The Diplomatic History of Orashi Region in the Pre-Colonial times to 1914

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Abstract.

Diplomatic history of Orashi Region in the precolonial times to 1914 constitutes the multifaceted communications and exchanges between actors, history of war and peaceful co-existence, peace-making/peace-building and the activities of great men and women. This study is more concerned with the ways of influencing decisions of people, communities, and states through dialogue, negotiation, warfare, atavism, trickery, treaty, accommodation, lobby and truce. These ways of influencing decisions are primarily conducted by an "accredited" or selected envoys to achieve national or self-interest.

Diplomatic history has come of age in Africa. Formally, when we talk about diplomatic history, historians and social scientists hurriedly rushed into European diplomatic history, forgetting that Africa, the cradle of human civilization had diplomatic intercourse across national boundaries. The reason for this awe and inkling was because of the intellectual, technological, political and economic world dominance of Europe or European culture for the past several centuries ago.

From time immemorial, political entities, be they tribes, city-states, nation states, kingdoms and empires had engaged in diplomacy of some sort within and without for economic and political interests and preservation of territorial integrity. Apart from war, some forms of diplomacy have existed throughout recorded history among all people (Orugbani, 2006:1). Rourke (1993:284) also alluded that diplomacy is as old as recorded history and almost certainly even pre-dates it. Biblically, the ancient king of Babylon, Assyria and Egypt, the cradle and melting pot of human civilization sent envoys to negotiate with other rulers as early as 1500BC. Biblically, the queen of Sheba visited king Solomon of Israel in 950BC on what would be called a contemporary diplomatic mission (Gbenenye, 2004:5, 1kings 10:1-13). Even Benin had diplomatic relations with Portuguese (Lisbon) in 1514 (Smith, 1976:20). From the end of fifteen century (1494) some of the coastal states in West Africa had continuous diplomatic contacts with Western Europe. No community, state and

empire can claim the monopoly of diplomacy unlike capitalism, socialism and the modern nation state 1648.

In Africa, the development of diplomacy emanated from the need to settle inter-communal wars and negotiate peace. In Orashi Region, commercial relations and the need to seek solution to common problems and security, played great part in the development and expansion of diplomacy. European historians, ethnographers and economists have dismissed everything Africa even diplomacy because of the absence of written records. "Our books are in our heads and the mouth of the old man may smell bad but it says salutary things", have really justified African history and culture. Like I said earlier, Africa diplomatic history has come of age permitting a wide range of scholarly contributions with much more interdisciplinary approach, making it vast international study dominated "'by no single national or methodological tradition". This heterogeneous or heterodoxy has granted an emporium of new ideas, scholarship and acted as a bulwark against the intrusion of orthodoxy. Realism and idealism are the two pronounced and highly controversial schools of thought which dominated the discourse of international relations. In the mid-20th century, more complex and broad theories like Marxism, conflict theory, dependency, political economy theory, modernization, linkage theory, constructivism, world system theory, system theory, etc. have been permitted into diplomatic history.

Diplomatic history deals with the history of international relations between states. Diplomatic history tends to be more concerned with the history of diplomacy while international relation is the totality of relations among actors and non-actors in the world society. International relations deal more with current events and creating a mode intended to shed explanatory light on international politics while diplomatic history tends to concern itself with the past relations and its management between states, noting the elements of changes, thereby providing scholarly answers to fundamental questions like what relations and interactions existed in the past between two or more states? When and how it happened? Was the relation of cooperation or conflictual? Was it of competition, warfare and diplomacy? Was it of conquest, hegemony and lordship? Was it a centre and periphery relation? What were the consequences and lessons of what happened? These questions helped the researcher to have coherent accounts of the past in order to synchronize the interconnectedness or continuous interaction between the past and present relative of the subject under review. Hence, the relations of communities must be seen as a complex of conflicts and cooperation embracing hundred of situations in some of which power is virtually at stake and others of which mutual convenience is the real issue (Orwa, 1985:2).

Diplomatic history is the study of how societies related, interacted and pursued their interests in the past either through negotiations, diplomacy, threats, exchange of benefits, flattery, accommodation of interest, alliances, trade, politics, loyalty and or war. The major aim of interaction is to secure interests. When peaceful means was incapable to secure interests, acute, unhealthy and cut throat competition, intrigues, diplomatic manoeuvre and warfare became the available instruments. War occurs when dialogue and diplomacy has gone to the low ebb and bulging zeal to do violence took centre stage.

