off the coast. But in 1885, they came via the creek from Lagos through Aboto. The British adventurers were, however, not informed that there were other communities towards the coast where negotiation could be made. Hence, further transaction started with the Mahin. For an unknown reason, the Europeans seemed to have forgotten the Ugbo treaty, and the Mahin treaty of 1885 became the basis for their further activities in Mahin and Ugbo. This was to serve as a fundamental cause of conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

In 1895, the Lagos government, representing the Queen of Great Britain, entered into alliance with the Mahin and extended their authority to Ugboland. Following this development, the laws of the colony of Lagos were applied to the newly created Mahin District Council with the Ugbo. However, the area was administered by the District Commissioner stationed at Epe. By the amalgamation of southern and northern Nigeria in 1914, the area became part of Ijebu District. In 1915, the Mahin and the Ugbo were incorporated in Ondo Province being in Ondo Division. In 1928, the water side district of Ondo province was constituted as Okitipupa Division³⁰. With this development, the Mahin king, *Amapetu*, was recognized as the head of the whole area. This laid the foundation of conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin. Fundamental to the British policy during the colonial period was the making of the Ugbo subordinate to the Mahin. The effort of the British to lord the *Amapetu* Mahin king, over Ugboland was, part of a large scheme to achieve a centralised government for Ilajeland. Earlier on in 1912,

Captain Neal writing on the federation of Yorubaland, recommended a single minor council for Mahin and Ugbo³¹.

Having consolidated their control over Mahinland and its environs, the British were confronted with the problem of administration. In solving this problem, they adopted the method of indirect rule. The indirect rule system, which served as the vehicle of British administrative system, operated on three principles: the Native Authority, the Native Court and the Native Treasury³². These principles formed the cornerstone of British colonial administration in the newly created Mahin District council, which included Ugboland.

The indirect rule system made use of the traditional, social and political institutions as apparatus of governmental administration. This, however, did not imply an acceptance of the usefulness of the traditional institutions. Rather its adoption was necessitated by lack of personnel to deploy for direct administration of the area. Direct administration could only be effectively undertaken if British officials were involved in large number. This was a step that could not be contemplated both for financial and logistic reasons. The need then arose that indirect administration, which required little fund and also involved minimum disruption to the people's ways of life, should be adopted.

The first major step taken by the British in inaugurating indirect rule in Mahin District Council was the formation of an administrative centre, the council of chiefs with the *Amapetu* as the chairman and the British official styled resident as the president. It is noteworthy that the consular system was not new in Yorubaland. Each Yoruba town was governed by the head chief and its council of state. The new element in the council established was in their composition, especially the presence of a colonial officer as the president of the council. The reason for the inclusion of a British official in this council, was to give the chiefs effective guidance and supervision in the task of administration.

The British official stood at the apex of this system with traditional chiefs below him. This system provided the British officials with both subordinate

administrative personnel and the means of controlling them³³. It was held by the British colonial authorities that, for the necessary working of the indirect rule system, there should be traditional rulers or paramount chiefs to rule their own people along the lines dictated by the British administrative officials and where there were no paramount chiefs, they had to be created. This done, they were declared legal Native Authorities and given certain powers. The powers given varied in degrees and covered wide areas where they had no traditional control hitherto. The position given to the paramount chiefs under indirect rule system at this time did not mean that legally they had absolute power. The chiefs were under the British administrative officers usually called the Resident. The Resident had the power to issue instruction to paramount chiefs in the interest of good administration.

Despite the fact that the *Amapetu* was supposed to be the sole authority as gazetted by the British government, he had no right to spend the revenue of the native administration without the approval of the Resident. Most of the budgets of the native administration in the area were prepared by the Resident. Besides, the British officers believed that, in the interest of efficient administration, everything possible must be done to make the Authority of the *Amapetu* and his chiefs respected in the whole district. Thus, any group of people who proved disloyal to the *Amapetu* and his chiefs were dealt with. The *Olugbo* and his chiefs who failed to recognise the authority of the British imposed sole Authority, the *Amapetu* were also dealt with. The position of the Sole Authority, styled Native Authority was created arbitrarily. Thus, the *Amapetu* had his jurisdiction extended far beyond the territory over which he had been exercising traditional control. He was held responsible for the supervision of tax collection and public works, presiding over native courts in the area and the general maintenance of law and order throughout the district.

The Native Court Ordinance of 1914 provided for the establishment of different grades of courts: ABCD. The grades were listed in descending order of

judicial power. The high grades of courts were presided over by the paramount chiefs. It is worth noting that the inauguration of Native Court system in Mahin District, which included Ugboland, brought discontent. The British political officers continued to play leading roles in these courts. In theory, the Native Courts were supposed to have a fair measure of autonomy and initiative in matters of local administration. In practice, some of the Native Court merely pandered to the whims and caprices of British Administrative Officers.

The financial need of native administration led to the establishment of Native Treasury³⁴. Before the setting up of the Native treasury, revenue from the Native Court was paid to the government. With the establishment of the Native Treasury, the entire fund had to be paid into the newly created Native Treasury in which account of revenue and expenditure were properly kept. In this way, the Native Authority had virtual control of its own finance and consequently responsible for payments. The money from the Native Treasury was used to pay the salaries of the *Amapetu* and his chiefs, the court clerks, messengers, and other native administration employees, and to finance public works.

The Native Authority was established on a centralised basis and the role of each component was clearly defined. The native administration was placed on stronger financial footing with the introduction of direct taxation that was still then unknown and so alien to the people. Commenting on the British Policy of taxation, Curmen says “--- The system of taxation was over centralised, all tax receipt books were sent to the *Amapetu*, who issued to his chiefs, who collected in Ugboland over which he had no traditional control”³⁵. This act of making the *Amapetu* to enforce the payment of taxation in Ugbo area over which he had no traditional control made proper assessment difficult. While the colonial presence was creating socio-economic change in theory, in practice, this engendered crises and contradictions. Some of the policies and mode of their implementation often generated anti-colonial protest and riots from the Ugbo. The protests by the Ugbo

symbolised a rejection of the British rule, in general, and of administrative oppression and economic injustice, in particular.

It must be emphasised that, the British administrators, on their arrival in Ilajeland in 1895, settled at Mahinland for reasons already identified above. Thus, the Mahin had the added advantage of having the British settled amidst them, with social amenities that attended their advent. This advantage made the Mahin to become pompous and claimed that development could only pass through them to the Ugbo. This also made them to claim seniority over and superiority to the Ugbo. This, in turn, led to political rivalries between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

In fact, this political rivalry developed to a point where the Mahin falsified history. While some Mahin claimed that the Ugbo people migrated from Mahin, others claimed that the Ugbo towns and villages are villages within Mahin Kingdom. Another area where the Mahin falsified history is that of kingship status. They claimed that the *Olugbo* of Ugbo had no right whatsoever to wear a beaded crown. The Mahin came to regard the wearing of a crown as their exclusive prerogative and birthright. The result of all these were accusations and counter-accusations from both parties in the presence of the colonial government. Both the Ugbo and the Mahin claimed seniority and entitlement to the wearing of a beaded crown, while denouncing the counter-claim of the other.

The political bitterness and controversy between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* reached the climax when the *Amapetu* petitioned the *Olugbo's* right to wear a beaded crown. He also objected to the *Olugbo* stool. The *Olugbo* felt insulted by the query and, in view of the audacious challenge given the *Olugbo* about wearing the crown by the *Amapetu*, the *Olugbo* filed a suit in the law court saying history is his witness and the Mahin should vacate his territory to their original location on the bank of Benin river. To the Ugbo, the cause of conflict with Mahin was not just that the *Amapetu* wanted to be the only cock that crowed, but also that it wanted to suppress the Ugbo aspirations.

Even though the British administrators realized that facts and history were falsified and distorted in the Mahin's claim, they further encouraged the *Amapetu* to politicize this falsification in order to enable them legalize their settlement in Mahin, and enhance their policy of indirect rule. Ode-Mahin served as the headquarters of their administration of all the towns and villages in Ilajeland. Hence, the *Amapetu* developed an imperialistic attitude and he became so power-intoxicated that he claimed ownership of all the land in the district. He claimed that, as the head of Mahin District Council, which included Ugbo, he had power over all the land of Mahin township and the entire district, holding the said lands in trust for all. He claimed to be the over all landlord. This led to conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The indirect rule policy introduced in Mahin District Council, which included Ugbo, was formalised through the Native Authority, Native Courts, Native Treasury and the others, created the impression that the system was a continuation of the traditional system. But in many ways, the system or policy was an aberration on traditional convention and subversion of the traditional system practised in the waterside area of Ondo Province. The British policy led to the complication of traditional political system through alien impositions, distortions and forcing the Ugbo and the Mahin to willy-nilly aggregate. Indeed, the emergence and the appearance of the British as power brokers in Ilajeland created numerous crises between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The advent of colonial rule was intended to establish a political system that would cut across the Ugbo and the Mahin. This attempt was to breed discontent and definitely to strain the existing peaceful relations between the Mahin and the Ugbo. With the making of the *Amapetu* as the Native Authority, the political sovereignty of the *Olugbo* was damaged. The squabble that ensued manifested in all sorts of political bitterness, intrigues and confusion.

The period 1900 to 1930, saw the Ugbo agitating for separation and autonomy from Mahin District Council. This prompted the colonial authorities to

set up the Carkek Commission to look into the *Olugbo's* grievances and to make recommendations to the colonial government. The findings and subsequent recommendations led to the repatriation of the *Olugbo* from Calabar to Ugboland. The colonial authorities granted autonomous Native Courts for the Ugbo. Mahin District Council was changed to Ilaje District Council. This was done to successfully incorporate the Ugbo. However, the Ugbo people's aspiration were continually subdued until the end of colonial rule in the area.

4.3 **The impact of colonial influence on the Ugbo-Mahin conflict**

Socio-economic and political relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin were largely determined by various aspects of British administrative policy. Harmonious relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin, came to an end when the British effectively negotiated and signed the treaty of protection with the Mahin in 1885, which negated the earlier treaty signed with the Ugbo in 1884³⁶. The 1884 Ugbo treaty was signed by the Ugbo high chief named Oyo at the town of Eruna (one of the Ugbo towns). This treaty sealed the agreement between the Ugbo people and the British. High chief Oyo signed on behalf of the *Olugbo* because there was an interregnum in Ugboland. But the Mahin treaty of 1885 became the cornerstone for British further activities in the whole area.

When *Oba* Ogundere became the *Olugbo* in 1900, he vehemently criticised the Mahin treaty. At first, tension and conflict ensued as a result of Native Court established in Mahin and the full European patronage of the *Amapetu* to the detriment of the *Olugbo* who claimed seniority over the former. The opposition to colonial arrangement continued after the death of *Oba* Ogundere. He was succeeded by *Oba* Mafimisebi. The *Oba* continuously opposed the British presence and the appointment of the *Amapetu* as the Native Authority. His position on colonial policy earned him deportation³⁷. The British described *Oba* Mafimisebi's action as insubordination to colonial policies. To this end, the British systematically laid the fruit of enmity and destroyed the long-existing cordial political relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The indirect rule system associated with British administration had a remarkable effect on the Ugbo-Mahin relations during the colonial era. It was held by the British, that it was necessary for the working of this system that there should be traditional rulers or paramount chiefs to rule their own people along the lines dictated by the British administrative officers. Where there were no paramount chiefs, they had to be created by warrant, after which they were declared legal native authority with certain power.

The making of Mahin king as Native Authority further fuelled the crisis between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The *Olugbo* was unwilling to recognise the *Amapetu* as a Native Authority appointed by the British. Thus, the conflict for supremacy was very pronounced between the Ugbo and the Mahin during the colonial period. The Ugbo believed that the colonial government was deliberately subjecting them to the Mahin because of their nationalistic stance and vehement criticism of colonial presence. This aspect of the workings of the British administration policy, in which Mahin enjoyed patronage while the Ugbo were disciplined, had the result of undermining cordial political relations, which had existed between the two groups.

The British were apparently more concerned with the need to build up the power of the Mahin king. They failed to realise that in the waterside district, there were two distinct groups of people, each guarding its independence jealously. Therefore, the working of a new political system to impose the leader of one group on the other was to undermine the guiding principles of the very system they were operating. The Ugbo resentment to the new order continued to lead to conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the colonial period³⁸.

The subordination of the Ugbo by the colonial government is difficult to explain. It could no longer be pleaded that the British were unfamiliar with the Ugbo people. As early as 1917, the British penetration of the waterside region had been completed. It can only be assumed that the unwillingness of the Ugbo to accept the British rule produced the latter's coercive rule in Ugbo. Little or no

consideration was given to the effects of British policy on the Ugbo. Accustomed to the delegation of authority from the central to local authorities, the British paid little regard in this instance to the socio-political difference between the Mahin and the Ugbo. This continued to lead to friction between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

In addition, the procedure used by the British government in the establishment of Native Court system also produced crisis and contradiction in the relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The Native Court Ordinance provided for the establishment of three grades of courts. These courts were B, C, D. status, the grades being listed in descending order of judicial power. The British only established grade B court in Mahinland (plate 6), while the courts in Ugboland were of C grade (plate 7). The selection of members to the Native Court affected Mahin-Ugbo relations. The problem of grading and court membership were never satisfactorily settled throughout the colonial period.

Moreover, the Native Court Ordinance conferred on the Resident of a province the right to establish a Native Court of Appeal. The siting of Court of Appeal in Mahinland led to resentment by the Ugbo. The British government expected appeals to come from all areas in the waterside district. The unpopularity of the court in adjudicating cases from Ugboland was mentioned in Ilaje intelligence report. There were several complaints. One of these emanated from the fact that there was no Ugbo representative as member of the court. The Ugbo hardly considered it necessary to take their appeal to the court. Second, it was scarcely worthwhile to the Ugbo to attend a court, which, as a result of its composition, could not guarantee justice. In mixed cases (cases involving Ugbo and Mahin), the Ugbo questioned the ability of the court to give an equitable verdict³⁹. Finally, they also questioned the rationale for the location of such a court in Mahinland.

The Native Court system had significant consequences on the Ugbo-Mahin relations; a new element was brought into political interaction between the two groups. As a result of the introduction of the Native Court system, the Ugbo found

themselves sharing a common judicial institution with Mahin. In this common judicial institution, there was always a dominance of Mahin over Ugbo. It was this development that constituted the source of conflict between the Ugbo and Mahin⁴⁰. The people of Ugbo saw themselves being subjected to Mahin political authority.

There was considerable Ugbo agitation against this arrangement and the fact that the British administration did not react quickly enough to Ugbo grievances worsened the situation, as the Ugbo tended to demonstrate that the British were consciously putting them under Mahin suzerainty. No doubt, the British attitude was determined by their concern not to establish a multiplicity of authorities in the waterside district⁴¹. There was also the feeling that the geographical proximity of the two areas was a unifying factor for fusing together the two groups. Thus, the British believed that the arrangement would facilitate co-operation, but it led to deep polarization and hatred between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The composition of the Native Court and the making of the king of Mahin as Native Authority brought discontent between the Ugbo and the Mahin, because it contradicted the pre-existing political tradition. This system created by the British was the pillar of irritation for the Ugbo. The *Olugbo*, *Oba* Ogundere, refused to accept the *Amapetu* as the Native Authority. Hence, he empowered his subjects to show hostile reactions toward the *Amapetu* and his nominees. This agitation continued until his death. He was succeeded by his son, *Oba* Mafimisebi I, who vehemently opposed the colonial arrangement and instituted hostile reactions toward the British and the Mahin. Despite the attempt of the British to suppress him, the *Oba* continued hostilities against the Mahin. The *Olugbo*, *Oba* Mafimisebi I, was alleged to be violating the colonial policies and was consequently deported to Calabar in 1921⁴². Side by side with the political system put in place by the British, social and economic changes were taking place. These changes had great effects on Ugbo-Mahin relations.

As noted much earlier, the *Otu* (age grade) institution remained a unifying force between the Mahin and the Ugbo. However, during the British administration in the area, the British government did not give the *Otu* institution any opportunity to demonstrate its qualities. Consequently, the *Otu* institution collapsed and disappeared. Acknowledging the non-existence of age grade in 1937, Curmen observed, "... today no new *Otu* is being formed"⁴³. Hence, the entertaining and unifying inter-community wrestling competition among the *Otu* institution, which facilitated cordial relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin ceased to exist.

The social interaction between the Ugbo and the Mahin was also altered by the destructive influence of the British colonial administration. For instance, the Ugbo-Mahin social relation, which was further strengthened by inter-marriage in the pre-colonial period, was adversely affected. There was a considerable breach in inter-marriages between the Mahin and the Ugbo. The breach became noticeable when the Ugbo felt reluctant to marry from Mahin,⁴⁴ as a result of British administrative policy, which emphasised Mahin pre-eminence. This reluctance adversely affected inter-group co-operation between the two communities.

During the pre-colonial period, economic relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin promoted mutual understanding. In fact, before the coming of the British to the region, the Mahin and the Ugbo had established strong economic ties. In the nineteenth century, economic activities boomed in the area. The area was fertile for fishing activities as a result of the presence of numerous rivers. Also both local and long distance trade boomed. The British hegemonic influence altered cordial economic relations between the two groups. For instance, in the commercial relations between the Mahin and the Ugbo during the colonial period, the Mahin played the role of middle men between the European traders and the Ugbo people. Hence, the Mahin occupied an extremely strong position. They controlled virtually all aspects of trade. It was this development that made the

colonial period a turbulent one. The relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin was characterised by friction.

