The Role of Land and Border Disputes in Intergroup Relations Between Ogbia and Epie-Atissa Communities, In The Central Niger Delta

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Abstract

The Ogbia and Epie-Atissa are geographically contiguous ethnic groups, distinguished only by language. Most of the border communities are even intelligible in both languages, brought about through inter-marriages, migration and settlement. These relationships notwithstanding, disputes about use of farm-land and forest resources have become a puzzle. This research was conducted through oral evidence and some facts gotten from few available written texts, to unravel the causes of the quarrels, worsened by the contiguous topography and miscegenation. It was discovered that rivalry began mostly during the Legitimate trade, when oversea trade became lucrative. Exploitation of palm products, for instance, and land for planting newly introduced Asian and American crops, was the starting point of problems of encroaches to each other's boundaries. Evidence from linguist, indicating the ancient, indigenous origin of some plants and crops, and the diffusion of some foreign ones, deductively suggested that the Oversea trade was the starting point of inter-communal competitiveness on the use of land. Various African Traditional Dispute Resolution methods were used to settle the disagreements. These are approaches and structures developed in trying to tackle the inter-human relation arising from their bid to harness from the environment. In order to reduce the difficulty experienced in transportation through this terrain, the construction of roads, bridges and culverts have rather caused annual inundation. Studies are needed to ascertain how the floods could be controlled.

Introduction

Some key problems between boundary communities of Ogbia and Epie-Atissa borders on the application and usefulness of the African Traditional Dispute Resolution methods, which uses its cultural, religious practices and sanctions, in settling disputes. The absence of a body for dispute resolution between the two groups, caused some avoidable wars in these traditional societies. These ethnic groups were nation-states in pre-colonial Africa;

so they had the attributes and qualifications of the modern state in international law, which are: a population, a territory and sovereignty, Umozurike (2005).

The contiguity of the land and terrain was a major source of border disputes. The area covered by the two groups of our study, generally falls within the "soils of the fresh water alluvial plain**",** in Bayelsa State. This soil is divided into, first, the ones that are not flooded, second, some that are only flooded during the rainy season and third, others that are water logged throughout the year, Okonny, et al (1999). There is no measured out plan and description of portions, to ascertain the boundaries of the communities.

Harnessing the numerous species of flora and fauna was therefore, the bone of contention and still remains so. From the Legitimate era, exploitation of the forest resources, as will be seen, became contentious. Popular plants are the economically important Raphia palms (*Raphia vinifera, Raphia hookeri*). *Raphia vinifera* produce the palm wine, called *tombo* in Nigerian parlance. The *tombo* (palm wine) is then brewed through indigenous technology, producing the native gin called *ogogoro.* The *Raphia hookeri* fruit are edible, it provides Raphia fibre, the midribs of the fronds are used for building; the *Raphia vinifera* fruit is a fish poison, and edible larvae (*Oryctes sp.*) may be obtained from the rotting trunk. There is also the palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*), from which the palm oil and kernel oil are gotten. The wild palm tree out-numbers every other species of tree in this forest. The coconut (palm) is a popular and important tree planted in the Niger Delta. Crops that are planted here are cocoyams, cassava, yams, plantains, maize, etc., Nyananyo (1999).

The immediate section following the 'Introduction' is 'Theoretical and Conceptual Clarifications' which gave analysis, consequences of population movements, contact, interaction and interdependence. This will put us in the picture, to apprise and to appraise some case-studies of relations between boundary communities of Ogbia and Epie-Atissa. The Ogbia communities are Otuokpoti and Elebele, whereas, Agbura, Ekeki, Kpansia and Okaka are communities from the Epie-Atissa group.

There is a section for discussion, which bring to light the origin and diffusion of major export and domestic crops, popularly traded and consumed between the two groups. Though barter was the initial mode of exchange, we will see the currencies that were later imported that facilitated hired labour and the export trade. There is justification in the elaboration given about the origin and diffusion of currencies and crops, for the simple reason that these traditional societies had the knowhow to have received and adopted foreign items. There is therefore need to resonate how these societies adopted foreign ideas, so as to challenge the present generation in the much talked about policy of

technology transfer. Moreover, such sources as Hopkins (1973), Austen (1987), Williamson (1993), etc., from which this research benefitted are becoming scarce to come by.