The diplomatic history of Orashi Region is not recent as conjectured by scholars. Diplomacy is found in some communal societies and had evolved independently by people in the parts of the world (Smith, 1976:7). There were times priests, councils of elders, *Umuada* (first daughters) *Nwada* (son or daughter of married daughters), chiefs, local chieftains and war commanders acted as ambassadors to inter-village squabbles or wars. Before the outbreak of any war, concerted efforts were made by communities to prevent it. Diplomatic envoys made up of kings, chiefs, councils of elders, war captains, *Nwada,* and *Umuada* were sent to broker peace. When diplomatic approaches failed, ultimatum was sent by one of the communities to the other, whether it wanted peace or war. These local ambassadors were donned with distinctive emblems and regalia to show that they were sacrosanct and assumed dignified demeanour to impress other communities that they were different. For example, children born out of marriages either inter-communal or inter- ethnic marriages could be sent for peaceful settlement of conflicting issues at stake. Those children could not be lynched or molested by his uncles or mother's kinsmen being seen as part of their blood relation. Marriage, an ancient institution, which had hitches, intermediaries were sent for peaceful settlement. Those son(s) and daughter(s) and many other reputable dignitaries sent as envoys derived those special privileges and immunities enjoyed by diplomats today. In 1864, when Abbi Amachree of Kalabari, a capitalist during the palm oil commerce, after hearing of the good news of Alambo's waterloo, his opponent to the Kalabari's kingship throne, immediately delegated Chief Okubo of Udekama (Degema), a blood relation to Akalisuo (Engenni warlord) to negotiate a truce (Osaih, 2020:10). Alkalisuo having considered the blood relation and Chief Okubo's flatteries (attribution of strong names), which is a diplomatic technique of the emissaries accepted the message that restored peace leading to the opening of the passage up to the Engenni-Orashi River to Oguta (ibid).

Before European presence in Orashi Region, there were large proportions of relations carried out in Orashi through peaceful commercial and diplomatic means. Trade, culture, migration, marriage, war, peace and other ties existed between communities and states.

Scholars of international relations or diplomatic studies have variedly showed how important cultural relation is to the survival and continuity of international system. No man or community is an island, that is why it was abundantly satisfied in all aspects to associate. In fact, the political and economic survival, prosperity and decline of communities depend on how well it could manage the relationship either through friendship or of warfare that is maintained with her neighbours. Communities were not isolated from each other; instead they interacted and inter-related peacefully and no community was self-sufficient. Diplomatic relations rested on the axiom that no society or world economy was autarkical (Osaih, 2019:93). Jones (1963:13) averred that neither the eastern delta nor their hinterland were self-sufficient in their economy. Alagoa (1970, 1971) and Ikime (1977) stated that social relations in the Niger Delta were hinged on inter-dependence. This was the major reason why different scholars of academic repute such as: Ake (1981), Hopkins (1973), Austen (1987) and Zeleza (1993) avidly averred beyond ritual equivocation and reasonable doubt that economic factors (substructure or base) determined the superstructure of any society.

One basic aspect of any cultural group is its history. It constitutes its identities, national consciousness and a unifying factor. This study is an attempt to critically reconstruct the diplomatic history or history of diplomacy of the Orashi people in four categories ranging from intra/inter-communal relations (conflicts and cooperation), inter-state/communal relations, (competition, warfare and diplomacy, inter-regional relations (coastal-hinterland relations) and Orashi people in international politics and diplomacy.

Intra/inter-communal relations (conflict and cooperation): At foundation, the Orashi Societies fashioned out an effective and smooth-running cultural, socio-economic, political and religious systems to survive in their environment. They interacted closely with their neighbours. They were linked in various ways. There were forcible links created by wars which resulted to conquest. There were more beneficial links of trade via cultural fusion, or borrowings, intermarriage, movement of people and exchange of ideas from one community to another. Like the Niger-Benue, there was constant traffic on the Orashi and Sombreiro Rivers as the waterways linked various periodic markets, as various villages and clans linked and interacted in terms of inter-group relations. Some of these periodic markets in Orashi Region were/are: Ahoada, Omoku, Erema, Akabuka, Ede, Mbiama and Abua markets. Those markets in the past and at present provided material goods to satisfy biological and social needs. To travel to those markets were either on the river through the canoes or on foot along the jungle and forest parts linking one community and its market with another. It was always a precarious and arduous task when travelling along the bush parts and the river. When the need for local markets could not satisfy the needs of the expanding population, internal long distance trade came up and to overcome the

insecurity and the precariousness associated with long distance trade, diplomatic finesse of accompaniment of the brave came up. Traders secured the help of the brave, bi-linguists and travelled in groups with weapons to ward off any impending attackers (Osaih, 2020:62).

