

Post Conflict Resolution, the Case of Ekaju/Osokom Conflict, 1982 – 2013 in Cross River State

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Abstract

The research centers on “Post-conflict resolution of Ekajuk-Osokom conflict, 1982-2013”. The aim of the work is to investigate post-conflict resolution of Ekajuk-Osokom conflict, 1982-2013. This is with a view to finding out why there is lasting peace between Ekajuk and Osokom communities after the bloody conflict of 1982. Second, to provide a better insight into conflict resolution that will be a good example for conflict management at communal level. The multi-disciplinary approach was adopted while carrying out this research. Two major sources of data were used in the conduct of these research namely, primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included oral interview conducted in the field, reports of peace committees and minutes of committee meetings. While secondary sources which included publish works and dissertation were used. The research discovered how useful mechanisms like peace committees setup by two warring communities can actually lead to lasting peace. I therefore recommend the practice of setting up peace committees as a preventive measure against outbreak of conflict and post-conflict resolution strategy to restore peace to communities involve in conflict.

KEY WORDS

Post, Conflict, Resolution, Ekajuk, Osokom and Resolution

INTRODUCTION

Ekajuk is one of the four clans that constitute the present day Ogoja Local Government Area, namely: Nkum, Nkim, Mbube and Ekajuk. It is also one of the eight clans that make up Bakor ethnic group in Cross River State .In the case of Ekajuk, "Ekajuk lies between latitude 6°29" and 6°33" North and between longitude 8°33" and S°36" East. The 2006 census put the population at about 59,000 people. The Ekajuk people occupy about 170sq mile territory (State Geography Information Centre). The Ekajuk people are bounded in the North by Yala, Nkum and the Nkim people, in the East by Boki, in the West by Ukelle and in the South by Abanyom and Nnam people.

The Osokom people are unit of Boki people who lived in western Boki and abounded in the West by Ekajuk, in the north by Kakagom in the south by Abayom, in the east Boji. On April 3, 1982, a territorial boundary dispute between Ekajuk and their Osokom neighbours climaxed in a communal conflict that led to the loss of lives and wanton destruction of property (Nshum, 2015: Oral interview). The Ekajuk and Osokom

people had been close neighbours for several years and their boundary evolved through migration (Mrs, Obia, 2013: Oral interview). The conflict lasted for eight days before it was brought under control by the Nigerian police force. A number of factors, both remote and immediate contributed to the outbreak of hostilities between both communities.

Remote Causes

One of the factors that contributed immensely to the outbreak of conflict was the issue of migration. Migration was highly fundamental to the conflict. Migration is seen as "the collective movement or progressive infiltration of a people into or out of a given habitat. In general, it is known that people are compelled to migrate from one place to another for a number of reasons" (Nyam, 2011).

The people of Ekajuk and Osokom are believed to have migrated from Western Cameroon. The Ekajuk people were the first to occupy the territory presently inhabited by the Osokom people. This position is well attested to by both the Ekajuk and the Osokom informants. For instance, Ekajuk in justifying this position during the presentation of their case before the Peace Committee of 1982 stated clearly "Ekajuk moved from East to West". They settled in areas like Nsanaraganti, 'EltalNkim', that has now come to be known as 'Boki Hill, they moved to AnyoNdim, Ntamanti and then to Ekpulokwu and to Ekpugrinya. It should be noted that the Boki people called the Ekajuk people 'Ndim' and so most of the villages established in Boki by Ekajuk people bear the prefix 'Ndim, e.g. 'NdimAro', 'AnyoNdenr, etc. The westwards and so Ekajuk territory expanded westwards to include grassland areas and good sources of drinking water.

