Towards Effective Implementation of Alternative Dispute Resolution Strategies in Conflict Management: The Experience of Nembe-Brass, 1895-2023

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Abstract

This paper examined the effective application of Alternative Dispute Resolution Strategies in conflict management in Nembe-Brass with emphasis on the use of indigenous methods. The primary objective of the study is to ascertain the use of indigenous approaches to conflict resolutions as alternative to western approaches. The study employed the primary, secondary, and the multidisciplinary approaches in its collations and interpretations of data. It made use of the Structural functionality theory in its analysis. The study stressed that conflicts in Nembe-Brass started from the family setting and gradually metamorphosed to the larger society. The research revealed that claims to ownership of land, conquest and territorial expansion, competition for natural resources, trade monopoly, siting of basic infrastructure, chieftaincy tussles, political crises, cultism among others are the main causes of conflicts in Nembe-Brass. The study further revealed that indigenous methods such as oath taking, libation, Summon before a God/Goddess, Court Of Appeal – Ibidi Kiri (adjudication/litigation), adjudication and litigation, mediation, conciliation, dialogue etc were means through which conflicts were addressed. The paper recommended indigenous approaches should be adopted in as alternative means of resolving conflicts in the Niger Delta. The study concluded that conflict is a natural phenomenon that affects all

societies of the world, as such, requires sincerity, competence and indigenous methods in addressing it, as none effective methods, may lead to disastrous outcomes.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Management, Indigenous Diplomacy, Alternative Dispute Resolution

Introduction

Alternative Dispute Resolution Strategies which is well known for its vitality, endurance, and eternal relevance, is one of the most developed aspects of African civilization. Its application in traditional African societies manifest in diverse forms such as oath taking, libation, negotiation, sending of emissaries, kings courts, use of deities among others. According to Nweke (2012), the traditional institutions are indigenous political arrangements through which moral leaders are selected and installed in accordance with their indigenous conventions and laws with the mandate of ensuring peaceful coexistence within their domains. These indigenous methods of alternatively managing disputes are usually managed by the political institutions has persisted to re-define itself for greater relevance despite the changes and adjustments brought about by modernity. In the majority of Nigerian cultures and communities, it has continued to be the dominant traditional system of conflict resolutions and has played an active role in the management and settlement of conflicts, particularly in the conflict-prone Niger Delta region (Isaac, 2003).

Isaac (2003), stressed that, despite the fact that traditional African institutions were not equivalent to Western institutions in terms of structure, administrative procedures, substance, responsibilities, or privileges attached, they nevertheless created a similar level of social and political cohesion in their respective communities as was found in Western countries at the time. The cohesion, tranquility, and safety of kingdoms, chieftains, and communities were greatly reliant on the good leadership and protection of the kings, chiefs, sub-chiefs, and community/family leaders, chief priests, oracles, ancestors who composed the hierarchy of the traditional institution. These individuals and institutions were responsible for maintaining order within their respective communities. Disagreements were settled through the process of customary arbitration, with the

chief receiving assistance from elders who were designated as customary arbitrators at the village and state levels. This study will therefore examine the application of indigenous methods of conflict resolutions as a channel of Alternative Dispute Resolution Strategies in conflict management among the Nembe- Brass people from 1800-2022. It will examine the role these institutions play in the sustenance of peace and harmonious relations.

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts are inevitable in any society and as such its management is a collective effort. In the Niger Delta, so many communities have experienced different conflicts that have lingered over the years. In many Bayelsa communities, for instance, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Strategies have helped to maintain/negotiate peace, by introducing and applying indigenous conflict management strategies in the handling of conflicts. Despite the efforts made by the people in the maintenance and settlement of disputes, not much has been recorded about them, particularly as regards to Nembe-Brass. Against this backdrop, therefore, this study will examine the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution Strategies with emphasis on indigenous approaches in conflict management in Nembe-Brass from 1895 to 2022.

Land and people of Nembe-Brass

The people of Nembe-Brass are among the Ijaw speaking tribe of Bayelsa State, who had settled at their present home about hundreds of centuries ago. According to Alagoa (1964, p.4), the name Brass was given to natives who lived and transacted business on the Rivers Nun, Brass and St. Nicholas. According to this view, the early European traders who had earlier contacts with these people noticed that the indigenes were hard and difficult bargainers who often referred to their customers as "Barasin" literarily meaning "let go" which implied that, if the price of a product was not right, the buyers (Europeans) should leave. Following this development, the early European traders nicknamed the people as the "Barasin" people, which was later corrupted to "Brass" (Alagoa, 1964). Conversely, Ama-Ogbari (2018), however, argued that, the expression "Barasin" referred to the ungodly practice of the European traders who were fond of touching the native female traders on sensitive organs. Thus, the reaction of these female traders to this attitude of the

European traders was the resultant expression "Barasin". However, a third school of thought has it that Brass, a "metal" was used extensively during trade transaction along the Rivers Nun, Brass and St. Nicholas during the early European contact, and this might have formed the background of the name "Brass". Following from the above, the name Brass might have originated from either and /or any of the above postulations. In Brass Local Government Area, the Nembe dialect of the Ijo language of the present Eastern Ijo groupings is spoken in the area. That is, Tuwon (twon), Okpoama, Odioma, Enoama and some communities around Nembe.

Nature and forms of conflicts in Nembe-Brass

The nature of conflict in Brass Local Government Area, is similar to that obtainable in other traditional African societies, particularly those of the Niger Delta states. In Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa, conflicts are expressed in different forms and in different contexts and society. Some of the notable forms of conflicts as enunciated by Kachii (2019) are:

i. **Relationship Conflict:** This form of conflict are said to occur because of the presence of strong negative emotions, misconceptions or stereotypes, poor communication or miscommunication or repetitive negative behaviours.
ii. **Data Conflict:** Data conflict occurs when people lack the information necessary to make a wise decision, and are misinformed disgraced on which data is relevant, interpret information differently or have competing assessment proceedings.
iii. **Interest Conflict:** Interest conflict is caused by competitor over perceived incompatible needs. Conflicts of interest result when one of the parties believes that in order to satisfy the needs and interest of an opponent must be sacrificed.
iv. **Structural Conflicts:** Structural conflicts are caused by forces external to people in dispute. Limited physical resources or authority, geographic constraints, time, organizational changes and so forth can make structural conflict to seem like crises.
v. **Value Conflicts:** Value conflicts are perceived or actual incompatible belief systems. Values are beliefs that people use top give meaning to their lives.

Value explains what is "good or bad", "right or wrong", "just or unjust" (Kachii, 2019).