One question which has often arisen in connection with the Ugbo-Mahin commercial relations during the colonial period was whether the Mahin used the British support to compel the Ugbo to trade with them. Although it has been argued that the Mahin maintained their commercial position in Ugboland by superior force, the high degree of mutual interdependence involved in the Ugbo-Mahin commercial contact has never been sufficiently stressed. The Mahin were dependent on the Ugbo for seafish and mats. For various reasons, the Mahin found it impossible to engage in this kind of trade with other neighbours to the same extent as they would with the Ugbo. The Ikale and the Apoi, in the hinterland, did not produce mat or engage in fishing activities. Conversely, the Ugbo depended heavily on the Mahin for European manufactured goods. In these circumstances, there was no need for the Mahin to compel the Ugbo to trade with them. The Mahin contact with the British gave them an advantage over the Ugbo in matters of trade. It was the Mahin's contact with European traders that made it possible for it to supply the Ugbo with manufactured goods.

The British succeeded in appropriating the economic resources of the people. With the area incorporated into British Empire in 1895, the Mahin and the Ugbo started to feel the economic impact of colonial rule. The Mahin and the Ugbo were involved in weaving, which facilitated cordial relations. They exchanged products and also exported them to other parts of Yorubaland through Mahin markets. One of the first moves made by the British was to discourage salt making. The economy was further ruined as local salt industry in Ugboland collapsed as a result of the importation of European salt. As Curmen rightly put it in 1937. "... The salt trade, however, was killed about six years when the importation of European salt increased⁴⁵. Hence, one of the adverse repercussions of the British rules on Ugbo-Mahin economic relations, was the importation of European salt. As noted much earlier, during the pre-colonial period, the Ugbo

monopolised the production of salt. Consequently, the Mahin entered into cordial relationship with the Ugbo. But the importation of salt during the colonial period altered this development.

In addition to the salt-making industry, other local industries like handicraft and weaving were discouraged - either by not providing markets or in the name of a phony *laizzes faire*, allowing independent buyers to pay ridiculously low prices for the Mahin and the Ugbo products. However, the Ugbo and the Mahin indigenous economies were not completely destroyed, thanks to their resilience.

In addition, with the establishment of the Native Treasury, the British introduced taxation, which was then foreign, and in fact, unknown to the people; it was accompanied with social services of government, which could promote mutual cooperation. Taxation was a means of generating revenue, but the law governing the collection of taxes in one area could not be applied in another. Following the establishment of colonial rule, and with the setting up of Native Administration in the Waterside District, the collection became centralised with all tax receipt books sent to the *Amapetu* of Mahin. He, however, issued them to a few chiefs, who collected tax in certain areas over which they had no traditional control. Hence, the system bred discontent and troubles between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

Having imposed taxes, the British administration had to work out how they were going to collect it from the towns and villages. This would no doubt entail a lot of work, given the uncooperative attitude of the Ugbo. In the first place, the administration had to know generally the population of the area. Second, and perhaps more important to them, they wanted to know the number of taxable adults in the areas, so that they would be able to estimate the value of tax they would collect. To carry out this work, the British administration employed the services of the *Amapetu*, who in turn, made use of some Mahin chiefs to help him collect tax in an area where he had no jurisdiction. There is no doubt that tax brought discontent between the Ugbo and the Mahin. Since the Ugbo knew that

failure to pay their taxes could lead to imprisonment, the general practice was that each time a collector was coming to the village, those who had not or could not pay their taxes hid themselves in the bush till the collector would leave. It was quite a hard time for tax defaulters. At times, the collector would spend some time in an area and, during the period, the hiding tax defaulter would sleep in the bush and he would sneak home at night for food.

Consequently, young and other mobile Ugbo people who could not continue to bear the brunt of the excruciating British policy fled to Lagos Lagoon, Badagary, Ilaro creeks and even Port-Novo. These people became alienated and their traditional customs and practices as well as their allegiance to their kingdom waned. This development continued to lead to conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the colonial era. In fact, the cordial economic relations noticeable between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the pre-colonial period were adversely affected.

On the whole, tension arose between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The tension, however, resulted from the various aspects of British administrative policy. Hence, the appearance and emergence of the British on the political scene of the waterside region jeopardised the cordial political and socio-economic relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

4.4 The triggers of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict in the post-colonial period

The post-colonial Ugbo-Mahin relations were confronted with fundamental problems of political bitterness, intrigues and confusion occasioned by the British misrule in the area. The traditional political arrangement was upset. As noted in the section on colonial influence above, during the colonial period, the political status of Ugbo was downgraded. The colonial government did not allow any representations from Ugbo in the Native Administration and considered the Ugbo as people, who were meant to be seen but not heard. Hence, the Ugbo's aspirations were continually subdued until the end of colonial rule. Despite the colonial disengagement, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict became radically politicized.

Consequently, the Ugbo-Mahin relation is often characterised by victimization as well as intimidation of each other⁴⁶. These situations have often degenerated into hatred and repression between the two groups.

In the prevalent atmosphere of ethnic conflict and the struggle for prominence between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*, their people were inevitably drawn into this politics. The dynamics of their involvement resembles that of their traditional rulers⁴⁷. The Mahin, whom the Ugbo predated in the area greatly resented the Ugbo's claim of seniority. This exacerbated the demand of people for separate council, to which the elite in the area strongly opposed because the creation of council would reduce their strength in the federation and the advantages of power which they had in the state.

More than anything else, the ethnic struggle between the Ugbo and the Mahin for prominence spread ethnic thinking to every family unit, who were unwilling to marry from each other. This development further polarised the Ugbo and the Mahin, whom observers saw as *Ilaje*, into ethnic compartments separated from each other by increasing divergence of political beliefs and interest. In addition, political disputes over census, elections, creation of wards and distribution of social amenities aggravated tension and hatred, which further created division between the Ugbo and the Mahin⁴⁸.

Closely related to the above is the issue of political representation either at state and federal level. Political dominance of affairs by either the Mahin or the Ugbo generates tension and acrimony between the two groups. As soon as an Ugbo or a Mahin person occupied or was nominated to a position of authority, the other not appointed would do everything humanly possible to subvert the programme and determination. Naturally, each group thoroughly resents each other's aspirations. This perceived marginalisation by one ethnic group is one of the fundamental factors that hindered the search for true unity, integration and development of the Ugbo and the Mahin. Apart from the struggle for dominance or political representations, there is strong struggle between the Ugbo and the

Mahin over posts at the local government council. This is always in the administrative, executive, managerial and even clerical positions at the local government.

The only way of hope of resolution to the Ugbo-Mahin conflict came with the discovery of oil in Ugboland. Mahin willingly embraced the Ugbo because of the supposed benefit derivable from the crude oil that abounds in Ugbo. The oil exploration that was supposed to be a source of unity turned to be a central point of division because the Ugbo people did not allow the Mahin to fully benefit from it. The Mahin probably believe that they have not enjoyed adequate compensation on oil spillage and other environmental hazards occasioned by the oil exploration activities in Ugboland, and that the Ugbo have been feeding on oil money.

Environmental degradation is a major cause of disagreement between the Ugbo and the Mahin, especially when the Mahin discovered that their land has been eaten by sea incursion. Since the commencement of oil exploration in Ugboland in the 1980s, over a million barrels of oil have been drained from the area⁴⁹. In Ugboland, there are pockets of oil wells connected to oil fields where crude oil is drained. This has contributed significantly to ecological problem leading directly to series of pollution, not only in Ugboland but also in the entire Ilaje area⁵⁰. This has devastating effects on Ugboland and Mahinland. Oil spillage has horrible effects on people, the land, plants, fishes and water. Ugbo and Mahin went through environmental and psychological trauma whenever oil spillage occurs. For instance, fishing activities in the two areas are affected when spillage occurs. The Ugbo and the Mahin are predominantly fishermen and they depend on fishing. The spillage spoils and destroys the good fishing ground of the Ugbo and the Mahin, leaving behind a tale of woe and misery⁵¹.

The source of disagreement between the Ugbo and the Mahin could be explained in terms of environmental degradation and oil spillage. The Mahin believe that the Ugbo have prevented them from their supposed compensation and that the Ugbo benefited immensely from it. On the whole, both Ugbo and Mahin

are faced with environmental degradation and economic strangulation. Chevron oil company, the leading oil company operating in Ugboland, took advantage of the Ugbo, who are interested in having the greater percentage of the money of oil spillage because government officials are also collaborators. Government always folds its hands, doing nothing to encourage the Ugbo to allow the Mahin to have a share in the oil money. The role of government also fuelled disagreement between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

Closely connected to the above is the appointment of representatives to the boards of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ondo State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (OSOPADEC). The NDDC and OSOPADEC are intervention agencies created by the federal and state governments respectively for the development of the oil producing communities in Ilajeland. The commissions are empowered to rehabilitate and develop the oil producing areas of Ondo State and also to carry out developmental projects as may be determined from time to time by NDDC or OSOPADEC.

Since the establishment of these commissions, the Mahin people have not been allowed to be chief executive of OSOPADEC or have representations in NDDC. The Mahin became uncomfortable with this development because the Ugbo regarded the Mahin as people who were meant to be seen, but not heard as far as oil politics is concerned. The Mahin struggled to have a position in one of these boards. Several memoranda were submitted to the government to this effect. The Ugbo protested against the inclusion of the Mahin on the two boards. When the Babangida administration created the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1991, a Mahin man was appointed by the Federal Government to represent Ondo State on this board. This led to protest by the Ugbo. The crises that ensued led to the removal of the Mahin man and his replacement by an Ugbo man⁵². The vehement opposition to the appointment of Mahin to the board of OMPADEC was regarded by the Mahin as a calculated attempt by the Ugbo to continuously suppress them.

In addition, the Mahin believe that they form part of Ilajeland. They agitated for oil blocs, a development that was thwarted by the Ugbo. The determination of the Ugbo to prevent the creation of oil bloc union for the Ugbo and the Mahin led to resentment and further fuelled the Ugbo-Mahin conflict.

A close assessment of OMPADEC, NDDC, and OSOPADEC, that were created for sustainable development of the oil producing communities in Ilajeland, reveals that, to some extent, the commissions flagged off developmental projects in this zone. These project cut across virtually all critical sectors of the economy, not minding the difficult terrain in the siting of developmental projects. For instance, in the areas of road construction, provision of water, provision of healthcare delivery facilities, renovation and equipment of classrooms, investment in fishing as well as reviving the rich cultural heritage are receiving the attention of the NDDC and the OSOPADEC.

There were certain shortcomings noticed in the activities of these commissions. These shortcomings ignited the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. The execution of developmental projects and other social amenities were not equitably distributed. More than ninety percent of the projects were sited in Ugbo. This was done to reflect the claim of the Ugbo that their land is flowing not just with milk and honey, but also with the black gold oil. The location of the Ugbo on a land full of oil made the OSOPADEC and NDDC to regard Ugboland as the mandate area. This serve as a fundamental source of conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The oil wealth of the Ugbo has not been wisely invested to promote cordiality between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

4.5 Strategies for managing the Ugbo-Mahin conflict

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict is a legacy bequeathed by the colonial government and the alarming rate it has assumed calls for prompt management and resolution. The conflict has become a major element of impoverishment as well as undermining human security and social development. It is evident that the

conflict has done incalculable damage to decades of cordiality and peaceful co-existence.

Although conflict is unavoidable human interaction⁵³ and often serves as a creative element in human society, the horror that accompanies it is a pointer to the fact that conflict could be equally very destructive, if it is not properly managed⁵⁴. If a conflict is well managed and resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties, it could lead to some qualitative development in the relationship between them. This is particularly so if the resolution of the conflict leads the parties involved to devise problem-solving procedures to guide their future relationship, and change the existing climate of mutual distrust and animosity to one of mutual understanding and creative cooperation between them⁵⁵. If, on the other hand, a conflict is badly managed as to lead to escalation, it could become harmful and lead to unnecessary dissipation of scarce resources.

Over the years, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict has been managed essentially through the judicial means and the use of security forces to suppress the conflict. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has a long history of management through judicial process dating back to the colonial period. During the colonial period, several judgements were given on chieftaincy tussle between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*. Court judgements were equally given on the perennial land dispute between the Ugbo and the Mahin. A good example was that of 23rd August, 1919 when the *Amapetu* wrote a petition to the Resident Ondo Province on the insubordination of *Oba* Mafimisebi I, *Olugbo* of Ugbo. The case was further reported to the secretary Southern Province. In April, 1920 *Oba* Mafimisebi was warned by the Lieutenant – Governor, that his behaviour would probably lead to his deportation⁵⁶. The majority of the judgements established the *Amapetu* supremacy over the *Olugbo*.

Another aspect of the judicial method was the setting up of commissions. For instance, on 6th June, 1921 a judicial enquiry into the *Olugbo's* behaviour was set up by Sir Bernard Carkeek, District Officer Ondo Division. The *Olugbo*

refused to make any defence unless the *Ooni* of Ife, the *Osemawe* of Ondo, the *Oba* of Benin and the *Olu* of Itsekiri were called as witnesses⁵⁷. The Court, therefore, held that the government had refused to recognise the *Olugbo*'s claim of supremacy and independence of the *Amapetu* of Mahin as relevant under colonial system of administration. He was consequently deported. The deportation order was signed by Sir Donald Cameron, the Acting Governor of Nigeria and by October, 1921, the *Olugbo* had reached Calabar, thus establishing the *Amapetu* suzerainty over the Ugbo.

However, in September 1926, Mr. R. A. Robert, Acting Lieutenant-Governor, Southern Province sent Mr. Carkeek from the secretariat to enquire into the *Olugbo*'s case⁵⁸. In 1927, the *Olugbo* was repatriated from Calabar after he had signed a document acknowledging the authority of the *Amapetu* over Ugboland. The Ugbo people, however, vehemently maintained that the *Olugbo*'s renunciation was binding on him alone and would not affect subsequent *Olugbo* and the Ugbo people. One way of seeing the renunciation was that the Ugbo high chiefs wanted to quicken the return of the *Olugbo* from Calabar, because the tradition of the Ugbo forbade any citizen of their land being buried in a foreign land. It was feared that if the *Olugbo* died in exile, his corpse might not be released for necessary traditional rituals⁵⁹. Hence, it could be argued that the renunciation was a strategy for bringing the *Olugbo* back home before his death. Thus, there was no lasting solution to the chieftaincy tussle between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*.

The bridge of amicable relations was damaged and as from then their relations were characterised by struggle for supremacy. Till date, the Ugbo and Mahin relations are characterised by claims and counter claims from both sides regarding ownership of land and supremacy. The Ugbo and the Mahin are not in harmonious relationship. The adoption of judicial methods, especially during conflict over land and position in Ugbo and Mahin breeds bitterness, tension and unending court proceedings⁶⁰. It also creates fear, instability and disorder which

make peaceful co-existence impossible between the two ethnic groups. Apparently, this has undermined social development in the Ilaje society⁶¹.

While the judicial method has been one of the most popular techniques in the management of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict, the fact remains that the various court judgments, judicial commissions and panels have not brought about the resolution of the conflict. The Ugbo-Mahin experience has again underscored the weakness of the judicial approach to conflict resolution. One basic weakness of the judicial method of conflict management is that it usually brings about outcomes that are not mutually satisfactory to the parties. It usually ends up in win-lose outcomes, thereby leaving a lot of bitterness. For instance, the Ugbo people have tended to discredit the court judgements, and judicial commission's and panel's decisions on the argument that the Mahin got most of the favourable judgement through fraudulent means⁶². The above shows the extent to which people can go in discrediting court decisions that do not favour them. As long as the judicial process does not seek to harmonise the interests of the parties involved in a conflict, it will be difficult to produce mutually satisfactory outcomes⁶³.

Another prominent conflict management mechanism adopted in mitigating the Ugbo-Mahin conflict is coercive method. This relates to the use of force or other coercive means to manage the conflict. Coercive techniques could take the form of third party, use of military or paramilitary forces to intervene in a violent conflict to enforce peace, bring about an end to hostilities or suppress the conflict⁶⁴. The resort to violence by parties involved in a conflict to force a settlement that is favourable to themselves on their opponents is also part of this. The use of coercive methods by either a third party or parties to a conflict does not usually guarantee a permanent resolution of the conflict. At best, it can only provide a temporary relief, serving as a control mechanism to de-escalate the conflict or create some semblance of peace, while necessary measures are put in place to resolve the issues involved in the conflict. Therefore, for coercive

techniques to have salutary effects, those concerned must take advantage of the uneasy peace to work out a permanent solution to the relevant conflict.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has led to the damage of the amicable relations between the two ethnic groups⁶⁵. The resort to force on the management of the conflict does not usually lead to its permanent resolution. This is because both the Ugbo and the Mahin do not willingly submit to force. Where they are compelled to submit to force, they usually accept the situation only as a temporary price to be paid for their inferiority in the power equation.

Furthermore, government's role in the management of the conflict, since the colonial days, has been marked by frequent resort to a coercive technique⁶⁶. In fact, when conflict erupted in 1921, following the deportation of the *Olugbo*, the first reaction of the colonial government was to deploy security forces to Ugboland to enforce and maintain peace.

The overall assessment of the judicial and coercive methods revealed that nothing has been done to comprehensively deal with the agelong Ugbo-Mahin conflict. There has been relative neglect of the traditional approach to conflict prevention, management and resolution. Not much has been achieved at the level of actually resolving the fundamental issues involved in the conflict. The judicial method that has often been resorted to by the third parties has failed to resolve the problem. In fact, it has created more bitterness instead of bringing relief to the two ethnic groups/parties. Also, the use of force or other coercive means to resolve it is not a resolution but a suppression of it.

