

Okoroma Switch to Nembe Dialect and Culture: A Study in Intergroup Relations.**By****Joseph Igoro, PhD****Department of History and International Studies****Faculty of Humanities****Federal university Otuoke, Bayelsa State.****Email: igorjj@fuotueke.edu.ng; josephigoro@gmail.com****Abstract**

This research is carried out to delineate the obscuring boundary between Nembe and Okoroma, in terms of the terrain, traditions of origin and intergroup relationship. Ordinarily, observers tend to view Okoroma to be an extension, an appendage of Nembe, since the mangrove forest, rivulets, connects the two groups without a break. The research disentangled, and pointed out the dichotomy between Nembe and Okoroma historical, cultural, social and political development and relations. Some of the data for this research were gotten from written works of professional historians from Nembe. testimonies of Okoroma were obtained through oral interviews, personal participation and observation during traditional installation of kings and chiefs. Nembe and Okoroma have different traditions of origin. Even the Nembe dialect is Ijoid, whereas the indigenous language of Okoroma was Ogbia of the Central Delta. The initial contact between the two groups was mutual cooperation and interdependence. Nembe people from the salt water and mangrove forest were attracted to Okoroma, the fresh water and more economic forest resources during the Legitimate Trade. Okoroma natural endowments and comparative advantage in forest resources attracted Nembe immigration and settlement in some existing Okoroma communities. Nembe's position at the coastal area and as middleman in the European trade placed Nembe in a dominant position over Okoroma, which instigated stereotypes and identity crises. Descendants of the inter-ethnic marriages, of the two groups, have abandoned the indigenous Ogbia language, in preference for the migrant Nembe dialect of the Ijoid. The descendants dress, speak and identify more with Nembe but still hold on to the tradition of origin trade to Ogbia.

Keywords: Okoroma, Switch, Nembe, Culture, Intergroup Relations**Introduction**

The area of our study, Okoroma lies in the salt/fresh water transition zone. The water is mostly salty in the southern part, during the dry season and it is fresh everywhere in the rainy season. The salinity of the water is influence by the nearness of the Atlantic Ocean,

which is accessible and linked through the Brass estuary. This part connects with the Nembe environment without a break. The mangrove forest is the dominant vegetation in the southern part and it is waterlogged all year round. Many creeks and rivulets crisscross this zone. Fishing is the leading occupation with few itinerant traders using boats go from one fishing-port to the other.

Mangrove plants are replaced by fresh water vegetation when moving inland. The vegetation in this forest are principally the economically important raffia palm. The juice from this plant produces palm wine and when processed turn out the native gin, *ogogoro*. The oil palm is one of the major trees, followed by many other plants use for timber. The soil is fertile for the cultivation of cassava, plantains, vegetables, etc.

The above description of the environment will help understand and appreciate Nembe migration from the salt water, mangrove forest to Okoroma, a fresh water zone. What actually follows is a study of intergroup relation between Nembe and Okoroma. Some traditions of origin and migrations of few Okoroma communities are given as case-studies. This is followed by sections on the interpretation of the traditions of origin and migration and stereotypes/identity crises between the two groups.

Much of Nembe traditions has been recorded and published by professional historians such as Professor E. J. Alagoa and others, whose texts were valuable. Oral traditions and ethnography was mainly relied about the past and extant of Okoroma. Five Okoroma communities, Dorgu Ewoama, Ibo, Akakumama, Ologoama and Ekperiana are used as case-studies of Nembe's intrigues, duplicities in Okoroma.

Dorgu Ewoama Community

The settlement history of Dorgu Ewoama has two versions: the indigenous and the strangers. The indigenous version is credited to Ebede, son of Igwe, who in turn was son of Akomu from whose name Akakumama community is now corruptly called. Akomu was son of Ovoh, son of Okoroma. It was said that the elder brother of Ebede, Akinam, then king of Akakumama, was killed by one Inengite from Oloibiri. Ebede enraged with the development, carried out a personal retaliatory action against Inengite family, at Oloibiri. He stayed in an ambush till the early hours of the morning and opened fire with a musket and smuggled himself back to Akakumama with the news. For fear of reprisal attack, Ebede appeased a forbidden forest across the creek and went there with his family. Other members of the Akakumama community joined him but later returned when the threatened attack never took place. This community has survived to be the present day of Dorgu Ewoama.