The extract above shows clearly that the Ekajuk people still calculated their territory to include areas they previously occupied which they abandoned in the course of migration. Some of these areas were firmly inhabited by the Osokom people as they migrated into those former Ekajuk villages thereby filling the vacuum created by the exit of Ekajuk through migration, of all the ancient villages of Ekajuk only two were not occupied by the Osokom. They were Ekpulokwu and Ekpugrinya. Ekpulokwu was closer to Ntamanti and it was still inhabited by one Mr. MontuiAdi of Ekajuk

Another remote cause of the conflict was dispute over farmlands at individual level between Ekajuk and Osokom persons. One constant source of friction between the two communities was the struggle over farmlands. The Ekajuk villages of Mbok, Mbok I, Ekpugrinya, Akomaye, MojabeEkabe, Eshinjock, Nwang 2 and EgojaNdim were close to the boundary between Osokom and Ekajuk. The Osokom villages of Ntamanti, Nk'im and Agba shared boundary with the Ekajuk villages listed above. The area inhabited by the Osokom was entirely a thick forest while that forest extended to Ekpulokwu and Ekpugrinya. Both the Ekajuk and the Osokom inhabitants were exploiting this forest. The Ekajuk who felt that their boundary was between Ekpulokwu and Ntamanti continued to exploit the area for farming. The Osokom people on the other hand calculated their territory to include Ekpulokwu and Ekpugrinya also were involved in clearing the forest area for farming. This attitude on both sides brought them into conflict with one another. In some cases, the conflict resulted in fight between some farmers and their counterparts from other tribe at individual level. Some of these cases went up to the police. The situation became so tense and unbearable in the 1960s. This prompted the leadership of both Osokom and Ekajuk to constitute Ekajuk - Osokom Liaison Committee of 1965 that was popularly called The 1965 Liaison Committee.

Apart from struggle over farmlands, the most fondly remembered remote cause of the Ekajuk-Osokom conflict 1982, was the road construction of 1978. In 1978, the Federal Government through the RCC Construction Company began the construction of a trunk road from Ikom through the Ekajuk villages of Mbok, Mbok I, MojabeEkabe, Akomaye, Eshinjock, Nwang 2 and through EgojaNdim to Katsina Alia. Before 1978, there were speculations on the exact location where the road construction would pass through. Some Osokom people enthused that the road would pass through Nkarasi linking Esaubendegh to Okundi, through Kwakwagom to Ogoja Junction.

This dream remained still born as in 1978 when actual road construction began; it was being constructed through Ekajuk territory. This brought about suspicion on the part of Osokom as some people began pointing accusing fingers on the Ekajuk that the Ekajuk may have influenced the diversion of the road through their territory. As unfounded as this allegation was it did not go down well with some Osokom people. This was because, the road construction provided the Ekajuk with abundant opportunities attached to the highway leaving them hinterland dwellers (Ayambim, 2013: Oral interview). Coincidentally, the government of Cross River State also began the construction of a road from a place called Akogbe along the Trunk A road linking Ekpugrinya, Ekpulokwu, Ntamante to Okundi. The construction of this road followed the traditional trade route that linked Boki with Ekajuk. The road from Akogbe to Boki made that place a junction that later came to be known as Ekpugrinya Junction. That means that there was an existing road that was undergoing full construction by 1978. This road construction heightened tension between the two communities. The desire to have a stronghold on the highway propelled the Osokom people to begin expansion towards the highway (Ayambim, 2013: Oral interview). The 1965 Liaison Committee was dissolved before 1978.

As a result of the desire to share in the spoils of the prospect of the construction of a trunk "A" road, the Osokom people proposed the formation of the 1978 Land Allocation Committee to allocate land at Ekpugrinya, The Ekajuk people stated this in their presentation as "the 1978 Allocation Committee". In 1978, the Boki people suggested the formation of an allocation committee to allocate land at Ekpugrinya junction. While they were eager to see the committee formed, the Ekajuk people rejected the idea based on the believe that they did not need the Osokom people to form an allocation committee to allocate Ekajuk land. Ekajuk people therefore formed their Allocation Committee as of right (Minute of peace meeting, 4th May 1982).

The joint land allocation committee was proposed to ensure that land was allocated to both Ekajuk and Osokom people at Ekpugrinya junction. This was a demonstration of the extent to which the Osokom people desired to have a presence on the highway. The Ekajuk people who were suspicious of the motive behind this idea rejected it in its entirety. Their rejection of the formation of Allocation Committee angered the Osokom people so much. The clan Head of Osokom, Mr. Afu alluded to this when he accused Ekajuk of preventing the Osokom people from having a share of the highway while testifying before the Peace Committee of 1982.