To overcome the basic weakness of the judicial and coercive methods, the traditional mechanism of conflict resolution could be adopted. Nwolise has lamented the ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and the failure of the judicial and coercive methods, which are essentially Eurocentric, and pleads that Nigeria should adopt new ways of conflict management and resolution, which will be more effective and efficient than what is now operated as inherited from the British colonisers⁶⁷.

In his words:

Africa's leaders including particularly those of Nigeria should urgently fund in-depth researches into Africa's traditional methods of conflict monitoring, prevention, management and resolution as well as of peacemaking, peace building and confidence building. Relevant aspects of these methods should be adopted and incorporated into our modern frameworks and mechanism for a more peaceful, orderly, lawful and harmonious society which can support and catalyze overall development⁶⁸.

The judicial and coercive methods of conflict management do not fit into the cultural and traditional practices of the Ilaje people. The use of judicial methods and coercive forces with their rigid structure often fail to address adequately, questions related to the Ugbo-Mahin conflicts.

Also, the procedures adopted have been found inadequate in this respect. The latest tendency is the involvement/activities of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in resolving the conflict. The Ilaje Patriotic Front and The Marine Front have helped in the management of the conflict. Many stakeholders workshops were held at Igbokoda (Mahin town) and Ugbonla (Ugbo town). The principal goal was to develop a number of conflict-management principles that could be applied in facilitating cordial relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The activities of these organizations were of direct and visible benefits to the people. They achieved a high degree of goodwill. Their activities have been commended by traditional rulers, who rely upon them particularly in areas like early warning, third-party intervention, reconciliation and peace-building.

Other indispensable groups that were involved in conflict management were the Council of Niger Delta Women of Ondo State, Ilaje Youth Forum, *Egbe Omo Ilaje*, National Association of Ilaje Students, Traditional Rulers Forum and the Gwama Boys. These groups were active participants in the management and transformation of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. Their activities have far positive effects on the conflict. The involvement of these groups turned out to be the most

popular and effective tool that touches the heart of all the parties involved in the conflict.

Finally, the promotion of peace education by the Ondo State Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OSOPADEC) cannot be underestimated in the area of conflict management. The specific objective of the commission is to explicate the concept of peace education and youth development and offer probable solution to youth violence. The youth from the two areas were constantly brought together with a view to engaging them in carefully structured dialogue on the conflict. Through various periodic peace seminars, the youth are guided to the logical point of seeing conflict as something to be avoided. The task of peace education as championed by OSOPADEC is to give the youths a solid information basis for evaluating situations as well as the readiness to find relevant knowledge in the present flow of information and to analyse information and sources of information critically. The goal is to create the feeling of solidarity with one another and act in cooperation in all facets of human endeavours

An overall assessment of methods used in the management of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict reveals that the past attempts of managing the conflict have failed to address the fundamental issues that propelled the conflict. Consequently, nothing has been done to comprehensively deal with the perennial Ugbo-Mahin conflict in Ilajeland. Not much has been achieved at the level of actually resolving the fundamental issues involved in the conflict. To be able to resolve the conflict, combined efforts of government, traditional rulers, women unions, youth associations and individual members of Ilaje are needed, for faithful implementation of conflict management strategies, such as elimination of the conditions that create an environment for conflicts. In other words, the groups should address the conditions and situations which are directly responsible for conflictual relationship between the two parties.

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CHAPTER FIVE
THE IMPACT OF UGBO-MAHIN CONFLICT ON SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The effects of the conflict on social relations

The policy of the Mahin towards the Ugbo in the contemporary time is characterised by friction and antagonism. There are records of conflict, which were sometimes resolved. Evidence abounds that the two ethnic groups abhor relationship between each other. The patterns of the Ugbo-Mahin colonial relations was carried into the contemporary era. Since colonial disengagement, Mahin and Ugbo have continued to divide themselves into two opposed groups as laid down by British administration. Thus, the relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin has been characterised by mutual suspicion, rivalry, intimidation, jealousy and victimization. These manifest chiefly in political, social, and commercial interactions.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has negative consequences on the people. The conflict led to competition for supremacy, making every trivial issue between the Ugbo and the Mahin dangerous. In fact, the competition for supremacy poses a great challenge to the final restoration of peaceful relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

Ethnic competition for supremacy in Ilajeland hinges on the balance between the Ugbo and the Mahin. In recent times, the Ugbo and the Mahin formed different associations in their quest for who controls what, in Ilajeland and the entire Ondo State. The associations that emerged within the two ethnic groups were motivated by the desire to control Ilaje politics and also frustrate either the Ugbo or the Mahin hegemony, as the case may be.

Each of these ethnic associations was inspired, founded and nourished by ethnic chauvinism and parochialism. Membership of each of these ethnic associations was restricted to the ethnic group. For instance, in Mahinland, such an ethnic association was formed for Mahin by the Mahin for the pursuit of the

objectives limited to the Mahin. Also in Ugboland, ethnic associations emerged and patterned in line with the Ugbo agenda. The ethnic association in Ugbo organised all the Ugbo which existed throughout Ilajeland, Ondo State and Nigeria as a whole, into a central union known as Ugbo Central Organization¹. This was engineered by the desire to control Ugbo politics. Members of the Ugbo Central Organization are often self-made men, who have done well in their chosen professions and in other special ways of life. The *Olugbo* consults with members of this organization on the ways to institute a new learning, a new technology, a new economy, a new culture, a new orientation and a new dynamic development. Through the effort of this organization, the Ugbo became a formidable ethnic group in Ondo State and the South-West as a whole. This organization championed the Ugbo-Mahin dichotomy².

The Mahin, in their agitation for supremacy accused the Ugbo of marginalization. To them, through the effort of Ugbo Central Organization, the Mahin have been prevented from occupying key positions in Ondo State. This has been one of the sources of conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin. This conflict seriously undermines development in the area.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has produced a large number of rival unions³. This gives the unions' ethnic colouration and it makes each of them appear no more than representatives of ethnic interests. Members of each union perceives the other union as either friend or enemy union, depending on their disposition towards ethnic group with which the union is identified. The people perceives the union of their origin as theirs. There is usually hatred and antagonism, as each union seeks to protect its homeland. All these reactions are often directed at preventing or ensuring dominance over each other. Sometimes, members of these rival unions precipitate their riots, in some cases, especially among the youth. There are reported cases of physical combats over trivial issues. In fact, the activities of these rival unions poses a great challenge to peaceful relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

It is abundantly clear from the above that ethnic sentiments are being aroused in all spheres of life. The situation is such that any appointment that is limited to one ethnic group is often criticized as a form of marginalization by the other⁴. In fact, the situation of things in Ilajeland has reached an alarming stage such that the educated, who formed National Association of Ilaje Students and *Egbe Omọ Ilaje*, have started to de-emphasize their membership to form National Association of Ugbo Students or National Association of Mahin Students⁵.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict also has effects on commercial transactions between the two ethnic groups. As a result of this conflict, people are reluctant to move to fishing camps in each other's community. Looking at the spate of the conflict, it will not be an overstatement to say that the region is extremely poor as a result of this conflict. Consequently, young and other mobile Ugbo and Mahin people, who could not continue to bear the repercussion of the conflict on fishing occupation, moved to the Lagos Lagoon, Badagry, Ilaro Creeks, Port-Novo, Cameroon and Gabon to practise their fishing activities⁶. This development continues to affect the economic growth of the area. In fact, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict adversely affects development in the region. As a result of the exodus of the mobile Ugbo and Mahin fishermen to other regions, the people became alienated and their traditional customs and practice as well as their allegiance to their respective kingdom waned over time⁷. This continues to lead to conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The cordial economic relations noticeable between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the pre-colonial period are also affected. The conflict has serious impacts on socio-economic and political relations between the two ethnic groups. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict particularly created serious disillusionment in the mind of the people not only within the two ethnic groups, but also in the minds of other ethnic groups in the riverine area of Ondo State. People see the conflict as unnecessary because it is a colonial creation, which should have been discarded. The carrying

over of this conflict into contemporary times has serious effects on the development of Ilajeland.

Socio-economic and political cordiality and development cannot succeed where lawlessness and conflict prevail. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has indirectly led to increase in social vices. It is evident that the conflict has done incalculable damage to relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin at the local, state and national levels.

It has been identified that one of the repercussions of the conflict is that it constitutes an impediment to the flow of investment and developmental activities. The Ugbo now find it extremely difficult to trust a Mahin man. This is also applicable to how the Mahin relate with the Ugbo. The inter-marriage between them has been adversely affected, as neither is ready to marry from the other community. The negative effects of this conflict on the people are enormous, doing incalculable damage to social and political relations. If things are allowed to continue as they are now, the conflict will eventually escalate into war between the two ethnic groups.

5.2 Effects of the conflict on oil exploration and compensation

Ugboland is abundantly blessed with crude oil⁸. The area contributes more than 90% of Ondo State revenue as a result of the exploratory activities of the Chevron Oil Company, a leading oil company⁹. Today, Ugboland still remains the only operational base of Chevron Oil in Ilajeland. The oil exploration that was supposed to be a source of unity turned to be a central point of division because the Ugbo people did not allow the Mahin to fully benefit from the mineral resources. At first, the Mahin willingly embraced the Ugbo because of the supposed benefit to derive from the crude oil that abounds in Ugboland. Trouble started when the Mahin discovered that their land had been eaten by sea incursion occasioned by the oil exploration in Ugboland¹⁰. But the Ugbo on the other hand, had prevented the Mahin from their supposed compensation.

Indeed, the oil exploration in Ugboland had turned to a curse because, occasionally, the Ugbo have used their advantageous position to prevent the oil company from paying compensation to the Mahin¹¹. The activities of the Ugbo in this direction has serious effects on social development in Mahinland.

Historically, Chevron, formerly known as Gulf Oil, secured exploration licences to operate in Ugboland in the early 1980s but skeletal operation had commenced since the 1970s. Today Chevron is in partnership with other subsidiaries, such as Conoco oil, Texaco, Ezzonmobil, Express Oil and Gas, among others, although Chevron is the operator of any of such joint venture, which produces several thousand barrels of oil a day in Ugboland¹².

As a result of the oil exploration in Ugboland, the Mahin have suffered a lot of damage. The high expectation of the Mahin people for improved living condition since the commencement of oil exploration in Ugboland, has been dashed. In a bid to address this predicament, the Mahin people expressed their agitation in diverse ways. The state of abandonment of towns and villages in Mahinland could be seen in the area of lack of basic socio-economic infrastructures. The life-ennobling infrastructure such as health facilities, foot bridges, electricity, modern town halls and schools sponsored and financed by the Chevron Oil Company are virtually non-existent in Mahinland. Water, which should have been compensatory commodity in Mahinland, suffered, especially from the activities of oil companies in Ugboland. Each spillage is enough to render available water unsafe for human consumption¹³. The natural water in Mahinland has been too polluted to be of any use as a result of oil exploratory activities in Ugboland. Besides, owing to sea incursion occasioned by oil exploration, Mahin waters are salty. It is this development, in most cases, that brings disagreement between the Mahin and the Ugbo. As a result of this misunderstanding, the Mahin people formed different associations. These associations, unlike other similar associations in the Niger Delta, are not destructive in their agitation for improved

living conditions. They struggle non-violently for the political, economic and environmental rights of the Mahin people.

Environmental degradation is a major cause of disagreement between the Ugbo and the Mahin, particularly when Mahin discovered that the Ugbo people had deprived them of compensation from Chevron Oil company¹⁴. Since the commencement of oil exploration in Ugboland in the 1980s, over a million of barrels of oil have been drained from the area with serious ecological effects on Mahin. In Ugboland, there are pockets of oil wells connected to oil fields where the crude oil is drained. This has contributed significantly to ecological problems, leading directly to series of pollution in the Mahin area. This has seriously devastating effects on Mahinland.

Oil spillage has also had very devastating effects on the relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin. In most cases, none of the compensation on oil spillage has been paid to Mahin. The effects of the spillage are horrible, not just on the Mahin people, but also on the land, plant, fishes and water. As a result of the oil spillage, the Mahin people go through environmental and psychological trauma whenever oil spillage occurs¹⁵, yet no compensation has been paid to them, but the Ugbo, on the other hand feed heavily on oil money. For instance, fishing activities in Mahinland, are affected when spillage occurs. The land has become dead; the high technical cleaning method of opening the soil to pour crude which later resurfaces damage Ugbo and Mahin` waters, yet the Mahin are prevented by the Ugbo from having direct access to the oil company. The Mahin are predominantly fishermen and they depend on fishing. The spillages spoil and destroy the good fishing ground of the Mahin people, but the Ugbo have not allowed the Mahin to receive the sympathy of the oil company, hence development is stalled in Mahin.

Although the source of disagreement between the Ugbo people and the Mahin could be explained in terms of inadequate compensation as a result of environmental degradation and spillage occasioned by oil exploratory activities in Ugboland, everything boils down to the absence of life-ennobling infrastructures

in Mahinland. In spite of the ecological effect of oil exploration, the people are extremely neglected. They have no social amenities. Many of their school leavers are unemployed; they have nothing to do to alleviate their condition. On the whole, the Mahin people are faced with environmental degradation and economic strangulation. The oil company took advantage of the Ugbo resistance to Mahin benefiting from the welfare packages and the Ugbo interest in welfare and development of their land. Therefore, in spite of the agitation of the Mahin for improved living condition, Chevron Oil Company still infringes on the right of the people because the Ugbo people are collaborators. The Ugbo traditional leaders always fold their hands doing nothing to encourage Chevron Oil Company to develop Mahinland.

In recent times, Chevron Oil Company has flagged up developmental projects in selected towns and villages in Ugboland, to cushion the effect of oil exploration activities on the people. None of these projects was executed in Mahinland¹⁶. These projects include provision of water and renovation and construction of classrooms. Chevron Oil Company also embarked on elaborate scholarship scheme for the Ugbo youth in primary, post-primary and post-secondary schools.

The Ugbo traditional rulers believe that, in order to bring real fundamental change to Ugboland, the youth need to be developed intellectually. They are of the view that to ensure success in the economic transformation of the land, the Ugbo people would need a core of people who are highly articulate and reasonably knowledgeable and could cope adequately with the challenges of technology. To this end, the oil company was mandated to offer scholarship only to the Ugbo youth; in fact the issuance of scholarship is controlled and directed at the *Olugbo's* palace. This is done to prevent the Mahin youth from enjoying Chevron Oil Company scholarship. Chevron Oil Company has entered into working relationship with all towns and villages in Ugbo through viable unions to the detriment of the Mahin. In addition, Chevron Oil Company is also to execute

projects and constantly pay certain dues to Ugbo towns and villages, through their accredited representatives as may be demanded from time to time.

5.3 Effects of conflict on kingship institution

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has great effects on kingship status in Ilajeland. Before the imposition of British colonial rule in the area, the *Olugbo* of Ugbo exercised political supremacy over all the *Oba* in Ilajeland. The pattern of British penetration of the region was to undermine the position and status of the *Olugbo*¹⁷. The *Amapetu* turned out to become a trusted friend of the British and served as tools in the latter's penetration of Ugboland¹⁸. The *Olugbo* particularly hated the *Amapetu* for his role in the British occupation of Ugboland and the subsequent preferential treatment the *Amapetu* received during the period of colonial rule.

It could thus be said that the unabating rivalry and tension between the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo*, which seem to dominate the kingship status in Ilajeland over the years, have a lot to do with the imposition of the British colonial rule. It fostered antagonistic relationship between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* as each tried to run down the other in the process of adjusting to the new political and social orders in which they found themselves. Between 1927 and 1952, the *Olugbo* and his chiefs craved political independence from the yoke of the *Amapetu*. This prompted the colonial authorities to set up Carkeek commission to look into *Amapetu-Olugbo* rivalry and to make recommendations to the colonial government¹⁹. The finding and subsequent recommendations led to the repatriation of the *Olugbo* from exile. This repatriation was facilitated by the signing of a document by the *Olugbo*, in which he acknowledged the *Amapetu* as his head. Consequently, the Ugbo people felt cheated, especially as they were traditionally and politically independent and superior to the Mahin²⁰.

The *Olugbo*, *Oba* Mafimisebi II, was determined to make known that he was not equal in status to the *Amapetu* and that the Mahin were his tenants. He wanted it to be that the fact that his towns and villages were placed in the Mahin District Council by the colonial government did not deprive him of the privileges

attached to his exalted position, notably as the only paramount ruler in Ilajeland. This made the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* to embark on confrontation, which led to political tussle between them. The political bitterness and controversy between the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo* reached its climax when the *Olugbo*, *Oba Adebajo Mafimisebi IV*, took the title *Olugbo* of Ilajeland. The *Amapetu* oppressively questioned the *Olugbo's* right to take the title *Olugbo* of Ilajeland. He also objected to the *Olugbo's* claim of first class *Oba* as far as Ilaje society is concerned. The *Amapetu* was enraged by this development and the *Olugbo* felt insulted by activities of the *Amapetu* and the Mahin people over the newly discovered title of the *Olugbo* of Ilajeland.

The first position of the *Olugbo* on the issue was that the *Amapetu* should go to court or empower his subjects to remove the title from his car's plate number. The *Amapetu* too did not take the issue lightly, for he regarded the newly discovered title of the *Olugbo* of Ugbu as a challenge to his authority and power. He, thus, reported the *Olugbo's* supposed insolence to the Ondo State government, claiming that it was contrary to Ilaje laws and customs for the *Olugbo* to declare himself as the *Olugbo* of Ilajeland in the presence of three notable *Obas* (the *Amapetu* of Mahin, the *Onikan* of Etikan, and the *Maporure* of Agerge). The *Amapetu* also buttressed his position that the *Olugbo* took the title of *Olugbo* of Ilajeland without the prior knowledge of the state government. The *Amapetu* maintained that, from time immemorial, none of the *Olugbo* that was installed and reigned in Ugboland, took title *Olugbo* of Ilajeland.