The second version is linked to the source of the name, Dorgu Ewoama. It says that after Ebede had settled in the new town (Ewoama), the threat of attack from Oloibiri still loomed. Ebede then went to Yemainain's house in Nembe, for protection, during the leadership of Dorgu at the time. That, Dorgu had made a proclamation at the water front and territory of Oloibiri, to henceforth demand from him any wrong done by the settlers of this new town in Okoroma. From which, the name Dorgu became added and called Dorgu Ewoama: by interpretation, Dorgu's new town.

The origin of the name Dorgu Ewoama has its interpretation from the first version of the traditions of origin. The name was said to have been given to the community from one of Ebede's sons called Dorgu. Due to trade, Dorgu sojourned and settled in Otuesega, having all his posterity in Otuesega, a community in present-day Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Ethnographic evidence gave credence to Ebede's version of the settlement history. A recent court case of a claim of founder or first settler went on appeal to the Supreme Court, in favour of the Ebede's version. The case was instituted in 1999/2000, and was decided in 2007, by a high court in the Bayelsa State Judicial Division, Yenagoa. The appeal by the Ibokolo family was dismissed in 2011 by the Port Harcourt Division of the Court of Appeal and also by the Supreme Court, in 2021. There are however, some members among the three major families of Dorgu Ewoama who are closely linked to the Yemainain House. No other war canoe house in Nembe metropolis has such ties in Dorgu Ewoama.

Fixing events in order of their occurrence will give an interpretation of that relationship. The members of Yemainain House, led by Chief Dorgu, used Dorgu Ewoama as a trading post which later resulted to intermarriages. This was said to have taken place long after the settlement was founded.

There was no evidence of suzerainty-vassalage, in which the Yemainain House had lord it over the inhabitants of Dorgu-Ewoama. Their relationship was based on trade and intermarriages. Oral account rather attested that Daufa of Dorgu Ewoama participated, in Yemainain war canoe, which was headed by Chief Dorgu, in the British-Nembe War of 1895. And during the investiture of King Daufa, as king of Dorgu Ewoama, Chief Edward Nanyo, who became the head of Yemainain House was said to have witnessed the coronation. Interestingly, Chief Edward Nanyo was a brother-in-law, married to Madam Iwori, a sibling of King Daufa. Ipogolanyo Igbeta, from the Karitongha branch, of the Koritongha/Yemainain Group of Houses, married Begha, daughter of Aminini of Dorgu Ewoama. This marriage gave birth to Itarimoye, who in turn was married to Eminah,

Ebede's son. These are few examples of intermarriages between the Karitongha/Yemainain House of Nembe and members of Dorgu Ewoama community.

The Settlement of Ibo (Ibobio)

The traditions in Ibo stated that Ibu, a woman of mystical powers, along with her brother, Abbi, left Eminama and cleansed the Ibo bush, considered as a forbidden forest. They were said to have left their original home, Obaleli, a community in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, bounded by Ayakoro in Ogbia Local Government Area, all in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The migrants had initially stopped over at Otuakanangu, downstream of the Ekole River. They eventually sojourned to Eminama. After settling at Ibo, marriage took Ibu back to Eminama. Ibu's grant son, Adikima, claims Ibu's portion of inheritance in Ibo. The Ibo community is currently inhabited predominantly by Abbi descendants.

Another traditions of migration stated that Daniel Opuene from the Ockiya War Canoe Chieftaincy House in Ogbolomabiri, Nembe, established the settlement of Ibo. He escaped to Ibobio community in Okoroma, from the reprisal attack of Nembe by the British, in 1895. He was said to have come to his in-law, Chief Aguoleisi of Eminama community, who helped him to contact Abbi descendants who are the leaders of Dorgu Ewoama and obtained permission to settle in Ibo, Amiebi (2011).

Oral account stated that King Daufa, as the then reigning king of Dorgu Ewoama, whose mother, Eyesi or Ayoroba, as she was variously called, was Abbi's daughter. King Daufa was the one that gave permission to Daniel Opuene to settle at Ibo. After cessation of hostilities and restoration of peace in Nembe, Daniel Opuene returned to Nembe. He died and was buried in Nembe. Nevertheless, his family members had intermarriages with the natives of Ibo which left Opuene's link in Ibo. Afterward, another Nembe immigrant, Iyalla also came to Dorgu Ewoama during the reign of Eminah, also a son of Ayoroba, obtained permission for a portion of the Ibo bush and carried out kernel trade. Iyalla built a house roofed with iron sheets. When he went back to Nembe, his family members could not sustain the settlement. The house collapsed and is now covered with thick forest. There is Iyalla chieftaincy stool in Ogbolomabiri Nembe.

