



**Thesis by
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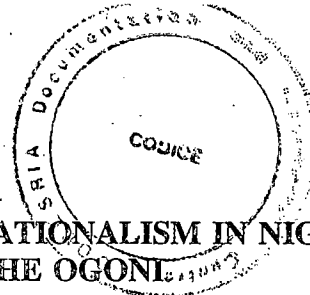
**UNIVERSITY OF ABADAN ,
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**Oil and minority ethnic nationalism in
Nigeria : the case of the Ogoni**

January, 1997



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**OIL AND MINORITY ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA:
THE CASE OF THE OGOINI**

BY

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A Thesis in the Department of **POLITICAL SCIENCE**
submitted to the Faculty of The Social Sciences
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree
of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**
University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

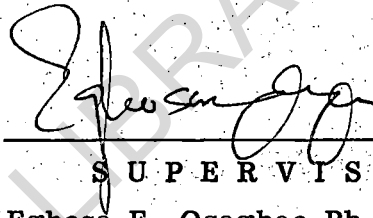
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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by Mr Victor Adefemi Isumonah, under my supervision in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE STUDY

AMOS	-	Association of Mineral Oil States
COP	-	Council of Ogoni Professionals
COTRA	-	Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers
EMIROAF	-	Ethnic Minorities Rights Organization of Africa
FOWA	-	Federation of Ogoni Women's Association
MORETO	-	Movement for Reparation to Ogbia
MOSIEND	-	Izon (Ijaw) Nationality in the Niger Delta
MOSOP	-	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
NYCOP	-	National Youth Council of Ogoni People
SMM	-	Southern Minorities Movement
ODU	-	Ogoni Divisional Union
OMPADEC	-	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission
OSTRA	-	Ogoni State Representative Assembly

ABSTRACT

This study examines the origins, goal(s) and consequences of the struggles of the minorities in the oil-producing areas of Nigeria. The minorities have common aspirations which derived from similar economic and environmental conditions occasioned by oil-exploitation. However, interethnic rivalry which sometimes resulted in violent clashes between neighbours among them, self-regarding patron-client ties and state repressive response to nascent political action were among the factors which prevented them from forging a strong regional movement. They, therefore, pursued, for the most part, their goal of internal independence through separate ethnic movements.

From a case study of the Ogoni, one can speak of a phenomenological relationship between the role of the elites and other factors in the emergence of minority ethnic nationalism in the oil-producing areas of Nigeria in the sense that the latter existed as mere conditions until the former transformed them into factors. There is evidence that the exploitation of oil started causing discontent among the peasants almost at the same time it commenced. They expressed their discontent, at best, in the forms of sabotage, theft and other clandestine actions. They never perceived their situation in ethnic terms such as that the oil wealth their ancestral homeland is endowed with was being exploited for the benefit of

other ethnic groups. It was the elites who perceived the situation of the minorities this way and proceeded to mount nationalist campaigns when they were convinced that their reformist approach was not yielding the desired results.

The state responded with a mixture of non-violent and violent strategies of containment. The latter strategy in Ogoni's case culminated in the exploitation of whatever differences that might have existed between the Ogoni and their neighbours to the end of preventing the spread of the example of Ogoni effective resistance to other oil minorities.

INTRODUCTION

Minority nationalism first emerged a few years to 1960 when Nigeria attained political independence. This nationalism took the forms of movements for separate regions such as the Calabar - Ogoja - Rivers (east), Mid-West (west) and Middle Belt (north) state movements and violent resistance such as by the Tiv in the north to their incorporation into the northern political system dominated by the Fulani. It grew cold when its protagonists achieved some self-rule in their separate states in 1963 and 1967. Another important factor in the lull experienced by the nationalism was the military grip on Nigeria following its seizure of power in 1966. Lastly, mention must be made of the role of the minorities' increased access to political power under the Administration of General Yakubu Gowon, himself a minority man from the Middle Belt, in the dissolution of the nationalism.

In the 1990s, minority nationalism resurfaced, aimed this time not at separate states since these had been won nor against incorporation into a regional political system dominated by the major ethnic group there but a redefinition, supposing they had once been defined before, of the terms of union in the Nigerian state. A former state military governor, Colonel Yohana Madaki, spoke for the Middle Belt thus:

Our main complaint is that the Middle Belt is the labourer, the workman in the factory; they do not participate in the management of the factory. And that decisions are not always taken at the conference table.¹

Until his execution in November 1995, Saro-Wiwa was famous for his call for

¹ Quoted in Tell, Lagos, May 2, 1994, p.14

a Constitutional Conference where a "New Nigeria" could be negotiated.

The organization of this second phase, so to say, of minority nationalism, fell into two categories. First were regional associations in some areas. Examples of this category were Middle Belt Forum, Akwa-Ibom Forum, Old Delta Province, Association of Minority States, Committee of Oil-Producing Areas, Nigerian Chapter of Ethnic Minority Rights of Africa Forum, Southern Minorities Forum, Edo State Forum, etc. Each of these regional organizations was composed of several clusters of ethnic minorities. Second were ethnically homogeneous movements such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ijaw Ethnic National Rights Protection Organization of Nigeria (IENRPON),² the Movement for Reparation to Ogbia (MORETO), Council for Ikwere Ethnic Nationality Forum (CIN), Kokori Progressive Union (KPU), Ekpeye Ethnic Nationality Forum (EENF), etc. This study is concerned with the latter category, specifically, Ogoni nationalism. The nationalism entailed by this category is in the study termed minority ethnic nationalism.

