

Interrogating Okrika-Ikwerre Intergroup Relations in the 19th and 20th century

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Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	
Citation: TUBOBERENI, TOMI BEN; IGBANI, ROBBINS OWEDE. (2025). Interrogating Okrika-Ikwerre Intergroup Relations in the 19th and 20th century. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHSS). Volume 1(9), 363-372.	The study explored Okrika and Ikwerre relations in the 19th and 20th century. The study made use of historical research design in both data collection and analysis. Thus, in sourcing for data the study made use of both primary and secondary sources such as oral traditions, oral history, archival materials, academic journals, text books and among others. The study revealed that before 1900, the various city states of Niger Delta of Nigeria, regardless of their harsh environment, had contacts among themselves and other kingdoms inside and outside of the Niger Delta. They were linked together during the pre-colonial period and this linkage were influenced by trade, political and cultural relations. One social-political relation that determined the fate of Okrika-Ikwerre relations was the establishment of Port Harcourt within the second decade of the 20th century. The establishment of Port Harcourt and the ownership claim was one main event that distorted the existing relations between Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rebisi) neighbour. It is crucial to note that Okrika and Ikwerre, Diobu (Rebisi) share very close social relations. The two groups, Ogoloma people of Okrika and their Diobu (Rebisi) Ikwerre neighbours had very close economic and social relations as they traded together in markets like Ahia makara, Ahia Kalabo and Nwaja (Waja) located at present day Trans-Amadi axis of Port Harcourt. The trade between Ogoloma (Okrika) and Ikwerre (Rebisi) after several years, brought about social relations and acculturation through intermarriages between Ogoloma-Okrika and Rebisi Ikwerre. Key Words: Okirika, Ikwerre, Intergroup-relations, Economy, Kingdom, Trade, Social, and political

Introduction

Okrika, is located in the Eastern Niger Delta region of Nigeria with a rich history of cultural and economic exchanges with other communities, both within and outside the region. Intergroup relations as a means of interactions between individuals in different social groups, as a means of conducting relations between societies, played a crucial role in shaping Okrika's history and development. The Okrika nation which ordinarily cannot live in isolation, interacted with other neighbours such as Ibani (Bonny), Opobo, Kalabari, Nembe-Brass, Andoni and other groups such as the Ogoni, Ikwerre, Ibos and Europeans for survival.

Before 1900, the various city-states of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, regardless of their harsh environment, had contacts among themselves and other kingdoms inside and outside of the Niger Delta. They were linked together during the pre-colonial period and these linkages were influenced by commerce, political and cultural relations. The Niger Delta people live in mangrove forest, swampy zone and difficult terrain too swampy for cultivation. The traditional occupation n of the Niger Delta people remained fishing, farming, and hunting, and salt making (Alagoa, 2005).

They have over the years been involved in sizeable commerce with their neighbours of the rainfall forest zone who supplied them with necessary food items in exchange

for fish and salt. These exchanges occurred dating from the precolonial era, when each ethnic group constituted a country of its own. At this time, the goal of intergroup relations was geared toward the furtherance of each state's interest as dictated by geography, history and economics. Safe-guarding the state's independence, security and integrity were of prime importance. This apparently resonate with the belief that the pre-colonial period was not devoid of several sovereign and independent states and kingdoms, as each ethnic group exercise dominance of the resources located within its territory. Okrika is one of the city-states of Niger Delta in Nigeria before the advent of colonialism. She maintained relations with her neighbours. This relationship has spanned three epochs, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial.

During pre-colonial era, up to 1900, when Okrika stopped been a sovereign state as a result of British colonization, Okrika's relations as an independent city-state was characterized by trade, wars, alliances, tension and cordiality. When the Europeans first came during the slave trade, the relations were that of trade in African slaves which was characterized by diplomatic understanding of equal status for which mediation and negotiation was just a simple way of settling dispute arising from such trade. Following the abolition of slave trade and the introduction of legitimate trade, several strands of relationship existed between the Europeans and the city states of Niger Delta. At the dawn of colonialism, relations with the Europeans were characterized by force, treaties of various forms, involving negotiation. During the period under review, even when the city states such as Okrika, Ibani and Kalabari were involved in various crisis, especially over fishing rights, the colonial masters still employed instruments of diplomacy such as persuasion, conciliation, negotiation, mediation to exact treaty among the parties involved and also for the benefit of Britain. For example, before the introduction of Christianity in Okrika, there was a deal which is referred to as the "Church Mission Agreement 1881" between the city-states of Okrika and the Christian Mission. (Appendix 1). Even for Okrika to come under the jurisdiction of Her Britanic Majesty (HRM), the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, there was a treaty of Protection 'in 1888.

After the treaty by which Okrika became a British protectorate, she was still awash in various forms of relations with her neighbours, sometimes, under British mediation. Under colonialism, all the sovereign powers before now enjoyed by the people of Okrika and other city states were regulated and moderated by the colonial government and the Nigerian state, a predecessor to the colonial administration, sustained the structure bequeathed to it by the colonial government. The treaty and alliances

Okrika, entered into at one stage or the other, were part of preventive measures adopted for it to survive in a hostile environment. Preventive paradigm is any action undertaken by state and non-state actors to prevent disputes from arising between parties as to bring about peace in order to avoid disputes escalating into conflict and to limit the spread of the conflict, when it occurs. It was for this purpose that Okrika entered into various treaties and agreements for survival.