Akakumama Community

Akakumama was founded by Ovoh, one of the eight children of Okoroma. After the death and burial of Okoroma at Otu-Okoroma, present day settlement of Ologoama, an epidemic was said to have caused the desertion of Otu-Okoroma. Ovoh crossed over the creek, and founded present-day Akakumama. First, the settlement was called Akomuama. Oral tradition attested that Akomu was a direct son of Ovoh and became king. Traders from

Nembe made reference to the community, using the king's name, Akomuama: by interpretation it means Akomu's town; ama in Nembe language means town. The present name, Akakumama is a corruption of Akomuama.

Chief Egbelu was a migrant from Nembe-Bassambiri, who came with his family and settled at Akakumama. Oral account testifies that he escaped to Akakumama to hide from the British reprisal and bombardment of Nembe, in the British – Nembe war of 1895, Alagoa (1964). After cessation of hostilities, Egbelu relocated to Nembe-Bassambiri, where he stayed and died. A mausoleum is built in memory of him and the name also forms the head of a group of War Canoe Houses in Nembe-Bassambiri.

Nonetheless, some members of Egbelu family still live and populate Akakumama. His family members have occupied many traditional positions in Akakumama as well. Kantee, from the Egbelu family, was a regent of Akakumama. Late Oruene Johnson Kantee was Deputy King to the incumbent, King Ebinimi Donka Solomon, Ovoh III. In the present settlement pattern, the Egbelu family members occupy the upstream of the community, having much influence in the political and social affairs of the community. After the death of King Solomon Donka, Ovoh II, When Chief Inemiegha Johnson, from the Egbelu branch in Akakumama, became the head of Egbelu Group of War Canoe Houses in Nembe-Bassambiri, he chalked Chief E. K. Adowei in Nembe-Bassambiri, as the king of Akakumama. Though, Chief E. K. Adowei was from the lineage of Ovoh through the Eperega branch, Egbelu's handpicking and installing him as the king of Akakumama was considered *ultra vires* and void. This was strongly opposed by the Ovoh descendants and by some branches of the Egbelu family resident in Akakumama as beyond the powers of Chief Egbelu and not backed by custom. Though, Chief E. K Adowei died shortly afterwards and the incumbent King Ebinimi Solomon Donka emerged from the Ovoh lineage.

Currently, there are in existence the Egbelu descendants in Akakumama, subsumed in Ikoni and Johnson chieftaincies. The Ovoh descendants are represented in Akoto, Akiribe, Eperega, Fatawari families and chieftaincies in contemporary Akakumama community. The incumbent King Ovoh III, trace descent through Akoto, to the founder, Ovoh. Akomu, being the first son of Ovoh, has his grandsons founded Dorgu Ewoama, who are the Akinam/Ebede Royal Family of that community. Oral account attested of Ovoh's children founded other new communities and also co-founded dynasties.

Ologoama

Ologo was the re-settler of Otu-Okoroma that was deserted due to an epidemic, and from whom the community got its present name. Ologo, was a son of Alagba, the fourth son of Okoroma. By virtue of its re-establishment at the site of Otu-Okoroma, Ologoama functions as the traditional headquarters of Okoroma clan.

Okoroma territory is the putative ancestor of lineages, towns and clans in now Okoroma clan; still some Ogbia and Ijo clans, kingdoms. Okoroma was the eldest son of Ogbeyan. He had lived with his father in an island, known as “ Ogbeyan Toru Otokolo”, an estuary of the Brass River and the Ekole creek.