Causes of Conflicts in Nembe-Brass

According to Okaripre (2023), the causes of conflicts are multi-faceted among families, communities, towns, cities, countries and the societies at large. However, the major conflicts to be examined in this study could serve as sample of what is obtainable in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, and that similar to other communities or societies. The causes of conflicts in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State like in many other regions of Nigeria and in the world are classified into economic and political causes. They includes but not limited to the following:

- **Discovery of Crude Oil (Economic Cause):**

Once intergroup relations between the communities in Brass became sour, it was evident that conflict was inevitable. At the discovery of crude oil in 1957 at Itokopiri in Otuabiyi land in Oloibiri, many prospecting oil firm rushed to Nigeria to partake in the process, which the Nigerian Agip Oil Company was one of them. In 1965, the company struck oil, however, actual production started in 1970 at Ebocha in Rivers State. According to Ama-Ogbari (2018), Brass Local Government Area has accommodated the Nigerian Agip Oil Company for well over thirty years. The company (NAOC) occupies more than 990.01 acres of land in Twon-Brass, a land sub-let to them by Tenneco Oil Company of Nigeria. Nonetheless, at the discovery of oil, and the subsequent building of the Brass Oil Terminal at Twon-Brass, different groups/communities became enemies and began to fight each other so as to gain control of the royalties accruing from the exploration of the crude oil minerals (Ama-Ogbari, 2018).

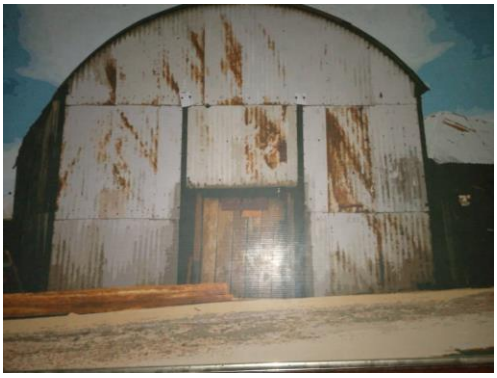
On the 20th of February, 1971, specifically, Chief Kieriboyegha Cameron, Benjamin Abali Shidi, and Christopher D. Ngeri-Sambo signed the Tennaco Oil Company for the lease of nearly one thousand acres of land at Twon for the establishment of an oil terminal. The Brass oil terminal built by the Nigeria, Agip Oil Company under a sub-lease agreement with Tennaco was officially commissioned by General Yakubu Gowon the then Head of State, Federal Military Government of Nigeria on the 21st of December, 1973. (Douprebo, 2023). The Twon-Brass Agip Oil exporting

terminal is on the Atlantic Coast about 100km West of Port Harcourt and 500km South East of Lagos. It is a two and half hours' drive from Yenagoa in Bayelsa State capital and about 140km South accessible by boat or helicopter. The construction of brass terminal started in July, 1971 and began operation in April, 1973. The Terminal comprised more than twelve tanks and can take millions of barrels. The oil is pumped from storage tanks with overall storage capacity of more than three million barrels through a 36 sea line to the location point which consists of a bolly capable of receiving more than 250,000 ton and tanks (Ama-Ogbarai, 2018). Other oil stations that also pump gas and oil to Twon-Brass terminal included Akiri, Egegoro, Eboucha, idu, Kwale, Obrikom, Oshi and Tebidaba. A prominent feature of Agip operation in Twon-Brass is the Agbara plat form. It is located some 45km from NAOC offshore terminal at Brass Local Government area.

On a more specific note, the discovery of crude oil and the building of the Twon-Brass oil Terminal is Brass Local Government Area led to the Beletiema/Liama/Igbabele conflicts from 1996 – 1997, and the Odioma/Bassambiri Nembe conflict in the 90s. The fall out of the discovery of crude oil in Brass Local Government Area, gave rise to the penchant for the expansion of land and land ownership and ownership of titles of land. The discovery of crude oil usually is the remote causes of most of the land conflicts in the area. This is because when an oil well is located in your land, this goes to show that the community has a lot of benefits from the oil well location (Keremah, 2023).

Fig. 1: The Agip Residential Building and Warehouse in Twon-Brass





Source: Fieldtrip **Date: 14/07/2023**

- **Land Ownership/Expansion and Ownership of Titles**

The expansion of land, boundary disputes and land ownership has caused a lot of violent conflicts amongst communities in Brass Local Government Area. These land conflicts in Brass Local Government Area heightened as a result of the discovery of crude oil and the attendant profits and gains that accrue from the oil companies operations. The conflict between Odioma and Bassambiri in 2005, was caused by land at Obioku community. It was a conflict for the ownership of Obioku land and its resources by both Odioma/Bassambiri Nembe (Ayebaifiemi, 2023). The conflict led to the killing of some local government councilors and a pregnant woman at Nembe during the chairmanship of Hon. Walter Odogu as the Chairman of Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Historically, Obioku community was founded by one Mr. Ibologi, his father from Bassambiri Nembe, while his mother from Odioma. He went and settled in a land owned by Odioma. But when crude oil was discovered in Obioku land at Odio Creek by Shell Development Company of Nigeria, there was clash of interest on the ownership of the land. But in the year 2004, a conflict started on the ownership of Obioku Ama or community between Odioma and Bassambiri and in 2005 it led to loss of lives (Ayonimite, 2023).

Another conflict caused by land is the conflict between Twon-Brass and Okpoama in 1986, Twon-Brass and Okpoama in 1996 and Twon-Brass in 2002. Okpoama claimed the land from the community to the water tank close to Twon including Ewoama as its land. Then, Twon also claimed ownership of the land from the community to the Airstrip, including; Ewoama Town which led to the razing down of Ewoama. This conflict attracted the government of Baeylsa State during the leadership of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as the Executive Governor of Bayelsa State but between 2007 and 2008, Gov. Timipre M. Sylva rebuilt the community when Hon. Douprebo Ikuromo was the Chairman of Brass Local Government Area. We also have the Beletiema and Liama conflict of 1996-1997 which was caused as a result of land, but, the remote cause was crude oil. There is also the Akassa and Koluama conflict over ownership of the land at fish town in 1999, the Egwema and Akassa conflict in the year 2000 caused by land, and the Egwema and Liama conflict between 2012 to 2014, also caused by land/land boundary with crude oil well as the remote cause of the conflict (Otonte, 2023).

- **Conquest and Territorial Expansion**

Conquest and territorial expansion is seen as another cause of conflict in Brass Local Government Area. Historically it is believed that the ancestors of Twon-Brass came independently from Benin passing through Iselema (Itsekiri) to the Ijo area, then to Obioma in Okoroma district and to their present place of abode. (Ama-Ogbari, 2018). Although, the Benin origin had not been confirmed from independent source, it is evident that their secondary dispersal point from Obiama may be correct. According to E.J. Alagoa (1972 p.46):

> "… a further stream of immigrants also from Benin was called Obiama. They came in search of fishing grounds but became pirates and a pest to the Nembe people who combined to waged a war against them. They sued for peace and permission to settle among the Nembe people. This was refused and they went down river to the cost and settled at the mouth of St. Nicholas Brass and Nun Rivers and forming the towns of their own known as Twon, Okpoama (Big fish town), Iwama (small fish town), Beletiema, Akassa, Odiama, Ologbobiri and Ebelema.