It should be noted that road construction is a social amenity that is considered vital for the development of a place. Access to good road provides a good opportunity for people to engage in commercial activities. It also removes some of the difficulties associated with selling perishable agricultural products. Moreso, it attracts investors who

want to engage in trade to settle in a particular place for economic activities. This in turn leads to economic prosperity of a people. He accused Ekajuk clan of refusing to attend the committee meeting that was set up to allocate plots at the Ekpugrinya junction but rather went ahead and started developing the place with houses (Minute of peace meeting, 4th May 1982). To make matters worse, the Ekajuk people claimed compensation on the disputed land from the construction companies even up to Ekpulokwu.

The Osokom people mounted a sign board at the newly constructed junction written, "Okundi Junction", but it was removed and replaced by the Ekajuk with the one written "Ekpugrinya Junction". Even oral evidence from the two belligerent neighbours showed that it was the road construction of 1978 that instituted series of events that culminated in the fight. Words of some of the informants who attested to this fact were as follows:

Madam Monica Otu had this to say, "I think the remote cause of the problem was fear of who would own that area when the new road was completed. This fear was from both sides-that is, Ekajuk and Osokom. They were only looking for an outlet" (Madam Monica, 2013: Oral Interview).

For Mr. Maurice BoyepOtu, the remote cause was "the opening up of the road through that area by the government which made both the Osokom people and Ekajuk to start nursing the hope of advancing towards it for economic benefits. This I think is the sole reason, because before now, they had all along been co-existing without problem (Otu: 2013: Oral interview).

According to Mr. Francis Obia, "the prospect of a federal road cutting across the boundary area was the cause of the conflict. When this dream of a road finally came to light, it raised anxiety from both sides and they became eager to map out land extends. All that was needed now was a kick started for trouble".¹²⁰ All these evidences point to the fact that the 1978 road construction by the federal government was instrumental to the eruption of the Ekajuk-Osokom conflict of 1982.

Immediate Causes of the Conflict

As the dust generated by the road construction of 1978 was yet to settle, another remarkable incident happened in 1980. On June 8, 1980, a certain Mr. Gerald Tawo began erection of building at the Ekajuk village of Ekpulokwu. This action rose tempers to the highest level. It must be remembered that the road construction of 1978 had already prepared the way for the outbreak of a fight between the two communities. It must be remembered that the dream of the Osokom people to make a successful presence on the highway was rendered futile and remained stillborn when the Ekajuk rejected the proposal by the Osokom people to form a joint land allocation committee to allocate land at Ekpugrinya Junction.

As if that was not enough, the Ekajuk people moved enmass and occupied the land thereby denying the Osokom people the share of the highway permanently. It must also be remembered that the relationship between these two communities had remained completely strained following these developments. That was why when on June 8, 1980, Mr. Gerald Tawo began the construction of a house at the village of Ekpulokwu, the Ekajuk people wasted no time in calling him to order by summoning a meeting of Ekajuk and Osokom people on June 27, 1980.

The meeting was well attended by both clans but deliberations were not concluded. So, the meeting was adjourned to July 5, 1980 (Mobibi, 2013: Oral interview). This meeting was well attended and a decision was reached. Both Ekajuk and Osokom agreed to place a suspension order on the construction work of Mr. Gerald Tawo and caused him to sign an undertaking that he should stop work until when a committee had been jointly setup to look into the issue. The content of the agreement was as follows:

Mr. Gerald Tawo of Ntamante willingly hereby declare and promise to abide by the decision of the Ekajuk and Boki communities to suspend any work on the disputed area between Ekajuk and Boki until a committee of Ekajuk and Boki is formed. That any action can be taken against me by the above on any attempt on violation of the above decision (Acceptance of suspension order from Ekajuk and Boki community)

Indeed, Mr. Gerald Tawo having signed an undertaking to suspend work, actually suspended the building of the house. This agreement which was designed to forestall breakdown of law and order merely postponed the conflict. Events of 1982 clearly demonstrated that the agreement which was supposed to have been conceived in good faith was pregnant with conflict as both communities were not ready to make any concessions on the disputed land.