Ekperikiri (Ekperiamama)

Ekperikiri, which now rank in size with the major communities in Okoroma was acquired for farming by a Nembe migrant to Twon-Brass, Chief Thomas Ada Spiff. His settlements were named after those persons he appointed as his representatives in the new settlements. Thus, Ekperi was the man Chief Ada Spiff placed as his representative in the farm settlement. This community was said to have been founded in the late 19th century, now grown to be sizeable and bears its name as Ekperikiri. But recently, it is known as Ekperiamama. In Nembe dialect *kiri* means a hamlet, a settlement attached to a town, city or metropolitan; while *ama* refers to a well established settlement, a town, Alagoa (1964). This community now adopts Ogbia custom, in addition to Christian ways. There was a drift and expansion of Ogbia population into Ekperikiri through intermarriage and fishing. Such relationships were mainly from the Ogbia communities of Otuabo, Oloibiri and Oguama. The first settlers from Twon-Brass end up in adopting the culture of the Ogbia new comers and surrounding Okoroma communities.

Chief Ada Spiff was a Nembe man but fled to Twon-Brass and established a settlement, called Gbobokiri, now Gboboama. Gbobo was whom Ada Spiff placed as the head of the settlement, from which Gbobokiri or Gboboama is now known. Chief Ada Spiff left Nembe due to religious wars between his Christian supporters and traditional belief adherents or worshippers, (Alagoa (1964)).

Interpretations of traditions of origin and migration

Much of the analysis of the movements of Nembe people in settlements in Okoroma clan will be guided by Jan Vansina's (1992), contributions on 'Population Movements and Emergence of New Socio-Political Forms in Africa'. The Nembe populating Okoroma could be classified as the concept of drift, which Vansina said is a “gradual slow movement into new territory”. When drift occurs, old and new or original settlements are not

deserted. Though, in the mobility of Nembe people into Okoroma, the Nembe metropolis was almost abandoned. Chiefs who participated in the Akassa Raid (the war between the British and Nembe in 1896) escaped to Ogbia territories and surrounding swamps, bushes and islands. This was to evade the reprisal by the British bombardment and burning down of the half quarter of Nembe town, (Alagoa 1964).

The occupation of Okoroma by the Nembe people continued, which motivation was triggered by the 'push and pull' factors. The push factor (factors which induce or force people to emigrate) was the British bombardment and burning down of Nembe metropolis. These Nembe chiefs and their families, dependants left their country and occupied Okoroma, but later returned to Nembe. The British only laid siege on Nembe for a while and went back to Akassa, the regional headquarters of the Royal Niger Company, a British chartered company.

The initial movement to Okoroma by Nembe Chiefs and their families were on a refugee status and ended on their return to Nembe. They were however attracted back to Okoroma, which qualified the second movement as the pull factors (factors which attract people to immigrate). As a result, some of the Nembe chiefs established new farm settlements, while others settled amongst existing communities and got land for farming. Mobility may have been greater after the Nembe-British war, of 1896. Nembe merchants also established trading posts in existing communities, as their sphere of influence, bought palm oil and kernel in those communities. In addition to the station for buying palm produce, Chief Ombu from Okpoama, a Nembe dialect speaking community, planted palm trees of high yielding varieties on a land owned by Aminini, which is beside Akakumama community. As noted somewhere, Egebe, from Nembe, on his part planted rubber trees on a land he bought from Kantee from Akakumama community. The palm produce and rubber are raw materials needed by the colonial industries in Europe.

It should be noted that fishermen from Okoroma also crossed into Nembe territory, but they do not establish permanent communities. Okoroma fishermen using boats undertook expeditions, several kilometers into Nembe territory and still returned home the same day. Sometimes, these fishermen may stay for more than a day, in communities such as Ewelesue, Gbobokiri, which are Nembe settlements, and return with dry fish caught during the fishing expedition. Accommodation in those fishing trips is provided by relatives, friends or through good will.

Okoroma movements into Nembe territory, in such cases, are on individual mobility. They are not collective movements. The foregoing quotation is apt in affirmation of this point,

which Salamore (1976) said, "Ethnic boundaries are permeable, and people, sometimes singly and sometimes in group, cross them. They do so in general, either to maximize their opportunity or to minimize threats". Okpeh (2006) also made a fine point on this, when he said "...each ethnic group identified itself with a portion of land on which its members carried out their economic activities. This land had its bounds and limits which, in addition to providing a social idiom necessary for cohesion within its members, bestows them identity and therefore relative autonomy from others ... boundaries or no boundaries, people freely interacted with each other".