The above goes to buttress their claim that their ancestors independently came from Benin. The dates of their settlement were shrouded in the dist. Researchers have not been able to give a definite time to its foundation and settlement. However, a comparative study of neighbouring societies had shed light on the time of their settlement. A study of Nembe History by Tepowa confirmed that these coastal communities, including; Twon, witnessed incessant attacks and harassment from Nembe until the reign of King Forday Kulo, Mingi IV, Amayanabo of Nembe who reigned between 1800 – 1832 brought a truce to the region. According, Alagoa (1972 p.36),

> it was in the days of the famous King Kulo that these people (Obiamas) enjoyed perfect freedom in Brass and up to this day the memory of King Kulo is green in the minds of Twon people being always mentioned with sentiments of sincere respect and affection.

Consequently, rivalry and strife was at the center of the relations between the Obiama and the Nembe, which snowballed to the fighting between them.

- **Competition over Natural Resources**

This is at the center of virtually all social relationship, hence, it is very alarming to see communities/individuals, and towns in Brass Local Government area scrambling over land and crude oil, amenities, (Kachi, 2019). Family members scramble for the proceeds from the oil prospecting and servicing companies for contracts, job orders, scholarships etc. and who should have a dominant control over such proceeds, contracts, job orders, scholarships etc. indeed completion over natural or mineral resources is responsible for most of the conflicts in Brass Local Government Area (Oruabere, 2023).

- **Insensitivity to the plight of the Citizenry**

Been insensitive to citizens yearning especially from various representatives is also another major cause of conflict in Brass Local Government Area. Government leaders remain insensitive to salary payment for civil servants, oil company workers, lack of job creation, and adequate provision of basic amenities, insecurity which are catalysts of building into social conflicts (Beye, 2023). However, conflict take place due to growing poverty, misappropriation of public funds, high sense of corruption, and even failures to meet peoples basic human needs (Kachi, 2019). A case in mind was the recent youths Twon-Brass conflict with the Amayanabo of Twon-Brass, HRM King A.P Diete-Spiff and his council of chiefs in 2022/2023.

- **Citing of Basic Amenities**

The citing of amenities by government and other multinational oil corporations have always been a source of conflict in Brass Local Government Area. Retrospectively, right from the consulate days when the vice-consul was posted to Twon-Brass by British protectorate government in 1891, Twon-Brass had served as the seat of administration for an extensive area, covering the present Brass, Nembe, Ogbia, Southern Ijaw and Yenagoa Local Government Areas. On the creation of Rivers State in 1967, government followed the established pattern to develop the first five divisional headquarters namely, Port-Harcourt, Ahoada, Brass, Ogoni and Degema known as PABOD (Douprebo, 2023). At this point, there was a serious conflict between Twon-Brass and Okpoama when it was announced by the government to site certain development projects in Twon-Brass, being the divisional headquarters. These include a Secondary School, Catering Rest House,

Low Cost House and a General Hospital. This disagreement arose due to Okpoama's claim over the land where these projects were to be sited (Ama-Ogbari, 2018).

Again, in 1970 Twon-Brass community leased about 1000 acres of land to the Tenneco Company which was later sub-leased to the Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC) for development as an oil terminal. After the signing of the agreement, Okpoama wrote a letter to Agip claiming the entire land to be their own. In 1972, Okpoama attempted to survey the land area of Twon-Brass itself, claiming the land as its own. This action nearly resulted into a bloody clash between the two communities. In 1986, Twon-Brass and Okpoama was at the verge of another conflict over a piece of land of Twon-Brass that had been made available for the state government for development as a fish farm. Okpoama consulted a law firm that wrote to the state government and Twon community on the matter. When the matter became intolerable, the Twon-Brass chiefs in 1988 took the opportunity to write the late Amanyanabo of Okpoama, Justice K. Saint Sagbe drawing his attention to all the provocative activities on the part of Okpoama and requesting him to refrain his Chiefs form indulging in such frivolous, malicious and provocative adventurism likely to set the land on fire (Akonu, 2023).

- **Clash of Beliefs/Ideology**

Belief systems are also sources of conflict in many Nigeria communities. Because individuals differ, so also are their religious beliefs. Thus, the non-alignment of these belief, sometimes, drag individuals into direct conflict. In Brass Local Government Area, conflicts are said to arise when people's beliefs, religious and political views clashes. Since they are sensitive issues, and also a sense of identity and belonging, individuals seldom go to any length to protect their beliefs and what they hold dear to heart. For instance, in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, there are mostly issues of political conflicts among the different political parties in almost all the general elections held from 1999 to date, which have resulted in the death and destructions of lives and properties like the one in Okpoama in 2019 (Otonte, 2023).

- **Trade Monopoly**

Trade monopoly is one of the causes of conflict in Brass Local Government Area. This could be traced backed to the 19th century, specifically to 1895, during the reign of Queen Victoria, when the trade monopoly by the Europeans, particularly led to trade monopoly in the then Niger Area. This trade monopoly which led to the raid in the Royal Niger Company, Chartered and Limited at Akassa by the Nembe speaking people and other neighbouring clans like the Ogbia and Bassan/Koluama people popularly called the Akassa Raid. The Akassa raid was the most important occurrence during the reign of King Fredrick William Koko, Mingi the VIII, Amanyanabo of Ogbolomabiri – Nembe who led the raid on the 29th day of February, 1895 (Fiepreye, 2023). The cause of the Akassa raid was trade monopoly by the Royal Niger Company through the Royal Charter. Ogiriki-Ockiya stated thus:

> The cause of it was the trade monopoly in the Niger claimed under Royal Charter, granted to the National Company in 1886 by the British government; and as the best part of that Nembe trade was done in the Niger in the primitive days, their sphere of action became much limited in consequence (Ockiya, 2018 p.23).

The Royal Niger Company stationed at Akassa had absolute monopoly of trade in that part of the Niger Delta. They took firm measures to protect its interest by enacting stringent regulations to control the trade within its areas of jurisdiction. The regulations prescribed sundry fees as licenses to be paid before any outsiders could be allowed to trade in the area (Ama-ogbari, 2018). Fees were stipulated for specific and general licenses. For instance, Eke-Spiff contends:

> … that the license for trading in spirit alone cost £100 per annum. In addition to a general license of £50. These licenses apart, a trader must pay a separate fee of £10 as port dues for every port of call at which he intended to transact business. On completion of payment of these numerous fees and licenses, the trader had to report at the company's base at Akassa and pay a duty of two shillings per gallon on his trade spirit after having paid one shillings a gallon at Brass. After the completion of business transaction, the trader

> would again report and pay an export duty of 20 percent on the value of all produce (|Eke-Spiff, 1970 p.10)