The Ondo State government in support of the *Amapetu*, sternly admonished the *Olugbo* and sharply ordered the *Olugbo* to reverse to the old title of the *Olugbo* of Ugbu. The *Olugbo* refused to comply with the order, maintaining that he was entitled to take the title of the *Olugbo* of Ilajeland because it formed one of his traditional title, a replica of the *Olugbo* insignia of royal authority, referred to as *Opa Ilaje*, and called upon history as a witness. He said that his predecessors had, over the years, used the symbol *Opa Ilaje* as paraphernalia of office. To support

his claim, the *Olugbo* produced the Ugbo symbol of traditional political authority. In corroborating the *Olugbo*'s position, R.J.M. Curmen opines that the name Ilaje is closely associated with the Ugbo cult of *oro* staff. He adds that the Mahin whose senior chiefs received *Opa Ilaje* directly or indirectly from the Ugbo practised the same variety of *oro*²¹ cult. Omogbenin also lends credence to the *Olugbo*'s claim:²².

The name Ilaje is a post Ugbo outward migration from Ife. As a prince and heir, the leader of the dynamic migrating team that left Ife to settle first in the Ilajeland left Ife with three insignia of royal authority viz *Opa Ilaje Aja* and *Arubeji*. Consequently, one of these insignia of authority became the nomenclature of the group formerly known as Ugbo.

Jeje and Oyenusi assert that, as far as Ilajeland is concerned, the *Olugbo* is the political and cultural head, although this is not to suggest that the other *Oba* bow to him. By implication, the superiority of the *Olugbo* is that of position²³. This revelation represents the political status of the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*.

On the whole, the *Amapetu* of Mahin claimed that the *Olugbo* had no right whatsoever to claim the title of *the Olugbo* of Ilajeland. He argued based on colonial position that the titled king of Ilajeland should be the exclusive prerogative and birthright of the *Amapetu* of Mahin. The results of this were accusations and counter accusations from both parties. Each claimed seniority and right to the title King of Ilajeland, while denouncing the counter-claim of the other. Even though the Ondo State government realized that fact and history were falsified and distorted in their claims, the government did not take any conscious step to address the contradiction. Instead the two traditional rulers were brought into Ondo State Council of *Oba* as permanent members and with first-class status. With this development, the Ilaje had two traditional rulers as permanent members in the Ondo State Council of *Oba* as against one from each recognized ethnic groups.

In spite of the inclusion of the two traditional rulers as permanent members of the Ondo State council of *Obas*, the issues of superiority and supremacy between the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo* still remain outstanding. This requires greater attention and commitment by all in the interest of lasting and sustainable peace. The *Olugbo* and *Amapetu* chieftaincy imbroglio could be resolved in the light of its historical context and origin. The chieftaincy tussle between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* has lingered because of the lack of proper understanding of the history of the *Olugbo* stool, which is the oldest in Ilajeland. The superimposition of the *Amapetu* on the *Olugbo* ignited the rivalry between the two traditional rulers.

5.4 Effects of the conflict on infrastructural development

The Ugbo- Mahin conflict has negative consequences on the infrastructural development of Ilaje society. The conflict particularly has created serious disillusionment in the mind of the people in Ilajeland and in Ondo State, as a whole. Infrastructural development cannot succeed where lawlessness and conflict prevail.²⁴ The constant occurrence of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict in Ilajeland indirectly led to increasing social vices. It is evident that the conflict has contributed tremendously to the under-development of Ilaje society. The conflict has been identified as an impediment to the flow of investment into the region. Its effects on the Ilaje society have been so negative. Throughout Ilajeland, the urbanization index is low while rural settlements are thinly populated, scattered and without linkages. It has also been discovered that, in Ilajeland, socio-economic tangibles, such as road, electricity, potable water, education, health facilities and information are at low levels. The orthodox development and equalization strategies cannot be totally applied in the Ilaje society, because of the petty jealousy and antagonism that characterize interaction between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The conflict has caused poor and immature urbanization, poor information flow or interaction effect and hatred which restrict towns and villages interaction and integration. .

It is assumed that one of the major legacies of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict is non-availability of amenities and basic infrastructure in many towns and villages in the two areas. Development cannot take place in a vacuum. Government, investors and other multinationals cannot develop infrastructure such as road canals, jetties, water, transport, schools, hospitals, potable water, electricity and long piled bridges traversing swamps in Ilajeland because of the rivalry between the Ugbo and the Mahin. Inter-settlement links and bridge cannot be constructed between the two communities because of the conflict. Sustainable industrial base is virtually absent because investments go with infrastructural facilities. As a result of the conflict, federal, state and local governments are reluctant in providing infrastructural facilities. Multinationals and foreign donors are also unwilling to channel their development efforts to the transformation of Ilajeland.

Poverty in Ilaje society has its genesis in the Ugbo-Mahin conflict. There is the need to redistribute welfare facilities between the Ugbo and the Mahin. Deliberate efforts should be made by the government to encourage investment in Ilajeland. The need for the flow of investment calls for the speedy resolution of the conflict.

There is differential availability of the fruit of infrastructural development between the Ugbo and the Mahin. This issue of inequality in infrastructural facilities is due to the conflict. Employment opportunities in Ilajeland are narrow because industries are not in existence. The region is not adequately industrialized; growth and welfare investments are not available to attract investment opportunities to the region. There are many material resources awaiting development such as commercial fishing, fish oil extraction and fishing net and boat/canoe construction. Others include food processing industries, wood based industries, rubber and oil palm processing and rice milling. All these have been hindered by the conflict.

The infrastructural development index in Ilajeland is very low. Until structural problems associated with the conflict are adequately addressed

infrastructural development in Ilaje society will be elusive. One of the principal reasons why genuine infrastructural development cannot be easily realized in Ilaje society is that the relationship between the two ethnic groups is characterized by mistrust and antagonism. This type of relationship has worked in a direction opposite to integration and infrastructural development. Certain inter-communal links established during the pre-conflict era were broken because of the conflict. This has its roll on the community.

5.5 Effects of conflict on social institutions

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict has great consequences on social institutions. For instance, the traditional age grade (*otu*) system has gradually lost its character of being a symbol of unity in Ilajeland²⁵. In the pre-conflict era, it was often a tradition for the youth in the two areas to organize themselves into *otu* at the age of twenty²⁶. In other words, the *otu* from Ugbo who were of the same age with the *otu* from the Mahin often saw themselves as *olukun* (friends). These groups exchanged innovative economic ideas; and promoted competitive economic activities, honesty, truth, worthiness, diligence and dignity of labour. They equally attended ceremonies organized by their fellows²⁷. The *otu* from Ugbo and Mahin, in some cases, settled issues that could create enmity between themselves.

However, during the conflict era, the *otu* institution collapsed and disappeared²⁸. Hence, the entertaining and unifying inter-community wrestling competitions among the *otu* institution, which facilitated cordial relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin, ceased to exist.

The two groups no longer trust themselves. This has led to the formation of different fora and associations, where issues of ethnic importance are discussed and defended to the letter. The *otu* system has been replaced by intra-ethnic unions. Ethnic unions, such as the Ugbo Central Organization and the Mahin Descendants Union are prominent features within Ilajeland. They help in nourishing ethnic parochialism and chauvinism. They also offer assistance financially, morally and in other ways to youth within their area of jurisdiction. In

other words the ethnic unions now concentrate more on the development of their mandate areas. Membership of each of these ethnic unions was restricted to the ethnic group.

Different social clubs of parallel functions emerged in the two areas²⁹. Some of these social clubs include the Ugbo Dynamic Club, Mahin Compact Group, Ugbo Progressive, Mahin Club 7, Ugbo Galaxy Club, Mahin Inner Circle among many others³⁰. While some of these clubs are philanthropic in nature, cultural or purely social, many others combine all these functions. However, their activities are restricted to their ethnic areas.

The contributions of these social clubs to the Ugbo-Mahin dichotomy cannot be ignored. Mention must, therefore, be made of the contributions of the Ugbo Central Organization and the Mahin Descendants Union in promoting antagonism, abhorrence and competitive mistrust between the Ugbo and the Mahin. Each member of the club and union used their talents and positions to undermine development in Ugbo and Mahin. The activities of these unions hinder socio-economic transformation of Ilaje society. This is most noticeable in the area of electricity and pipe-borne water. Also they prevented construction of modern infrastructures. For instance, members of the Ugbo Central Organization prevented educational development in the Mahin. They used their privileged position as an oil-producing community to prevent the Mahin from gaining access to scholarship, construction of modern classrooms and libraries and donation of books by oil companies.

The unions in both Ugbo and Mahin have used their rivalry to stall industrial development in Ilajeland by demanding separately for improved social life. This has made many tangible benefits to elude the two groups. The unions, together with their traditional rulers, play tremendous roles in blocking social development in Ilajeland. From all indications, the unions have contributed tremendously towards the prevention of social development in Ilaje society.

The execution of viable programmes, that would have brought socio-economic transformation are often halted. For instance, these unions, because their rivalry, contributed generously towards promoting division among the youths and among market women. Some of these unions are also at present embarking on programmes that will further deepen division between the Ugbo and the Mahin. They ensure that social amenities are restricted to either Mahin or Ugbo as the case may be. This competition has resulted into a situation where each union prevents the aspiration of the other one. From all indications, it could be seen that the present socio-economic backwardness in Ilaje society is not unconnected with the activities of ethnic unions and clubs. The pattern of economic infrastructures such as roads and foot bridges are determined by the ethnic unions and clubs.

Closely related to the above is the effect of the conflict on traditional festival celebrations. Traditional festivals are used, through celebration to transmit ideas, aspiration and philosophy of a people which make their life meaningful³¹. They are a re-enactment of historical, religious and traditional events, which serve as factor of interaction, cohesion and mobilization in the society. The periods of these festivals are determined either by natural cycles, for example harvest season, new-moon and so on, or what is termed as manifestation of the supernatural in traditional circles. Ilaje society used religious festivals as, rallying point for unification of ideas and philosophies³². In this sense, therefore, religious festivals are like modern promotional fans that mobilize members of the society to achieve particular aims and cement their aspirations and display their creative achievement.

The joint traditional celebration in Ilajeland was truncated by the Ugbo and the Mahin people who do not trust each other. In the past, the Ugbo and the Mahin jointly celebrated the *Malokun* festival in honour of the sea goddess³³. In the pre-conflict era, the Mahin maintained strong alliance and strong affinity with the Ugbo. The Ugbo contact with the Mahin also left some impacts on the Mahin. The

Mahin would have been influenced by the Ugbo *Malokun* festival. The Ugbo and the Mahin jointly celebrated *Malokun* festival until the imposition of colonial rule.

The *Oluweri* festival is also common and indigenous to the two ethnic groups. It is celebrated in honour of the river goddess where on they live. As a result of its historical significance, presents were exchanged between the Ugbo and the Mahin during the celebration. However, the Ugbo and Mahin conflict in recent times, has grossly affected peaceful co-existence, hence, the joint festival celebration ceased to exist and presentation of gift became impracticable.

As mentioned earlier, the Ugbo and the Mahin have several socio-cultural festivals which are jointly celebrated. However, as a result of the conflict between the two groups, traditional festivals are no longer celebrated together. Most of these festivals have their origin in the historical evolution of the people, while some take their roots from religious understanding of their environment. In addition, some of the festivals are designed to create time for leisure and recreation.

There are different types of festival, depending on their purpose and significance to each of the ethnic groups. Most of these festivals have religious colouration, even though they are cultural. Religious festivals are associated with different deities believed to have offered them protection and provision of life necessities. The *Malokun* festival which is prominent among the Ugbo is celebrated because *Malokun* is believed to be goddess of the sea. The festival has become a tourist attraction today because of its importance to the people. Despite the reluctance of the Mahin towards this festival as result of the conflict the *Malokun* festival has continued to be popular. Thus, the festival is an annual event that takes place in the month of November. The purpose of the festival is to ask for the blessing of the goddess in providing sea so that during fishing expedition, more fishes will be caught³⁴.

There is the general agreement among the Ilaje people that the *Malokun* festival is rooted in the Ugbo culture³⁵. It is described by some of them as an

extension of the Ugbo relation to the supernatural sphere. *Malokun* is believed to have the power to make people wealthy and prosperous. The Ugbo people usually sing praises to sea goddess, eulogizing her and extolling her virtues as the kind hearted queen of the sea. To the people, *Malokun* is more powerful than the people and also knows the true path to happiness because she has the key to financial success. Hence, whenever the people are hungry, they will shout *Malokun Olugbo ebi o* (*Olugbo*, the custodian of the sea no food to eat). Immediately after this shout, the people will receive the blessing. The sea will be calm and they will go on their fishing expedition. The significance of shouting *Malokun Olugbo* is to ask her to provide abundant fish. It also assures them that all is well. If after the shout of *Malokun Olugbo*, the people still fail to catch fish this means all is not well in the land.

A close look at the *Malokun* festival celebration reveals that the Mahin embraced the celebration partly because of the belief that the festival has the potency of giving the people grace to enjoy good health, prosperity and peace throughout the year. However, certain conditions have made Mahin to withdraw from the celebration, most especially the chieftainship tussle between the *Amapetu* and the *Olugbo*. There is fundamental contradiction between the traditional songs used during the celebration of the *Malokun* festival which eulogizes the *Olugbo* as the custodian of the sea and the new programme preached and pursued by the *Amapetu* and the Mahin people. This has resulted in the decline of the influence of the festival in the Mahin. In addition, the rivalry between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* is a militating factor against the *Malokun* festival which is a symbol of unity. The dispute has affected the belief and worship of *Malokun* by the Mahin. The Mahin people no longer participate in the *Malokun* festival, because they regard it as the *Olugbo* festival. The end result is that the festival no longer has the desired impact in the area of fostering mutual relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

5.6 Effects of the conflict on religious institutions

Many changes have taken place in the religious sphere of Ilajeland as a result of the conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin. In the pre-colonial era, religion played tremendous roles in the administration of justice in Ilajeland. It facilitated cordiality between the Ugbo and the Mahin. The continued existence of any traditional society depends to a very large extent on its ability to create viable religious institutions necessary for peace maintenance, confidence building and conflict resolution. More importantly, the ability of the religious institutions to mitigate conflict make the society peaceful. The Ilaje people, in the pre-colonial era, created traditional religious institutions which underwent changes in response to the development in the area.

One of the most celebrated religious institutions which mitigated conflict among the Ilaje people is *Ayelala*³⁶. The headquarters of this institution is located at *Orita Ayelala* (Mahinland) the very spot where the victim later called *Ayelala* was sacrificed³⁷. Besides the headquarters, many sanctuaries dedicated to *Ayelala* abound in Ilajeland. These sanctuaries are found in many communities and the house of individuals who seek protection from *Ayelala*. The devotees regularly offer sacrifices at the sanctuaries. These offering include cowries, kolanuts, indigenous chalk, live chicken, goats and pigs. Many of these live animals wander about within the premises of *Ayelala's* sanctuary and no mortal is tempted to steal them.

The Ugbo and the Mahin accord fear and respect to *Ayelala's* sanctuary. The people believe that the sanctuary has protective function and is endowed with necessary power to fulfill certain roles. All contacts with the ancestor is made by the high priest, who constantly conducts sacrifice in the sanctuary. In the time of conflict, *Ayelala's* sanctuary is regularly consulted³⁸. The people tap the power of the oracle through oath taking in the sanctuary by ritual means to bring about confession³⁹.

Before the conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin, *Ayelala* regulated execute of judgement among the Ugbo and the Mahin for a long period before the imposition of colonial rule, which ushered in friction between the two groups. In the pre-colonial period, the Mahin and the Ugbo respected *Ayelala*. Any judgement handed over to people by the chief priest instilled fear into the people's mind. One of the most striking aspects of the conflict was decline in the consultation at his sanctuary. The Ugbo are unwilling to consult the sanctuary because of its location in Mahinland. Consequently, the relevance of the institution in fostering unity between the Ugbo and the Mahin was condemned and replaced. This culminated in super-imposition of western model of conflict resolution. The European approach adopted is erroneous and misleading, and capable of relegating the people generally into the dustbin of legal culture. Thus, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict has negative repercussion on the judicial power of traditional religious institution in the administration of justice in Ilajeland.

In addition, before the Ugbo-Mahin conflict, the *Alaghor* institution was a traditional religious institution that was used by both the Mahin and the Ugbo to monitor prevent, manage and resolve conflict among themselves⁴⁰. The members of *Alaghor* also had their peculiar ways and manner of effecting peace-making, peace-building and confidence-building. When decision on an issue was reached unanimously, the matter would then be referred to *Alaghor* (the highest court in Ilajeland). In the area of conflict resolution, the *Alaghor* (the wise men) served as the international court of justice. Members of the *Alaghor* were feared and believed to possess mystical power. In Ilajeland, selected members of *Alaghor* served as valuable judicial advisers to the king. The *Alaghor* were wise men who possessed moral and ritual attributes; and they also possessed and controlled powerful supernatural forces.