Some aspects of the relations between communities constituted a seed bed of conflicts over fertile land, fish pond and fishing sites, control of trade and trade routes, and economic resources. In course of business transactions in the markets, debts were incurred and awkward and vulgar exchanges of words, which fanned the embers of conflict. Some of these minor conflicts turned into lasting friendship. To ensure confidence and trust, traders entered into oath-taking to ensure faithfulness and payment of debts as at when due. Sometimes, traders often acted as inter-community ambassadors for information dissemination to another community, informing them of their august occasions of festivals, burial, traditional marriage celebrations, and sport or wrestling contest, and masquerade dances (Osaih, 2020:66). There were also degrees of cultural exchanges among Ogba and Ekpeye, Abua and Ekpeye, Erema and Ihugbogo, Ede and Igburu etc. Visiting groups were not expected to carry any foodstuffs and equipment as such was alien to sense of Orashi hospitality. Visits were reciprocated for the host to suffer the same privations. They were clothed, fed and entertained. The families of Erema, Akabuka, Oboburu etc. made permanent traditional friendships with families in Abarikpo and Ubirama villages of Ekpeye respectively. In addition to these cultural interactions, Ogba and Ekpeye regarded themselves as descendants of common progenitors (*Akalaka*). This was expressed in their sayings, *Ekpeye Nwa-Akalaka* and *Ogba Nwa-Akalaka* meaning the son of Akalaka.

In sporting (wrestling) activity, it will be out of ignorance to conjecture that wrestling contests between communities were absolutely peaceful. There were times two rivals broke into an open conflicts. Erema-Abarikpo 1763, and Erema-Ihuagbogo 1700 had wrestling conflicts. When the conductors of the game were unable to settle the conflict, the elders of the two villages sat down together to resolve the issue peacefully. Conflicts beyond them were taken to revered oracles, which were regarded as impartial judges and the priest of the oracles with divine wisdom, performed such religious tasks of peaceful settlement of conflict. Among the famous judicial and religious institutions that united and settled individuals and Orashi villages were those at Etche Ozuzu(*Amadioha*), Arochukwu(*Ibiniukpabi*), umuneoha (*Igwe-ka-ali)*. Suffice it to say here, that being impartial centre to obtain justice without fear or favour, the people from far and wide consulted those spiritual centres. This cultural diplomacy resulted to bi-linguism and mutual intelligibility in dialects. The examples to these linguistic affinities are:

Igbo	Ogba	Ekpeye	Ikwerre	English
Offo	Owhor	Owhoh	Owhor	Staff Or Symbol Of Authority
Ishi	Ishi	Ishi	Rishi	Head
Ato	Nwaeto	Bhito	Eto	Three
Ala	Ali	Ele	Eli	Land

(Osaih, 2020:19, Williamson, 1987:13). It is very clear from the above; there are similarities among Orashi language internally and externally.

Orashi people were peaceful lovers to the point that they facilitated their cultural diplomacy with common understanding and covenant which became the bedrock upon which treaties, alliances, establishment of boundaries, development and protection of trade and trade routes, payment of tributes between dominant powers as a tributary were made. Nevertheless, they were all approximations of continuous diplomacy. The Engenni people had a common understanding and affinity with their neighbours never to engage in war (Osaih, 2020:5). There were also traditional non-aggression pacts between Erema and Ihugbogo villages. These were expressed design entered into to promote peace and mutual co-existence in pre-colonial times.

