

## TRADITIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONG THE ABAKALIKI IGBO, 1850-1970

**Amiara, Solomon Amiara and Nwokike, I. Kenneth**

Department of History and International Relations, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Conflict is an essential part of human existence and formed the basic part of our daily social interactions. The peculiarities of African societies and states system make the study of conflict in Africa beginning from the period of 1850 up to 1970 possible. While western historiographers and unorthodox writers considered it as a normal African way of life, contemporary writers have argued that most African nations and clans were led into conflict through slave raiding, mineral deposits and European imperial motives. Against this odd, Africans were conveyed to different kinds of conflicts like migratory wars, settlement questions and land disputes. Though, scholars and historians alike have extensively worked to investigate why there appeared to be “culture of conflict” within African traditional societies however, none of them has tried to unpack the traditional conflicts predominant in Africa at that time and the present state of terror that characterize the western societies. It is against this background, that this paper seeks to fill the intellectual gaps within this area of study and argues that despite the peculiarities of African traditional societies, there were traditional conflict management strategies adopted to deal with conflicts in African nations particularly the Abakaliki Igbo who evolved through a decentralized political system in which each political units developed a means of managing her differences. The position of this paper is that, these strategic measures employed towards managing in African traditional societies were less time consuming and expensive to the present multi track diplomacy like arbitration, negotiation, mediation and conciliation.*

**Key words:** *Abakaliki, Conflict, Traditional, Management, Strategies.*

### **Introduction**

Africa is a continent often described as a “Dark Continent” by the western historiographers. This historic misrepresentation made the European traders and investors to see Africa and its subjects as not habitable and sub-standard, however, the regions are very habitable more than any other part of the world as it is free from natural disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, terrorism and war. Though, this is not to say that there were completely absence of wars among the African

people, there were scores of communal wars arising from land struggle, slave hunting, migration and settlement. Records of these wars dominated Asian, European and African literature over the past 100 years, thereby making Africans appear to have had the culture of conflict all over the globe. Africans might have not been conflict prone but their contacts with the Europeans made them vulnerable to conflicts. The Europeans taught Africans the importance of slavery and cash crops as people who lived in the arid land sought for more fertile land to which they engaged one another into war and forced the lesser powers to migrate to another place. This migratory war was so common among the migrating people that they usually looked for a place to settle and find clans or nations. Therefore, it is important to infer that African states' system and nationalities were orchestrated by conflicts of different magnitude to which Abakaliki Igbo were not in exemption.

Abakaliki is geographically located in the northern part of Igbo land and in the present day Ebonyi State of Nigeria. Before the creation of Ebonyi State on October 1, 1996, Abakaliki was a senatorial zone in Enugu state. C. O. Mgbada, maintains that it was the Abakaliki zone and Afikpo zone of the then Abia State that were merged to form what became the Ebonyi State.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, within the context of this study, Abakaliki will be used both as a geographical entity and as a name to describe the people of Abakaliki in Ebonyi, Izzi, Ezza North, Ezza South, Ikwo, Ohaukwu and Ishielu Local Government Areas. The area is bounded to the North by Benue State, to the South by Afkipo North and Ohaozara Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State, to the East by Enugu State and to the West by Cross River State. Abakaliki is almost completely a flat undiluted area-some 120-180 mm above sea level. The weather condition is relatively hot with a humid temperature, though the area witnesses a rain fall of about 1800-2000mm per annum. The rain is often heaviest between Mid March and July with a short dry spell that often occurs in August, and another wet season appearing between September and October. From November till March comes along dry season of harmattan.

Abakaliki is dominated by three major clans of Ezza, Ikwo and Izzi. However, there are other minor clans that are said to be co-habiting with those major clans; among which are Effium, Ezzangbo, Agba and Abaomege. Along Ishielu Local Government are found non-Igbo speaking