Nembe expansion into Okoroma was rather widespread. Ekperikiri (now Ekperiamama), for instance, could be classified under diaspora, as a type of unusual population movement. Going by Vansina's (1996) explanation, diaspora occurs when drift is discontinuous, and leads to new settlements separated from the parent settlements by foreign populations. As said earlier, drift is gradual, slow movement, an extension of the usual patterns of mobility into a new territory. There is no longer movement from Twon-Brass to settle in Ekperiamama. There were other migrations later, from Oloibiri and Otuabo that have intermarried with the first settlers in Ekperiamama. The descendants of this miscegenation no longer have links with Brass, Oloibiri and Otuabo communities. Though, a major relationship with Brass is on the appointment of the Amanyanabo (King) of Ekperiamama. The traditional head of Ada Chieftaincy House in Twon-Brass chalks the Amanyanabo of Ekperiamama.

The description given of the contemporary families' composition in these communities, shows that the newcomers did not dispossess the autochthones of their land and political authority. Rather, there is a mixture of the two populations and the emergence of a new society and culture. Though, the aborigines, that is, the Okoroma people are more inclined to adopting the language and ways of the Nembe immigrants.

There is a continuous contact of the immigrant Nembe families in Okoroma, with the metropolitan Nembe city, and this is a factor that is superimposing the Nembe ways and dialect of the Ijo language over the Ogbia language, spoken by the aboriginal Okoroma people. This has occurred through the linguistic process of language shift. Where a society or community no longer speaks its original language, it is said to have shifted or switched its language; that is, it has adopted the language of another group in place of its own, Orugbani (1990).

The new generation of children born in Okoroma preferred the Nembe dialect over their indigenous Ogbia language, as a way of seeking for prestige. This could be explained, first, from the appointment of Okoroma traditional offices. The clan head has always been

appointed by persons of the product of inter-ethnic marriage. These are persons having Nembe and Okoroma parentage. Chief Simeon N. Dienagha, a veteran, who in 1973 was appointed the first clan head of Okoroma. His paternal roots are from Nembe. He was removed and Chief Charles Onoye Amiebi succeeded him in 1975. Chief Amiebi was an accountant with Shell BP and in 1979 - 1983 served as Commissioner of Finance in the old Rivers State. He had his paternal roots from Twon-Brass. They were predisposed to Nembe and were fluent only in the Nembe dialect.

The incumbent clan head of Okoroma clan, His Royal Highness, King Bartram Douglas was even a nominee, along with others, for the traditional stool of Mingi XII, Amanyanabo (King) of Nembe. But His Eminence, King Dr. Edmund Daukoru emerged as the Mingi XII. Daukoru was a high ranking staff of Shell BP and had also served as Chairman, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in the early 1990s. Then, throughout the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, 1999 – 2007, Daukoru served as the Minister of State for Petroleum. All these credentials must have counted in favour of Dr. Edmund Daukoru's emergence as Mingi XII. On his part, Bartram Douglas studied in the United States of America and has the US Green Card. He is an oil exploration expert, with a company incorporated in the USA. His multinational company's laboratories in Nigeria and the USA are equipped in scientific research and analysis in oil drilling.

Again, the serious ties with Nembe could be seen from the Okoroma-Ibe Council of Chiefs, who are the repository of Okoroma culture and tradition, affiliation to the Nembe-Ibe Council of Chiefs, instead of the Ogbia Brotherhood that embraces all Ogbia traditional institutions. Though, this association with Nembe is understandable when viewed from the backdrop of the Bible, hymn book and some Western literary works translation into the Nembe dialect and are in use in churches and taught in primary schools in Okoroma. The Nembe dialect is however not a total takeover of the Ogbia language, as some Okoroma communities are bilingual and have some traces of onomastics (personal and place names). The designations of the clan head and communities' rulers still bear Ogbia titles. The clan head is called the *Obanobhan* (clan head) of Okoroma, just as it is called in other Ogbia groups. In the Nembe dialect the clan head is known as *ibeyanabo*. While the individual community rulers of Okoroma bears *obanema* (king), just as those of other Ogbia communities' rulers, Nembe called their kings *amanyanabo*. Also, some names of founding lineages in Okoroma convey Ogbia meanings such as Akinam, Aminini, Onikaru, Aguolaisi, Akomu-Aziba, just to mention a few. These Ogbia names and titles are proof and support of what Jan Vansina said, that a basic rule for linguistic verification is that in contact situations the ousted language, at all times, leave traces, Vansina (1992).