Cooperation between communities did not preclude conflict and vice versa. There were at times, these diplomatic relations were broken down and war became rift. War occurred when communities and state could not convince one another through diplomacy, war, a state of open hostility became in inevitable. Some aspects of relations between communities constituted a seed bed of conflicts. Conflicts over fertile lands, fish ponds, trade rivalries, control of economic resources, warlike and oppressive rulers, maltreated travellers, abducted women, hunting escapades, plunder and forceful acquisition of moveable and immoveable properties and dominations of the powerful over the weak. Some of these intra/inter communities wars were: Erema-Obite caused by adultery and abduction of women, Ubiio-Ubeta: envy, injustices and neglect over chieftaincy affairs, Ogbugu-Oboburu 1893, Engenni-Ekpeye: trade related conflict in the market, Erema-Akabuka: undefined boundaries 1880, Erema-Okporomini: war of settlement etc. Some of these wars were not carried out with the attitude of total war but to flimsily to inflict minor injuries as a show of strength and power. Also closeness to blood relationship dictated a low level of force and sometimes for environmental replenishment. The consequences of the war were destabilization of socio-economic relations, promotion of unhealthy tension, distrust, unrest and migration. Wars can also be a means of redeeming an unjust and hegemonic situations and also for ecological balance. This was the concept of limited warfare practiced in the pre-colonial era (Ejituwu and Okoroafor, 2009:51).

Inter-Ethnic/State Relations: Competition, Warfare and Diplomacy: The issue of state formation has been an age-long intellectual debate in the social sciences and humanities. States are those socio-political and economic organizations that are characterized by centralized authority, administrative machineries and judicial institutions with cleavages of wealth, privileges and status, correspond to distribution of power and authority (Anikpo, 1991:272). The Marxist scholars anchored the rise of state on productive forces. Alagoa in his deconstructive history to Eurocentric writings stipulated that state in the Niger Delta were stimulated primarily the level of participation in the internal long distance trade and secondarily by over-sea trade (Alagoa, 1972:192-193). Those communities that exploited the internal and external trade, wealth and prestige became prevalent visavise, the poverty of the hinterland communities. The Orashi people operated a communalistic government where conducts of public affairs were explicitly driven by equity, equality, egalitarianism and collectivism. This made their social and political organisations and government smooth, orderly and efficient. A hardworking farmer or trader can suddenly rise up from great poverty to wealth/fame. Nworiza of Ogbele, a local capitalist established a state in Ekpeye due to external trade. Even Akalisuo became a central figure (monarch) due to community consensus to deliver them from constant harassment of Ekelewa, a (notorious pirate) from Ombor and other attacks from neighbouring villages. The Ogba became a kingdom due to harassing hegemony of Aboh people (Osaih, 2020:219-227). There have been cultural and economic stereotypes suggesting multiple interactions between the Orashi people and the neighbours of Aboh, Isoko, Central and Eastern Niger Delta, Ikwerre and Igbo. Tradition indicates that the cassava, yams, coco yam, palm oil, root crops, sheep, goat, cows, dogs were exchanged by the Orashi traders for salt, dried fish, fresh sea foods and some times canoes etc. Geographical and economic endowments prompted economic inter dependence. Formally, the Orashi people and distant neighbours were in a state of armed neutrality. Since local trade could not satisfy the insatiable needs of the expanding human population, traders engaged in Internal long distance trade to acquire those resources that were unevenly and inequitably distributed by nature to be redistributed through economic interaction factored by differences in climatic conditions, level of industrialization and skills. These numerous resources in Orashi Region attracted her neighbours. The economic condition of 18th and 19th centuries accelerated the relation between Orashi and her neighbours which resulted to peaceful relation and infrequent wars. The lucrative nature of slave trade between the Niger Delta city-states and the European, warranted continuous slave raids in the northern delta fringes. Slaves were acquired by the Niger Delta potentates from the Orashi and Igbo hinterlands to increase the military strength and also to be exchanged for European products. The Niger Delta city-states who were the big time dealers in slave trade incorporated some Orashi chiefs and local capitalists into the slave trade business who became wealthy. This climaxed the rudimentary slave trade in Orashi