In the pre-conflict era, the power of the *Alaghor* cut across Ugbo and Mahin. The rapport which this institution brought between the Ugbo and the Mahin was very remarkable. For instance one could lay the report of the Mahin

people before the Ugbo *Alaghor* who could handle the case without partiality. Also, the Ugbo could be reported before the Mahin *Alaghor* who will handle the case without partiality and prejudice. In other words, *Alaghor* wherever it existed in Ilajeland had prominent influence on the administration of justice in the pre-Ugbo-Mahin conflict era. During this period, the ritual sanctions of the *Alaghor* were believed to operate automatically. Hence, whatever the judgement the *Alaghor* passes, it cannot be reverted.

As a result of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict, many changes took place in the administration of justice by the members of the *Alaghor*. The *Alaghor* ceased to be an international court of justice in Ilajeland. Their activities became restricted to each kingdom in Ilajeland. The conflict has tremendous effects on the unity of Ilaje people. In the pre-Ugbo-Mahin conflict era, it was obvious that the *Alaghor* was the only traditional judicial institution acceptable to both the Mahin and the Ugbo, but the Ugbo-Mahin conflict ended the traditional judicial power of the *Alaghor* institution. The *Alaghor* ceased to be the symbol of unity in Ilajeland. The institution lost its members. The ordinary people no longer fear this institution. The mind of the people became liberated partly because they asked question concerning the procedure the *Alaghor* used in the juristic tradition of determining guilt and innocence. On the whole, the stronghold of the *Alaghor* institution was broken, and disrupted. The institutional base that held the judicial administration in esteem was broken and there was revolt against the *Alaghor* tradition and philosophy. Events that unfolded after this show that the Ugbo and the Mahin are strange bed-partners as far as the *Alaghor* institution was concerned.

One cannot but argue that the Ugbo-Mahin conflict brought a lot of changes to the power and functions of traditional religious institutions. There was the disruption of their galvanizing judicial roles. The function of the *Alaghor* and *Ayelala* to protect and settle dispute between the Ugbo and the Mahin became lost. The members of *Alaghor* who served as supreme judges of the Ugbo and the

Mahin and their court which served as the final court of appeal in Ilajeland gradually lost their importance. Although these institutions still exist in spite of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict; some people still find it difficult if not impossible to dissociate themselves completely from those institutions, especially at each kingdom. Thus, people in each kingdom still make individual consultation on issues relating to land, chieftaincy matters, crime and other political disputes.

On the orthodox religious sphere, the advent of the Aladura Christian Movement further facilitated cordial relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the pre-conflict era. The Holy Apostles Church and Cherubim and Seraphim Church are branches of the Aladura Movement. The two sects of Aladura Christian Movement in Ilajeland have their headquarters in Aiyetoro and Ugbonla, respectively. Aiyetoro and Ugbonla are towns in Ugboland established as theocratic communities⁴¹. The emergence of the Aladura Movement introduced a new era of revolutionary rebirth in Ugboland and the entire Ilajeland. Many people began to troop to the new emergent communities of Aiyetoro and Ugbonla, the two Zion cities⁴². The Aladura Movement, which had Mahin elements outright condemned all traditional norms, taboos and peculiar practices. In the process of their growth, they destroyed many shrines and other symbols of traditional worship in the Ugboland and in Mahinland⁴³.

The annual convention of the Holy Apostles Church at Ayetoro and Cherubim and Seraphim at Ugbonla fostered unity between the Ugbo and the Mahin. During the convention, gifts of various kinds were often given by the Holy Apostles Church and Cherubim and Seraphim in Mahin to the General Overseers who incidentally were Ugbo indigenes. Mahin people who were members of the Holy Apostle Church or Cherubim and Seraphim personally presented gifts to their General Overseers. One important point to emphasize here is that the Mahin and other adherents of the Holy Apostle or Cherubim and Seraphim Church saw themselves as brothers and sisters. It could then be concluded that the establishment of the Aladura Churches Holy Apostles Church and Cherubim and

Seraphim Church) promoted cordiality between the Ugbo and the Mahin in the pre-conflict era.

However, despite the tremendous influence of the Aladura churches in Ilaje society as at that time, a number of internal weaknesses bedevilled the affairs of the church in such a way that the church lost its relevance. The General Overseers who were supposed to disseminate knowledge, ideas and skills embarked on discriminatory policy against the Mahin.

Trouble started when the Mahin in the church discovered that the Ugbo were discriminating against them especially in the appointment of key principal officers within the church. Some influential Ugbo people were given offices they were incapable of managing. For instance, it was quite possible for an Ugbo man to become a Senior Apostle before his ordination as Apostle. In fact, the top hierarchy of the church was filled with mainly the Ugbo. Many powerful Senior Apostles emerged that encouraged discrimination against the Mahin. The church became loose. As a matter of fact, some Mahin People deserted the church. Instead of spiritualism, the church took keen delight in segregating; some of the Ugbo that were appointed to senior positions were in fact irreligious. They had little knowledge of theology, as they were often absent from church service.

The Ugbo appointees spent their time in pleasure, feasts, parties and entertainment. There was quest for materialism, rather than ensuring the salvation of mankind. As a result of this development within the church, many faithful Mahin believers resorted to one measure or the other to bring reforms but they were frustrated. The by-product of this was that some Mahin members deserted the church and established their own denomination in Mahinland. In support of the Mahin adherents of Aladura Movement, the Mahin people instituted hostile reactions against the protagonists of the new religion. The Ugbo practitioners of the new religion were physically attacked and humiliated. The cohesion of the Ugbo adherents of the new religion was tested by the Mahin, whenever the people

travelled outside their settlement; they were systematically molested and harassed. This development further fuelled the conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

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Endnotes

1. The Ugbo Central Organization was constituted by Oba Adebajo Mafimisebi, members of the Ugbo Central Organization were drawn from towns and villages in Ugbo. This organization instituted new culture, new orientation and new dynamic development for the Ugboland. It is a formidable group that negotiate always with oil companies.
2. Information derived from Hon. Oyebo Aladetan. Oyebo Adelatan is a member of Ondo State House of Assembly representing Ugbo constituency and confirmed by Hon. Lomiye, Executive Chairman Ilaje Local Government 20th February, 2010.
3. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict led to the formation of ethnic union such as Ugbo Confederacy, Ugbo Central Organization, the Ilaje-Ugbo Youth forum, Mahin Descendant union, Mahin Compact Group, the Ilaje--Mahin Youth Forum.
4. Prince Adebajo Edema, a Mahin man, was appointed to represent Ondo state on the Board of Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission, but was removed when the Ugbo people protested against the appointment as a form of marginalization of Ugbo oil communities.
5. The conflict between Ugbo and Mahin in recent times, led to the split of National Association, of Ilaje students into two rival Associations i.e. National Association of Ugbo Students and National Association of Mahin Students. This development occurred in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
6. Evidence derived from Mr. Omotehinse, retired civil servant and former principal of many secondary schools in Ugbo and Mahin respectively, 28th February, 2010.
7. B.A. Omogbemi (2007). *Ilaje nation and her cultural heritage* (Ondo: Grace Excellent Publishers), p.35.
8. J. M. Magi, (2003). *Arogbo-Ijaw and Ugbo-Ilaje fratricidal wars: An unnecessary inter-ethnic conflict* (Felulab int'l prints), p.10.
9. <http://www.wikimediaorg/wikipedoa/en/a/a4/> Niger Delta State retrieved April 2010.

10. I. Aboribo (2002). "The Political Economy of Environmental pollution and compensation in the Niger Delta. The case of victims and the law". A paper presented at the National Conference on Management of Petroleum and Energy Resources for sustainable Development in the Niger Delta held at Delta State University, Abrata.
11. Evidence derived from Hon. Atikase Otito. Hon. Atikase is a member of Ondo State House of Assembly representing Mahin constituency, 20th February, 2010.
12. B.A. Omogbemi (2007). *Ilaje nation and her cultural heritage* (Ondo: Grace Excellent Publishers), p.82.
13. L.A. Okosodu and I. M. Isede (2003). "Environmental pollution and its effect on the people of the Niger Delta Area". Being a paper presented at the 4th Annual National Conference of National Association for Advancement of Knowledge NAFAK held at the Federal College of Education, Okene Kogi State.
14. Evidence derived from Dr. Jatuwase Ode-Mahin, 23rd February, 2010 and confirmed by *Oba* Omowole, the *Amapetu* of Mahin.
15. J. S. Babatolu and O.B. Olanusi .(2001). Environmental impact of ethnic nationalities crises in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria, being the text of a paper presented at the 3rd National Conference of Social Studies Association of Nigeria held at Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo.
16. Evidence derived from Hon. Atikase Otito. Hon. Atikase is a member of Ondo State House of Assembly representing Mahin constituency, 20th February, 2010 and confirmed by *Oba* Omowole, the *Amapetu* of Mahin.
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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

It has been established in this study that relations between the Ugbo and the Mahin during the pre-colonial era were characterised by mutual understanding and cooperation. The mutual understanding and cooperation manifested chiefly in the spheres of social interactions, such as inter-marriage, traditional festivals as well as commercial interactions. It has been discovered that certain factors often opened avenues of greater inter-group relations between the Mahin and the Ugbo, such as geographical factor. This factor appears to be a potent one for their close interactions because of the relative ease with which the people moved from one place to another. Also, during the celebration of some traditional festivals, there were occasions when the Ugbo and the Mahin used to exchange presents. This relationship was further cemented by inter-marriage between the two groups. Trade also provided the opportunity for close interactions. It is noted that, with wide range of commercial interactions, they were able to borrow ideas from each other, which facilitated cultural transmission. This was the pre-colonial pictures of relations between Mahin and the Ugbo. It was not a relationship totally characterized by friction and antagonism. But the policies pursued by the British during the colonial period greatly altered the pre-colonial situation.

It has been revealed in this study that the British treaty with the Mahin in 1885 negated the treaty earlier on signed with the Ugbo in 1884. The 1885 treaty recognized that the general administration of numerous towns and villages in the jurisdiction was vested in Ode-Mahin and recognized the *Amapetu* as the king of the entire district. The treaty laid the foundation for the political problem in Ilajeland, during and after the colonial period. It has also been discovered that, on the basis of this treaty, the political leaders of the Mahin, unlike traditional political leaders in Ugboland, enjoyed full colonial patronage to the detriment of

the Ugbo people. This was the source of the Ugbo grievance which led to considerable strain in the relationship between the two groups.

The advent of colonial rule was meant to establish a political system that cut across the two groups. This attempt bred discontent and strained the existing peaceful relationship between the Mahin and the Ugbo. It has been established in this study that with the making of the *Amapetu* as the Native Authority in Ilaje district, the political sovereignty of the *Olugbo* was damaged. The squabble that ensued manifested in all sorts of political bitterness, intrigues and confusion that followed the wake of colonial rule in the area. It has been pointed out in the study that the Ugbo-Mahin conflict in the colonial era arose as a result of three fundamental factors.

The first is the colonialist's failure to look into the traditional system of government existing in the area before the advent of the British and its failure to realize the unsuitability of subordinating the Ugbo to the Mahin suzerainty. The second concerns the British translation of foreign social concepts into the people's constitution. The third is the act of confusing a principle with the circumstance in which it was first applied. Because indirect rule had been developed elsewhere with their somewhat despotic chieftainship, they assumed that a powerful chief was indispensable to the same system. The attempt to find chiefs opened up the temptation to create them where they could not be found or exalt them where they did not seem to be sufficiently powerful. The great authority conferred on the *Amapetu* and the downgrading of *Olugbo* by the British administration in contradistinction to traditional convention is the best illustration of how colonial policy led to the growth of conflict between the Mahin and the Ugbo people.

It has also been discovered that when the British government terminated its control over Ilajeland, chieftaincy imbroglio between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* ensued. The activities of the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* were radically politicized. Each of them believed that the interest of his people should take precedence over the interest of the other group. In fact, their activities have brought deprivation,

nepotism, hatred, suspicion, discrimination between the Ugbo and the Mahin people. Furthermore, it has been established in this study that the post-colonial Ugbo-Mahin relations were confronted with fundamental problems of political bitterness, intrigues and confusion. Their people were inevitably drawn into the conflict and struggle for prominence between the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu*. Their involvement resembles that of their traditional rulers. This conflict spread ethnic thinking to every family unit.

In sum, it has been pointed out in the study that the conflict constituted impediment to the flow of investment and economic transformation of Ilaje society. Most of the good things found in the big towns of the world, such as industrial estates, manufacturing companies and huge business investment, are conspicuously absent in Ilajeland. In fact, the conflict has hindered infrastructural development of Ilaje society.

6.2 Research findings

The findings in this study show that the painful memories of the bitter conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin, occasioned by the British misrule, linger to the 21st century. In other words, the present-day conflict has roots in the colonial policy. It has been found out that the Mahin migrated from the Benin area to settle in the Ugbo region. Hence, they constitute an ethnic minority among the Ugbo people. The population of the area became swollen and it became cosmopolitan. Ugboland grew in importance; there trading activities flourished. It has also been revealed in the study that, with wide range of commercial interaction, the people borrowed ideas from each other. This facilitated cultural transmission.

The Mahin at first bolstered the strength of the Ugbo, but later they followed the colonial presence which spurred them to destabilize the Ugbo's internal politics. Conflicts erupted between them. In the conflicts, the Mahin seem to have continually triumphed in a larger part due to their alliance with the colonial government. During the colonial period, it was discovered that, in the

interest of administrative convenience, the Ugbo were placed under the jurisdiction of the *Amapetu*, the traditional ruler of the Mahin. This gave the Mahin the upper hand as *Amapetu* of the Mahin had control over land. This meant that the Ugbo were expected to be subservient even though their settlement predated the Mahin settlement in the area. It has been discovered that throughout the colonial period, conflict continued to erupt in an alarming rapidity. To this day, the Ugbo look at the Mahin as ungrateful settlers, who have failed to appreciate the hospitality of the Ugbo who allowed them to settle in their territory. At the same time, the Mahin look with disdain at the Ugbo people, whose sovereignty had been downgraded by the colonial government.

The pattern of the Ugbo-Mahin relationship during the colonial era was carried into the contemporary era. Today, it is evidently clear that the relationship between the Ugbo and the Mahin is characterised by mutual suspicion, rivalry, intimidation, jealousy and victimisation. These manifested in all facets of interaction. Despite this ugly development, the conflict has not escalated into violent repression, the reasons for this is not unconnected with the activities of the Ilaje Youth Forum, the National Association of Ilaje students and *Egbe Omọ Ilaje* who are responsible for peace building and total reconciliation of all the aggrieved parties in the two communities. These organisations hold periodic meetings and evolve new strategies to entrench interaction and share experience. Furthermore, the *Olugbo* and the *Amapetu* continue to mitigate several potential conflict situations that could escalate into violent crises. They have, through their activities, demonstrated commitment to peace-building. Their campaigns against violence have so far yielded considerable results.

However, in spite of the efforts of these associations and traditional rulers, who arguably are now well disposed to peace, many issues still remain outstanding and require greater attention and commitment by all, to ensure lasting and sustainable peace. These include the marginaliation of the Mahin in the compensation on oil spillage and other ecological problems occasioned by the oil

exploration activities in Ugboland and discrimination against the Mahin in the appointment of representative to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Ondo State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (OSOPADEC). Others are the prevention of the Mahin from occupying key positions at the state and federal levels by the Ugbo, the suppression of the yearning and aspiration of the Mahin by the Ugbo, and the existence of parallel associations motivated or nourished by ethnic chauvinism and parochialism.

6.3 Recommendations

This study has established that conflict in communities is not necessarily disastrous but, if well-handled and with the use of consensus and other means, it could lead to positive changes in the communities. The Ugbo-Mahin conflict could be averted if the people in the two communities jointly interact and engage in common programmes of development. With the involvement of the traditional rulers in peace-building, the conflict would be reduced and consensus enhanced.

Proper and effective resolution of the conflict is paramount to the growth and stability of Ilajeland. Groups and community leaders need to learn the skills involved in managing and resolving conflict constructively. The unresolved Ugbo-Mahin conflict has caused the individual to flounder and the two communities to fail in their responsibilities.

The first step in effectively managing the Ugbo-Mahin conflict is to recognize the nature of the conflict and at what level it is operating. Secondly, people cannot resolve their differences unless they make them known to each other. The Ugbo and the Mahin people must be made to communicate their feelings to each other. In addition, there must be re-establishment of mutual trust that was lost during the colonial era. The Ugbo and the Mahin conflict must be resolved through bargaining and negotiation. The implementation of any development project in Ilajeland is largely dependent on the ability to manage the Ugbo-Mahin conflict successfully. For the Ugbo-Mahin conflict to be amicably resolved, the knowledge base of the people must be expanded. They need to be

told that the present conflict is a British creation. This will bring about positive change in the two communities and facilitate peace-building.

Furthermore, there is the need for a proper arrangement that would allow promotion of psycho-social work, which aims at both psycho-social healing and psychological transformation, towards peaceful co-existence in the two communities. Promotion of peace education in that targets both females and males of all groups is necessary in the society. Non-violent means in the management of the conflict should also be promoted. Reconciliation of the Ugbo and the Mahin and trust-building in the two communities and encouragement of inter-marriages and cultural re-integration of the two communities will also help.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict could be resolved in the light of its historical context and origin. The conflict has persisted on because of the lack of proper understanding of the history behind the Ugbo-Mahin agelong interaction, which was that of tenant (Mahin) and landlord (Ugbo). The superimposition of the Mahin on the Ugbo by colonial government ignited the conflict between the two communities.