The facts of bilingualism exist in such Okoroma communities, such as Oguama (Otuogu, as known by Ogbia speakers), Eminama, Ekperiana and Sangakubu. According to Orugbani (1990), bilingualism refers to the state of two or more languages existing together within a community. To be bilingual, a group of people in addition to its own language take up the language of, more often than not, a more populous and dominant neighbour for day-to-day use.

The Nembe language having upper hand and entrenchment in Okoroma could be said of Vansina's concepts of 'Elite and Prestige migrations'. The elites as Vansina (1992) said, come alone with a few companions; while the population movement involved is insignificant, the socio-cultural results are spectacular. The place of origin of the elite had to be either the most prestigious place people could imagine or the one most removed from their own civilization. These analyses fit squarely in the Nembe chiefs' movement to Okoroma. It should be noted that the Nembe chiefs were the middlemen in the European trade and received trust goods from the supercargoes. These chiefs had influence and dominance over markets in the hinterland up to Aboh, Onitsha and Lokoja, Okoroma being the first and closest inland neighbour, Alagoa, (1964).

The socio-cultural norms of Nembe are continuously eroding the Ogbia custom, indigenous in Okoroma. Majority of Okoroma natives would rather prefer to settle in Nembe and copy Nembe ways than Ogbia mannerisms. There is an indication of Okoroma craving and preference of everything about Nembe. The cultural proof of borrowing can establish the fact that Okoroma is taking on every aspect of Nembe. The evidence is in the War Canoe House system (*Omungu aru wari*) and the *omungu aru dogu* (canoe regatta), being institutionalized in Okoroma. The recently constituted Okoroma Council of Chiefs not only aligned itself to the Nembe Council of Chiefs, they borrowed the seating arrangement and entertainments given to the Nembe chiefs during 'wake keep'. In such funeral ceremonies, chiefs were taken to nearby restaurants or private homes and served assorted food and drink lavishly in the middle of the occasion. These expenses were borne by the deceased relatives. This sumptuousness and extravagancy are not observed by the Ogbia chiefs in the Ogbia Local Government Area, with whom Okoroma communities share the same traditions of origin.

Stereotypes and Identity Crises in Nembe and Okoroma Relationship

Predetermined views of the two groups on each other tended to shape relations between them. On that basis, it built stereotypes which now gave the dominance Nembe has over the Okoroma people. Stereotypes are opinions formed by one ethnic group against the other which sprang from past events. In order to explain and relate this point to the two

groups we are studying, it could be said that Nembe and Okoroma, have been in contact, interacted and inter-dependent on each other from pre-colonial times. For instance, there was an incidence of Mingi, the patriarch, who took refuge at Adibonimi, an Ologoama land given to him to settle. Mingi had escaped to Okoroma from the kingship dispute he had with King Ogbodo, then incumbent Amanyababo of Nembe. Accounts from Ologoama had it that Mingi again escaped from Okoroma to Okpoama due to dispute he had with Ologoama people, Amiebi (2012). This took place in pre-colonial times.

But serious contact and interaction began during the 18th and 19th centuries. Recorded account attest that Nembe and Okoroma had no common traditions of origin. Their relationship stems from trade and intermarriages, when prominent Nembe traders settled in existing communities and even founded settlements in Okoroma. These Nembe traders bought palm oil, palm kernels and timber for the coastal trade with Europeans. The Okoroma people interchanged their products with European goods brought by the Nembe traders. There was a consequent influx of Nembe population to Okoroma towards the close of the 19th century. The population expansion to Okoroma took place aftermath of the British reprisal attack, when a large section of Nembe was burnt down.

These contacts gave rise to the stereotypes now existing between Nembe and Okoroma. The Nembe people view Okoroma as weak, not civilized and as a conquered territory. This seems paradoxical, judging from the fact that it was Okoroma that granted the Nembe people initial refugee status, who later returned to Okoroma as traders. The Okoroma people, on the other hand, describe the Nembe people as proud, crafty, cheats, troublesome and land grabbers. These also constitute a source of ethnocentrism, which is leveled against the Nembe intruders. That the Nembe people have the attitude and perception of themselves as superiors, more civilized, dressed well and very descent.