peoples of Okpoto, Ntezi and Ezillo. These non-Igbo speaking groups have lived and intermarried with the Abakaliki people that most at times, they are being referred to as Abakaliki people. However, the three major clans of Abakaliki have been argued to share one ancestral father. This is agreed upon by the three brothers who said that Ekuma Enyi is their ancestral father. Though, this mythical assumption has been challenged by the present writer who holds that the trios particularly Ikwo, could trace their history of origin to Igala.<sup>2</sup> Although, it appears there are similarities in their culture, traditions and customs and the people are very hospitable. The population figure of the people as at last census of 2006 stood out 1,060,279.<sup>3</sup> Until recently, the people were said to be predominantly agriculturalists with very few people engaging in trade, crafts, hunting, fishing, carving and animal husbandry. Today, about 75 percent of the people are politicians and 20 percent civil servants while 5 percent combine civil service with farming. As agriculturalists then, the people had witnessed intermittent fighting arising from claims and counter claims for land ownership. These wars took two phases to which the first phase was mainly conflicts and wars which took place before c.1800 while the second phase were wars fought on expansion as was of Ezza-Oshiri in 1903, Ngbo-Ezza in 1904, Ezza-Ikwo in 1910, Ezza-Izzi in 1902, Ikwo-Izzi in 1967 and Ezza-Ntezi in 1914.<sup>4</sup> These inter communal wars are not exhaustive as in some parts; there are still rage of wars going on now.

These wars were difficult to resolve, however, the resolution could take a form of defeat to force the weaker powers to migrate to some other areas. This was not certainly very easy as some of the actors of wars possessed the same military preponderances with each other thereby making the war last longer than was expected. It is against this background that some clans adopted the measures of co-habitation to manage their differences as in the cases of Ezza-Enyimagu of Izzi Local Government Area, Nsobo Ebim of Ekpaomaka in Ikwo Local Government Area and Ezzamgbo in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Apart from this co-habitation strategy, there were other cases in which some communities invited another community to jointly fight one's enemy. This happened during the Ezillo-Ngbo war where the former invited Ezza to assist them in the war. The invitation came with an agreement for a portion of land at Egu-Echara. The combined forces of Ezillo and Ezza defeated the Ngbo and brought Ezza-Ezillo settlement of the area. However, with population expansion, the two

communities became embroiled in intra communal war. The scourge of the war was over expansion of Ezza-Ezillo and political marginalization of the aborigines which see-sawed from hatred to indigene/settler's question.

### **Brief Definition of Conflict**

Conflict has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Like every other concept in social sciences and behavioural sciences, it eludes one universal acceptable definition thus, variety of these definitions abound. Conflict generally is an intrinsic and as such, becomes an inevitable part of human<sup>9</sup> existence. For Isard, conflict is a phenomenon that is an important part of human existence and a natural part of our daily lives.<sup>5</sup> It appears to be pervasive in nature and generally arises as a result of the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups or individuals. According to Amiara, S. A., it is the inability of the parties in conflict to enjoy values accrued to scarce commodities that inevitably conveys them into conflict.<sup>6</sup> While Butler, opines that conflict arises from mutual recognition of competing or incompatible material interests and basic values. In this way, conflict becomes unavoidable.<sup>7</sup>

As our daily way of life, conflict is an essential creative element in human relationships. It is a means to change, the means to our social values of the welfare, security, justice and opportunities for personal development can be achieved, if suppressed...society becomes static.<sup>8</sup> As an elastic concept, conflict encompasses strike, fight, struggle or battle, clash, confrontation and quarrel. For L. Coser, contends that conflict is defined as the struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injury or eliminate the rivals.<sup>9</sup> In the light of above statement, conflict refers to some form of friction or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group.

Therefore, conflicts have been widely contested to be vices that should be avoided. A common trend among scholars and students of social conflict is to perceive conflict in terms of its destructive tendencies. There are constructive conflicts that could lead to social harmony and development of the society hence not every conflict is evil and as such, it will be erroneous to

assume that whenever a conflict occurs, it will lead to destruction. Meanwhile, since man is born in conflict, he must always look for opportunities to his inherent characteristics. Thus, the inevitable discrepancy between what is needed and what is available must be acknowledged hence there is hardly anything like attainment of perfect equilibrium or homeostasis.