Finally, oil companies operating in Ugboland should be ready to extend their coverage to Mahin in handling societal environmental problems like spillage, pollution, degradation. They should meet the needs of the Mahin in the area of compensation payments and grant scholarship to the Mahin too. In addition, oil companies should foster very close relationship with the Mahin by encouraging dialogue rather than applying of politics through avoidance and involvement in Ugbo-Mahin dichotomy.

6.4 Conclusion

A close assessment of the Ugbo-Mahin conflict has revealed that the conflict generates a climate of suspicion and distrust. The Ugbo and the Mahin that need to cooperate and work together now pursue self-interest which results into antagonism instead of teamwork. In communities where this exists, the common practice is that each community will make sure that it intimidates and

victimize the other. The outcome is violent clashes, which may result in loss of lives, school and religious activities will be paralyzed and valuable property will be destroyed. The conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin may degenerate into violent repression, with its attendant consequences. In addition, the Ugbo-Mahin conflict can bring about stoppage of oil exploration in the area. The oil companies may be unwilling to carry on their exploratory activities if the conflict persists. This will affect the progress of the two communities. Money meant for the development of the area will be diverted to other means. Similarly, the unresolved Ugbo-Mahin conflict rather than help in the building of a virile ethnic group, has been destabilizing the process of establishing formidable Ilaje nation. This will continuously polarize the Ilaje into two opposing camps.

The conflict can lead to disagreement and also slow down development in the area. The present state of conflict consciously lead to frequent disagreement, people of each community would want to enforce their beliefs and views. This will lead to intimidation and victimisation and depriving each other of political appointments in future. Also the prolonged conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin can be destructive in the future, if nothing is done to resolve the conflict constructively.

The disruption of social interaction between the Ugbo and the Mahin is doing a lot of damage to marital relationship. There will be a time when a total collapse in inter-marriage between the Mahin and the Ugbo would occur if no specific formular for resolving the conflict is adopted. At present, the Mahin are reluctant to marry from the Ugbo as a result of the perceived marginalization. Furthermore, the formation of rival unions in the area is bound to present a problem for the Ugbo-Mahin relations. This trend will hinder future cooperation in the area and escalate the conflict. Each of these unions has parallel and incomparable agenda. Prominent among the union is the Ugbo Central Organization with the headquarters at Ode-Ugbo and financed by the *Olugbo*. The

Ugbo Central Organisation co-ordinates activities of other Ugbo unions by scheduling meeting of various unions in Ode-Ugbo. Similar to the Ugbo Central Organisation is the Mahin Descendants Union. The union meets frequently to coordinate Mahin activities. This is not as strong as the Ugbo Central Organization. The activities of these unions will impinge future cooperation between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The last factor that seems to constitute a great threat to the Ugbo-Mahin future relationship is the issue of Abeotobo, the Ugbo border town with the Mahin. The Mahin people in the next village, Seluwa, believe that every oil money paid to Abeotobo should be extended to them. The agreement reached with oil companies still regard, the Ugbo community as their operational base. So the fate of Seluwa-Mahin town in relation to oil benefits can only be determined by the *Olugbo*. While the people of Abeotobo and Seluwa are conscious of the fact that they have common interest and problems, the Ugbo seem to be hesitant in cooperating with Seluwa in any oil committee, partly because of the conflict and partly because the Ugbo Central Organisation is built to promote the Ugbo agenda. The issue should not be dismissed as an irrelevant development but should be regarded as a fundamental issue that will hinder future cooperation between the Ugbo and the Mahin.

The Ugbo-Mahin conflict is very much rooted in the people's political life. It seems that the people are yet to understand that what to do is to address the unhealthy rivalry between the two communities. Ilajeland has been characterised by mutual suspicion, intimidation, jealousy, victimisation and acrimony. This is consequent upon the legacy bequeathed by the colonial government. There are pockets of conflict here and there. Incidences of disagreement between the two communities have been on the increase even in recent times. Most of the time, what is described as harmonious co-existence between the two communities is often very fragile and this snaps as soon as there is any slight provocation.

There are series of conflicts between the Ugbo and the Mahin arising from either deliberate marginalisation, differential opportunities of the employment, government appointments and so on. The disruption of harmonious relationship between the two communities is a pointer to the fact that the conflicts have done great damage to the development of Ilajeland. Resolving the conflict will heal old wounds and return the two communities to normalcy so that there will be peace, harmony and development.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

S/NO.	NAME	STATUS	AGE	DATE
1.	High Chief Titus Agbudeloye	Ugbo King maker	70yrs.	22/3/2010
2.	High Chief Bolaji Igbayisemore	Aro of Ugboland	70yrs.	29/4/2010
3.	High Chief Isaac Menawonu	Mahin king maker	70yrs.	04/4/2010
4.	High Chief Micah Elebiju	Asogbon of Mahinland	70yrs.	25/5/2010
5.	Chief Rufus Ibojo	Sasere of Ugboland	60yrs.	18/6/2010
6.	Mr. Boye Omotehinse	Retired Principal	60yrs.	28/2/2010
7.	Prince Raphael Irowaninu	Mahin Prince	50yrs.	10/6/2010
8.	Princess Florence Mohiro	Mahin Princess	50yrs.	10/6/2010
9.	Prince Paul Okorisa	Ugbo Prince	50yrs.	30/5/2010
10.	Hon. Oyebo Aladetan	Ugbo representative in Ondo State House of Assembly	50yrs,	20/2/2010
11.	Hon. Otito Atikase	Mahin representative in Ondo State House of Assembly	50yrs.	20/2/2010
12.	Hon. Gbenro Lomiye	Executive, Chairman Ilaje Local Government	50yrs	20/2/2010
13.	Chief Idowu Akintubuwa	Eghare of Ugboland	60yrs.	10/2/2010
14.	Chief Akinwale Iwalokan	Oliha of Mahinland	60yrs.	14/4/2010
15.	Mr. Oluwole Aiyenuro	Civil Servant	50yrs.	10/6/2010
16.	His Royal Magesty Oba Adetemi Omowole	The Amapetu of Mahin	70yrs.	23/2/2010
17.	Pa Badi Ebietomiye	Church leader	70yrs.	24/4/2010
18.	Mr. Olu Eretan	Retired Civil Servant	60yrs.	24/5/2010

19.	Madan Yinka Ilawole	Retired Civil Servant	60yrs.	25/6/2010
20.	Pa Fola Ilawole	Church leader	70yrs.	22/6/2010
21.	Prince Ola Isogun	Youth leader	50yrs.	23/6/2010
22.	Apostle Nathaniel Owowa	Church leader	70yrs.	25/6/2010
23.	Chief Mebawondun Iyamolere	Chief Sasere of Mahin	70yrs.	10/4/2010
24.	Mr. Kunle Obolo	Youth leader	50yrs.	11/3/2010
25.	Chief Ali Mobola	Sectary, Ondo State Oil Producing Area Development Commission	60yrs.	28/2/2010
26.	Chief Edudun Kalejaiye	Regent to the throne of Olugbo	70yrs.	26/2/2010
27.	Prince Paul Aderibole	Mahin Prince and Civil Servant	50yrs.	22/5/2010
28.	Mr. Ola Ebiesuwa	Civil Servant	50yrs.	20/5/2010
29.	Chief Ajibuwa Ehinmowo	Community Leader	70yrs.	7/7/2010
30.	Chief Iyiola Ebitgha	Community Leader	80yrs.	8/7/2010
31.	Mr. Oyemeta Ikuelogbon	Civil Servant	50yrs.	8/7/2010
32.	Mr. Oyeyemi Erewumi	Civil Servant	50yrs.	8/7/2010
33.	Mrs. Ikuemola Omotayo	Civil Servant	60yrs.	6/6/2010
34.	Madam Florence Ikuesan	Civil Servant	60yrs.	6/8/2010
35.	Mrs. Eniola Ebini	Trader	60yrs.	9/10/2010
36.	Chief Biola Enikuemehin	Community Leader	70yrs	9/10/2010
37.	Mr. Debo Efofan	Civil Servant	50yrs	10/11/2010
38.	Mr. Adesakin Gege	Civil Servant	50yrs	10/11/2010
39.	Mr. Emmanuel Igbasan	Civil Servant	50yrs	20/11/2010
40.	Chief Akinluwa Ikuenomiye	Community Leader	80yrs	20/11/2010
41.	Chief Abel Iroaye	Community Leader	70yrs.	20/11/2010
42.	Apostle Pius Iyabo	Church Leader	60yrs.	20/11/2010
43.	Apostle Reuben Jedo	Church Leader	60yrs.	20/11/2010
44.	Snr. Apostle Ayomipo Kukute	Church Leader	60yrs.	20/11/2010

45.	Mr. Akinsulu Loto	Civil Servant	50yrs.	22/11/2010
46.	Mr. Adewumi Lebi	Civil Servant	60yrs.	22/11/2010
47.	Mr. Alex Mekuleyi	Civil Servant	60yrs.	22/11/2010
48.	Chief Abayomi Metibemu	Community Leader	70yrs.	24/11/2010
49.	Chief Oladapo Oripanye	Community Leader	70yrs.	26/11/2010
50.	Mr. Ojulade Oyetomi	Community Leader	70yrs.	27/11/2010
51.	Apostle Olola Ojoade	Church Leader	70yrs.	10/12/2010
52.	Chief Koya Omogbemi	Community Leader	70yrs.	12/12/2010
53.	Madam Mosumola Jolomi	Trader	70yrs.	20/12/2010
54.	Prince Zacheaus Mafimisebi	Youth Leader	40yrs.	22/12/2010
55.	Prince Idowu Omowole	Youth Leader	40yrs.	23/12/2010
56.	Chief Abel Ikuemehinola	Community Leader	80yrs.	5/1/2011
57.	Chief Elijah Ikuebameru	Community Leader	80yrs.	5/1/2011
58.	Apostle Timelehin Ojogo	Church Leader	60yrs.	5/1/2011
59.	Mr. Folorunsho Ogonoh	Civil Servant	50yrs.	5/1/2011
60.	Chief Adeolu Sepeluwa	Community Leader	70yrs.	10/1/2011
61.	Chief Olawoye Elebiju	Community Leader	70yrs.	10/1/2011
62.	Snr. Apostle Oluwole Akintimehin	Church Leader	60yrs.	12/1/2011
63.	Madam Margret Ikuelo	Trader	60yrs.	12/1/2011
64.	Mr. Adeoni Enikanselu	Trader	60yrs.	15/1/2011
65.	Mr. Oreola Enikalogbon	Trader	60yrs.	15/1/2011
66.	Mr. Kolawole Oroyomi	Trader	60yrs.	15/1/2011
67.	Snr. Apostle Ayoola Leke	Church Leader	60yrs.	15/1/2011
68.	Madan Josephine Itola	Trader	60yrs.	15/1/2011
69.	Madan Magret Ikuemanoyi	Trader	60yrs.	20/2/2011
70.	Mr. Adero Ikuesika	Civil Servant	50yrs.	20/1/2011
71.	Madan Janet Lomiye	Trader	60yrs.	20/1/2011
72.	Mr. Olalere Atibere	Civil Servant	50yrs.	20/1/2011
73.	Chief Aluko Dede	Community Leader	70yrs.	20/1/2011

74.	Mr. Isaac Netufo	Legal Practitioner	60yrs. 22/1/2011
75.	Chief Afolabi Ojamomi	Community Leader	70yrs. 22/1/2011
76.	Chief Ekundayo Ekundayo	Community Leader	70yrs. 22/1/2011
77.	Mr. Williams Segede	Civil Servant	60yrs. 22/1/2011
78.	Mr. Sunday Akintibuwa	Trader	60yrs. 22/1/2011
79.	Mr. Oladeji Obatugha	Trader	60yrs. 24/1/2011
80.	Madan Debrah Aboyewa	Trader	60yrs. 24/1/2011
81.	Madan Florence Ilemoboro	Trader	60yrs. 24/1/2011
82.	Chief Elewele Ikuejamofa	Community Leader	70yrs. 24/1/2011
83.	Madan Ayobami Jiriwo	Trader	60yrs. 24/1/2011
84.	Madan Oguntibeju Adeola	Trader	60yrs. 26/1/2011
85.	Mr. Temitope Adetoyinbo	Civil Servant	60yrs. 26/1/2011
86.	Mr. Adeolu Ajimuda	Civil Servant	60yrs. 26/1/2011
87.	Chief Adedeji Ikujuni	Community Leader	70yrs. 26/1/2011
88.	Chief Ilesanmi Omoyoin	Community Leader	70yrs. 26/1/2011
89.	Chief Durojaye Likinyo	Community Leader	70yrs. 28/1/2011
90.	Mr. Michael Obembe	Trader	60yrs. 28/1/2011
91.	Chief Edawole Ikusote	Community Leader	70yrs. 28/1/2011
92.	Chief Oyewole Adesomoju	Community Leader	70yrs. 30/1/2011
93.	Chief Adeolu Ikuedairo	Community Leader	70yrs. 30/1/2011
94.	Mr. Olusegun Adelokiki	Civil Servant	60yrs. 30/1/2011
95.	Mr. Timothy Adetimehin	Civil Servant	60yrs. 30/1/2011
96.	Apostle Opyye Bababowale	Church Leader	60yrs. 30/1/2011
97.	Chief Tunde Igbasaan	Community Leader	70yrs. 5/2/2011
98.	Chief Lade Akingboye	Community Leader	70yrs. 5/2/2011
99.	Mr. Olatuyi Aworunse	Trader	70yrs. 5/2/2011
100.	Snr. Apostle Isaac Mafo	Church Leader	60yrs. 5/2/2011

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The interview came after all available primary and secondary sources have been consulted. The question asked focused mainly on the following:

1. What do you know about traditions of origin of Ugbo and Mahin?
2. What were the nature and characteristics of pre-conflict relation between the Ugbo and the Mahin?
3. How did the Ugbo and the Mahin come in contact with European and why did the European lay the foundation of Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
4. What were the attitudes of the Ugbo and the Mahin towards the European and why for such attitudes?
5. What were the social and economic changes witnessed during colonial period?
6. What were the repercussions of British rule on Ugbo-Mahin relations?
7. What were the features of British politics that fuelled the Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
8. Why did the British undermine the sovereignty of Ugbo and increased the power of Mahin King?
9. What were the consequences of recent political development on Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
10. Who are the agents of peace in the Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
11. Are there other ways of managing the Ugbo-Mahin conflict?
12. Why in your opinion do you think the Ugbo and the Mahin find it difficult to co-exist side by side?
13. Why do you think the Ugbo and Mahin carried the colonial conflict to the contemporary time?
14. Are you being denied your legitimate rights and victimized by either the Ugbo or the Mahin?

15. Who owns Ilajeland and what do you want to see happen to other ethnic groups?
16. Would you marry from Ugbo or Mahin?
17. How would you describe the attitudes of either the Ugbo or the Mahin about how the people see themselves.
18. What are the effects of the conflict on the people's prospect in life?
19. What are the effects of the conflict on social relations?
20. What are the effects of conflict on oil exploration and compensation?
21. What are the effects of conflict on kingship institution?
22. What are the effects of conflict on infrastructural development?
23. What are the effects of conflict on social institution?
24. What are the effects of conflict on religious institutions?
25. How would you assess the activities/role of ethnic unions/clubs threatening public peace and security in the area?
26. Would you encourage frequent/occasional meeting of various community leaders, non-governmental organization, church associations, union youth leaders e.t.c. to exchange news as an effective way of checking outbreak of conflict between the Ugbo and the Mahin?
27. Is violence the only means of settling scores among the Ugbo and Mahin?
28. Are there other ways of ensuring sustainable peace and development in Ilajeland?
29. What are the strategies that will encourage social integration, social healing and psychological transformation?
30. What do you know about the efforts of local, state and federal government to settle the Ugbo-Mahin conflict?

APPENDIX B
LIST OF OLUGBO OF UGBO

1. Oronmakin
2. Oyeroye
3. Olumani Oghone
4. Omaaboma
5. Ehi-Oluyegbo
6. Alajabiro
7. Oyetuwa
8. Ameto
9. Opa
10. Akereti
11. Eerinoye
12. Kongbe Oluwen
13. Akinmulero
14. Akinribido
15. Onajorogbe
16. Ojadele
17. Agbedun Igi Elera
18. Ohun
19. Ogundere
20. Mafimisebi I
21. Samuel Ejagbomo Mafimisebi II
22. Napoleon Mafimisebi III
23. Akingbade Adebayo Mafimisebi IV (recently dethroned)

Source: Jeje, A. and Oyenusi, W.(1999) *The Gorillas Invasion: An eye-witness Account of The Ijaw/Ilaje Genocidal war in the Niger Delta* (Lagos: Scalar publication Ltd.) p.8

APPENDIX C
LIST OF AMAPETU OF MAHIN

1. Alagwe
2. Erinoye
3. Oronfeyin
4. Aganganjigan
5. Eyinmokunti
6. Eyinmonoren
7. Olowopiti
8. Akenneyin
9. Ojagbemi
10. Haberi
11. Ogunsemoyin
12. Igbakereun
13. Thomas Emghantobe Omowole
14. Iyamolere
15. Noah Ogbolo
16. Festus Ololajulo Isogun
17. Lawrence Adetemi Omowole

Source: Omogbemi, B.A. (2008) *Ilaje nation and her cultural heritage* (Ondo: Grace Excellent Publishers). p.30.

APPENDIX D

UGBO

TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND PROTECTION

Her majesty the Queen of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India and Company and the Chief of the territory of Ogbo (Ugbo) being desirous of maintaining and strengthening the relations of peace and friendship which have so long existed between them have agreed and concluded the following articles

Article I

Her majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Company, hereby undertake to extend to the said chief and to the territory under their authority Her Gracious favour and protection.