In the light of all these numerous and heavy financial taxes, levies and dues, the Brass man was worse affected. These payments were very strangulatory and in order to get out of the financial burden and to be afloat in business, the Brass man resorted to smuggling. However, the RNC was quick to react to the activities of smugglers to prevent smuggling; RNC imposed a heavy fine of £500 for any trader caught in the act. Besides, there were great risks involves in smuggling. A smuggler that was caught was subjected to all forms of inhuman treatment or even killed; his canoe and goods often confiscated by the company. This intolerable situation persisted until Frederick William Koko ascended the throne as Amanyanabo of Nembe-Ogbolomabiri in 1889. Koko became King of the Nembe kingdom at a period of impending crises, beside his personal qualities such as youthfulness, about 40years old when he became king and well educated, he acknowledge the other elderly and older chiefs in the kingdom and its neighbours. But as the Amanyanabo and Christian king, he became automatically the Amanyanabo and chief priest of the kingdom, Koko being a Christian and well educated could not understand why the Queen of England, Queen Victoria who brought Christianity to his domain should feel unconcerned when his people were being tortured and killed by the company's agents because of trade. He was also surprised at the utter indifference of the protectorate government with a vice-consul at Twon-Brass over plight of his people (Ama-Ogbari, 2018).

With the passage of time, the chiefs of Nembe-Brass made frantic efforts appealing to the British parliament to take steps to relieve them of the economic strangulation and were joined in the protest by some British firms which were not under the jurisdiction of Godie. Even Bishop James Johnson in the area intervened but to no avail. The incident that broke the camel's back, however, was that of a Nembe woman who travelled to the hinterland to buy foodstuffs, but was apprehended, assaulted and smeared with coal far from head to foot by agents of the RNC. When eventually she returned to Nembe, she narrated the gruesome experience to the people and her forbidden appearance moved everyone to seek revenge on the company (Michael & Ikiabo, 2023). After much consultations with the chiefs, elders

and Amanyanabos of Ogbolomabiri, Bassambiri, Okpoama, Twon and other neighbors like some Ogbia communities such as Agholo, (Kolo), Oloibiri, some Ijo communities such as Kaiama, part of Sabagreia, Tombia and Peremabiri lent their support by attacking Royal Niger Company at Akassa on the 27th of January, 1895, the Brass people attacked and raided the Royal Niger Company premises at Akassa now popularly called the Akassa Raid. This raid was caused by trade monopoly by the Royal Niger Company (Sele, 2023).

Again, the raid was initiated and executed mainly by the king of Ogbolomabiri-Nembe because the present Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, part of Ogbia especially the Southern side of Ogbia from Otuegila to all of Oloibiri clan and Anyama clans, and part of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State were under the sphere of influence of the Nembe kingdom in those days. The only area that was not under the influence of the Nembes in Ogbia are the present Kolo creek, that is, from Agholo (Kolo town) to Etegwe II (Aga, 2023). The Kolo warriors were able to protect the incursion, invasion, and expansionist tendency of the kings of Nembe. This resistance by the Kolo warriors and the killing of the Nembe ceaselessly led to the Oath/Covenant taking between the Agholo (Kolo) people and the Nembe people for a peaceful co-existence. The covenant was made to protect one another and it was sworn and sealed at a forest in-between Otuegila and Otakeme because the sphere of influence of the king of Agholo (Kolo) starts form Otuogidi to Etegwe II near Okarki at the Orashi River which is the original Kolo creek (Otonte, 2023).

Not losing sight of our focus on the Akassa raid as the consequence of the trade monopoly by the Royal Niger Company, the Royal Niger Company chartered and limited went so far as to molest, an seize all Nembe speaking people and all other places under the sphere of influence of the Nembe king-trading canoes they happened to see in the lower Ijo markets, firing, and killing many people, even as far as to the Akassa creek which leads to the Brass, Twon River, and based on this, king Koko the Mingi of Nembe being the supreme king of the area, invited the king of Bassambiri and the principal chiefs of both sides, the king of Okpoama and his principal chiefs; Twon and other kings and chiefs from the sphere of influence of king Koko in a mass meeting to deliberate on the activities of the Royal Niger

Company and its effects to the economic life of the people. After many deliberations, it was unanimously agreed that "To die by the sword is far better than to die of Hunger" (Ockiya, 2008). Based on the outcome of the meeting convened by King Koko, the Nembe people and the people under the area of influence of the king referred to as the Brass people raided Akassa, the then Headquarters of the Royal Niger Company, chartered and limited on the morning of the 29th of January, 1895 (Ockiya, 2008).

During the raid, several clerks and orwo boys were killed whose heads were carried off to Nembe – as trophies; many were brought as captives to Nembe, the majority of whom were executed in cold blood the next day at sacrifice island and feasted upon (Ockiya, 2008). About four (4) people died on the side of the Nembe fleet at Akassa; one from the canoe of chief Felix Smoke Amabebe by named Akemegha Dogu, a son of Chief Dogu, one from Chief Daniel Kalango's canoe named Idoni and two (2) from Okpoama named chief Igula and Debi during the raid. But it is difficult to estimate the damages done to the company upon the raid, some of the things damaged on the raid by the Brass people that Akassa were trade goods, furniture, dresses, and fittings of all sorts were looted, some arms and ammunitions etc. none of those carted away were released to Her Majesty's government except a few dollars and other things as invoices. About twenty-eight (28) of the captives were eventually released by the Christian chiefs namely; Chief Christopher Warri, Chief Nathaniel Yekoroha, Chief Uriah Cameroon, Chief William Samb, Chief Sidi and others. In consequence of the raid, a punitive expedition was sent by the government of the Oil Rivers Protectorate (now Southern Nigeria) under the command of Admiral Bedford and Sir Claude Macdonald on the 20th of February, 1895 to Nembe. Nembe – Opgbolomabiri and Bassambiri were bombarded. Okpoama was also bombarded by the British punitive expedition. After the bombardment, the skulls of those slaughtered about 32 in number were handed over to Consul Harrison on the 20th of July, 1895. These skulls were the ones buried at Twon-Brass that they are today referred to as the "white man's grave" that is now a tourist attraction (Oruabere, 2023).

However, after the bombardment by the punitive expedition of the British government on Brass/Nembe people, a commission of inquiry was set up to look

into the cause of the raid led by Sir John Kirk with one Captain Arthur who arrived Brass on the month of June, 1895 (Ockiya, 2008). After the sitting it was discovered by the commission of inquiry that the cause of the raid was as a result of the fact that the grievances of the Nembe people were that from time immemorial, they had been charter granted to the National African Company and in consequence of their stringent laws enacted, the Nembe people were not allowed to carry on free trade in the Niger and as they had no other better markets, they were all reduced to want; vide Sir John Kirk's report (Ockiya, 2008). This goes to show that trade monopoly was the cause of the Akassa raid as shown in the Her Majesty's report of inquiry. Those that represented the Nembe/Brass people in the commission of inquiry were: Chiefs Christopher Warri, Nathanel Yekorogha, Thomas Ockiya, and David Kleriama. While in the part of the company was Joseph Flint and others.