### **Conflict Management**

Conflict management is best understood as any effort to control or contain an ongoing conflict between politically motivated actors operating at the state or sub-state level, typically through involvement of a third party.<sup>10</sup> Conflict management is centrally concerned with making an ongoing conflict less damaging to the parties directly engaged in it. This is not usually the case with violent conflicts. Until recently, violent conflicts took the invitation of superior powers to defeat one of the parties into conflict, thereby making the lesser power/party to accept the membership of that superior power through oath taking. Therefore oath taking and blood covenant were important aspects of conflict management in the olden days as most conflicts were often fought with arrows, spears, machetes, stones, sticks and later den gun. However, the nature or type of conflict determined the resolution strategies-either to invite a third party to set up peace initiation process or withdrawal of troops from the battle field. M. J. Butler, holds that conflict management often originates from a concern on the part of a third party with containing the conflict's damaging or destabilizing effects to other semi-involved or non involved parties (horizontal escalation) as well as containing the conflict's ascent up the ladder of violent goals and implements (vertical escalation).<sup>11</sup> For S. G. Best, conflict management is the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict.<sup>12</sup> Conflict management sometimes can be synonymously used with such term as "conflict regulation" to refer to the capacity of handling conflict positively at different stages, including the ability to prevent the occurrence of conflict by being proactive. By this, it takes the form of conflict limitation, containment and litigation. John Burton, has averred that conflict management may include "conflict prevention", a term he uses to connote containment of conflict through steps introduced to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control the behaviour of conflict parties.<sup>13</sup>

Like as we have argued above, the approaches towards managing a conflict differ as one moves from one level of conflict to another. There are variations in conflicts involving property, land, family, marriage, communities as well as those between Christian parties on the one hand, and then non-Christian parties on the other hand. The political and social formation of African states gave credence to these variations as there were clans and kingdoms that evolved into a highly centralized authority and state system, headed by paramount kings and chiefs while others are characterized with decentralized authority to which Igbo States are involved. In this kind of society, because of the powers conferred in the king, or the paramount traditional political leader, the resolution of dispute is always rigid and takes the form of judicial arbitration. This measure was seen to be time-consuming, characterized with injustice and favouritism hence, parties into conflict could only be asked to take an oath in order to determine justice. Like in Igboland, the traditional judicial system consisted council of elders and other senior men, age grade and umuada. Important decisions are taken at the village square and by this, a vicious party would always find a way to scuttle justice and rather than embarking on judicial arbitration, parties in dispute can choose to manage their differences in order to avoid the outbreak of violent conflict.

Indeed, apart from judicial arbitration, managing conflict in traditional African society took another form of “selective delegation” where some selected group of people would be sent to interface with the warring parties in order to broker peace between them. One of the problems of this method is that at times, some delegated members would be given to financial inducement and bribery that their senses of neutrality would be affected. Another problem shows that some of the delegates will be so handicapped to stand before the conflicting parties because of sheer sentiments. Though, this usually comes when the conflict is still at its earliest or pre conflict stage and parties to the conflict have not started mobilizing resources or troops to the battle field. The delegates will meet and try to settle the differences even though, economic ties, blood bond, marital relationships and cultural affinity do affect their neutrality to the extent that a new phase of conflict will be prepared between the parties. Thus, disputant parties would be charged to consider intermarriage system or grassroots community-based activities to de-escalate potential conflict within the area. Therefore, it became a common practice that in many African setting, proactive measures were undertaken to keep conflicts from becoming manifest. By this, long

held traditions and cultures which are rich, promote the human spirit, community life, togetherness and clustering of groups, including their neighbours in such ways that conflict is downplayed. S. G. Best opines that for instance, village festivals like the new yam festival among the Igbo in Nigeria, initiation rites and puberty festival for young people, marriage ceremonies, the sharing of village and community markets, weddings, death accompanying mourning rites are all community-based that lead to the management of conflicts.<sup>14</sup>

### **Traditional Strategies for Conflict Management**

In traditional Igbo society, conflict was largely part of the Igbo states and social habits. The people were fighting wars of different kinds till when the British made contacts and decided to stymie the tide of the wars. Particularly in Abakaliki Igbo, there were records of inter and intra communal wars prosecuted on land disputes which to a large extent made the area a theatre of war. Indeed, there were much concentration of wars in Abakaliki area between one community and another, such war occurred between the people of Ikwo and Okum, Ezza and Izzi, Ezza and Oshiri, Ezza and Ikwo, Ikwo and Izzi, Izzi and Okum and Ezza and Mgbu. Other wars that occurred within the period of our study were the ones occurring between one autonomous community with another. For instance, in 1959, the Okpuitumo in Izzi fought a bloody war with the Ida. N. V. Steensel asserts that the dispute between the people of Okpuitumo and Ida started in 1910 and lingered till the outbreak of bloody war of 1959.<sup>15</sup> By 1925, the people of Igbegu waged a serious war with her Okum neighbour, while in Ikwo there were intra communal wars between Igbudu and Inyimagu of Mgbabu Autonomous Community and between Ebiem and Omege Echara. In Ezza, population expansion forced them into migration thereby engaging other communities into internecine wars.