society. Slave trade was a causal factor in inter-ethic wars. Ogbia communities raided the north of Odual in order to sustain supply to Nembe-Brass dealers. The Nembe people constantly raided Abua people which resulted to war in 1709. When slave trade ended in 1807, the mad rush and competitive spirit among the city-states of the Delta over whom controls the Orashi and Sombreiro rivers and the oil markets ensued rivalries and consequently wars and the climax of these wars were purely fought in Orashi region (Osaih, 2019:17). Each of these rivals sought to exclude each other from buying palm oil in their already conquered markets and wished to make it on their own permanently without encumbrances. They also extended their trading empires at the expense of their rivals. These incessant inter-ethnic conflicts revolved around claims and counter-claims to exclusive right over palm oil markets in Orashi Region. Akalisuo of Engenni and Nworiza of Ogbele and their compatriots were the notable new class of men that influenced trade and politics of Orashi Region in the heydays of legitimate trade by collecting trade duties from the users of the Sombreiro and Orashi River respectively. They both blockaded the rivers with their armies, an activity that was rampart among the Niger Delta city-states. Chief Barboy Alambo, with his faction resorted to militant aggression and war in order to forcefully open the blockaded, Okarki, the economic nerve centre of Engenni. This singular abrasive act was what led to war between the Engenni people and the Kalabari people at Okarki. With the support of Nembe, (the arch-rival to Kalabari) in arms and other logistics, Barboy and his warlords lost the war in 1864 (Osaih, 2020:160). When Alambo fell, Princewill exploited the opportunity and diplomatically made peace with Akalisuo and the blockade was opened, for Kalabari merchants after the conditions were met to enable them access peaceful passage to and from the hinterland markets in Kreigani, Omoku, Idu, Ndoni, Awara, Aboh, , Ozubulu, Igbo etc. Akalisuo and his men were militantly and religiously prepared and fortified to face any impending attack if any Niger Delta city-states fail to corporate and comply as usual by way of paying trade dues and homage. Asuk (2013:148) buttressed the above that New Calabar kings and chiefs woo and consolidated commercial relations with Engenni local rulers by keeping with its traditional payment of dues. These regular annual presents to Engenni rulers; "pledges were renewed and ceremonial gigs were fitted out in a very expensive and colourful fashion". A gift sent by rulers of one state to another was an expression of courtesy, friendliness or reconciliation. The gifts from the Niger Delta rulers and capitalists that passed the Orashi River was an expression of the recipient's superiority and supremo. It was a means to solicit support or neutrality against other states and to end hostility. All these were done to pursue commercial overtures without breach (Osaih, 2020:159). All participants in the legitimate trade both state and individuals have diverse historical, cultural and social backgrounds, goals and values that were dissimilar which reflected the absence of achievable consensus among various groups. This resulted to self-measures since nobody wants to be a loser. Many deployed measures of compromises, diplomacy and force to

enable them remain uppermost in the trade and politics of the Orashi Rivers. Wars sometimes ended by complete surrender of the opponent. Others ended by juju-swearing and oath-taking which were sacred and binding. This formidable undertakings entailed of a goat, fowl, or ram (*ehi*) and cooked with either yam or plantain as a lasting and remarkable memorial. In private relations of today, to ensure trust and confidence, parties engaged in oath-taking, sealed with their blood. Treaties were also confirmed by the giving of slaves and exchange of virgins. For example, the war between Odual and Nembe-Brass, the Nembe-Brass people sent an emissary to Odual for dialogue and both groups met at an island close to Oluasiri community and exchanged virgins as a sign of peaceful settlement of conflict. In land dispute, parties resorted to planting of trees to demarcate frontiers (Personal observation). The Ockiya family in Nembe is the offspring of the Odual virgin that was given to Nembe. In Emelego, the Tom's family is the offspring of the Nembe virgin. One of the conditions Abbey Princewill fulfilled before the blockaded river was opened was the official hand over of six male slaves as servants to Akalisuo, the veteran warlord of Engenni. The commercial competition, over the oil markets and control of trade routes brought financial prosperity and fortune to the Orashi traders and rulers. The rivalries/warfare between Orashi people and the Niger Delta city-states on one hand and the Nembe and Kalabari on the other hand, in the Orashi Region made life precarious while the utility of diplomacy responded to the acts of war, as a means of conflict resolution.