Article II

The said Chief agreed and promised 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 on the territory of Ogbo is reserved to Her Britannic Majesty to be exercised and the Majesty shall appoint and direct.

Article IV

This treaty shall be provisional only until ratified and confirmed by Her Majesty's Government.

Done and signed in duplicate at Eruna in the country of Ugbo this 24th day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-four.

Eruna, December, 24 1884.

Source: Gwam, L. G.(1937) *A preliminary, inventory of administration records assembled from Ondo Province.*

APPENDIX E

MAHIN

TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND PROTECTION

Her Most Gracious Victoria, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Empress of India, by William Brandford Griffith, Esquire, Companion of the Most Distinguished order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Lieutenant-Governor, Administering the Government of the Gold Coast Colony, one of the possessions of Her Majesty on the West Coast of Africa, on the one part and Amapetu, independent King of Mahin, for himself and his lawful successors on the other part, have concluded this day this treaty of friendship and protection between them.

Whereas Amapetu, King of Mahin, on the eleventh day of March, one thousand eight hundred and eighty five, entered into a treaty of friendship and protection with his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Germany, by Dr. N.G. Nachtigal, His Majesty's Imperial General Consul and Commissioner for the West Coast of Africa, endowed with the necessary powers of attorney in the name of His Majesty the German Emperor, King of Prussia, Wilhelm I, whereby King Amapetu, in Article I, begged his Majesty the Emperor to take his country under His most gracious protection.

And whereas it was provided by Article VII of the aforesaid treaty of friendship and protection, that it should be "in force and legacy" from the date on which it was signed, with the reservation that it should become invalid in the case of the non-ratification thereof on the part of the Imperial German Government within eighteen months of the date on which the said treaty was signed.

And whereas the before mentioned treaty was done and signed at Mahin, in the residence of King Amapetu, on the eleventh day of March in the year one thousand, eight hundred and eighty-five; and whereas it has since been officially notified by the Consul at Lagos for the German Empire, to King Amapetu that His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Germany had declined to ratify and confirm the

before-mentioned treaty of friendship and protection; whereby the same became null and void, leaving King Amapetu free to enter into a treaty with Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

Now, therefore, be it know to all whom it may concern, that the herein-before mentioned parties of the first and second parts of this treaty of friendship and protection have agreed to the following Articles constituting the same.

Article I

King Amapetu, of Mahin, led by the desire to strengthen and enlarge the relations, commercial and otherwise, maintained by the trading and mercantile community of Lagos with him and his country, to protect the independence of the latter, to fortify his Government, to procure to his subjects the advantages of civilization and to secure to strangers the due protection of life and property, begs Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, to take him and his country, including the Island or land called Atijere, and all portions of his country bounded by the-sea, under Her most gracious protection.

Her majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, by Her Licut-Governor herein-before mentioned accepts the offer of King Amapetu and will afford Her Most Gracious protection to him and his country

Article II

King Amapetu, hereby engages not to cede his country nor any parts of it to any other power, not to conclude treaties with other Governments without the special consent of Her Majesty the Queen.

Article III

Her majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, will not prevent King Amapetu or his lawful successors, either in the levying of revenues appertaining to them according to the laws and customs of the country, nor in exercising their jurisdiction.

The habits and customs of the country shall be respected by Her Majesty's Government as far as they do not offend the principal of humanity.

Article IV

King Amapetu will secure to all British subjects and persons seeking British protection, all over the territory governed by him, the most complete protection of their persons and property as also the right and the liberty to settle upon all parts of his country, to travel there, to take domicile, to manufacture and trade, and to buy or hire land and real estate for cultivation or other purpose, and also to erect building thereon.

British subjects and persons seeking British protection, shall not do anything in the territory belonging to King Amapetu that would offend the laws and rules of their own country, and shall pay those duties and tributes to King Amapetu which have hitherto been levied in his country or may hereafter be determined upon between Her Majesty's Government and King Amapetu.

Article V

The regulation of other circumstances of mutual interest not mentioned in the foregoing Articles remains reserved for agreement between Her Majesty's Government and King Amapetu.

Article VI

This treaty shall take effect and be in force on and from the date on which the parties to it shall sign the same. Done and signed in duplicate at Aboto, in the country of Mahin, this 24th day of October, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five.

Aboto, October 24, 1885.

Source: Gwam, L. G.(1937) *A preliminary inventory of administration records assembled from Ondo Province.*

APPENDIX F
COPY OF LETTER OF OLUGBO ENUNCIATION AND
ACKNOWLEDGING THE AMAPETU AS HIS HEAD

I MAFIMISEBI, the Olugbo of Igbo now a deportee residing at Calabar hereby solemnly promise and bind myself to respect the following condition if it will please his Excellency the Governor to permit me to return to my own country.

- (a) I will proceed to Okitipupa and place myself in the hands of the Resident Ondo province or District officer at that place.
- (b) I will accompany them to Mahin and formally salute the Amapetu as my District head
- (c) I renounce formally my claim to wear Yoruba crown.
- (d) After paying homage to the Amapetu, I will reside at Obe and not return to the vicinity of Mahin unless with the express consent of government. I will endeavour to maintain friendly relations with the Amapetu of Mahin.
- (e) Especially I agree to support the Mahin Native Court and recognize it as the competent court to settle disputes between Mahin and Igbo people, constituted as the Resident of the Ondo province has determined or may in future determine.
- (f) In all public matters I agree to obey the instruction of the resident Ondo province and declare that on my return to my country I will claim no official or judicial powers as a matter of right.

Witness to mark:-

The Olugbo of Igbo

E O. Ession.

Date June 13th 1927.

And I Samuel Mafimisebi declare that I did interpret fully the above renunciation and proposed agreement to the Olugbo of Igbo and that he did appear to fully understand its provisions and did voluntarily offer to sign the same.

In my presence at Calabar
(sgd) Mafimisebi

(Sworn interpreter)
13TH DAY OF June 1927
(sgd) Edward M. Park
Resident, Calabar province.

Source: File No. 251 16452, Olugbo of Ugbo Deportation.
NAI CSO 26/06452, Chieftaincy Matters.

APPENDIX G

COPY OF LETTER WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT OFFICER OKITIPUPA DIVISION TO THE RESIDENT ONDO PROVINCE ON THE OLUGBO – AMAPETU RIVARLY

The District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

20th April, 1938.

The Resident,
Ondo Province,
Akure.

THE OLUGBO OF UGBO'S CROWN

With reference to your endorsement O.O.P. 996/150A of the 6th of April, 1938, I realize that I made a mistake in my letter No. 0.N535/14 of the 1st of April, 1938 and wish to apologize. I regret that when I told the Olugbo that there was no objection to his wearing a crown I had overlooked your endorsement No. OP.996/131A of the 15th of October, 1937. In particular I wish to apologise for writing that "on your last visit to Mahin you informed the Olugbo, that there was no objection to his wearing a crown". On thinking the matter over I realize you did not say this. I believe what you did say was that if the Olugbo was allowed to wear a crown you would be willing, if you found it possible, to witness the crowing ceremony.

2. Unfortunately the Secretary's letter saying that the matter must await Sir William Hunt's return came too late. I wrote immediately to the Olugbo to tell him to postpone the crowing ceremony but my letter reached him on the 11th April, and he informs me that the ceremony was concluded on the 10th April.

3. So the position is that the Olugbo has assumed a crown but the Chief Commissioner has not given recognition.

4. The Olugbo has been to see me and I attach his reply as called for in the letter mentioned above. The Olugbo has assured me that he will not wear his crown until his Honour's decision is received. The Amapetu has written to say that is not pleased that the Olugbo has assumed a crown but he does not seem very angry. I feel confident that if I had more time to travel I could get the Amapetu to agree to the crown. It is such a pity that the Ilaje District cannot be travelled more. Not only to cement the friendship between the Amapetu and the Olugbo but also to get Chief Kudeyinbu of Agerige into a more amiable frame of mind and for many other reasons also. The people are wild and lawless. Many things happened which government never hear about. I get rumours from time to time but can never substantiate complaints.

5. To return to the point I would like to say that, in my opinion, there is no doubt that the Olugbo is entitled to a crown by custom. His father had one and only renounced it "formally", I send a copy of the agreement for easy references. Again His Honour has the order written at paragraph 54 of his April 1937. Inspection notes that "of deportation of the late Olugbo to Calabar in 1921 should not have been made". If the Olugbo wears a crown the Amapetu will soon get used to it and I think that they can still "federate as older brother with younger brother", (late sentence of paragraph 54 of the inspection Notes). The more fuss there is the more the trouble will brew.

Sgd.
Ag. District Officer
Okitipupa.

Source: NAI CSO 26/06452, Chieftaincy Matters.

APPENDIX H
COPY OF LETTER WRITTEN BY THE RESIDENT ONDO PROVINCE
TO THE HONOURABLE SECRETARY SOUTHERN PROVINCES,
ENUGU ON THE RECOGNITION OF OLUGBO OF UGBO

The resident,
Ondo Province,
Akure,

The Honourable Secretary,
Southern Provinces,
Enugu.

The Olugbo of Ugbo

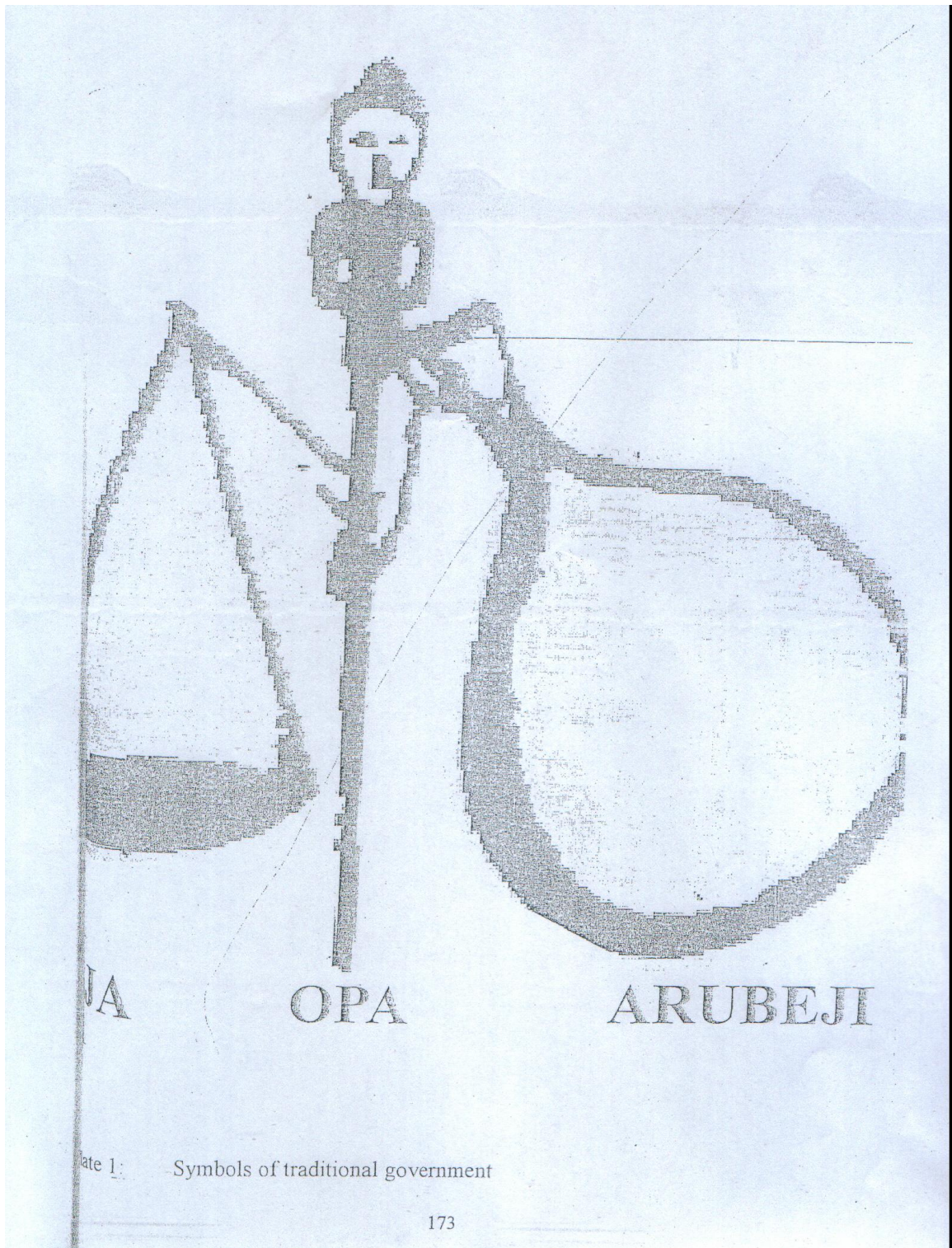
1. With reference to your letter No. W.1 10633/89 of the 25th of March, 1938, I enclose a copy of the Olugbo's replies to the arguments raised against his claim to wear a crown.
2. The Olugbo's reaffirmation of his father's agreement not to wear a crown was made upon his appointment as Olugbo and before the intelligence report was written. The intelligent report proved that "the order of deportation of the late Olugbo to Calabar in 1921 should not have been made", (his Honours inspection notes paragraph 54 of April, 1937).
3. It seems that the present Olugbo's father who was quite wrongly deported for rightfully insisting on his independence had a crown and the promise not to wear it as a condition of his return from his wrongful exile.
4. His Honour, Sir William Hunt, was in favour of granting it but said it was a matter of custom. The Olugbo has three crowns and also has an Ada and Eben. The Olugbo on my last visit to Ugbo raised the question again and all I could tell him was that it was a matter of custom in which government was not called upon to interfere. He seems at any rate to have much right to

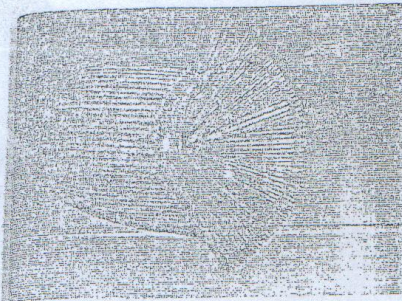
wear a crown as the Amapetu who is not his senior and the Amapetu whose claims are also a little doubtful, would have no grounds for objection.

5. In the meantime the Olugbo has gone and crowned himself I think probably on the mistaken impression that there was no objection. The ceremony was concluded on the 10th of April and a copy of your letter under reference only reached him the following day.
6. The Olugbo has been to see the District Officer and has assured him that he will not wear the crown until his Honour's decision is received. The Amapetu has written to the District Officer saying he is not pleased that the Olugbo has assumed a crown "but he does not seem very angry".
7. The District Officer states "in my opinion, there is no doubt that the Olugbo is entitled to a crown by custom, His father had one and only renounced it formally". I send a copy of the Agreement for easy references. If the Olugbo wears a crown, the Amapetu will soon get used to it and I think they can still "federate as older brother with younger brother. The more fuss there is the more the trouble will be brew".
8. I propose visiting the waterside next month (May) but propose discussing the matter with his Honour on his visit to Owo on the 7th – 9th of May.

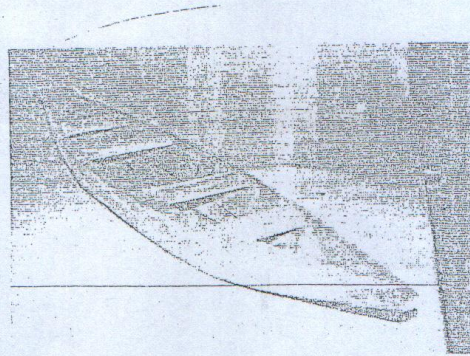
Sgd.
J. Wann,
Ag. Resident Ondo Province.

Source: NAI CSO 26/06452, Chieftaincy Matters.
Also see NAI OK 535/VI Olugbo of Ugbo personal file.