Theoretical and Conceptual Clarifications

Jan Vansina's contributions on 'Population Movements and Emergence of New Socio-Political Forms in Africa', was be a major guide to this article. For instance, the concept of drift as a "gradual slow movement into new territory" and when drift occurs, old or original settlements are not deserted, Vansina (1992), was a factor in Kpansia and Elebele relationship. The movement could be orchestrated, either by taking advantage of opportunity or to escape from threats. Ethnic boundaries in Africa generally, are porous, and people go across them., Salamore (1976). Boundaries or no boundaries, people freely interacted with each other. But each ethnic group connects itself with a fraction of land on which its members conducted their economic activities. This land had its expanse which bestows them identity and as a result confers independent access from others, Okpeh (2006).

However, the material conditions of the people involved in the areas of economic and social condition within the geographical area are not static. There are five outlined progressive stages that takes place between social groups: (1) The stage of contact and interaction; (2) The stage of compromise and co-operation; (3) The stage of competition; (4) The stage of conflict; and (5) The stage of assimilation and integration, *Okpeh (2006:17*). These stages overlap and "there is no hard and fast rule about the stages…", *Okpeh (2006:17*). Migration could be a first reason and is the bedrock, from which all the other stages could be laid or determined. Jan Vansina's statement lend credence to this point, when he said, "History was but a perpetual movement of waves of migrants colliding with each other and by chain reaction triggering off other migrations", *Vansina (1990:16*).

The "chain reaction" will depend on the strength of the immigrant or the hospitality or hostility of the autochthones. In view of that, the attendant relationship could be compromise and co-operation. It could possibly result to the third stage of competition. It is the fallout of these relationships that could trigger off conflict, as the fourth stage.

Inter-group therefore, is the way in which two or more groups associate, connect, relate with each, or among themselves. The two attributes which inter-group relations hinge on, namely: (a) interdependence, and (b) contact and interaction, are key features of society. This is subject to the understanding, in the first place, that man gets his means of sustenance from his environment. Due to variation in ecosystems, possibly by human

causes or climatic changes, man must move out of his environment to get what is produce in the next environment. So, societies depend on each other for the basic necessities of life, *Okpeh (2006*).

A basic idea that needs reiterating, as we progress, is that many of what are now called ethnic groups were nation-states in pre-colonial Africa. They had the attributes and qualifications of the modern state in international law, which are: a population, a territory and sovereignty, Umozurike (2005). Ikime (2006) seemed to confirm this when said "Anyone familiar with the history of the delta states will recall that these states … each saw itself as a sovereign state, and competition among them for available resources in their peculiar terrain was a recurrent feature of their history".

Case-Studies:

Otuokpoti and Agbura Relations

Oral account supported by few published texts had it that Agbura migrated from Tarakiri to their present location, and met Otuokpoti landowners, Yakie (2010:12). While Otuokpoti claims that they gave Agburra a place called *Ogboro* to settle, which is along a creek called - *Ologekpo*. Agburra abandoned this site and moved to a place called *Onue*. Their action was said to have brought suspicion. An informant, King A. C. T. Wongo (incumbent paramount ruler of Otuokpoti), said the then ruling king of Otuokpoti, relocated the Agburra people and settled them in their present location, by the Ekole river.

With time, the Agbura people invited or brought people from Delta (Urhobo) to harvest palm fruits, and received royalties. The Otuokpoti people kicked against the Agbura action, on the ground that the Agbura community as tenants, cannot receive royalties on the land not belonging to them. Agbura, on their part, claimed that they are part of Epie-Atissa and that they were using resources belonging to the Epie-Atissa clan. This degenerated into inter-communal war, a clash over the use of land and resources between the two communities.

Interpretation of Traditions

In order to find a chronology to the Otuokpoti and Agbura relationship, the first to look at is the migration and settlement stage of Agbura. As said above, this period must have occurred during the pre-colonial period. This could be during the Atlantic slave trade era, when people are forced to move from place to place due to slave raiding. Some communities that had abandoned their original homes to hide, due to slave raids, relocated at the beginning of the legitimate trade. Writing on the Cape Farmosa Communities of Liama, Egwema and Beletiama, Okorobia (1999:213) said, "it was after the eclipse of the

slave trade that they re-established their present settlements at the bank of the Akassa Creek linking the Brass River to the Nun River." The Agbura relocation to the Ecole River could therefore, be deduced to be, after the eclipse of the slave trade and the beginning of the legitimate trade. This was also evident even from the oral account of Agbura invitation of Delta (Urhobo) palm cutters, from which products – palm oil and kernel were significant trade goods during the period in question.