This was because for the Ekajuk, allowing the Osokom to occupy their previous settlements of Ntamante, AnyoNdim and several other villages was enough sacrifice made to the Osokom people, so, enough was enough as any further attempt to expand the territory of Osokom to the village of Ekpulokwu could not be tolerated any longer. The Ekajuk believed that observance of their traditional boundary which was the spot between Osokom village of Oshekase (Ntamante) and Ekpulokwu which was called EbgbaMongan and EwongMongan in its just and purest terms was the only way that could bring about peace.

Therefore, anything humanly possible must be done to maintain the boundary. On the part of Osokom people, the refusal of the Ekajuk to allow them share the other side the road particularly part of Ekpugrinya junction was unbearable. Even if Ekpugrinya junction was by 1980 effectively occupied by the Ekajuk people, according to their calculation, their boundary was on the newly constructed Trunk A road at a spot known as Mile 7. For the Osokom, the protest against the erection of the building by Mr. Gerald Tawo by Ekajuk was an unwarranted provocation and as such the protest would not stand.

These were the feelings on both sides as the Ekajuk and Boki Committee that was agreed to be formed following the suspension order to look into the construction of Mr. Gerald Tawo's building was never formed after a period of two years. The refusal by both Osokom and Ekajuk to form the committee earlier agreed upon was a clear demonstration of the extreme position that was taken by both communities. The period from July 7, 1980-March 1982 did not witness any form of traditional diplomacy between the two communities. This meant that any provocative incident between the two communities was bound to cause conflict.

The straw that broke the camel's back was the resumption of construction work on the disputed land on April 1, 1982. Following the action of Mr. Gerald Tawo, the Ekajuk people at Ekpugrinya mobilized to site on April 2, 1982 to stop Mr. Gerald Tawo from continuing to build the house. They ended up demolishing the house.¹²⁷ When Mr.

Gerald Tawo ran home to Ntamante to inform his community that the Ekajuk had demolished his house and beaten him up, Ntamante people also mobilized to site. Available evidence from both Osokom and Ekajuk showed that it was the women from both communities that started the violence that ruptured into a total tribal conflict. According to Mrs. NkatuAbiji, "we heard news that something was happening at Ekpulokwu and so we women mobilized and rushed down to the scene. On getting there, women started throwing stones at each other and a woman from Ntamante stoned me on the eye and inured me. As blood began flowing from my eye, I was taken to Maternity Hospital, Ogoja for treatment.

A 40 years old man Augustine MogbukEgar who was also at the scene of the I incident said he accompanied his parents to site and narrated what he saw to the researcher as follows:

May be, war would not have happened if not because of women. It was the women that started throwing stones at each other and a woman from Ntamante eventually stoned Mrs. NkatuAbiji on the eye and injured her. This was what aggravated the situation (Mogbuk, 2013: Oral interview). One thing is clear from all these testimonies, the fact that the Ekpugrinya peplemobilized to site to stop Mr. Gerald Tawo from building. When Mr. Gerald Tawo ranto Ntamante to inform his people, the people of Ntamante also mobilized to site

The stone throwing incident by women of both communities that led to injury of Mrs. NkatuAbiji on the eye created the spark that led to conflict. After the stone throwing incident, both communities retreated to their homes. The tension between the two communities was outburst. The Ekpugrinya people reported the incident to the Police Divisional Headquarters in Ogoja. In spite of the complaint by Ekajuk to the Police, both Osokom and Ekajuk began total mobilization for violent conflict. It is said that a troop of policemen was sent to Ekpugrinya Junction on the night of April 2, 1982. In the night of that same day, both Ntamante and Ekpugrinya villages withdrew all their children and women from their respective villages. It was alleged that the policemen on guard may have left Mr Ekpugrinya junction in the night when there was no fight. At around 4am in the morning of April 3rd, 1982. two houses were burnt down at Ekpugrinya by people suspected to be Osokom people. In early hours of the morning of April 3, 1982, as at day break gunshots were heard from Osokom and the Ekajuk people responded with gunshots signaling the beginning of the dark days (conflict) between the two communities.