These wars were brutal and people, villages and communities began to look for how to manage their disputes so as to avert the recurrence or re-eruption of the war. Therefore, these wars were managed through:

**Sacrifices/Oaths' taking;** oaths' taking is one of the African traditional strategies for conflict management. This method was aimed at discouraging and preventing parties from pursuing

individual interests by getting the parties to take an oath and make sacrifices to gods. It was believed that when parties into conflict swear an oath of peace, they will commit their lives and pursue valued goals that will promote their cooperative existence. This is normally handled by the elders of the communities by performing rituals before a powerful deity or shrine either with human blood or dog. Captured slaves or wanderers were often used as instruments of the oaths. In carrying out the rituals, the communities will swear to live in peace and vowed that any of them who first violate the oath should be conquered and chased out of the place.

Young people who constitute the band of warriors are warned about the implications of defiling such oath. While sacrificial objects such as human beings would be buried alive or killed at the border area to mark the beginning of blood bond between the parties, usually, protracted enmity, hatred and suspicion were resolved by exchange of valuable gifts and invitation for ceremonies like chieftaincy coronations, new yam festival, burial feast and other traditional rites. Defaulters of this oath were usually banished or ostracized with a letter of notification to the other party.

**Joint Construction of Dam:** until recently, conflicts in African society were fought over land dispute and considering the scarcity of drinkable water, parties into conflict usually resort to construction of dams on the disputed land as a way of peace building. Construction of dam on the disputed land usually takes a collective agreement to de-escalate violent conflicts. The assumption is that when a dam is constructed on the disputed land, it will help and restrict parties from staging claims of ownership of the land. This is usually proposed by a third party who acts as an independent mediator by seeking peace from the disputed parties. However, both parties will contribute jointly for the construction of the dam and would always send people periodically to clear, maintain and keep the dam clean. More so, they will nominate able bodied men from each community who will provide security to the dam so that people will not take their flocks to drink the water. This was one of the traditional conflict management strategies pursued by African subjects over the periods of our study.

**Markets:** another important method of traditional African conflict management was the common use of market. Available markets within these periods promoted inter group relationships and as a result, inter trade relations among the people of Igboland were encouraged

through the availability of markets. However, the Igbo occupation was predominantly hinged on agriculture, trade and manufacturing. Commodities or goods manufactured and produced were traded in the market, therefore the importance of market showed that people needed to maintain smooth and healthy relationships to be able to trade with their neighbours. In doing this, they share together a common market and jointly make sacrifices to the gods of the market located at the central part of the market called “anya ahia”.

However, criminals and evil men are tried in the market square and if found guilty, would be allowed to walk around the market for seven times as a punishment before appeasing the gods. This was normally carried out by the elders of the communities who invoke the gods to accept their appeasement. Where the party refused, a consultation would be made with some sacrifices by the community. So the penalty or punishment serve as a deterrent to people to not violate the common use of the market.

**War Covenant (Igba Ndu Ogu):** like sacrifices and oath-taking, the Igbo people are predominantly associated with “Igba ndu”. The concept of igba ndu is always tied to a powerful deity in every community. Prominent deities such as Igwekala, Ibinukpabi, Amadioha and Ahiajioku are some of the deities called upon to witness the covenant. In Abakaliki Igbo, igba ndu is an essential strategy of conflict management. It is a covenant between two or more individuals or group of people seeking mutual understanding or relationships. Communities in conflict can arrive at reconcilable conflict through blood covenant. Igba ndu can take a form of mixture of blood from the elders of each community and then every one of them could drink it. By this, they agree not to harm each other and swear to inform one another of any perceived calamity such as revealing of secret and other valuable information. Fortune tellers are admonished to keep watch on the communities.