When Nigeria became independence in 1960, and a Republic in 1963, Okrika and other Ijaw ethnic nationalities and her neighbours became part of Nigeria. That did not stop Okrika from interacting with her neighbours. The fact of this could be unearthed in the argument by Ndu (2002) that their existed two state system; the traditional state system (primordial state) and modern state systems within the same geographical confines. A typical example is the Okrika action and mediation in bringing about peace in the protracted conflict between Ogbolomabiri and Basambiri in present day Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa in 1979. This points to the fact that even under the Nigerian state, ethnic nationalities are indulged in intergroup relations for their mutual benefits. The Okrika people of Ijaw ethnic nationality occupy three local government areas of Okrika, Ogu/Bolo, greater part of Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. Diaspora settlements and have been involved in the work of maintaining good relations with her neighbours.

Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbour, 1800-2000, which deals with the history of relations between groups, has not been devoid of tension. So, in this study, we shall be examining the relations between the people of Okrika Kingdom and her neighbours. And of course, anyone with a critical turn of mind would realize that tension is a source of violence that is capable of straining relations between an ethnic group and her neighbour or between states in the international arena. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which harbors Okrika, the relations among the different ethnic groups could be said to be cordial, and at times characterized by tension and conflict, leading to arbitration and resultant treaty thereof.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to reconstruct the history of Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbour and to demonstrate the dynamics of her relations with her neighbours in the Niger Delta of Nigeria and the Europeans.

Literature Review

In other to identify the gap that exist in knowledge, this study reviewed the following empirical studies. Though it must be noted that literature on Okrika and her neighbours abounds but the available literature has no direct bearing on the study.

Okorobia (ed.) (2009) in a book titled “The *Central Delta* in Alagoa, Tamuno and Clark, The Izon of Niger Delata” examined the Central Niger Delta as the natural habitat of the vast majority of the Ijo people. It also examined the history and culture of the Ijaw ethnic group, the role played by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the effects, as a direct consequence of British colonialism as well the process leading to the creation of Bayelsa State, were adequately covered. The study discussed the economic, political and social history of the people, as well as the relationship that bonded them together, internally and externally, were also brought to the fore. The work seemed to be thorough; however, it did not take into account all facets of the history of the people, but it is important to the study.

Derefaka and Orugbani (eds.) (2009) in their work titled “*The Eastern Niger Delta* in Alagoa, Tamuno, and Clark, The Izon of the Niger Delta,” focused the discourse on three distinctive groups namely: Okrika, Kalabari and Ibani. They delved into their history, from the perspective of Pre-colonial to Post-colonial periods. At the centre of their discourse were traditional politics, socio-cultural history of the people, and their religious institutions that became forces of change. The Atlantic trade and diplomatic relations among the Niger Delta group and the European traders, as well as the effect of the trade on the region, came into their conversation. The authors were able to trace the origin of the people to the Central Delta. The work is very detailed, but the authors did not give considerable consideration of the settlements of the Eastern Niger Delta. In spite of the shortcoming observed, the work is important with regard to the Study of the diplomatic history of Okrika.

Furthermore, Okorobia (1999), A History of Underdevelopment of the Niger Delta and Enemugwem (2000) “Significance of the Delta Region in the Development of Nigeria” are unpublished thesis of the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies of University of Port Harcourt. Both theses examined the development and underdevelopment of the Niger Delta with emphasis on the economic resources of the Nigerian nation. While Okorobia discusses the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta; Enemugwem took into account the role played by the Niger Delta with regard to the development of Nigeria. These two unpublished dissertations were of immense help to the researcher.

Wotogbe-Weneka’s (2020), *Owumini: Beliefs and Practices of Aquatic Spirit among the Ikwerre People of Niger Delta*, is a work of monumental fact, which exposed the concepts of Owumini as a religious phenomenon among the Ikwerre people of Niger Delta. The work shows the inter-religious dialogue and understanding cultural ideas and practices that existed between the communities of Niger Delta communities.

Afigbo, A.E. The Native Revenue Ordinance in Eastern Province: The Adventures of a Colonial Legislative Measure in Obichere (ed.) (1982) ‘Studies in Southern Nigeria History’, explores how the introduction of indirect rule and native revenue ordinance in eastern provinces, and the adventures of colonial legislative measures, were used by the British to weaken the people of Eastern provinces with Lugard playing a key role, and without recourse to the purse of the people. The work highlighted on how the imposition of direct tax on the people of the provinces was resisted and sparked several riots notably among which is the Aba woman riots of 1929. This points to the fact that there was discontent and lack of confidence between the government “British authorities and the governed”, and the indigenous people. What is more? Forced labour was imposed on the people as a matter of policy and expediency

Afigbo’s (1972), *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rules in Southern Nigeria 1891-1929*, explores how the introduction of indirect rule and native revenue ordinance in south-eastern provinces, and the adventure of colonial legislative measures put in place to rule the people of the area by the British, through what was thought to be their indigenous political organizations, affected the people. The work shows how the people of southeastern Nigeria resisted the imposition of warrant chiefs and tax on them resulting in several riots such as the 1929 Aba women riot.