Inter-Regional Relations: Coastal-Hinterland Relations. The mode of life of any given people is determined by their environment. Those close to the sea develop the skill of fishing and salt making, while those in the hinterland were primarily farmers. Both depended on each other for their products. Their relations were friendly and cordial and sometimes hostile depending on the issue or interest at stake. Economically, none of them were completely self-sufficient. Environmental endowments, constraints and complementary needs were the reasons for exchange between the coastal and the hinterland region. Traders were the unofficial representatives of their communities who promoted the interest of their state in other lands. Traders serve as avant-garde of political entities. An indispensable aspect of the coastal-hinterland relations was the issue of lives and property. Traders decided to develop social and diplomatic super-structures with their commercial associates to ensure congenial & smooth-running transactions as well as securing human lives and properties (Okorobia, 1999:88-89). Marriage and concubinage strengthened this economic ties. Friendship and reliable contacts were established with hinterland traders. These were important measures to ensure safety along trade routes. Some of these social and diplomatic ties were also cemented by vows. When marriage relationship was proved inadequate and unsatisfactory, traders resorted to blood covenant as an important means of ensuring their safety along trade routes because of the insecurity

vitiated with long distance trade. It must be mentioned that there were inter-regional migrations to and from for either fishing, trading or for agricultural purpose respectively. The Nembe and Kalabari traders established settlements in Odual and Engenni villages respectively. These traders and their families were well protected and taken care of, and they prospered financially without hindrances. Relationship between them was so cordial that they were allowed to observe their traditional masquerade and other festivals without molestation. This led to inter-cultural borrowings. *Egbukele* and *Owu* dances came from the coastal region. It also led to exchanges of ideas (pottery, canoe-making, weaving etc. The *Owu* or *Ejira* dances are found among Engenni, Ijo, Epie, Atissa, Ogbia, Kalabari, Abua, Ekpeye, Odual; and Ogbogbo originated from Engenni. *Ogbogbo* found among the Nembe, Brass, Ogbia, Engenni, Degema and Kalabari originated from Nembe and the *Okpasugbilom* dance popular among the Engenni, Epie, Atissa, Biseni, Zarama, Ogbia, Okordia and other Ijo clans originated from Ijo. *Egbukele* found in Egi, Ekpeye and some Ijo clans originated from Kalabari. These relations also resulted in wars. For instance, Ogbogu-Kalabari, Odual-Nembe, Abua-Nembe, Engenni-Kalabari wars. These wars were either to control economic resources, trade routes or to open a blockade. The principal beneficiaries of the over-sea trade in slaves and palm oil were the Niger Delta city-states and European supercargoes while the Orashi region were exploited unfairly, excluded and cheated to the fullest. Most of them played subservient while others resorted to piracy and power to access foreign wealth (Okorobia, 2013:91). Some of the conflicts between the coastal traders and the hinterlands were over allegiance, claims and counter-claims to oil markets in Orashi, and this trade associated conflicts were mediated by European consuls. The commercial rivalries over Idu and Oguta axes as well as Okarki, between Nembe-Brass and the New Calabar created violent conflicts in Orashi society that led to the suspension of trade. This brought in consul John Beecroft in 1854 at the request of European trading community to intervene, to "settle a long term dispute of most serious detriment to the genuine interest of the trade". The essence of consuls sent from imperial state was to maintain peace stability, security and to ensure the loyalty of the colonies to the metropolis (Osaih, 2007:18, 2009:1) according to Ikime (1968:14), the consuls primary function was to protect the lives and property of British traders in the Niger Delta. The hostilities were temporarily settled by consul Beecroft (Jones, 1963:147). At another time, rivalry ensued over claims and counter-claims of oil markets in the Orashi region. This brought in consul David Hopkins to mediate and resolve complex claims and counter-claims by awarding the control of different hinterland markets to disputing trading states via treaty of peace. The era of consul or authority in the internal affairs of the people was the immediate prelude that watered the ground for the establishment of British rule in the Orashi of the Niger Delta Region. The trade between the coastal people and the Orashi people brought in British goods of hats, mirrors, walking stick including deadly firearms and rums which

instigated the era of gun culture, leading to the revolutionary change of warfare from limited to unlimited warfare.

Orashi People in International Politics and Diplomacy: Man, the thinker has always tried from time immemorial to develop ways to conquer natural and man-made disasters. Though, it might take long, trials and retrials and constant experimentation has engendered drastic revolutions of development.