Fig. 2: Remains of the Royal Niger Company Warehouse in Akassa





Source: Fieldtrip **Date: 14/09/2023**

- **Cultism**

The conflict between Isongufuro and Isena-asawoi that later metamorphosed to Teme cult group in Saturday July 20, 2002 at Ogbolomabiri-Nembe. In August 18, 2002, there was the establishment of the headquarters of Isena-asawoi that transformed to Teme Cult group whose spiritual leader and priest Oseiikiobekuma Clever lives there at Odioma. Membership of the Teme Cult groug according to Weekly Star Newspaper of August 18, 2002 is drawn from Ogbolomabiri, Odioma, Okorma, Twon-Brass, Ogoni, Peremabiri and Bille (Dambo, 2006). The guiding principle is for all member communities to be protected by any member community threatened by an outside force, retaliation by all on any community that attacks a member community and solidarity of all member communities in

flushing out opposition in a member community. They were so solicitation that the welfare of a member community is the pigeon of all and this had helped to build a solid bond in the Alliance (Akonu, 2023).

Due to the activities of Isongufuro and Isana-asawoi Cult groups, 18 people were killed and many more wounded at Ogbolomabiri-Nembe on July 20, 2002. In 2004, DSP Alamieyeseigha (JP) intervened in the activities of the cult groups but to no avail. And finally on February 19, 2005 the activities of the cult groups led to the invasion of Odioma town headquarters of Isan-asawoi cult by the Federal Government of Nigeria military forces which sacked all citizens, killing a dozen more. The Nembe Council of Chiefs intervened but it was agreed that an oath be taken to stop the killing which was taken by Beletiama, Eguema and Liama. Fiefamokuma Pepple, was the juju priest that went to administer the oath which is from Odioma, a juju called Etielekia god – god of war (Pogo, 2023).

- **Greed/Self-Interest**

Nigerian Agip Oil Company was politicized in terms of employment, the provision of basic amenities and scholarship by the Twon people on other host communities in the Brass Island like Okpoama and Ewoama. Employment and the award of educational scholarship as well as award of contracts was lope-sided in favour of Twon community. The other social basic amenities like electricity, Twon-Brass had electricity from NAOC. Five (5) years before Okpoama and Ewoama got electricity because the contract was awarded to HRM, King Aip Diete-spiff, the Amanyanabo of Twon-Brass (Ayonimite, 2023).

- **Absence of Truth**

Lack or absence of truth among the elders and chiefs of the families, house or group of houses and war-canoe houses as well as members of the chiefs Council/Amanyanabo's Council is one of the main cause(s) of conflict in Brass Local Government Area. Members of the Amanyanbo Council, elders and houses/family elders in Brass Local Government Area have been economical in telling the truth about the real history of their communities, land ownership, land boundaries between communities and other neighbouring communities. Sometimes the truth is half-truth. This absence of truth form the chiefs and elders

in the true history of lands/land boundaries amongst families, communities etc. has led to laying claims to land/land ownership with the advent of the discovery of crude oil in the area. The land conflict between Akass/Koluama in 1999 in Brass and Southern Ijaw Local Government Area in 1999 over the ownership of fish town (Aga, 2023).

The lingering land conflict between Twon-Brass and Okpoama which led to loss of lives in 2002, Bassambiri-Nembe and Odioma of Nembe and Brass Local Government area over the land ownership of Ekebeleama near Obioku in 2005, the conflict between Akassa/Egwema in 2000, Egwema/Liama 2012-2014, Beletiema/Liama 1996-1997 etc. and as all these conflicts continue to linger, the living elders, chiefs, Amanyanabos who knows the real ancestral lands/land boundaries have refused to speak the truth thereby encouraging perpetual land conflicts in the area coupled with the crude oil discovery in the area (Sele, 2023).

- **Chieftaincy Tussle**

Chieftaincy struggle/tussle is one of the major cause of conflict in Brass Local Government Area. Chieftaincy tussle has made some families and communities in Brass Local government Area to be unstable. In Okpoama the conflict in the Ayah group of houses has made the leadership of the family unstable. It led to the death of Chief Ebitimi Dore Sile Ayah in 2021 and his predecessor, Chief Athanasius Erefagha Benson-Ayah in 2012. The same chieftaincy tussle also led to the founding of the Ewoama country in Brass Local Government Area by some members of the Ayah group of house. In another case in point is the Ewoama and Okpoama conflict in 1990 and 1998 in the Ayah group of Houses (Sele, 2023).

Peace building and peacemakers have also adopted arbitration in managing conflicts in Brass Local Government Area. In clear terms arbitration is the reference of a matter/dispute between not less than two parties for determination after hearing both sides in a judicial manner, by a person or persons other than a court of law of competent jurisdiction (Ama-Ogbari, 2018). This is the rise and assistance of a neutral third party in conflict who hears the evidence from both parties and thereafter gives a verdict usually called ahead which is expected to be binding on the parties (Yebei, 2023). A case in point is the formation of the commission of

inquiry into the trade conflict between the Brass people and the Royal Niger Company at Akassa popularly called the Akassa Raid which sat at Twon Brass in June, 1895 led by Sir John Kirk. The Beletiema and Liama conflict in 1996, the Okpoama and Ewoama conflict in 2002 among the Aya group of houses.

Indigenous Diplomacy and Alternative Dispute Resolution strategies in Nembe-Brass

Style is seen as the manner of doing or presenting things especially a fashionable one or particular way in which something is done, while management could be seen as the judicious use of means to accomplish an end (Michael, 2022). This is the skill or act of dealing with people or situations in a successful way. Hence, conflict management or handling style could be seen as a particular means of managing conflict that will bring about peace or de-escalate or that will not degenerate to a crisis situation (Michael, et al., 2022). The indigenous nature of conflict management is usually embedded right from the time which are aboriginal, locally, owned, historically and culturally attacked and religiously emphasized to be observed. Hence, the dictum "I am, therefore you are, and since you are, therefore, I am" depicts the aboriginal characteristics of the nature of African community and Brass people inclusive in conflict management.

The unity of all members is reiterated and the search for peace and collective coexistence is an ultimate goal that is initiated and promoted. Management of conflict indigenously becomes effective and permanent solution based on the aboriginal system which produces more effective as in resolving conflicts because the traditional people or indigenous people seeks reconciliation system, which produces more effectiveness in resolving conflicts because the traditional indigenous system, seeks reconciliation, restoration and sustained relationship between standard rules as instituted (Kachii, 2019).