The resultant war between Otuokpoti and Agbura, as attested by oral accounts, must have taken place during the middle or later part of the second decade of the 20th century. This date could be reasonably proposed, using relative dating technique, inferred from the available absolute date. It has been said that in 1911, the Niger Delta Palm Nut Cracking Company opened a base at Yenagoa, Yakie (2010:38). Agbura action of bringing Delta (Urhobo) palm cutters, as testified by oral account, was possibly to increase harvest and then to multiply the quantity transacted at the Niger Delta Palm Nut Cracking Company. Otuokpoti, in reaction, must have warned, sought for a moment of truce, before belligerency. Presumably, all these must have taken place few years after 1911.

J. G. Nkem Onyekpe presented the view that "colonial Nigeria was incorporated into the British capitalist system as an appendage to meet the industrial raw material requirements of factories in the mother country…Initially the peasants depended on wild oil palm trees and communally owned palm grooves for fruits", Onyekpe (2012:188-189). British colonial administration of Nigeria began in 1900, Tamuno (1980:393). J. G. Nkem Onyekpe who wrote on the West Niger Igbo communities mentioned that Orhobo and Ukwuani planters were required for rubber planting in the area. Agbura people invitation of Urhobo to cut palm fruits implied that the Orhobo people are specialist in the harvest of these economic trees required by the colonial economy.

It should be noted that the exports of palm product was a response to industrial growth in Europe, which led to a rise in the demand for oils. Palm oil was used in the production of soap, lubricants and candles. Lubricants were required to oil the new machinery, especially the railways. Palm kernels were only needed much later, which was for the manufacture of margarine and to process the residue for cattle food, Hopkins (1973).

Elebele and Ekeki War

Another notable event in the relations between boundary communities of Ogbia and Epie-Atissa, was a war fought between Elebele and Ekeki. Yakie (2010:43) only mentioned in passing, without giving details that there was war between Ekeki and Elebele in 1892, in

which Chief Emem of Elebele died at Ekeki Epie. Oral account gave the name of the Elebele victim to be Emom or Ibom, but added that an Ekeki man also died.

The Ekeki victim was said to have invited Emom or Ibom of Elebele, to settle an adultery case. The Ekeki man had married a wife from Elebele but a Kpansia man was suspected or alleged to have committed adultery with her. That the Ekeki man provided *Ibeki emi* (a jar or clay pot of *ogogoro* (native gin), equivalent to 12 bottles), as the summon fee.

At the end of hearing of the adultery case, Emom did not pronounce guilt against the Kpansia man, accused of the adultery. The complainant, that is, the Ekeki man, suspected foul play, since Kpansia has historical link to Elebele. He demanded a return of his *Ibeki emi*, the summon fee. A messenger sent by Emom to Elebele to bring the *Ibeki emi*, misinformed the Elebele community. Instead of saying Emom was not allowed to leave Ekeki unless and until he returns the *Ibeki emi*, the messenger rather said, Emom had been held hostage and might be killed before Elebele could plan for rescue.

Consequently, *Odini Okuru* (six warriors) were sent by Elebele and the warriors were rather surprised on arrival at Ekeki that a meal was instead ready for the messenger and any expected visitor or guest from Elebele. But since the *Odini Okuru* from Elebele did not come with the *Ibeki emi* and were rather armed, the Ekeki complainant pointed a gun at Emom, who also responded in pointing a gun. Both fired and killed each other at the same time. There are said to be other casualties, as the six warriors fought their way out of Ekeki to Kpansia.

Among the *Odini Okuru*, Ogbara with the surname Okuru-Kuru was said to possessed mystical powers, symbolized in his *aguo ikpe* (shoulder wrapper). When the *aguo ikpe* is thrown down on the floor, Ogbara changes to *Okiti Kiti* (python). The creek at Okaka was eventually their route of escape to Elebele. However, Ogbara who married Ekeki wife, stayed back unhurt and later left to Elebele.

The oral informant could not give any date to this event. We are left with the date, of 1892, Yakie (2010:43). There is an inclination to accept this date, bearing in mind that a native court was only established at Sabagriea in 1904, which jurisdiction covered Epie-Atissa, Yakie (2010). The adultery case would have been summoned and decided there.