Government Mediation Efforts

As it has been the case with several other conflicts, the Ekajuk/Osokom conflict of 1982 which began on April 3, 1982 and ended on April 11, 1982, brought in its wake horror, terror, anguish and hunger (Minute of 22nd April 1982). This followed the loss of lives and the wanton destruction of property occasioned by the outbreak of hostilities. As the conflict continued to take its toll on the two communities, it became clear that only a government intervention through its security forces could lead to the cessation of hostilities and a potential ceasefire.

Therefore, on the 8th April, 1982, a troop of Nigerian Police Force sent from Calabar (the State headquarters) and complemented by troops from Ikom and Ogoja Divisional headquarters descended on the theatre of conflict. Three days later, the two warring communities completely retreated to the bush (war zone). This marked the first

intervention efforts made by the State government. Informants from both warring communities corroborated this position. Below are some of the extracts of the statements of some of these informants.

"The government made a quick response by sending police to stop that fight" Another informant stated as follows:

"The government tried by sending police to stop the fight" (Maria, 2013: Oral Interview Further, another informant stated as follows: "It was the government that stopped the fight with the use of policemen".

Apart from sending the police to stop the fight, one of the most remarkable, laudable and very successful steps taken by the Cross River State Government was the setting up of a Peace Committee. The formation of peace committee was very unusual and unprecedented in the history of boundary dispute resolution in Cross River because, previous tribal wars have always been accompanied by panels of enquiries rather than Peace Committees.

The state government constituted a 40 member peace committee comprising twenty

S/N	Name	Title
1	Munen O. N. Egbe	Ag. Paramount Ruler, Ikom- Chairman Ruler, Ogoja Paramount
2	Chief B. P. Bue	Paramount Ruler, Ogoja
3	Mr. Nkang N. Nkang	Ministry of Rural Development, Ikom
4	Mr. Njock Nkor	Governor's Office, Calabar
5	Elder E. Oyama	Secretary, Abi Local Government
6	Mr. Okoi I. Ewa	Secretary, Ogoja Local Government -
7	Mrs. S. Ewa	Asst. Secretary, Ogoja Local Government
8	Mr. Achor O. Achor	Chairman, Abi Local Government Committee Caretaker
9	Mr. S. O. Egbe	Member, Ogoja Local Government Committee Caretaker
10	Mr. I. C. Odi	Member, Ogoja Local Government Committee Caretaker
11	Mr. P. A. Abua	Member, Ogoja Local Government Committee Caretaker

officials representing the government and ten representatives each from the two belligerent communities. It was called Ekajuk/Osokom Peace Committee. Members of this committee were as follows: (a)

Officials:

(c) Representatives from Osokom (Boki):

1. Mr. P. O. Abang
2. Mr. P. O. Bisong
3. Mr. E. O. Obi Akachak
4. Mr. P. E. Tawo
5. Chief J. A. Osang
6. Chief M. O. Bedebe
7. Chief B. Asu
8. Chief David Nkang
9. Mr. Jariath Akam
10. Chief G. O. Afu- Clan Head, Osokom

A comprehensive examination of the committee showed that the Ekajuk/Osokom Peace Committee as it was called was constituted to handle the issue in a traditional way. That is why members had to be drawn from both Ekajuk and Osokom. The Peace Committee was headed by Munen O. N. Egba (the Acting Paramount Ruler of Ikom Local Government Area) and Mr. Okache A. Egbanabo (Assistant Secretary of Ikom Local Government Area) was the secretary of the Committee. The Committee was supervised by the Commissioner of Police through the two Divisional Police Officers of Ikom and Ogoja. The mandate of the Committee was as follows:

1. The restoration of peace and order between the two clans
2. To verify the true owners of the disputed land through traditional methods of enquiry.
3. To determine the true boundary between the two communities.
4. Peaceful and amicable resolution of the dispute (Minute of 4th May, 1982).