As a matter of fact, their initial relationship was that of accommodation and co-operation, particularly from the Okoroma people. True to the core, the Okoroma people were in their pristine 'state of nature', as classical philosophers will put it. When the forest resources continued under exploitation by both groups, it became a contest and intrigue. Ranging from the economic aspect, to the political and social relationship, Nembe began a plot of dominance. For instance, descendants and relatives of the chiefs that resided in Okoroma communities, as refugees and later as traders, lay claim as founders of the communities. Thus, Egbelu family laid claim as the founder of Akakumama; Yemainain family, as the founder of Dorgu Ewoama; Daniel Opuene as the founder of Ibo. These claims and dominance were perpetuated throughout the colonial period, when administrative and judicial units of the Brass Division and Nembe District were stationed in Twon-Brass and

Nembe respectively. It was at post-independence that personalities like King Donka Solomon retook the Akakumama traditional stool and restored the Ovoh dynasty.

Concrete cases in point, first, was a case of Nembe people deception and cheating of Okoroma people of their land. Amiebi (2011) recorded that when the Eastern Regional government of Nigeria, established the Burma rice farm at Okoroma, a lawyer was needed to perfect the agreement. The Okoroma people consulted Chief Francis Allagoa, who was retired as a magistrate and then crowned, in 1954, as Mingi X, Amanyanabo (king) of Nembe. While Mingi X represented the interest of Okoroma, Nembe chiefs misled him and instead wrote the agreement in favour and in the name of Nembe. After collecting the money, Mingi X was said to have invited the people of Okoroma to receive their share. The Okoroma people rejected the money and could not do anything about it.

Secondly, more cases of deception and takeover of individual, family and community lands in Okoroma by Nembe persons were recorded during the colonial era. MacDonald Egebe was from Nembe and came to Okoroma in 1933, when he was retired as native court clerk. He was said to acquire a small portion of land for farming, from the Ikoni family of Akakumama and engaged in piggery farming. This, he abandoned and instead ventured into rubber tree planting. Whenever the rubber trees matured and as is in their nature, the seeds exploded, wherever the seeds landed and grew, belonged to MacDonald Egebe. Thus, his land boundaries had no permanent demarcations. In this manner, he had land disputes and litigations in the Nembe Native Court.

It is said that MacDonald Egebe being a retired native court clerk manipulated the court process to his advantage. In 2014, a particular land case he had was decided by the Supreme Court, in his favour, against the Ikoni family. Though, MacDonald was said to have died since 1974, his children and grand children as his successors, continued with the land case to conclusion. There is in existence, a farmhouse on his land which goes by the name, Egebekiri, that is, Egebe settlement.

In the area of politics, more strangers, than the indigenes, represented Okoroma in the Nembe County Council during colonial and post independence. In the 1950s, one John, an Akwa blacksmith who resided in Akakumama, represented Okoroma in the Nembe County Council. Douglas Ogomu, from Emadike and Nembe but was resident in Dorgu Ewoama represented Okoroma from 1976 – 1979. Douglas Ogomu, who became Chief Yemainain, won Ekperi Daufa in alleged rigging in Nembe, where the votes were counted. An exceptional case was the councillorship of Chief Gibson Nyenye Orunengimo, also in the 1950s. He was from Akakumama and Bassambiri Nembe. It was said that a motion was

raised to change the name of Okoroma to Tereke, during a meeting in the Nembe County Council. Chief Orunengimo had challenged Mingi X, who chaired the meeting, how would he feel if Mingi's surname was changed to something else. The commotion that ensued was averted when the chairman of the Nembe-Ibe Council of Chiefs, Chief Nobail Bokolo, from Bassambiri, moved a motion for adjournment. The matter was then adjourned indefinitely, Amiebi (2011).

In successive manner, Okoroma gradually put away the yoke of domination, by the first appointment of an Obanobhan (clan head) of Okoroma, in 1973. This gave backing to efforts by individual Okoroma communities, to regain political autonomy from Nembe chiefs. Regaining social and political autonomy reached a crescendo, when Okoroma formed their council of chiefs, in the late 1990s. These chiefs now conduct burial rites and perform traditional functions hitherto usurped by Nembe chiefs.

But in spite of these efforts, there is sub-consciousness among the Okoroma chiefs to imitate everything about the Nembe chief. This pertains particularly to Nembe pattern of dressing, the seating arrangement and mannerism during funerals. Because of this crave, a Nembe chief is given front seat when among Okoroma chiefs, whereas, an Okoroma chief comfort himself and feel proud to take the back seat when in the midst of Nembe chiefs. This identity is causing crises, amongst youth groups however.