Wariboko’s (2014), *Elem Kalabari of the Niger Delta*, chronicled the rise of a merchant class at Elem Kalabari and its transition from slaves to trading in palm oil, and then also, palm kernels, its ultimate demise in the face of colonialism, and improved transport technology. He draws on the rich archival materials in public records office in Britain and Nigeria and unfolded history of Eleme Kalabari in a historical manner.

Derefaka and Orugbani (eds) (2009) *The Eastern Niger Delta* in Alagoa, Tamuno, and Clark, The Izon of the Niger Delta, focused their discourse on three distinctive groups; Okrika, Kalabari and Ibani. They delved into their history, from the perspective of Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial periods. At the centre of their discourse were traditional politics, socio-cultural history of the people, and their religious institutions that became forces of change. The Atlantic trade and diplomatic relations among the Niger Delta group and the European traders, as well as the effect of the trade on the region, came into their conversation.

Ejituwu, N.C., Asuk, O.C. (2020). N. C. Ejituwu and the Historography of the Niger Delta is a work that was aimed at analyzing the role of Nkparom Claude Ejituwu in the historical reconstruction narrative of the complex inter – group relations woven around inter – marriages, inter – related migrations, commercial rivalries or competitions for economic resources, wars and fluid alliances, and

traditional diplomacies with intricate outcome. Using Adoni as a case study, the work demonstrates the terrific historical, cultural, economic and political exchanges that characterized her relations with her neighbours and it goes to show the mastery of Ejituwu's knowledge in the deconstruction of orthodox stereotypes in the historiography of the Niger Delta inter – group relations.

Several scholars have done work on Okrika, but very few or none have looked at the theoretical significance of Okrika and her neighbours from preventive diplomacy perspective. Furthermore, none of the scholars reviewed, explored the motivations, strategies and challenges facing Okrika and her neighbours.

Okrika and Ikwerre Relations in Perspective

Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbours have had long lasting economic, political and social-cultural relations since the pre-colonial times though the relations have also been at one point or another not too cordial.

Economic Relations

The Rebisi and Evo of Ikwerre have had long-standing relations with Ogoloma/Okrika. The people of Okrika controlled the European trade which passed through the South-Eastern part of Ikwerre land to other hinterland markets called Obiatubo located in Isiokpo and Akpor communities (Alagoa and Fombo, 2001). The creek leading to Rebisi-Diobu provided access to the Ikwerre markets of Mbuoshimini, Ahia Elechi and others for the Okrika traders. Trade between Okrika and Ikwerre were intensified during the time of the palm oil trade thus, during this era, more trading centres were established. One of such is the trade between Bibialaka, a member of the Egweme (king makers of Okrika) and his son Okomba, who traded in palm oil products with the Oginba, Ikwerre, neighbours.

Tradition suggests that in the course of trading, Bipialaka normally both at Otukpo Oorokiri (Okujagu Iwo-ama) to trade with the Oginiba and Rumubiakani people of Ikwerre. Similarly, when Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu) rose to prominence as head of the “Egweme War Canoe

House” of Okrika, oral tradition, as recounted by Benjamin Rodgers, has it that Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu) obtained his palm products from the palm cutters of Oginiba and Rumubiakani. As a result of trade, Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu) established strong trade relations between the people of Oginiba, Rumubiakani and the Egweme king makers of Okrika. Consequent upon the trade relations, Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu), as Chief and head of the Kpeya “War canoe House” of Egweme Biri of Okrika, as a result of his ability to protect and for his charisma, was loved and respected by his trading partners.

Oral tradition suggests that when the people of Rumubiakani, led by one Chief Okpara Jikara for an unknown cause had communal conflict with their weak neighbours of Oginigba, the Oginigba people being trade partners with Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu), having seen his protective ability, appealed and sought for protection from him against their Rumubiakani neighbours. Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu), responded quickly as he mobilized and organized his kins in Egweme Biri (Egweme estate) in Okrika, as the entire able-bodied young men of kpeya house of Egweme Biri (Egweme estate) in Okrika went into war with the Rumubiakani people, in defense of the Oginigba people (Tubobereni, 2021).

At the end, Okpara Jikara and his people from Rumubiakani were defeated by Cheyeiniabusu (Okujagu) and his kin of Egweme “War canoe House” of Egweme Biri (Egweme estate), and in appreciation of their protection and deliverance from the hands of their hostile neighbours, the Oginigba people made a gift of their parcel of land, stretching from Mechelin to the creek by Belema oil, which is the creek separating Oginigba from Amadi Ama, to their defenders, which is the present day Azuabie (Okujagu) Ama, located at the Port Harcourt zoo axis (One of Okrika's internal diaspora communities) and those who do not have lands among the Oginigba people offered their virgin daughters for marriage to the people of Egweme “War canoe House”, therefore establishing a marriage link and bloodline between the Oginigba people and the Egweme “War canoe House” of Okrika as the children of the marriage between the Egweme people of Okrika and the Oginigba people given out for marriage are still in existence till date and had become part and parcel of Okujagu-Ama (Tubobereni, 2021).