However, war covenant “igba ndu” is recognized among the Igbo people and it was done to reduce conflicts taking place among the people. It is marked as a traditional war alliance aimed at conflict reduction, prevention and suppression. As a traditional conflict management strategy, it ensures that covenanted parties don’t exchange blood or engage in blood bath. In other words,

it is a solemn promise to engage in or refrain from a specified action. According to B. N. Amiara, during our youth ages, our father told us that “igba ndu” means an agreement with the gods or spiritual world that was done with serene mind, understanding and trust to which defaulters attract extinction of the community “mgbu uno”.<sup>16</sup> He maintains that usually it takes a form of breaking a machete at the battlefield with some incarnations before “eze muo”, the chief priest who observes the covenant. This exists among the people of Mgbo and Ikwo

**Snuff and Exchange of Snuff Box:** snuff is a tobacco made from a grinded or pulverized tobacco leaves. It is inhaled or sniffed into the nasal cavity. It is sniffed traditionally or inhaled lightly after a pinch of snuff is either placed on the back surface of the hand, held between thumb and index finger or by special made “snuffing” device. Snuff is attached with a lot of significant and it is commonly used among Igbo elders. It is one of the most valuable items required during the marriage ceremony, cultural rites and funeral rites. Enjoyed by the elders, it is expected that an exchange of snuff box represents brotherhood, good neighbourliness and common understanding among people.

In Abakaliki Igbo, there are instances where conflicts are resolved through an exchange of snuff box. For instance, a violent conflict that would have broken out between the people of Ndiagadoshi Echara and Nkalike Enyibichiri of Ikwo Local Government Area was averted through an exchange of snuff box by the elders of the two communities. A selected delegation was sent by the two communities on the invitation of neutral community elders who presided on the deliberation and at the end, struck agreement between them. In fact, interpersonal conflicts such as the ones between kinsmen are resolved through an exchange of snuff hence; they collectively believe that snuff signifies peace and purity of the mind. In many cases, parties in conflict rescind accepting snuff from their opponents because, they are afraid that it could be poisoned. Therefore, the alien fear and suspicion from exchanging “snuff boxes” seems to prolong differences among people but at the end, make conflict suppression, prevention and management possible.

**Inter tribal or Communal Marriage:** marriage is a social institution that is valued among the Igbo people. The significance of marriage shows that an adult Igbo man is not recognized in his home town until he gets married, therefore, it conveys certain respects and rights on individual whether man or woman. As a strategy for conflict management, marital engagement or vow between people helps to de-escalate conflict and reduce the degree of enmity that exists among them. For instance, it promotes continuous interactions between individuals in the family or community hence, protracted conflict between two communities is resolved through inter-tribal or communal marriages. Inter communal marriages stimulate communication between parties into conflict and help to remove suspicions associated with lack of communication.

S. Nwankwo holds that before now, inter communal wars were settled through inter communal marriages.<sup>17</sup> He further maintains that when a particular community gives their daughters' hands in marriage to men from another community, there is usually a consideration given in that regard especially during the period of communal clashes. Each of the two communities is always conscious of her own children and as such waste no time to sue for peace when conflict arises. He nonetheless stated that this may not be common practice among the various Igbo groups since there are communities who inter marry but still engage each other in communal clashes. Example could be seen of conflicts between Ezza Ezillo and Ezillo, Ikwo and Izzi, Okpuitumo Ikwo and Ameka Ezza within Abakaliki Igbo, Umeleri and Aguleri in eastern Igbo and other parts of Igbo land like the Owerri town. The implication of this assertion reveals that inter communal marriage is not an end to conflict among communities but a means to the management of social conflicts.

#### **Traditional institutions for Conflict Management in Abakaliki Igbo**

O. B. Nwolise, maintains that traditional African societies had law enforcement agents, traditional police and courts who were responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws of the land. According to him, they used council of elders, kings' courts, peoples and village assemblies for dispute settlement and justice dispensation.<sup>18</sup> The above organizations acted as modern western alternative conflict resolution strategies such as arbitration, mediation, negotiation, conciliation, multi-track diplomacy and many others. Each of the organs of the traditional institutions was charged with the maintenance of peace, thus, maintaining checks and balances

on each other. However, it will be instructive to note that the traditional African society had well reputed institutions for conflict resolution. This could be seen in the principle of “Ubuntu”, a concept that demonstrated the fact that Africans had over the years, developed and tested varied methods of conflict resolution.<sup>19</sup> This shows that they hold secrets of peacemaking lucked in their ways of life, customs and traditions for centuries before the disruptive activities brought about by colonization.<sup>20</sup>

In the pre-colonial Igbo societies, the Igbo had well defined socio-political institutions, the evolution of which facilitated crisis and conflict resolution. Those institutions are found in the organization of Village Council, Council of Elders/Privileged Persons, Peer Group Assembly, Umuada Assembly and the Oracle Priest or Eze Ala.