The first meeting of the committee brought leaders from both clans together for the first time after the war. Leaders of the two clans sued for peace and familiarized themselves with the official members of the Committee. After the inaugural meeting of the Committee on April 21, 1982, another meeting was scheduled to take place at the scene of the war on the 28th April, 1982. On the 28th April, 1982, members of the Committee visited the disputed territory and assessed the destruction caused by the war. They moved from Ekpugrinya Junction to Ntamante and finally held their meeting at Ekpugrinya Junction.

On Tuesday, 4th May, 1982, the third meeting of the Committee was held at Ikom Local Government Council Hall. It was in this meeting that the Committee listened to testimonies on both sides on what was the actual cause of the conflict. Representatives from both clans were asked to be very truthful in their submissions. The Divisional Police Officer for Ogoja warned that this matter be handled traditionally and not turn to a court case. He then cautioned that "if the matter cannot be treated traditionally, it should then be left for the legal court or panel appointed by the government of Cross River State to decide" (Minute of April 21 1982).

On the side of Ekajuk, the clan head of Ekajuk, Chief Francis Adigba Majuk explained that he called a Joint Peace meeting of the two clans to identify the traditional boundaries between them but Osokom clan refused to turn up; and as a result he went with his men into Ntamante to protest why Tawo was trying to build a house on the disputed land despite his effort of trying to summon a meeting of the two clans to try to

identify the traditional boundary between them. He further explained that he requested his colleagues, the clan head of Osokom to prevail on Mr. Tawo to stop building but to no avail (Minute of April 21 1982).

Mr. Philip Abang, the spokesperson for Osokom explained that the land under dispute belonged to Osokom. It was at this point that the Acting Paramount Ruler of Ikom, Munen O. Egbe asked Mr. Philip Abang why he allowed Mr. Gerald NkuTawoofBoki to sign an agreement in 1980 with the Ekajuk clan to suspend building a house on the disputed land when he had been able to trace the history of the disputed land as far back as 1980 as Boki land. At this juncture, the Ag. Paramount Ruler, read the agreement before the Committee and requested to know what Mr. Abang did when this agreement was being signed. It was at this juncture that the clan head of Osokom accused the Ekajuk clan of refusing to attend the Committee meeting that was set up to allocate plots at Ekpugrinya Junction but rather went ahead and started developing the place with houses; as such the Bokis asked Mr. Tawo to start building the demolished house.¹⁴⁰ He further stated that in 1920, one Ngbebu cut an iroko tree on the disputed land belonging to his father; when the case went to court it was decided in his father's favour. He again stated that "the Ekajuk brought people from all over Ekajuk clan to come and live on the land they were not living before.

The clan head of Ekajuk told the Committee that "they have a stream where they purify themselves, coupled with sacred stones and shrines all there in Ekpugrinya forest which he can take the Committee to see" (Minute of April 21 1982). At the close of submissions of Ekajuk and Osokom clans, the Committee accepted the suggestion by Mr. Ogbidi F. O. to inspect more lands on the next meeting : to verify the authenticity of the claims of the two parties. They advised that both parties should do a lot of consultation with their people before the next meeting day which was slated for 12th May, 1982. The Chairman of the Committee explained that members of the Committee were strangers to this disputed land and so would need to do a lot of homework before coming to concrete solutions and decisions. He therefore made the next meeting the final search for everlasting peace between the Ekajuk and Osokom clans (Minute of 4th May, 1982).

On 12th May, 1982, all the forty members of the Committee arrived the disputed land and declared their meeting open at 11.55am. They first moved to an Ekajuk village called Akogbe where Mr. P. O. Abang showed the Committee both the house and the timber shed he owns at Akogbe. The Committee found out that Mr. Abang bought the house from an Ekajuk man called EgarMbum, and the house was the only one owned by a Boki man at Akogbe village. The Committee also saw Mile 7 at Akogbe which Mr. Afu had earlier said was their boundary. The Committee insisted that mile was installed by government administration and asked Mr. Abang to show them the traditional boundary between Ekajuk and Osokom. Mr. Abang informed them that their traditional boundary was the forest. The Committee also saw all the Ekajuk houses in that village. The Committee found out that the Ekajuk people owned all the economic trees at Akogbe and were the ones who sold all trees that Mr. Abang sawed in the forest he claimed was their own to him for his timber business (Minute of 4th May, 1982). Before concluding the verification at Akogbe (now renamed Ekpugrinya junction), Mr. Abang of Osokom made a significant demand as he said "the Ekajuk can now own their own side of the Junction while the other side goes to Boki".