It is important to note that the affinal relationships that exists at the present between the Oginigba people and their Okujagu (Okrika), neighbours are as result of trade, as we have mentioned above. Similarly, the Kalio people of Okrika had a long-standing trade relation with the Elelenwo and Rumukrushi people of Ikwerre. Tradition suggests that during the palm oil trade, Kalio people traded with the Elelenwo people in palm oil and other products but mainly palm oil. After several years of trade relations, as a result of the flourishing palm oil trade, the people of Elelenwo and their Kalio trading partners established a market known and called Ikpuraba for trade between Kalio, other Okrika traders, and Elelenwo people, and other parties permitted to so attend. The market is located at the water fronts of present day Rumuodani community of Elelenwo.

The establishment of the market, which held ones in every eight days, fostered trade and social relations between Kalio people and the Elelenwo, such that as time went by, as a result of trade, Kalio people were offered a place to

stay to enable them spend more time in trading, as it was required at that time. Gradually this place became home outside home for the kalio and other Okrika people, as traders did not return home immediately. Sometimes, they spent days and weeks. Subsequently, the place became a settlement for the Kalio people that some of the Kalio traders no longer returned to their home land in Okrika. Eventually after several years. Kalio people settled at the place offered to them by their Elelenwo community.

However, there are those in Elelenwo at present who traced their origin to Kalio and other Okrika communities. Notable in this regard is the Alele family in Elelenwo. It is important to note that the Kalio settlement in Elelenwo no longer exist as descendants of the earliest and latter settlers have been absorbed into their host community. Nevertheless, the Ikpuruba market still exists. Albeit, it is the Oba Ama people, a sister community to Kalio-Ama, that trade at the Ikpuruba market. From the foregoing, it is evident that trade was an important aspect of Okrika-Ikwerre relations as every other aspect of the two groups came into being after trade relations had been far established, which subsequently led to diplomatic relations between Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbours. It is important to note as one of the major ethnic groups in River's state, Ikwerre enjoy its strategic location with her coastal Okrika neighbours. This was also based on the fact that the Ikwerre are not belligerent and had a long lasting peaceful diplomatic relation with Okrika. Also, the ecological differences between Ikwerre and the Okrika people made intergroup and diplomatic relations inevitable. Endowed with abundant arable land, the Ikwerre produces much more than they needed in tubers and vegetables in exchange for fish, salt, farming equipment and this naturally led to trade between Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbours, as we have mentioned earlier.

Markets such as Ahia Uzo (road markets) were in circles of four and eight days. The circles were such that interference was rare. The development of good inter-group and diplomatic relations between Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbours ca not be overemphasized. The early contacts of Okrika and Ikwerre predates the Trans-Atlantic trade in slaves and in palm oil and palm kernel, as we have stated earlier. Farm products moved in and out between Okrika and her Ikwerre neighbours in the pre-colonial time. Exchanges were by barter, and from Ikwerre communities, products such as; yams, cassava, coco yam, palm oil and items like livestock: including goats, fowls were exchanged for salt, fish and other products from the Okrika coast.

Social-Political Relations

One social-political relation that determined the fate of Okrika-Ikwerre social political and diplomatic relations was the establishment of Port Harcourt within the second

decade of the 20th century. The establishment of Port Harcourt and the ownership claim was one main event that distorted the existing relations between Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rebisi) neighbours. When coal was discovered in Enugu in 1908, the colonial authorities wanted to establish a seaport and railway terminus in the East, to facilitate the exportation of coal. In 1912, a survey team of colonial officials was sent to Okrika, and a good site was discovered along Isaka Creek. Abam, A.S. (1999) posited that Isaka is an Okrika town. The area known as *Obumuton Chiri*, but wrongly called Obumotu country by the British colonial masters (whites) was chosen. It consisted of a number of Okrika villages that engaged in fishing and subsistence farming.

When the initial survey was made, the Okrika villagers of Obumotu country were hostile. But when the colonial officials went back to Okrika town to see the paramount chief, the villagers were advised not to make trouble and that their interest would be protected (Abam, 2009).

The colonial officials wanted a total area of 25 square miles. The Okrika parcel of land was not up to the required extent and so, the survey team went beyond Okrika land, into the area of Ikwerre communities namely Diobu (Rebisi), Rumueme, Rumuomasi, Rumubiakani and Oginigba, at the instance of Daniel Oju Kalio, paramount chief of Okrika and political agent to the British for additional parcels of land. After the usual negotiations were made, a Deed of conveyance was prepared and jointly concluded in 1913, between the colonial officials on the one side, and Okrika, Diobu, etc, on the other hand. It is important to note that the total purchase price for the lands acquired was £5,650 (five thousand six hundred and fifty pounds), a huge amount in 1913, with each community receiving an amount proportionate to its parcel of land. According to Abam, Okrika which had 53% of the total acquired land, also proportionately received £3,000 pounds, representing 53% of the total amount of £5, 650 (five thousand six hundred and fifty pounds).

Diobu which had 35% of the total land acquired, proportionately received 35% of the total amount paid (i.e £2,000 out of £5, 650). All the remaining communities together had 12% of the £5,650. By 1928 there was another Agreement but that Agreement remained supplemental to that of 1913. In 1934 (i.e about 19 years after the 1913 Agreement and about 6 years after the 1928 Agreement), the Diobu people felt dissatisfied again and wanted another revision and variation. It was for such repeated demand for variation and later claim to sole ownership of Port Harcourt that Governor Lugard foresaw and referred to as "fictitious claims and artificial inflations of values" which chief Woluchem himself inadvertently put up. It is important to mention that the survey plan attached to the 1913 Port

Harcourt Agreement (i.e Document No. 1) which contained Okrika villages and more, are still existing, and at present forms part of greater Port Harcourt Local Government Area.