**Village Council:** the Village Council comprises all the leaders of thought and executive council members of the village including the heroes of war. Their responsibilities include giving room for the whole community to listen to the issues of disagreement and stake out a resolution strategy that will enhance peace building. Although, this method is somehow problematique because decisions in most cases may be swayed by few influential persons thus, creating an opportunity for the conflict to linger. Basically, the council will allow the contested parties to present their matters for which a decision will be taken upon them. The decision will include what the parties have to do or change in order to stop the conflict.

**Council of Elders /Privileged Persons:** the words of the elders are said to be arrows and as such, they possess curses and calamities. Given that the Igbo societies are gerontocratic in nature, however, confidence is placed on council of elders to judicially execute controversial matters. The reason is that, elderly decisions are best expected where experiences and wisdoms tend to correlate with age. Therefore, their decisions are final except in few cases where an unsatisfied person can sue for appeal to the village council.

**The Umuada:** the umuada are the conglomerations or women age grade association who seek to broker peace between two warring parties. They evolved through different village associations and seek the arbitration of justice from the general assembly. Each village has its own branch

and executive members. The village branches hold periodic meetings where disputes among members are settled while severe cases such as inter communal differences and murder cases are referred to the General Assembly who hold their meetings annually. By this, erring branches are either suspended or sanctioned and the punishments deter and make others to refrain from conflict thus, leading to the management of conflict.

**The Peer Groups Assembly:** The peer groups are the chief custodians of peace, security and they operate through an age grade system. They repair inter communal bridges, clear markets and roads, maintain schools and provide security to the community. The age grades serve as medium of law enforcement agents between the council of elders and the village assembly. They also work to ensure that criminals who would have provoked war with other neighbouring communities are arrested and tied (agbu) in the village square. Men and women suspected of poison and witches are arrested and brought to the village assembly, anybody found guilty will be ostracized and lead out of the community by the age grades.

**The Oracle Priest or Eze Ala:** the oracle priest doubles as the chief priest and sooth-sayer. He announces calamities, omen and abominations that will befall a community if such community incurs the wrath of gods. He pronounces the time of war and fortifies the soldiers of war. He also acts as peace-setter and sets up ground for peace processes between the warring parties. He announces and reminds the erring community about the impending calamities should they provoke a war, therefore, the oracle priest provides the information for the management of conflict and seeks the protection of gods for the community he represents. This implies that he acts as an intermediary between the gods of the land and the people of that community. He communicates important messages of god to the people and always seeks for gods' protection of the people.

### **Conclusion**

Conflict has been widely perceived to be part of human existence and the continuous interactions among individuals or communities cannot be peaceful always therefore, conflict will always occur due to ideological, social and economic differences which usually result in rivalry and

competition. The scope of human social conflict cut-across all spheres of life thus, making conflict appears pervasive. The pervasive nature of social conflict shows that it is unavoidable phenomenon. Therefore, a common agreement among scholars of social conflict is that whenever there is a break out of conflicts, there must also be measures adopted to resolve them.

These methodological foundations to its resolution could be proactive measures undertaken to de-escalate the manifestation of the conflict. These could be translated into traditional conflict management strategies such as joint construction of dams, sharing of markets, war covenant, snuff and exchange of snuff boxes, oath taking and inter tribal or communal marriages. It is believed that if these measures are pursued by parties into conflict as strategies for conflict management, violent conflicts or wars could transform to pro peacemaking and peace building. The attainment of this depends on the structures or types of the society.

The African traditional society to which the Abakaliki Igbo are part is one of such type of societies. The Abakaliki people have had well defined and strong organized political institutions. In the body of the institutions, the council of elders function as the highest decision marking organ to which serious issues like war, peace agreement and ostracism resolve around. The society is built on the body of institutions that maintain peace and ensure that conflicting issues at the preliminary or pre conflict stage are avoided. These institutions include but not limited to the ones discussed above but the whole range of measures taken to ensure that the crises ridden Abakaliki region were transformed to serene and pseaceful zone. These include the role of powerful deities like “Nte Ophene”, “Okemini Enyigba” and “Ugbala Nwanyi”. The activities of these deities have helped to maintain peace among the people. In fact, “Nte Ophene” has become a conventional deity “juju” that is worshipped among the people of Ama-eka Ezza and Enyigba Izzi because of its powers to maintain and protect its worshippers from attack. The joint worshiping of the deity signifies a common understanding that aimed at managing their differences.

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