The contradiction of capitalism in Europe, which spanned adverse effects of arresting profit and capitalization of value, which crumbled businesses, this made capitalist to look for a new environment which the centre-piece of capitalism would be achieved. The third world was the foreign land where exploitation and primitive accumulation world continued. These continents were explored, commercialized, aggressively looted and pillaged (bullionism), attacked, subjugated and colonized against their wishes. The period of this unwholesome network of activities was from 1500-1950s. Ake (1981:20) captioned graphically that Western imperialism in Africa took many hideous forms at different stages ranging from the pillage of natural resources, unequal trade and colonization. No wonder, the stories of the movement of the sons of Jacob to Egypt during one of the worst famine in recorded history or when Herod was searching to kill Jesus, the young child saviour was taking to Egypt. All these cases expressed one thing: looking for what you need in another man's territory. Whether what you seek is food or safety, the truth is you could and is able to get them whenever they can be gotten, either through the use of force, trick or barter. This was the case of inter-national politics and diplomacy of outrageous paradox, brain and brawn to sequestrate the resources of the autonomous Niger Delta people which the Orashi Region is part and parcel of. The Orashi people got themselves into the vortex of international economy after the abrupt elimination of the coastal middlemen. The deep-seated structural transformational mutations of the British economy in manufacturing, expansion of international ground breaking testimonies in manufacturing with attendant expansion in world exchange coupled with military naval weapons, trade ideology and diplomatic pressures from other competitive European countries, the existing trading relations of middlemen role of the Niger Delta city-states were altered. Those changes threatened the economic and political survival of Niger Delta city-states. As European traders penetrated inland, some people and rulers were very much interested in establishing commercial relations with the British with the hope that they would be financially gratified while others hated British intrusion like a plague. As the traders penetrated the hinterland of Orashi, conflicts arose between the British and local people. The need to secure European traders led to the appointment of consul (agents of colonialism) and the use of maxim guns to put down indigenous Orashi nationalism for the continuity of European economic and political interests. It was the defence of Orashi

people and her resources that made patriots and heroes of the likes of Nwooriza of Ogbele, Akalisuo of Engenni, Ogba warriors of Obrikom, Erema and Abarikpo which crushed the initial penetration of the consuls with the help of age group and dane-guns. The imposition and consolidation of colonial imperialism in Orashi Region was made possible by conquest, the conquest was in two phases, military and ideological. Militarily, campaigns and expeditions were carried out in Orashi Region. That was the so-called war of pacification. When military forces were irrelevant, ideological wars took the form of education supplemented by missionary fervours and radicalization, which was already in vogue became intensified (Ekekwe, 2015:41). The British used Christianity as a veritable instrument for imposing western cultures by stagnating social institutions and condemned the ways of life of the people as barbaric. Those converted to the white man's religion, viewed their culture and history as strange and became more receptive to imperial culture and apocryphal.

Consular period marked the beginning of British interference in the political life of the Orashi people and the diplomatic swing of treaty making ceded Orashi into the clutches of British imperialism. For better understanding of the roots of socio-economic and political developments in Orashi Region and the impacts of colonialism, this I did in my PhD thesis. Trade was the viable vehicle in which the European used to transport capitalism to Africa. The trade in slave and oil was purely exploitative, the system of indirect rule was a construct meant to serve British political and economic interest. Even the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Protectorate on 1st January 1914 was purely due to administrative convenience and for exploitative purpose. Nigeria became a modern nation state born out of imperialism and colonialism. The amalgamation was avidly descried by Ikime (1985:17) as geographically lopsided, ethnically incongruous and administratively absurd. It was a marriage of cat and dog. The mistake of 1914, which the British made, has not really been corrected by Nigerian political leadership.

Conclusion:

Diplomatic history of the Orashi Region is not new. It is old as man. Orashi people were not abundantly rich not to associate or relate with other communities. This insufficiency led to interactions that took the form of trade, diplomatic and cultural ties, treaty making, alliances, wars, peace, management of trade routes, boundaries and water resources, and non-aggression pacts etc. These contacts with near and distant neighbours, was accompanied by cultural borrowings, exchange of ideas and infrequent wars even before the invasion of European imperialism and colonialism. When the British finally broke the middleman role by the Niger Delta city-states, to relate with the Orashi people directly, these interactions took different shapes. The congenial and peaceful traditional diplomacy and intermittent warfare was horribly intercepted by doggedness of the British capitalistic

pursuit and unrelenting saga of imperial domination. Orashi, a small region within the Niger Delta fringe, taking on a strong bourgeois organisation in London. The show of strength and nationalistic militancy which the Orashi warriors exhibited changed to pacifism and peaceful diplomatic understanding with the British. Force, warfare and treaty of peace, the pillage of resources and colonialization that heralded serious institutional changes which circumvented traditional lines for the development of Europe and the pauperization of Orashi people.

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