Meanwhile, it must be stated that the constant and continuous claim to the ownership of Port Harcourt between Okrika and her Ikwerre Diobu (Rebisi) neighbours have sparked series of disagreements between Okrika and Diobu=Ikwerre people, thereby destabilizing the long friendly intergroup and diplomatic relations that the people of Okrika had with their Ikwerre neighbours. However, irrespective of the claim and counter claim made for the ownership of Port Harcourt between Okrika and Ikwerre, this did not deter the Isaka people from extending a hand of friendship and friendly relations to a group of immigrants who sort refuge in Isaka for safety.

According to available records, at one time when intra-communal conflict erupted at Rumueme, that was initially “Umueme” in the 1913 Port Harcourt agreement: the inhabitants ran away and were dispersed. Some hid themselves in the mangroves opposite Isaka (Fiberesima 1990). Those who hid themselves in the mangroves were rescued by one Subanibo of Oyo House, a fisherman from Isaka. In the course of his fishing, and taken to Isaka for refuge, but the place was rather strange to the refugees. They enquired of the Kokos and Agbakas of Ogoloma with whom they had been trading with before the Rummeme disaster. Isaka people pulled them to Ogoloma town to the families of Koko and Agbaka at which time Agbaka was the Amadabo of Ogoloma (Fibersima, 1990).

At Ogoloma, the refugees were recognised as members of the ‘Nwaolu’ family of Rumueme and they were received. After a while, some of the refugees at their request, were returned to Isaka, which was suitable to them for farming and were allowed to settle there for good. They have a separate small place to make a fifth House at Isaka to live and farm. In course of time, their number increased to form a House and were known as Nwaolu House. They still visit their kith and kin regularly at Rumueme. At Isaka, each member of Nwaolu House was called ‘Pelebo’ (Cutter) because they cut the bush for farming; Pelebo’ is now the Isaka given name of Nwaolu House (Pelebo House) and they still acknowledge Rumueme as their ancestral home (Fiberesima, 1990). This is an indication that Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rumueme) had a friendly and diplomatic relations. Albeit sometimes, these relations are distorted due to one reason or another.

It is crucial to note that Okrika and their Ikwerre, Diobu (Rebisi) share very close social relations. As revealed by Theophilus Owahonda, a chief in Oroabali, the two groups, Ogoloma people of Okrika and their Diobu (Rebisi) Ikwerre neighbours had very close economic and social relations as

they traded together in markets like *Ahia makara*, *Ahia Kalabo* and *Nwaja (Waja)* located at present day Trans-Amadi axis of Port Harcourt. The account of Theophilus Owahonda supports existing records that Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rebisi) neighbours traded together. The account of Theophilus Owahonda posits that at *Ahiamakara* and *Waja* markets Okrika people exchanged their sea food products with Ikwerre (Rebisi) farm products.

The trade between Ogoloma (Okrika) and Ikwerre (Rebisi) after several years, as has always been the case, brought about social relations and acculturation as stated earlier between the two groups that intermarriages took place between Ogoloma-Okrika and Rebisi Ikwerre. One example of such intermarriage is the marriage between a woman in Agbabuo compound and in Oro-Abali to a man from Ogan-Ama in Okrika. There are several such marriages in Amadi Ama.

Apart from inter-marriages as a result of trade, the two groups had other social relations such as wrestling together where that the Okrika wrestlers’ journey to Oroabali, and other Ikwerre (Rebisi) communities to wrestle. The account of Theophilus Owahonda points to the fact that Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rebisi), especially Oroabali people, were economically dependent on each other and socio-culturally interrelated as they often form fishing groups to fish together at nearby creeks. The account of Theophilus Owahonda also noted that as a result of close socio-cultural ties between Ogoloma (Okrika) and Ikwerre (Rebisi) when an elderly man dies, who did exploits in trade, a cow is often slaughtered at *Ahiamakara* market, where Okrika and Ikwerre (Rebisi) traded together. Though the significance of such ritual of killing cow was not revealed, but it points to the fact that Rebisi-Ikwerre used the ritual of killing cow to inform their Okrika neighbours of the incident of the demise of an excellent trade merchant and an elder.

In the account of Theophilus Owahonda, an historical link that has been missing between Okrika and her relations with Ikwerre (Rebisi) was revealed. This is the fact that as a result of the close relations between Ogoloma-Okrika and Rebisi-Ikwerre, the people of Orije in present day Oroabali of Ogbunabali settled at George-Ama in Okrika for a considerable number of years as a result of an intra-communal conflict between Orije and their kith and kin at their former settlement in Orije, located at the present-day fruit garden area of Port Harcourt. The intra-communal dispute led to the people of Orije in Oroabali to flee to George-Ama to seek refuge. After several years at George-Ama Okrika, the people of Orije returned back to Oroabali in the company of the people of George-Ama.