The styles in conflict management among the Brass people is basically reconciliatory, therapeutic and in extreme cases capital. It is because it mainly fosters peace and co-existence and also rehabilitate or compensate those deemed through injustice right form the home before venturing into the community architecture of conflict management (Keremah, 2023). Hence, the nature of

indigenously style of conflict management among the Brass people is almost similar to the real African setting in conflict management. It is worthy of note that taking into consideration the period under discourse from 1800, the present Brass Local Government Area was with the present Nembe Local Government Area and the indigenous management style had some links with the Nembes as well. The indigenous management styles as practiced by the Brass people are categorized by their standards which were indication of the grievances of the cases (Okutuate, 2023). The management styles as practiced by the Brass people included:

- **Oath-Taking**

An oath is a solemn pledge declaration or promise to a god, king or another person to attest to the truth of a statement (Michael, et al., 2022). This is the affirmation of the truth of a statement. Oath or Ezo or Oath Swearing or taking (Ode-Ezo) is one of the conflict management strategy used by the pre-historic and pre-colonial Brass Local Government Area people especially on matters where the disputants are not satisfied with the verdict of the council of elders or Paramount Ruler or Amanyanabo, especially on land dispute (Michael, et al., 2022). It involves the disputants swearing before a shrine on the true ownership of the said property by libation to the god with local gin or by putting the soil of the disputed area into a glass of local gin and stating their case after which they drink the gin. Judgment or the strategy is always given to the gods, hence, it is spiritual. The guilty party incurs the wrath of the gods which might be dangerous (Michael, et al., 2022).

It could be in the form of madness, death, serious ailment or other calamities. A case in point is the 2012 land conflict between Egwema/Liama/Beletiama conflict in the cape Formosa Island in Brass Local Government Area. The Nembe Council of Chiefs intervened in the matter and it was unanimously agreed by all parties involved in the conflict that an oath be taken by all those involved in the conflict to stop the wanton killings and to put an end to the conflict. In the Oath taking, the chief priest of the Odioma god called Ebelekia god called Mr. Fiefamokuma people was contacted to come and administer the Oath to all the parties concerned. The Oath was taking by the Egwema, Liama and Beletiama people in 2014. The god as used because Belekia god is the god of war (Okaripre, 2023).

- **Avoidance**

Avoidance is the act of annulling, a state of being vacant, putting, and quitting or the act of summary and keeping clear of. It is the state of not showing interest, commitment in trying to ignore (Michael, et al., 2022). Avoidance as a conflict management style is the systematic display of lack of trust or postponing and not addressing the issue at the right time. Brass Local Government Area people have adopted this style of managing her conflicts with her neighbours such as Kula in Rivers state, Nembe-Ogbolomabiri and Bassambiri, Koluama in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area.

- **Mediation/Negotiation**

Meditation and negotiation are some of the oldest styles used to manage conflicts in the traditional African society. It is a situation where a third party comes in to try to hold talk between the conflicting parties, to help in brokering peace among them (Michael, et al., 2022). In precolonial, colonial and postcolonial Brass, as Toipre (2023) averred, chiefs of families, Houses and war canoes houses mediate on conflicts. Sometimes, the sacred "Sekapu" Masquerades group mediates on conflicts amongst individuals or group of individuals.

i. The family

The management of a conflict or threat to peace, and order is first handled at the family level by the head of the family. The head of the family could be the father and in the absence of the father, the most eldest son or daughter settles the matter between the aggrieved members of the family. The matter settled could be minor quarrels or disagreements on land etc. if he could not settle the matter alone he can invite some other responsible and respectable person of impeccable character and integrity to join in the settlement of the matter. If he is unable to handle the matter he reports to the elders of the house. This is done because in Africa, issues are managed and resolved reconciliatory (Yebei, 2023). To bring peace and harmony through arbitration, the family is the primary agent in peace and reconciliation, followed by the leaders of the family – which formed the nucleus of law and resolution and management of conflicts. The next are that a matter could be settled in the Brass area indigenously is the House Chief level.

ii. House Chief

According to Douprebo (2023), the next indigenous style of conflict management is to report any matter or grievance to the house chief who is usually in charge of all the families. He heads the group of families. In the settlement of a conflict, he invites the elders of the various families to form a college of elders that arbitrates in any matter apart from crimes that involves death. Even death, the house chief can settle it in collaboration with other house chiefs. Any conflict that the house chief cannot manage or resolved has to be reported to the head of the group of house.

iii. Group of Chieftaincy Houses

The chieftaincy houses or group of chieftaincy houses comprises of about five (5) houses and above. It is headed by one chief of a House. They are usually men of good character, high integrity, brave, wise and intelligent people with lots of experience in Public Service. The group of chieftain houses usually sits to arbitrate on conflicts reported to them. They handle the matter with all sense of duty, dedication, commitment and service to the family and humanity. Since African and Brass in particular believes in peace, harmony, reconciliation and communalistic life, the group of chiefs ensured that the matter is managed and resolved amicably through arbitration. The Brass people believed in win-win case unless in issuers that involved death. The guilty is usually given a fine to pay as a sigh of deterrent to others (Okutuate, 2023).

Chiefs of the group of houses ensures that peace returns to both sides to the conflict because if the individual are not at peace then the family will not be at peace, the house, the group of families and the community at large. The stability of the family up to the group of houses brings peace, stability and progress to the community. So the group of chieftaincy houses is a microcosm of the community (Okaripre, 2023). The good and progress of the community depends on the good and progress of the family, houses and group of house, so, the group of chieftaincy houses participate actively in the administration of Justice in the community in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State since pre-colonial times. In some cases, chiefs of other group of chieftaincy houses could be invited to assist in managing and resolving a conflict through arbitration Sekiapu.

The Sekiapu is a masquerade dancing club. It is a male dancing troupe. It has been in existence since pre-colonial times up till date in Brass Local government Area. It is composed of both the young, adults and the elderly. They even have a president or head that administers the group. They dance without singing songs but the drums are used for singing and are also talking drums. It is the beating of the drums that determines the dance step. It is the admins that sing the songs but not the human dancers. This masquerade group plays important role in the management of conflicts in the area. It is an indigenous style of managing conflicts. In short, it is part of the traditional institution that takes part in the administration of justice for the peace and tranquility of the town (Keremah, 2023).

When someone is aggrieved even though you are not a member of the club, you can approach its club through the president; you place your complaint before the president by dropping a specified amount of money. The president on behalf of the club invites the accused. A date is fixed for hearing in the present of the principal members of the club especially the elders. Both the complainant and the accused would present there mater and they will be cross examined by the members sitting in the matter. Witnessed would be called to come and testify. After cross examination, both parties to the disputes would be asked to leave the venue. After much deliberation by the embers/elders sitting on the matter, a consensus would be reached. These elders form a college of Jury, anyone found guilty would be asked to either apologize, pay compensation, relinquish property or land etc., the victorious in the matter is refunded the money used in the summon (Summon fee). While the guilty is not refunded, sometimes, the guilty is given a fine of any sort to serve as a deterrent to others but it is mainly to bring peace and harmony in the society (Pogo, 2023).