At the end of the verification exercise at Akogbe, Committee members moved to Ekpulokwu which was the one man village inhabited by Mr. MontuIAdi of Ekajuk and it was the spot where Mr. Gerald Tawo attempts to build a house which ignited the conflict. While in Ekpulokwu, the Committee saw Mr. MontuIAdi's house and it was locked with padlock. Mr. MontuIAdi was crossed-examined by members of the Committee to establish the true owners of that village. He showed them a fig tree, cocoa trees and pears. He also explained that "the founders of this village were Late AkongEgar, Late NshorMonjock, Late MonjockAya and my late father AdiNsoro".He added that he was born in that village and his father AdiNsoro asked him to stay there.

They then departed Mr. MontuIAdi's house after visiting his shrines to Ekajuk-Boki boundary. At the alleged boundary Mr. Peter Molang showed raffia palms and an iroko tree which he claimed was the boundary between Ekajuk and Osokom. He further explained that the raffia palms belonged to MonjockAyack from Ekajuk and that it is now inherited by Montul Moshe (Minute of 4th May, 1932). The Osokom strongly objected his submission and after cross-examination, the Committee went to rest at 2.25pm. It was decided that the Committee only should meet at 11,00am on 21st May, 1982 at Ikom Local Government Council to consider and prepare a final recommendation.

The Decision of the Peace Committee

The Peace Committee set up by the State government resolve and follows:

1. That the boundary between Ekajuk and Osokom cannot be fixed by the Committee since Ekajuk is in Ogoja Local Government Area and Osokom is in Ikom Local Government. That the boundary between these two local governments should serve as the boundary between the two communities.
2. That the last house at Ntamante should serve as the last house towards Ekpugrinya and the last house from Ekpugrinya towards Ntamante should serve as the last house from Ekpugrinya towards Ntamante.
3. That both communities can continue to farm the disputed land since it was the issue of building a house that led to the conflict.
4. That the two communities should jointly celebrate New Yam Festivals of Boki and Bako to foster unity.
5. That both communities should jointly bury their loved ones as a mark of solidarity.
6. That both communities should intermarry.

The recommendation of the peace committee received fillip when the ex-servicemen of the two communities formed Ekajuk - Osokom Ex-servicemen Association that began holding meetings and burying their members to foster unity.

The next of action taken by the Committee was the organization of a get-together (Jamboree) at Ekpugrinya Junction for both the Osokom and the Ekajukpeople . to attend enmass, young or old, male or female to celebrate peace and signalled the fact that conflict was over. This jamboree was significant in many ways: it was a way of building confidence among the people that they can still live together as brothers and sisters.

Secondly, it was also to remove the fear associated with the conflict and provide a new platform where people could move freely from one place to another without fear of being killed as reappraisal. On the said day of the jamboree, people from all works of life from Ekajuk, Bokiand their neighbours attended t with fun and fanfare. Women from

Ekajuk and Osokom jointly prepared food for the occasion and also jointly served the guests.

They agreed that members of the two warring communities should stroll in a convoy into Ekajuk heartland to confirm the fact that peace had returned to both communities. This was done as both communities strolled to Ekajuk and Boki heartland up to Boje without any sign of molestation from either side. There was a lot of merry makings on that day as people who fought themselves drank and ate together.