The background of the conflict, as given by oral account, was rooted in some form of social and political settings. Ideas from peace and conflict experts will help to narrate and give understanding to the events that culminated or climaxed the physical confrontation

between Elebele and Ekeki. The Ekeki man going to Emom or Ibom, and employing his services, satisfied the African Traditional Dispute Resolution method, which applies non-conventional peaceful ways of settling disputes. This is a method that resolve conflict, the outcome of which it preserve relationship. African Traditional Dispute Resolution uses its cultural, religious practices and sanctions in settling disputes. There are two categories of persons or authorities that can settle a dispute. The first are the paramount rulers in centralized state systems. The second is a prominent person or sub-chief, whom the society reposes trust and respect, Best (2006:93-115).

Elebele and Kpansia

An oral informant narrated that Kpansia was given land to settle by the Yenezie-Epie community. Since the land was not enough, the Kpansia people used lands belonging to Elebele, being their ancestral home. Initially, there was no problem but the continued incursion of Kpansia into Elebele land, brought quarrel. In order not to allow this issue of use of land by Kpansia to escalate, the then head of Iko family (the informant's father) from Elebele, demarcated the land. It was easily settled, since, Elebele knew and accept the fact that Kpansia traced ancestry and migrated from Elebele.

Peace and conflict experts will group the methods adopted by Kpansia and Elebele, as communication and negotiation, an Alternative Dispute Resolution method. In the communication condition, for instance, they shared and received information between delegates in the conflict condition. Thus, Kpansia and Elebele were able to talk about their feelings, position and interest and so, resolved amicably. Alternative Dispute Resolution seek for and apply non-formal methods to settle disputes and resolve conflicts. The two parties in the conflict state will use ways that will carry on relationship after the conflict state of affairs comes to an end, Best (2006:96). This method of Alternative Dispute Resolution was the best for Kpansia and Elebele, based on their ancestral connection.

Elebele and Okaka

Elebele and Okaka had land dispute in the early days of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) of Nigeria Limited, operation in the area. It should be noted that Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) is the operator of a joint venture in which NNPC holds 55 per cent, Shell 30 per cent, Elf 10 per cent and Agip 5 per cent. The forerunner of SPDC, Shell D' Arcy, pioneered oil exploration in the Niger Delta (covering the area of our research) and discovered the first commercial field at Oloibiri in 1956, SPDC Diary (2000).

In the Elebele and Okaka quarrel over land, the dispute did not escalate into war but they had gone to court. In the instant case, an informer, Chief Peter Ogbarisi, said Okaka withdrew the matter, when Elebele went for the services of a legal luminary, Chief Gani Fawhaemi. Peace and conflict experts classify this method under adjudication. In this method, legal counsels represent the parties in a court of law, Best (2006).

In more recent times, land disputes are recorded between Elebele and Okaka with the establishment of the Bayelsa Palm limited. An informant explained that the Palm Estate is called Elebele Rison Palm because Elebele's portion of the land is the largest. He gave the names of the communities which owned land with the Rison Palm Estate as Elebele, Otuokpoti, Okaka and Azikoro. Apart from boundary disputes, the nomenclature of the palm estate was a bone of contention. The argument of the other communities was that there should be an acronym to reflect the joint ownership of the land, or none of the communities' name be used.

In order to get government's view and response on the issue of nomenclature and dotted boundary disputes, the researcher made several visits to the Bayelsa State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The then Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Dr. Edio Promise Ekio, eventually booked 12th of September, 2017. A copy of a 19-page government report, titled, 'Business Plan for Bayelsa Palm Limited' was presented to the researcher. The Head of Engineering Department of the Ministry, Engr. Adou Donbara David, explained on the issue of nomenclature and said the Bayelsa State inherited the palm estate from the old Rivers State, during the asset sharing in 1996, after the creation of Bayelsa State out of Rivers State. He further said the Bayelsa State Oil Company has acquired additional land for expansion which extended to impact Otuoke, Ewoi, Opolo, and Okutukutu communities. The first two are Ogbia and the rest are Epie-Atissa communities respectively.

On the question of the likelihood of boundary disputes, Engr. Adou Donbara said the State government is taking preemptive measures, involving the clan heads of Ogbia and Epie-Atissa, as members of the Land Demarcation Committee. The Committee will advise Government on matters arising from land demarcation and disputes therefrom.