Fig. 3: House of Chiefs and the Opu Sekiapu (Masquerade Dancing Club)





Source: Fieldtrip **Date: 17/09/2021**

iv. The King

In the management of conflict indigenously, the king of the community or town can arbitrate on any matter brought before it by any aggrieved citizen of the town. He advices the individual or individuals involved in the conflict for the peace of the town. This is because all kings/paramount rulers are natural Justices of the Peace (JP). They ensure that, there is peace, harmony and tranquility in their domain. Without peace and tranquility, there will automatically be restlessness, insecurity and lack of good governance or rulership (Otonte, 2023). The king is the father and natural ruler of the community or kingdom so he is well revered. He is seen as the representative of the gods and goddesses in the Town. His pronouncement/judgments or advice is believed to have some spiritual implications on the subjects. He is seen as communicating with the living, and the death, ancestors, divinities both good and bad. The king is seen as been a superhuman being with supersensible senses and powers. Anything he pronounced or says is a law and is binded in even in the spiritual word. So nobody dare disobeys his advice, pronouncement and adjudicates on matters. In some cases he can invite a sister country king to assist him in the adjudication of matters brought before him (Akonu, 2023).

Fig. 4: HRM. Alfred Diete-Spiff (Amanayanabo of Twon-Brass)



Source: Google.com Date: 12/05/2023

v. The King and His Council of Chiefs

Another style adopted by the indigenously in managing a conflict is to report it to the king and his council of chiefs. The king and his council adjudicate on all matters brought before it by any individual, group of individuals. The guilty is sometimes fined or advised or cautioned. The king and his council adjudicate on matters basically when invited by the king for assistance (Bokolo, 2023).

Fig 5: A Twon Brass Chief and his Council-of-Elders Settling Dispute



Source: Fieldtrip **Date: 12/08/2023**

vi. Summon before a God/Goddess

When an aggrieved party could not relieve a satisfactory judgment from anybody either perceived or real, the person can approach a god/goddess through the chief priest to seek redress. When the aggrieved summons someone before a god/goddess, in some pronouncement are made to show the accused that he is in trouble. The pronouncement is used so that the aggrieved could know the person that either stole the property or refused to confess have committed the crime that nobody knew about it. In some cases a gong would be used to inform everyone in the community about the theft or crime and a time line given for the suspect to come and admit in the commission of the crime or offence. If the date elapses, the complaint complains to the god/goddess through the chief priest to go and get the person arrested spiritually (Ayonimite, 2023). When this happens, the suspect would confess then sued the specified things to appease the god/goddess as a sign of being guilty of the offence. In some cases, when a person forcefully takes someone land, brings false accusation against someone etc. this style is sued as a style of managing conflicts indigenously. After any of these styles is applied and yield no success or the person is dissatisfied, the person takes the matter to the last place which today could be referred to as Court of Appeal. This place or traditional court is called Ibidi Kiri (Fiepreye, 2023).

vii. Court of Appeal – Ibidi Kiri (Adjudication/Litigation)

The jury in the Ibidi Kiri is composed of Juju priests only. Those that composed this Ibidi Kiri are: Ogididga Priest in Nembe, Ogidiga Seibabo, Onyoma Seibabo, Funumu Pere from Akassa, Kalowei Seibabo form Okpoama, Gbololo-Ongu Seibabo Ongu. The king or Amanyanabo could only be in attendance only in at the venue of the sitting. The jury of the court is composed of the chief priests of dangerous/harmful gods respected and worshipped by the people. Even the Amanyanabos/Kings are not members of this court, he can only be in attendance. A case goes to this court if the case could not be addressed at all level of the conflict management styles in the area. If it could not be addressed, the aggrieved party could take the case to the Appeal Court popularly called Ibidi Kiri (Isaac, 2003). This court sits at Nembe, particularly, Nembe-Bassambiri. The guilty in the Ibidi Kiri or Appeal court is summary execution.

From the composition of the Jury, it could be seen that within the period under discourse when the Ibidi Kiri was in existence, the present Brass Local Government Area was part of Nembe sphere of influence. Alagoa (1972), stated that the number of Nembe towns was sixteen (16), these are: 1) Ogbolomabiri, 2) Bassambiri, 3) Okpoama, 4) Odioma, 5) Obioku, 6) Diema, 7) Fantua, 8) Ewelesuo, 9) Egwema, 10) Lia-Ama, 11) Beletiema, 12) Egemelagu, 13) Sabatoru, 14) Etiema, 15) Kirupogu, 16) Twon.

In more serious cases, neighbouring communities or community with the same ancestral lineages mediate on conflicts especially between communities/towns. Even in intra-communal conflicts, families in other communities with the same ancestral lineages can also intervene on conflicts. Some of the cases are reported directly to the Amanayanabo-in-Council to wade into the matter for a peaceful resolution. In some cases, government intervened to resolve the conflict by setting up a commission of inquiry to work into the remote and immediate cause(s) of the conflict (Akonu, 2023). For instance, the 2023 intra-conflict between Nembe and Bassambiri claimed lot of lives. The conflict between Liama and Beletiema was mediated by the Bayelsa government during the regime of Governor Timipre M. Sylva. In the indigenous style of mediation, its judgment and resolutions it agreed by both sides, it becomes binding but if not deemed satisfactory by one of the

aggrieved parties, it goes to court (English). That is sometimes, it is successful but sometimes it is unsuccessful.

- **Adjudication and Litigation**

This is the conduct of a law suit. This is a non-violent way of handling conflict where the parties go to court to seek for redress. (Michael, et al., 2022). In adjudication/litigation for conflicting parties are represented by their legal counsels or lawyers. They are not given the opportunity of choosing the judge to preside over their case/matter. The judge delivers judgment that is binding to both parties and is always enforcement agencies. In recent time many conflicting parties prefer this method, as to people, it is the most effective method because the judgment can be enforced by the government and its agencies. A typical example is the conflict between Odioma and Bassambiri over the naming of the oil discovered by Shell at Ekebebeama by Shell as Odio creek oil well. The conflict between Twon-Brass and Okpoama over the oil terminal law.

- **Mediation**

Mediation is a historical dispute management approach characterized by a culture of confidentiality. Non-coercive involvement by mediators, commonly referred to as third parties, is employed to either mitigate or surpass conflict and facilitate its resolution through peaceful means. Mediators are typically selected from the communities or societies in which the involved parties reside. Elders in Africa are widely regarded as esteemed mediators due to their extensive experiences and knowledge (Eke-Spiff, 1970). The African conflict management system incorporates the notion of elders as a prominent socio-political paradigm for conflict resolution. These elders serve as third-party mediators, assuming the responsibility of facilitating effective conflict settlement within indigenous African civilizations. Elders have traditionally been seen as valuable arbitrators and mediators in light of their distinct qualities and attributes.

Amongst the Brass people, mediation is one of the means in which conflicts are settled, either amongst inter-family or group of families, intra-communities and inter-communities. This style is as old as the Brass people because they see each other as a brother. Mediation which is being used till date as a style in managing

conflict has proved very successful for the people and they continue to use it in the society. It is where a third party comes in to try to hold talk between the conflicting parties, to help in brokering peace among them (Michael et al, 2022). The inter-communal conflict between Liama and Beletiema form 1996-1997 and Egwema and Liama in from 2012-2014 by the Nembe Council of Chiefs.