The Committee recommended several measures which they thought would bring about lasting peace to the people as follows:

1. That people from both communities should intermarry with one another. (Dagom, 2013).
2. Erection of a police

Post at Ekpugrinya in 1982 to maintain peace and security on the disputed area. Members of the 1993 Ekajuk/Osokom Peace Committee were as follows:

Ekajuk Members:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Felix Eyu (Egbung) | Vice Chairman |
| 2. Prince Nakutu (Mbok) | Member |
| 3. Prince Fridalene Nneji (Nwang) | Member |
| 4. Prince Declan Ebi (Eshinjock) | Secretary |
| 5. Gregory Aganyi (Nwang) | member |
| 6. Matiki Monkap (Ekpugrinya) | member |
| 7. Benjamin Amap (Egbung) | member |

Osokom Members:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Richard Tawo Asu (late) | Chairman |
| 2. Patrick Ogim (Ntamante) | member |
| 3. Chief Cosmas Etta (Ntamante) | member |
| 4. Eider Fidelis Agabi (Duala) | member |
| 5. Chief Cosmas Ofum (Ntamante) | member |
| 6. Chief Michael Ngare (Ntamante) | member |
| 7. Ben Akan (Nkim Osokom) | member |

This Committee continued work till 2005 when it was dissolved. The committee was jointly funded by both Local Government Areas.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that Ekajuk and Osokom have been strong neighbours from history; that the causes of the conflict that began in 1965 and climaxed in 1982 are both remote and immediate; that a combination of factors culminated in the conflict of 1982; that the two Peace Committees which carried out their work relentlessly largely contributed to lasting peace which have survived for more than three decades.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross River State and indeed Nigeria is face with the challenge of conflict management. Some of these conflicts like the Obudu-Mbadugu Conflict which began in 1906 are yet to be successfully resolve while new ones have continued to linger. This situation is quite different from the post-conflict Resolution of Ekajuk – Osokom conflict which has never re-occurred since it was settled in 1982. This was due to the success of the two peace committees that manage the conflict. Therefore, in line with the definition of conflict management by Aja (2007), that “conflict management represent the operational and implementation mechanism process”. It is therefore necessary to recommend the setting up of peace committees between the various communities in Cross River State as a preventive mechanism against outbreak of communal conflicts and post-conflict resolution since it has proved to be very successful in the case of Ekajuk-Osokom Conflict. It proved to be effective in the pre-conflict years when they set up Ekajuk-Osokom Liaison Committee of 1965 which was dissolved in 1978; violent conflict broke out between the two communities only four years later in 1982 and its re-enactment after the conflict that has brought lasting peace.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

- Interview with Mr. Mathias Nshum Ebor, a retired teacher, age 75 years by 3pm in his compound at Mojabekabe village near Ekpugrinya.
- Interview with Mrs. MarilineObia, farmer, 22 of July 2013, at 6pm at Oshekace, Ntamante, age 78 years.
- Interview with Papa Brian Ayambim, age 88 years, a farmer, at Ogep by 1pm on 9th July, 2013.
- Interview with Mr. Maurice BoyepOtu, teacher, age 45 years old on 3rd July, 2013 in his compound by 2pm
- Interview with Mr. Francis B. Obia, teacher, 52 years, on 8th July, 2013 by 3.30pm, in his resident at Ntamanta.
- Interview with Mr. Fidelis Mobibi, farmer, age 75 years at his resident on May 28, 2013 by 4pm. See the document titled: Acceptance of Suspension Order from Ekajuk and Boki Communities.
- Interview with Mrs. NkatuAbiji, farmer, age 75 years, by 6pm on 20th May, 2013, in her compound at Akpugrinya village.
- Interview with Mr. Augustine MogbukEgar, trader, age 40 years by 3.30pm on 8th April, 2013 at the resident of NshorMonkperMonkpuk at Eshinjock.
- Interview with Mrs. Maria Otu, farmer, age 55 years at 3pm on 8th July, 2013 in her compound, Ntamante.
- Minutes of the Peace Committee meeting of 4th May, 1982, p. 4
See minutes of Peace between Ekajuk and Osokom clans on Boundary Dispute between them and the ensuing fight which has erupted held on the Disputed land on Wednesday 12th May, 1982, p. 1
- The final report of the peace committee on Ekajuk-Osokom conflict of 1982