The account of Theophilus Owahonda suggests that at the time of their return, the people of Orije were first settled at present day Marine Base axis of Port Harcourt, where the

former Infectious Diseases Hospital was located (IDH), but the people of Orije declined because they felt they will be far from their kith and kin in Oroabali if they are settled at present day Marine Base. Thus Orije, people were settled farther close to their kith and kin at Oroabali. This led to the people settling at Agbagbuo's compound in Oroabali, located at present day Ogbum-nu-abali. The account of Theophilus Owhonda also suggests that the fleeing group of Oro-abali, who seek refuge at George-Ama and later returned, had, some of their kith and kin stayed back at George-Ama, and today they have been absorbed into George-Ama but maintain the name, Oriji. However, over the years the name Orije has been anglicized to "Oriji" in spite of the fact that the people of Orije in George-Ama do not share continuous final relationship with their kith and kin at Oroabali. Those at Oroabali acknowledged the fact that they have relations at George Ama till date.

In addition, the account of Geoffrey Amadi, during a field interview at Nkpogu, corroborates that of Theophilus Owhonda that Ogoloma (Okrika) and her Ikwerre (Rebisi) neighbours had a very friendly relations devoid of conflict, hostility and skirmishes, as the two groups traded together mainly at Ahiamakara and Nwaja. The account of GeofferyAmadi suggests that the two groups had traded based on trade by barter where Ogoloma-Okrika traders exchanged their sea foods with Ikwerre (Rebisi) farm products. It is important to note that Ahiamakara was a market established between Okrika and Ikwerre (Rebisi) on the traditional calendar day called "Makara" which is the fourth day in Ikwerre traditional calendar that begins with Riabo, Asarabo, Eberi, Makara and Neem although another account suggests that "Ahia makara" means "the day we settled" or simply put as "we have agreed" or the day we agreed, (Ahia makara).

The account of Geoffrey Amadi further reveals that as a result of intergroup relations, the Nkpogu neighbours of Ogoloma-Okrika taught the people of Ogoloma (Okrika) a particular fishing method called "chua". The "chua" system of fishing was, according to the account, introduced to the entire people of Ikwerre (Rebisi) by a man named Harry Amadi as a result of friendly relations. Harry Amadi, in turn, taught his friend from Amadi Ama, Friedrich Inimgba, later chief Fredrik, F. Inimgbatuboni Koko, who in turn, also taught his people in Amadi Ama-Ogoloma, and through that way the chua fishing method was adopted in Okrika as a fishing method. The account of Geoffrey Amadi also affirms the fact that Ogoloma-Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rebisi) neighbours had a well-coordinated and friendly relation.

The accounts of Elder Sample Amadi, Chief O. Parker, Chief Tamuno – Koko 16, 17 & 18) all of Amadi Ama in Port Harcourt portray the fact that the people of Amadi

Ama and their Diobu neighbours have had a good relation from earliest time till date, regardless of cold war over land and ownership of Port Harcourt. These assertions by people of Ogoloma (Okrika) in Port Harcourt are also corroborated by the account of GeofferyAmadi of Nkpogu and Theophilus Owhonda of Orogbum, Rebisi 'Diobu'.

The researcher, have no reason to doubt the account of the informants because as a young man he was an eye witness to some of the trading relationship that existed. I for one sold Crab, Obojo, Isam and other sea products at Ahia Nwaokpu and Ahia Ezebunwa. The former is located at Umuomasi and is still in existence under the name of Umuomasi Market, while the later use to be at Oroworukwo immediately after the rail crossing from St. Paul's. It was common practice that after selling our products, we buy farm products based on a list already given to us by our parents to their customers or a well-known friend or relations. I also see Ikwerre women from all of Diobu come to water fronts and Borokiri- fishing ports around Amadi Ama down to Marine Base to buy fish in whole sale from Amadi Ama fisher men. This trading relationship I saw, led to several Amadi Ama fisher men ending up having Ikwerre women as concubines and vice versa with attendant offsprings rooted in their various kingdoms. In suit No. 287/65 at the customary court of Eastern Nigeria in the district of Obia grade 'A' holding at Umuogba now Rumuogba – Obia between Sunday Nlerum (m) of Elekohia and John Altraide of Amadi Ama, Ogoloma. Chief John, my maternal grandfather, who was over 100 years as at 29th November, 1965 in his desposition stated inter-alia 'we live together with the people of Orogbum Elekohia and Oroabali'. Such was the relationship.

Ogoloma - Okrika relation with the people of Rebisi is so overwhelming even today that some Rabisi community names still have direct bearing to Ogolom-Okrika names. Notable in this regard are:

Name	Interpretation
1. Oroworukwo	 The house of the Riverine (Ogoloma) man
2. Rumukalabo	 Children of small man
3. Woke Ogoloma	 Ogoloma Man/ A man from Ogoloma.
4. Ogoloma	 After Ogoloma in Wakirike

All this goes to show the Ogoloma-Okrika influence and relationship that have existed between the people from time immemorial. It is on record, as narrated by informants too, that there also existed strong marriage links.