An examination when the name Elebele was given to the palm estate, page 10 of the report, 'Business Plan for Bayelsa Palm Limited' with a sub-title "History", only said the

> *Bayelsa Palm Limited was originally part of the 'Low-land Oil Palm Project Yenagoa (LOPPY)' initiated by Rison Palm…*

> *… the LOPPY project was funded by a tripartite counterpart funding arrangement between:*
> *a. The Federal Government of Nigeria,*
> *b. The Rivers State Government/Rison Palm,*
> *c. The World Bank, using the Soc-finco Group as its consultancy firm and the European Economic Council (EEC) playing a supervisory role on its behalf.*
> *… By virtue of the asset sharing exercise in 1996, 16,000Ha of the original 29,000Ha earmarked for LOPPY project was given to Bayelsa state.*

The report went further to say that in the year 2,000, the Bayelsa State Government under Governor Chief D.S.P. Alamieyeseigha, sought to revitalize the Bayelsa State owned portion of LOPPY project and consequently re-branded it the **Bayelsa State Oil Palm Company**.

This section of the report concluded that the catchment communities, by 2005 and 2006, included Azikoro (46Ha), Elebele (503.7Ha), Okaka (25Ha) and Otuokpoti (637.3Ha).

The report did not however, mention any time nor reason of using Elebele as the name of the project. But a clue to the possible origin of the nomenclature of Elebele comes from Allison-Oguru, et al (1999:380). The authors said:

> *This agricultural Parastatal which later transformed into a partially privatized government-owned company was established in 1975. It inherited the 1,042Ha oil palm estate established by the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDC) at Elele. Since then, it had developed additional 15,486Ha, of oil palm estates at Elele (4,525Ha); Ubima (9,490Ha); Elebele-Ogbia now in Bayelsa State (1,083Ha); and Bori (388Ha).*

The name Elebele must have been subjectively given by the then "partially privatized government owned company-Rison Palm Limited", when it expanded in 1975. Moreover, Elebele was the only impacted community in the area at the time.

Discussions/Conclusion

In pre-colonial times, there was no much trade between the two groups under discussion, for the reason that farming was on the basis of subsistence; providing only for the daily need of the family. In the few instances of trade, the medium of exchange was by barter. There was no specified or agreed unit of measurement in the barter system. Customers agreed on the quantity they need to swap on their different items.

It should be noted that alongside the barter system, there were currencies in use at a later time. But these were not popular. The currencies were manilla (locally called *andaigbogi*), cowrie shell (*okoba*), pound sterling, and trade goods such as gin, tobacco, and cloth. The manilla was brought into circulation by the Portuguese in the late fifteenth century. The British first imported manillas in the early eighteenth century. The British pound was transferred to the West African Board upon its inception in 1912. The manila was valued at 3d. each in the Brass-Bonny area, Naanen, (1993:427). The area of our research was under the Brass District, later Brass Division, Alagoa (1964:6). Cowrie shells were imported into West Africa from the Persian Gulf by European shippers, Austen (1987:45).

The inception of legitimate trade gave boast to the forest produce, particularly oil palm and later kernel. At this point, the currencies were utilised for the export trade and had the attributes of modern money. Each one acted as a medium of exchange, as a common measure of value, as a store of wealth and as a standard for deferred payment, Hopkins (1973). Correspondingly, the currencies aided or helped the rise of wage labour force, with the noted case of Agbura hire of Orhobo palm cutters (harvesters), and the development of specialised export producers. The contact with other continents also introduced new crops, producing food for the internal market; for instance, cassava is a staple in the diet of these cultures under our research.

Among the trees and crops available in this area, the oil palm, Raphia palm, yam and possible few others are said to have prehistoric origin in the West African forest, Williamson (1993). The yam (*Dioscorea* spp.) is called in Epie as *adja* and is called *elel* in Ogbia. The general name of 'yam', linguist said, usually refers to the various species of Guinea yam (*Dioscorea cayenensis, Dioscorea rotundata*). That the Guinea yams are indigenous and that there are traditions of their being developed from wild forms, Williamson (1993:147). There are important economic species of timber: hard and soft woods, and other non-timber forest products, associated with this zone.

Whereas, majority of crops that serve as staple in their diet were actually of foreign origin. For instance, cocoyams, wateryam, bananas, and plantains reached West Africa by way of the Near East between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries A.D. The coming of the Europeans in the wake of the Atlantic Slave Trade led to the introduction of cassava (*Manihot esculentum*), maize, etc., into West Africa. The source of supply was South America and the Portuguese were the channel of diffusion, Hopkins (1973:29).