- **Conciliation**

This is one of the indigenous conflict management styles adopted by the Brass people. This is a system whereby a third neutral party is called to play an inter-mediatory role and persuading the conflicting persons to reconcile and ensure peace. (Michael et al, 2022). A typical case is the conflict between Egwema and Liama conflict from 2012-2014 by Gov. Timpre M. Sylva.

- **Dialogue**

Dialogue is another style in managing conflicts in Brass Local Government Area by the indigenous people. This style has been in existence form time immemorial. It is used mostly to settle mostly in intra-family, inter-family, intra-group of families and inter-group of families as well as inter-communal conflicts (Sele, 2023).

- **Confrontation/Fighting**

This has always been the style adopted when one of the parties to the dispute could not tolerate the excesses of the other party in a heated conflict that degenerates to a crisis situation while parties fried to express their deep-rooted anger. Loss of lives and properties have always been the product or aftermath of such conflicts. This style has never proffered lasting solution, rather, it deepens, complicates and breaks the existing relationship between the factions, and keeping them afar form each other rand make them to be more suspicious. The case in point is the conflict between Twon-Brass and Okpoama in 2002, Akassa and Koluama in 1999, Beletiema and Liama from 1996 to 1997, Akassa and Egwema in 2002 (Otonte, 2023).

- **Suppression**

This is a style for managing conflict whereby mostly a stronger power applying superior force in the form of intervention, especially when conflict escalates to a

crisis situation. It is mostly used by the government; it was adopted in the intra-Nembe Bassambiri conflict in 2023 by the Bayelsa State government that people were killed.

- **Negotiation**

Negotiation is one of the indigenous styles in managing conflicts in Brass Local Government Area. Conflicting parties after trying other means of conflict management adopted negotiation, where they sit on the round table for diplomatic talk on the way forward to end the disputes. A notable example is the conflict between Odioma and Bassambiri over the land and oil well at Obioku and the land ownership of Obioku community in 2005 (Keremah, 2023).

- **Arbitration**

This is also an indigenous style in managing conflicts by the Brass people. According to the Shadrack Gaya (2006), it is a method of conflict settlement that involves a third-party intervention. The basis of arbitration is that all the parties must submit to a binding decision to settle the conflict. For Gaya (2006), the third party or parties involved in the settlement is called Arbitration or Arbitrators.

- **Alternative Dispute Resolution Style (ADR)**

This is an age-long style of conflict management. It is as old as the Brass people; it is a traditional/indigenous way of usually adopted by the people of Brass Local Government Area. It is a way of settling disputes amongst them either intra or inter-families, hoses, group of houses and communities. This is mostly obtainable in typical African society, though many differ in its application in different societies yet it is adopted by the Brass people to bringing harmony and stability in the society. Here, elders, men of integrity, honest, just, well-meaning and influential persons are called to handle conflicts where the disputants are called to give or submit their statements, while judgment is delivered based on critical examination of the facts before the elders. However, most of these cases were referred to the community deity or shrine for spiritual consultation, libation, swearing or oath taking. (Michael et al., 2022) Ancestral spirits are also involved as the case may be especially in complicated cases like secret murder, witchcraft, theft, rape, abduction, kidnap and land boundary disputes. In Brass Local Government Area,

the Odioma god of war called Ebelekia is very prominent in handling such matters. E.g. the Beletiema, Egwema/Liama is a case in point where Ebelekia was involved.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the researchers put up the following recommendations.

i. The resolution of disputes should be facilitated by the active involvement of the traditional rulers who the custodians of the peoples traditions from the disputing parties, who should consistently engage in constructive dialogue and collaboratively propose viable solutions, measures, and procedures.

ii. The indigenous traditional institutions should strive to eliminate any form of tribal or ethnic alienation, sentiments or prejudices when addressing issues of conflicts.

iii. The government should undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the existing legislation pertaining the indigenous institutions and approaches, or alternatively, introduce new legislation, as their incorporation may contribute to a decrease in the frequency of conflicts within the Nembe-Brass area.

Conclusion

Despite the numerous enticing proposals for conflict management strategies in different African societies, with a specific focus on Brass, it is evident that the current state of affairs differs significantly from that of nearly a century ago. In contemporary times, African families and societies have become increasingly intricate, resulting in the decline or complete cessation of many customs and practices. The scarcity of highly esteemed and highly sought-after seniors is such that locating an elder possessing the necessary traits and demeanour to effectively manage familial issues would be exceedingly challenging. One potential approach to consider is the implementation of a condensed conflict resolution methodology that integrates elements from both historical and contemporary practices. This amalgamation would enhance its effectiveness in addressing future disputes and yielding favourable outcomes. In the Brass Local Government Area, conflict

management practices are observed to have originated from familial contexts and subsequently extend to the broader population.

The study, is an addition to the body of knowledge, as it has revealed the unique indigenous strategies used in the management of conflicts in Nembe-Brass. The study has also provided the government, policy makers, researcher, and institutions a new template to adopt when addressing/managing conflict situation across the country. The study has demonstrated the nexus between traditional institution and conflict management. It has shown that when the traditional institution is in-charge of community matters, devoid of political interest, it reduces conflicts.

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1	Mr. Mark Ayebaifiemi	62	M	Teacher	Odioma	23/07/2023
2	Dr. Titus Toipre	54	M	Lecturer	Okpoama	20/07/2023
3	Mr. Austin Yebei	58	M	Broadcaster	Akassa	28/07/2023
4	Capt. Kingdom Okoripre (Rtd.)	69	M	Retired Naval Officer	Akassa	02/06/2023
5	Hon. Douprebo Ikuromo	77	M	Public Servant	Okpoama	12/07/2023

6	Capt. Keremah Christian (Rtd.)	70	M	Retired Army Officer	Nembe (Bassambiri)	16/07/2023
7	Mr. Okutuate Benson-Agah	49	M	Administrator	Okpoama	03/06/2023
8	Chief Beye Pogo Sherri	60	M	Civil Servant	Ewoama	12/07/2023
9	Chief Ayonimite Ikuromo	64	M	Businessman	Virtual Interview	25/08/2023
10	Mr. Jonathan Otonte	50	M	Businessman	Ewoama	14/08/2023
11	Mr. Fiepreye Ekini	45	M	Civil Servant	Virtual Interview	12/07/2023
12	Miss. Mekuma Oruabere	52	F	Teacher	Okpoama	27/08/2023
13	Mr. Tarinyo Akonu	47	M	Journalist	Virtual Interview	10/08/2023
14	Mrs. Christianah .B. Sele	64	F	Business woman	Ewoama	18/06/2023
15	Miss. Yanate Aga	NIL	F	Civil Servant	Virtual Interview	04/07/2023

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