Education and Christian Relations

The people of Okrika and Ikwerre, like with many other city states or ethnic nationalities, cooperated and had education relationship. Whereas the first primary school in Okrika was established in 1880, that in Ikwerre land was in 1901 and this was long before the establishment of St. Cyprian's

School Port Harcourt in 1916. The development of this school was led by Chief Daniel Oju Kalio and a team of evangelist. As the city was growing, more schools were

established in Port Harcourt between 1916 and 1938 as shown in plate 21.

Showing When the First Eight Primary Schools in Port Harcourt Were Founded.

Name of School	Year Founded	Proprietor
St. Cyprian's School	1916	Anglican Mission
Banham Memoria School	1928	Methodist Mission
St. Jude's School	1928	Christ Army Church Mission
St. Mary's School	1930	Roman Catholic Mission
St. Paul's School, Diobu	1930	Anglican Mission
Holy Trinity School	1931	United Native African Church Mission
Cunardia School	1931	T.K. Utchay, Esq.
Belona Model Mixed School	1938	Warrior Osika, Esq.

SOURCE: *Extracted from Memorandum on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa: Cmd. 2374, H.M.S.O. 1925, also reproduced by Professor Otonti A. Nduka in **The City of Harcourt**, 25*

Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School (ACMGS), the first girls' school was established in 1943. On the secondary side whereas Okrika Grammer School (OGS) was established in 1940, non-existed in the Ikwerre areas. Several prominent Ikwerre sons and those also from Okrika attended primary and secondary schools established in each other territories and this created several bilateral and multilateral relations between them. For example, one of the informants from Amadi Ama, Ogoloma, Elder Sample Amadi, like several other Amadi Ama children of school age, continued their standard three education at St. Pauls, Diobu, as this was not available at Okrika. Same was also replicated in the Christian faith. Okrika sons took Christianity to Ikwerre land.

For example, Chief David Olunwa Inimbatuboni Koko of Amadi-Ama 'Ogoloma', took missionary activities (evangelism) to Ikpuruba, (Elelenwo) and Diobu area. (Fiberesima, 2007, p. 82). Another Amadi-Ama son, Okoroafo was appointed on 4th June 1894 by Ralph Moor as a warrant Chief. Okorafore led other Amadi Ama elders to cement the 'Ahiamakara

Convenant' between the people of Diobu and Amadi Ama people of Ogoloma. Chief Samuel Amadi Koko, was appointed a warrant chief in 1902 and was issued with H.B.M. warrant in the Degema division (Appendix 20). Though Okoroafo acted basically in Okrika, Samuel Amadi jurisdiction covers the whole of Diobu down to Umukrushu. He was the only recognized warrant chief at the time and at his demise in 1907, Chief David Inimbatuboni Koko took over as the chief of Amadi Ama and a paramount ruler in Ogoloma. Chief Samuel

Amadi's sofsprings were instrumental to the establishment of the St. Banaba's Anglican Church at Elekahia, Diobu, and a school as well, St. Banaba's Anglican School.

Before the establishment of a church in Elekahia, Elekahia people, that, were Christian converts, come to worship in Amadi Ama from time to time (Koko, F.T. (2008, p. 73). Chief Amadi supported the British in their fracas with Rumukurusi; in the Nwogu Nwekeke fight in 1899. He also took part in the Isiokpo war on the side of the British. In the imbroglio that ensued between Chief Wami of Diobu and Woodman, a one-time British officer, over the later order to the former to destroy his ancestral shrine, Miri-Waram' near St. John's Anglican Church, Diobu, Amadi, who was a friend, of Wami, mediated and got Wami acquiesced over his initial protest not to demolish the shrine. (Fiberesima, 2007, p. 95).

My findings point to the fact that, in the relationship between the people of Diobu (Ikwerre) and Amadi Ama (Ogoloma), Chief Agbaka also played a very prominent role. Agbaka, who according to Fiberesima (1990), was a premier chief (Amadabo) of Ogoloma in his account, suggested that it was Agbaka, that nick-named Rebisi 'Din-obu' in Okrika language, which has remained and is called today as Diobu. He also played a role in the establishment of Diobu-fe, or Diobu market, but called Ahia-Makara by Rebisi people, where Ogoloma (Okrika) people exchange their sea products with Rebisi people's food stuffs of yams, coco-yams, plaintain, cassava, vegitables and red palm oil, brought all the way from their Isiokpo homes (Fiberesima, p. 105).

Regardless of the controversy, over the states of Port Harcourt, between 1991 and 1993, when are Okrika son, in

the person of Chief Rufus Ada George was the governor of Rivers State, as the father of all, by his position, he, acted accordingly. He did everything to open up Ikwerre land like no other governor before him, to encourage development in Ikwerre land. The popular Ada George Road was one of his land mark road projects in Ikwerre land and little wonder, the Road was named after him. Under his administration, Ikwerre sons were appointed as commissioner and adviser in key areas, notable in the regards are: Celestine Omehia, who worked with him. Omehia was in fact the commissioner for education, whereas, Christ Nyeche, also of Ikwerre decent, was his Director General, outside several advisers in his government. His deputy, was also an Ikwerre man, in the person, of chief, Frank Eke.