Kay Williamson using linguistic evidence, gave the names of crops in many native languages in Nigeria and their possible historical origin and diffusion. The oil palm (*Elaeis*

guineensis) is called in proto-Edoid (the linguistic group that the Epie-Atissa belong), as *udi*, and in the Central Delta, which are Ogbia languages, as *ade.* That the oil palm was familiar to the speakers of Proto-Atlantic-Congo, indicating its ancient origin in West Africa. The Raphia palm (*Raphia vinifera, Raphia hookeri*) is called in Epie as *ukon* and Ogbia called it *oghol.* This tree also appears to be Proto-Atlantic-Congo, suggesting indigenous origin too, Williamson (1993:143-144).

The coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), as attested by the linguist, has native language pronunciation indicating European origin. For instance, Nembe, a neighbouring Ijo dialect, calls it *beke imbi* (meaning European nut). That the Epie and Ogbia names of the coconut as *okokodie* and *okokodia* respectively, derived their root from the Portuguese *coqueira*. That the linguistic evidence suggests that the coconut palm was introduced by the Portuguese, Williamson (1993:144).

However, the wateryam (*Dioscorea alata*) is being suggested to have a Nigerian southeast coastal entry point from the southeast Asian complex. This plant has cultural importance in this part of Nigeria and it is called *adja fina* in Epie, is ascribed as 'female yam'. Cocoyam (*Colocasia esculenta* and *Xanthosoma mafaffa* - old and new names respectively), is called *okile* in Epie, whereas Ogbia calls it *okida*. Williamson said both wateryam and Cocoyam are plants from the southeast Asian complex and could have been introduced in similar ways from the same area. The plantain (*Musa paradisaca*) and banana (*Musa paradisaca-var, sapientum*) were also introduced from the same southeast Asian complex, Williamson (1993:148-151).

The frontiers of Ogbia and Epie-Atissa are contiguous, making it difficult to ascertain boundaries. Therefore, exploitation of the forest and river resources, land use are the causes of the inter-communal disputes. For instance, a creek has its mouth at Okaka community, meandering through Azikoro, to Agburra town, then flows through Otuokpoti. From Otuokpoti the creek has different names at various points (*Ologekpo, Omomobhia, Ibhari-Iginia, Onuogboro, Odideli,* and *Omi*), which eventually joined the *Atua* creek. From the left, the *Atua* creek meanders to Elebele; while the right direction leads to Otuoke, Otuaba and Otuebula II. Another creek, called *Okiko* passed through Ewoi town, ending at a massive swampy area in Otuoke. A road from Onuegbum to Otuoke now runs through the swamp, with low bridges and culverts (for the drainage of water). Our informants-Mr. Lambert, Pastor Emmanuel Egede and Elder Manson Oru furnished the names and routes of the creeks that crisscross this area.

In the Business plan of the Bayelsa Palm Limited report, at page 11, the name of Atua creek is called *Owubio*. It is the official name, believed to have been given by the Nembe middlemen, who also used the creek during the legitimate trade. This creek was the route of the local trade network that existed between the Ogbia communities and those of Epie-Atissa.

An informant, Mr. Lambert Merley, who hails from Otuokpoti, pointed out how the Okaka side of the creek has been made impassable at the Isaac Boro Express way. This road was constructed between 1999 and 2004, by the first executive governor of Bayelsa State, Chief D.S.P. Alamieyesigha. Low bridges and culverts are also constructed across this creek that meanders through the communities of Azikoro, Agbura to Otuokpoti.

The mode or means of transportation through this creek was the use of canoe. The route of this creek, between Okaka and the Ogbia communities, runs parallel to the main Ekole River. The creek was preferred to the wider Ekole River, as a hide-out from slavers; and later, during the legitimate trade, the creek served as escape route to those who default in paying duties. This was for the reason that a hulk was anchored midstream by the confluence of the Ecole and Nun Rivers, which challenged canoes to pay duty on their produce, Yakie, (2010:41).

A road now runs through the Atua (Owubio) creek and adjoining swamp, with low bridges and culverts constructed, for the drainage of water. Instead the drainage of water, recent annual inundations in Bayelsa State are attributable to the low bridges and culverts constructed across creeks and swamps. However, further studies are needed to determine specifically, how floods could be controlled under the circumstances.

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