The stereotypes, the identities, relegate the Okoroma people to the background in Nembe worldview. Even among the educated elite, this discrimination exists. This manner of relationship is what the Psycho-cultural conflict theory emphasizes as culturally induced conflicts. Adherents of this theory explained that there exist different forms of identities. Among such identities, the one that is based on people's ethnic origin and the culture that is learned on the basis of that ethnic origin is one of the most important ways of explaining violent conflict. Identity is seen as a reason of those conflicts that takes time to resolve. This could come from when people are discriminated against or deprived from their basic (material) and psychological (non-material) needs, Best (2006). The non-material needs are the recognition and protection of identities, which in Okoroma's case, are the refusal to treat Okoroma as a separate clan or kingdom and the derision and derogation of Okoroma as uncivilized.

This Psycho – Cultural Conflict theory takes its root also from Maslow's Theory of Motivation and Burton's Human Needs theory. Both of these later theories explained how the individual or group start with basic need such as food, sex, security and moves to aesthetic taste needs, which are self-actualization, Best (2006). In this regard, Okoroma

could be feeling that they would achieve self-respect, if they throw off the stigma of uncivilized. In essence the denial of Okoroma's material needs of getting money from government, as occasioned from the Burma rice farm agreement, could be a factor, but the most dangerous is the derision of being too backward. Conflicts that are caused by a crisis of identity are usually the most potent, perilous and most aggressive. Identity is an unwavering, entrenched sense of self-worth, which makes life significant.

On that basis, when Okoroma have need to contest with Nembe in political position, the mind-set of being disclaimed as inferior and scorned, causes fear, which elicit defensive mechanism. Fear is the condition and situation which make parties restless and apprehensive, and which create insecurity and threat perceptions in them. Individuals and groups become aggressive against the things that put in jeopardy or risk their values, identity, security and any privileges and advantages they may get pleasure or benefit from.

Conclusion

The Okoroma people are the immediate western hinterland neighbours to Nembe. By the fact that the Nembe people occupies the seaboard gave them the advantage during the Legitimate Trade. They collected articles from the European supercargoes on 'trust' and exchanged these goods with palm oil in Okoroma. In order to reap maximal profit, the Nembe people, in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, established trading post, planted palm and rubber plantations in Okoroma.

The Nembe and Okoroma ethnic boundaries are permeable, and they, sometimes singly and sometimes in group, cross them. As stated above, they do so in general, either to maximize their opportunity or to minimize threats. Okoroma fishermen and women crossed into Nembe territory; using boats they undertook expeditions, several kilometers afield and still returned home the same day. Sometimes, these fishermen may stay for more than a day, in Nembe settlements, and return with dry fish. Accommodation in those fishing trips is provided by relatives, friends or through good will.

On the other hand, Nembe expansion into Okoroma was rather widespread. For instance, Nembe mobility in some cases could be classified under diaspora, as a type of unusual population movement; which when the movement discontinuous, led to new settlements in Okoroma.

Vansina's (1996) postulation, when applied to Okoroma and Nembe relations expunged Nembe claims as founders of Okoroma communities. Vansina had said that "Space had been tamed in most of Africa long before 1500 and no lands remained completely unused

by that date. Over most of the continent, settlement was of sufficiently low density that processes of expansion solved problems of pressure on the land. In the Okoroma instance, the drifts, from Nembe, the diaspora from Twon-Brass were made possible because Okoroma communities had low population density. This made expansion into Okoroma possible.

The expansion by the Nembe migrants could also fit into 'band migration'. Vansina (supra) said migration by bands, always armed, involves a relatively small number of people. This could exactly be applicable to the Nembe migrants. He again said such movements were sometimes the outgrowth of state formation – which Nembe had already emerged as a city-state, Ejitiwu (1999). Vansina as well said such movements could be a reaction to the expansion of trade from which the migrants wished to reap profits, which was true of Nembe, whose trading chiefs served as agents to European supercargoes who successfully linked the coast with the hinterland Alagoa (1964).

The relationship was initially mutual, Nembe culture and language has permeated into Okoroma. In outlook, an Okoroma personality has all the attributes of a Nembe person. But internally and when challenged, an Okoroma man claims he is from Ogbia.

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