During and after, when Omehia became the governor of Rivers State, though his tenure was short lived, he was supported by Okrika people. When, Rotimi Chibuike, an Ikwerre son, from, Ubima was pronounced the governor of Rivers State by the supreme court, he was fully supported by Okrika people. To reciprocate the support from Okrika, governor Amachi, appointed several Okrika sons and daughter into key positions in his administration. Notable in this direction are, Dame Alice Lawrence Nemi, commissioner education, Boma Iyaye, commisiner for Youths and Sports, Dr. Sampson Parker, commissioner for health and Ibim Seminatari, commissioner for Information. Amachi, saw to the completion of Odili road, and also built the Woji Akpajo link road, to ease, the movement of Okrika people living around Bolokiri and word 20 axis of Port Harcourt, to Okrika main land by road.

He also built the Okrika ring road. He was bent on rebuilding Okriker Grammer School, though he was was not permitted for reason best known to the owners of the school, the Anglican church. His quest for the development of Port Harcourt water fronts, basically, own by Okrika people, brought him, to a head on, with Dame Patient Jonathan, an Okrika powerful daughter, and the wife of the president of the Federal republic of Nigeria, Dr, Ebele Jonathan. Amachi also recognized the Amayanabo of Ogoloma, His Majesty, E. T. H Obudibo, Ikwo V, as a first-class chief, and also, as a government recognized traditional ruler is Rivers State. All members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, from Okrika, worked with him, before his imbroglio with Mrs. Jonathan. following the conflict of interest between Amachi and Patience Jonathan, Ijo people, and particularly Okrika people were divided over who should take over from Amachi. Opinion, was divided on who to support, eventually Amachi fought a fight of his political life and defeated Awara.

After his tenure, who to succeed him became an issue. Amachi presented Dakuku Peterside, whereas Patience Jonathan support Barrister Wike, another Ikwerre son, with

Federal might, and fully supported by Patience and her kinsmen, Wike from Rumueprikon, triumphed, in the 2015 governorship election and equally appointed several Okrika son, such Boma Iyaye, commissioner for Youths and Sports, Deinma Iyala, commissioner for Special Duties, Tam- George, commissioner for Information, Ambassador, Harold G. Koko, Chief of Protocol. Celestine Omehia, as the governor of Rivers State in 2007, also conceived the idea of demolishing the water fronts, but was vehemently opposed by Okrika people.

Question, and questions have been asked? Why are Ikwerre governors interested in demolishing of the water fronts? What is prompting them and what do they intend to achieve? It was in the guise of this that Chief Thomas George said that the people of Okrika who predominantly are living in and around the water front communities of Port Harcourt and those stretch out to find themselves in other parts of the city have often feared that once an Ikwerre man becomes Governor, he will like to demolish these places.

So, the people have often looked at Ikwerre men with suspicion. Therefore, when Governor Omehia, made that pronouncement of demolishing their habitat, the first of its kind, it became convincing to the people of Okrika, that their fear, was real. This, is to a reasonable extent, why Okrika People, became apprehensive and believed that there was an Ikwerre agenda on the ownership of Port Harcourt. This assertion in the view of the researcher may be correct when one look at the political composition and ward delimitation in Port Harcourt. Through political gerrymandering, no Okrika man have been elected as the major of Port Harcourt in recent times. This is inspite of the fact that, Okrika areas are more populated than Rebisi areas. This is the reality on ground. Situation like this, at the political level, couple with land issues, over the ownership of Port Harcourt, has created a very serious acrimony between the people of Okrika and Diobu (Ikwerre) and this, has diminished the prospect for peace, as the people of Okrika, are no longer happy about their marginalization in Port Harcourt, this posed threats, in their relationship. Overall, though there has been tension and near conflict situation over the ownership of port and in the political space, they still enjoy robust relationship that covers trade, concubinage, marriage, individual friendship and other strong areas of corporations

Summary and Conclusion

This research has successfully brought to light Okrika relations with her immediate neighbour the Ikwerre people. The study vividly revealed Okrika's diplomatic and inter-group relations which was first predicated by trade which was beneficial to both groups. The study has also shown that the Rebisi and Evo of Ikwerre have had long-standing relations with Ogoloma/Okrika. The people of Okrika

controlled the European trade which passed through the South-Eastern part of Ikwerre land to other hinterland markets called Obiatubo located in Isiokpo and Akpor communities (Alagoa and Fombo, 2001).

The study further revealed that before 1900, the various city states of Niger Delta of Nigeria, regardless of their rash environment, had contacts among themselves and other kingdoms inside and outside of the Niger Delta. They were linked together during the pre-colonial period and this linkage were influenced by commerce, political and cultural relationship. One social-political relation that determined the fate of Okrika-Ikwerre social political and diplomatic relations was the establishment of Port Harcourt within the second decade of the 20th century. The establishment of Port Harcourt and the ownership claim was one main event that distorted the existing relations between Okrika and her Ikwerre (Rebisi) neighbours. It is crucial to note that Okrika and their Ikwerre, Diobu (Rebisi) share very close social relations. The two groups, Ogoloma people of Okrika and their Diobu (Rebisi) Ikwerre neighbours had very close economic and social relations as they traded together in markets like *Ahia makara*, *Ahia Kalabo* and *Nwaja (Waja)* located at present day Trans-Amadi axis of Port Harcourt. The trade between Ogoloma (Okrika) and Ikwerre (Rebisi) after several years, brought about social relations and acculturation through intermarriages between Ogoloma-Okrika and Rebisi Ikwerre.

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