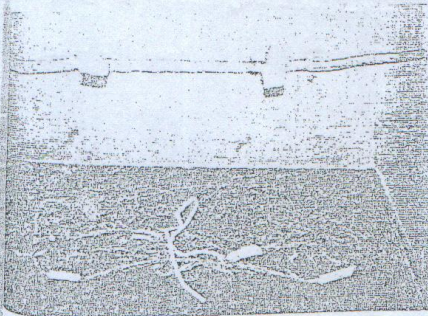




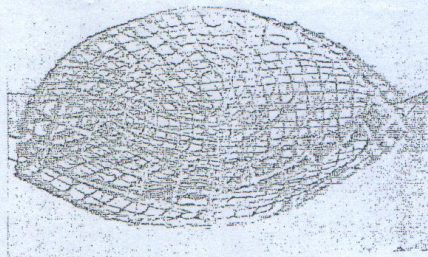
IRERE



OKO



AWO



IYANMA

Platc 2: Fishing gear -----

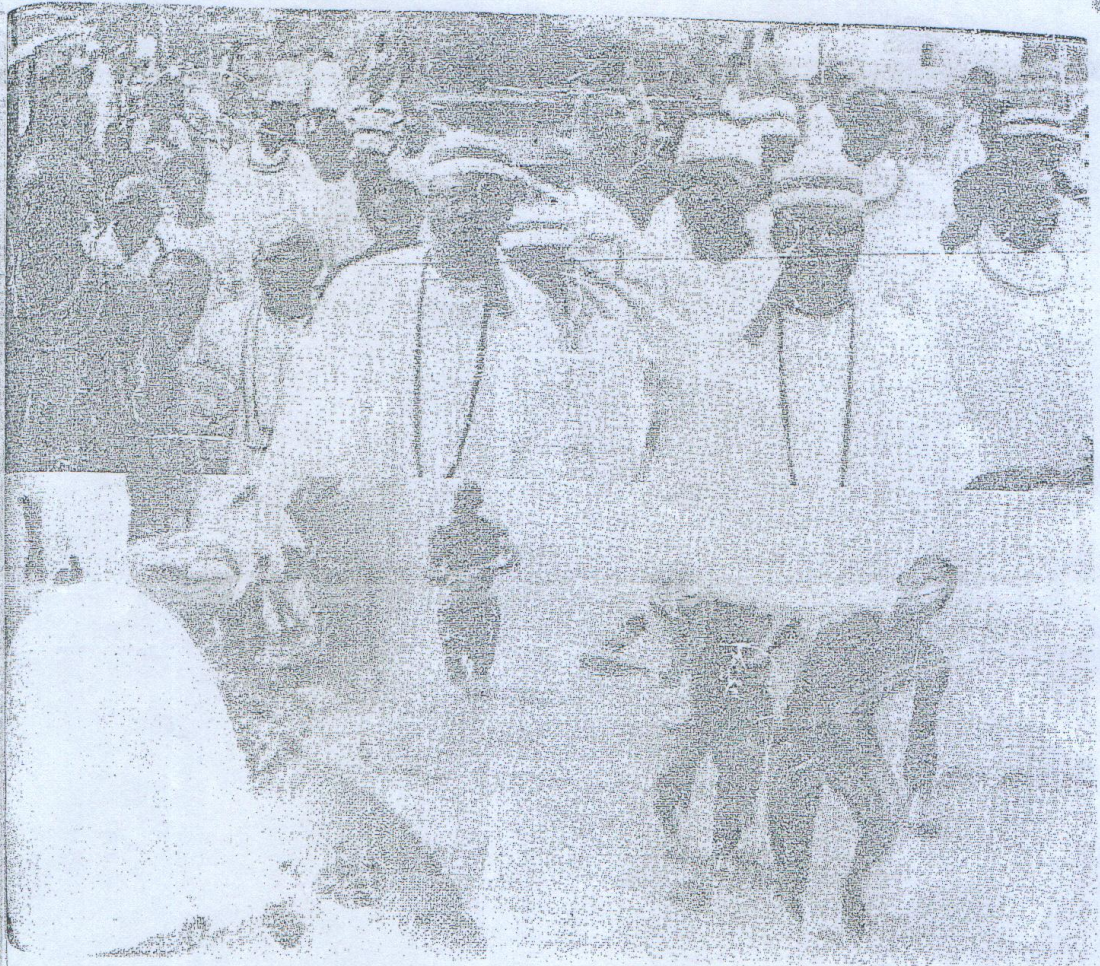


Plate 3: The malokun festival

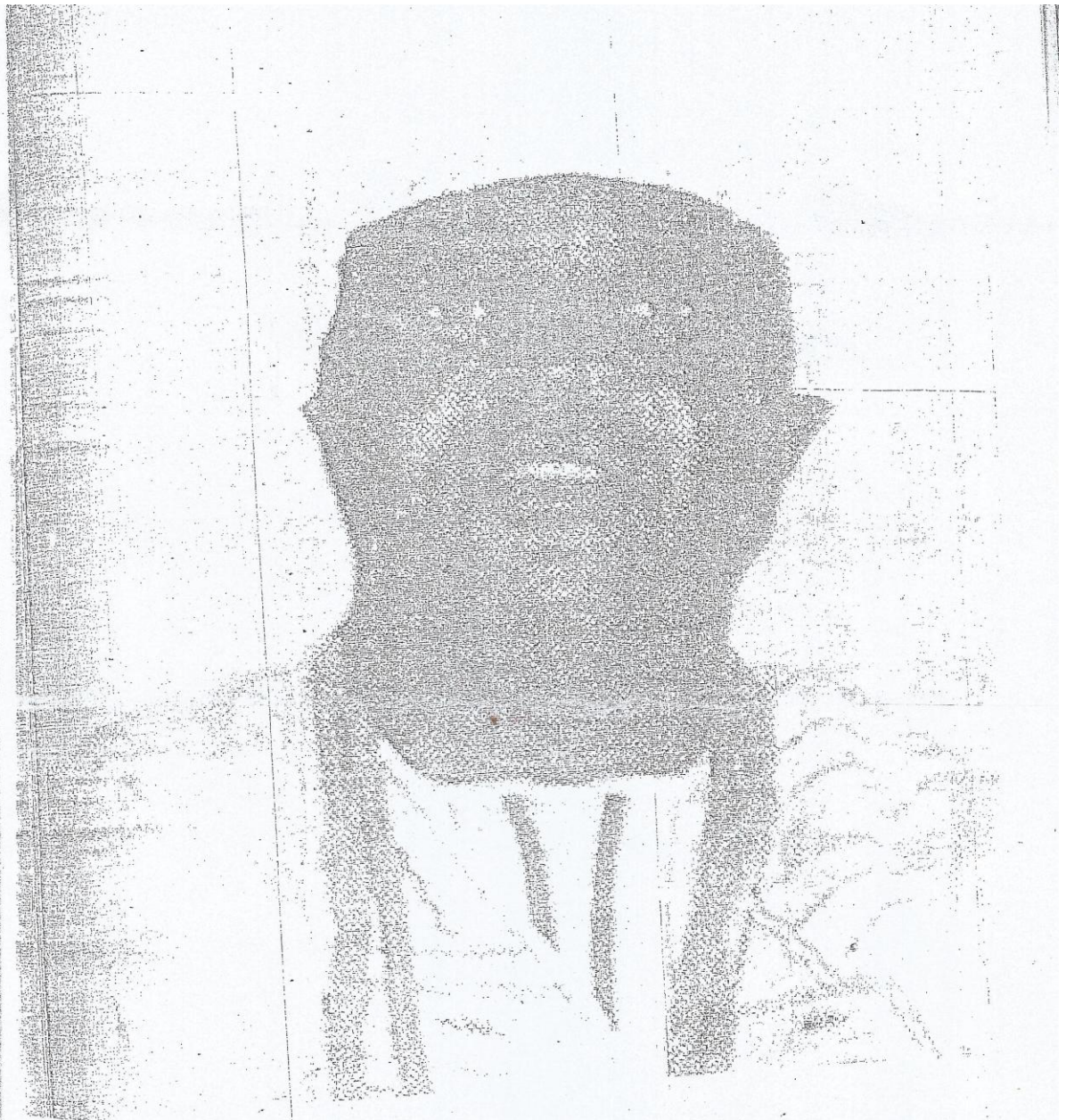


Plate 4: His Royal Majesty Oba (Dr.) Adebajo Akingbade
Mafimisebi The *Olugbo* of Ugboland 1982-2007



Plate 5: His Royal Majesty Oba (Dr.) Adefemi Omowole III
The *Amapetu* of Mahinland



6: Grade B court in Ode-Mahin -

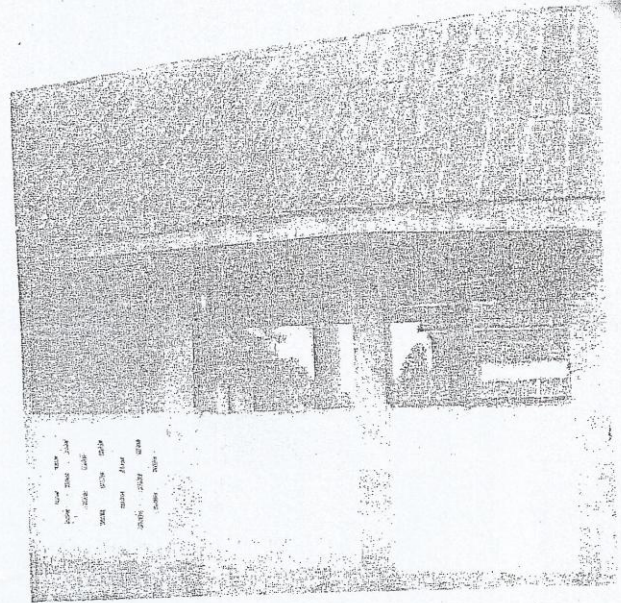


Plate 7: Grade C court in Ode-Ugbo --



Plate 8: The State Government with Ugbo and Mahin leaders in search of peace -



Plate 9: Focus Group Discussion held in Igbokoda the administrative headquarters of Ilaje Local Government -



Plate 10: Interview with Chief Biola Enikuemehin at Ode-Ugbo. -

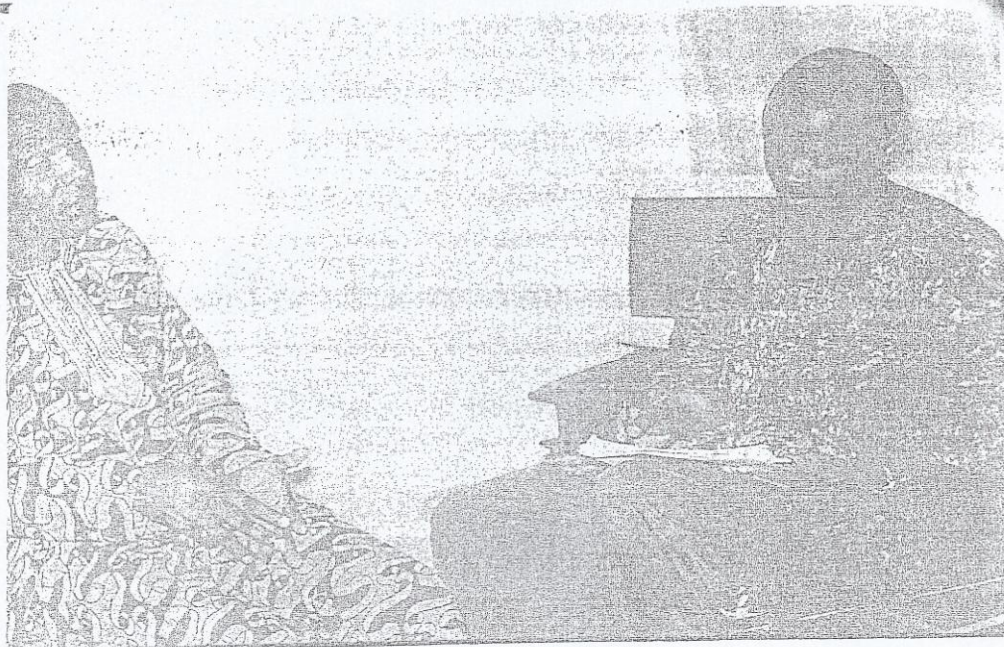


Plate 11: Interview with Prince Raphaël Rowaninu at Ode-Mahin -

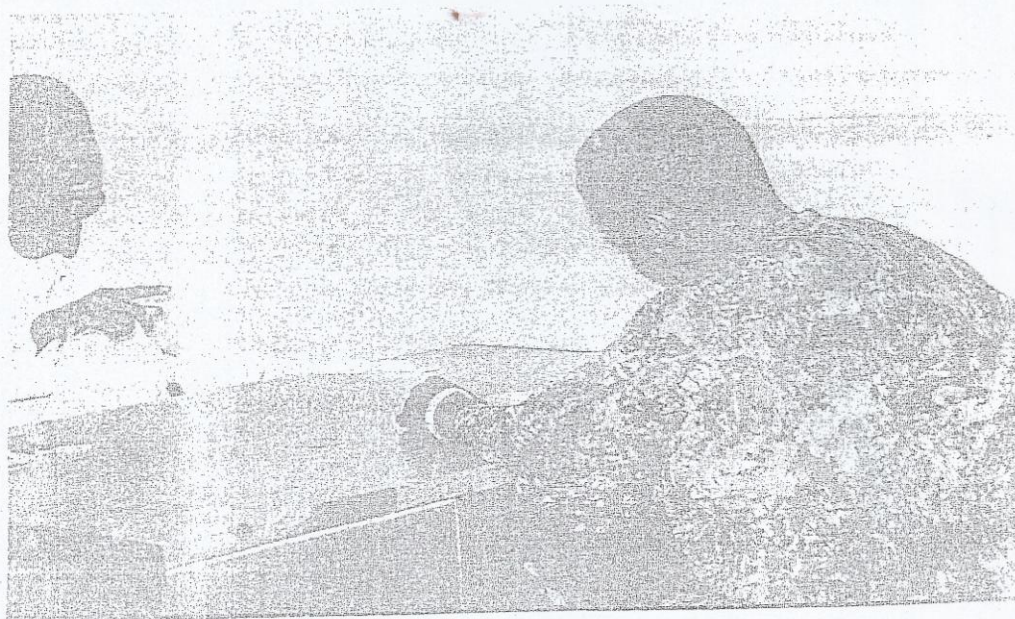


Plate 12: Interview with Chief Isaac Menawonu at Ode-Mahin ---

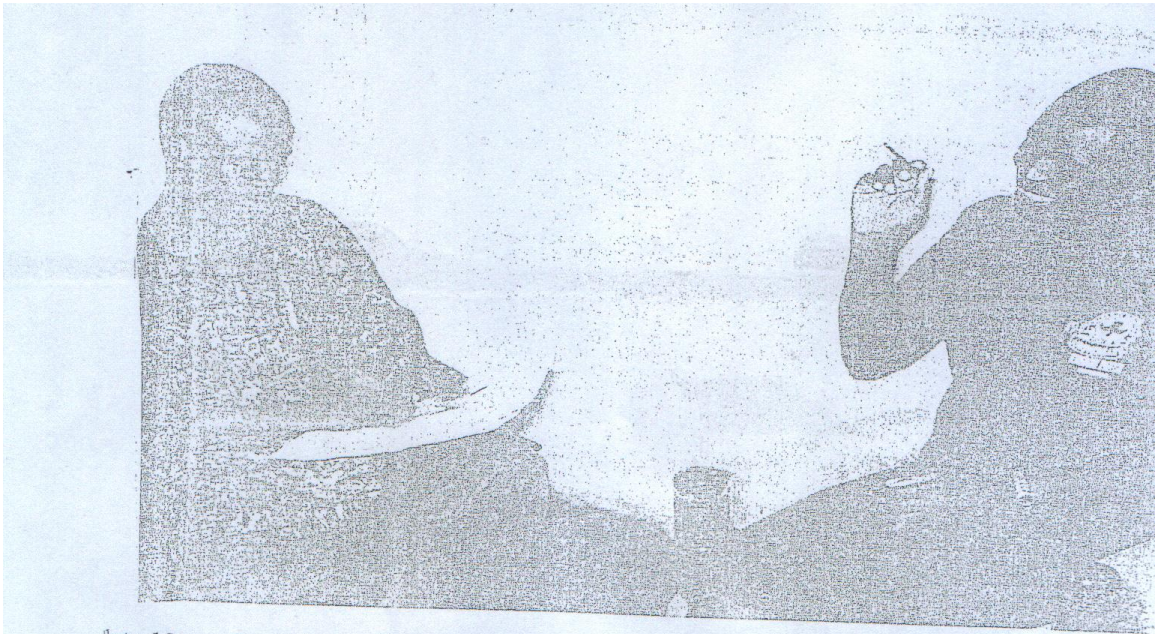


Plate 13: Interview with Princess Florence Mohinro at Ode-Mabin -----

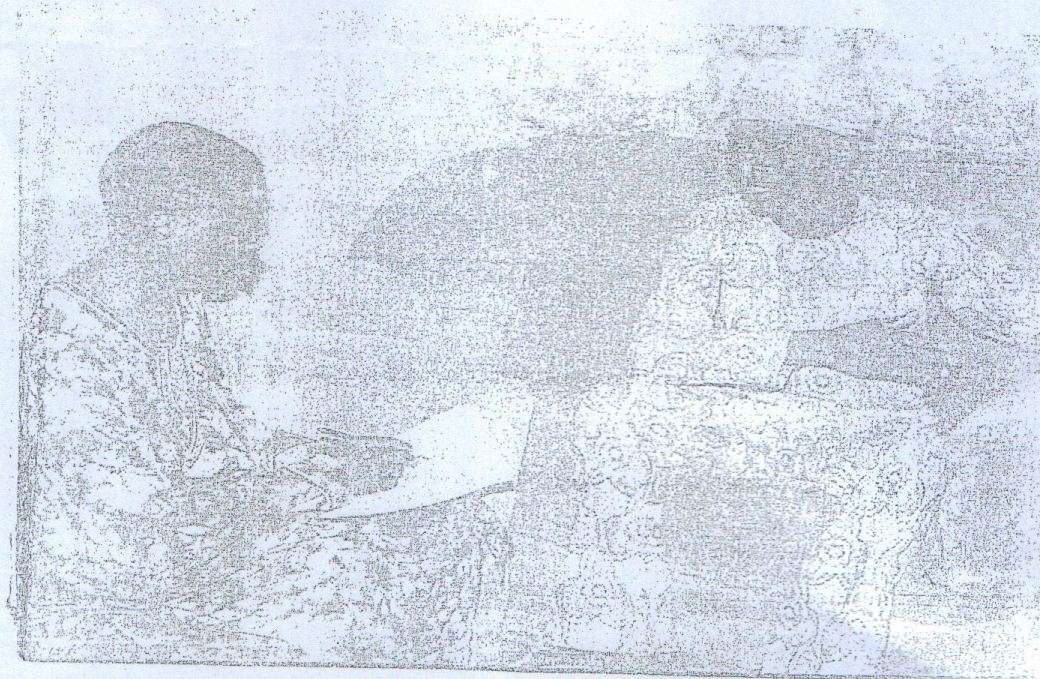


Plate 14: Interview with Prince Paul Okorisa at Ode-Ugho .