This nationalism was not just about access to oil resources but about self-determination whose critical motif is the ability to make decision on how resources within one's homeland are used. Being beyond quest for economic advantage, the nationalism cannot be accounted for by merely turning to economic factors.

Why, it may be asked, are the activities of the regional minority movements here characterized nationalism taking into account intra-group

² This may also pass for a regional organization for the fact that it bestrides the Eastern and Western parts of the Niger Delta

differences that were noticeable between the social groups they represented? This type of question is against the backdrop of the definition of **nation** on the basis of 'traditional' culture which like the one based on subjective consciousness, is inadequate.³ It goes without saying that in perceiving the relationship between nation and nationalism, the appropriate starting point is to realize that "it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round", as Gellner has written.⁴ Hobsbawm lends support to this view when he suggests a **posteriori** approach to defining nation. This starts with the concept of nation conceived by nationalism. As Smith put it, members of a nationalist movement may either conceive their group as an actual or potential nation.⁵ This perception of nations is conveyed by Anderson's reference to them as **imagined communities**, meaning that nations are what those who profess membership in them would like them to be.⁶ Finally, as Gellner has noted, the cultural homogeneity a nationalist movement requires is not one based on fixed elements of culture as language, custom and religion, but on what he calls "a high (literate) culture", with which the group strives to integrate itself.⁷ This

³ See Ernest Gellner **Nations and Nationalism**. Basil Blackwell, 1983 and E. J. Hobsbawm **Nations and nationalism since 1780 - programme, myth, reality**. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

⁴ Gellner op. cit, p. 55.

⁵ Anthony D. Smith **Theories of Nationalism**, London, Duckworth, 1971, p.171.

⁶ Benedict Anderson, **Imagined Communities**, London, Verso, 1986.

⁷ Gellner op. cit., p. 55.

culture, to me, expresses not mere language but the goals which members of a nationalist group set out to achieve. Shafer's definition of nationalism is, in this regard, noteworthy. He denotes nationalism as "that sentiment unifying a group of people who have a real or imagined common historical experience and a common aspiration to live together as a group in the future".⁸ The quest for group survival that is expressed as common action in relation with the state is generally agreed, constitutes nationalism regardless of individual contributions to the subject, adds Silvert.⁹ As noted below, the activities of both types of minority movements entailed acknowledged goals of nationalism. They are, therefore, qualified to be characterized nationalism.

Another objection to the characterization of the minority activities as nationalism may arise from the equation of the independence ideal goal of nationalism with political sovereignty. As already indicated, these movements' aim was not political sovereignty. Smith notes that the independence ideal is wider than political sovereignty goal. The former contains specific goals of autonomy, individuality and pluralism. Indeed, nationalists select from a variety of goals including "the drive for economic autarchy and self-sustaining growth",¹⁰ which was one of the goals of the ethnic nationalists of the oil-producing areas. Since the goals of autonomy, individuality and pluralism entail the activities of all of the movements, they can be characterized nationalism.

The nationalists of the ethnic movements worked both through them and

⁸ Boyd C. Shafer **Nationalism: Myth and Reality**. London, Victor Gollancz Limited, 1955, p.10.

⁹ K. H. Silvert ed. **Expectant Peoples - Nationalism and Development**, New York, Vantage Books, 1963.

¹⁰ Smith op. cit., p. 171.

regional minority movements. Yet, it must be emphasized, they worked primarily (if we measure work by the amount of time, energy and devotion) through their respective ethnic movements. Why was this so? Bates would argue that ethnicity is a ready principle of organization for ethnics because the pre-existence of "ethnic" infrastructure such as "traditional" political systems, kinship ties and common or mutually intelligible language, help reduce the cost and difficulty of political mobilization.¹¹ For Markakis, the principle of ethnicity for political organization is most attractive in an 'ethnocratic state'. In such a state, ethnicity forms an integral part of the political order "and functions as a controlling factor in the political process, long before an ethnic movement appears to challenge the order".¹² Right or wrong, the ethnic nationalists perceived the Nigerian state to be an 'ethnocratic state'.¹³ Naturally, then, they chose ethnic political mobilization as the primary instrument for challenging the order. One other reason for the greater preference for the ethnic principle was that the claim to territory basis of ethnic nationalism had to be justified in tradition and common history. These are rooted in ethnic identity which "is itself defined in the process of interaction - cooperation, competition,

¹¹ Robert H. Bates, "Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa", in Donald Rothchild and V. A. Olorunsola eds. **State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas**. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1983.

¹² John Markakis, "Ethnic Conflict and the State in the Horn of Africa", in K. Fukui and J. Markakis eds. **Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa**. London, James Currey, 1994, p. 236.

¹³ This perception is apparent from the public utterances and writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa, for example.

confrontation, even war".¹⁴

The Eritrean and Southern Sudanese experiences show that greater preference for regional political mobilization arises from the perception of a common external enemy who is at the same time considered intolerable. Overwhelming preference for the ethnic principle by the ethnic nationalists may be explained by the non-existence of such a condition. It could also be explained by inter-group differences. In any case, even the ethnic nationalists' use of the principle of regional political mobilization supports Markakis' assertion that "ethnicity is not always the basis upon which ethnic groups mobilize".¹⁵

Justification

This study was stimulated by the sheer popularity of the Ogoni resistance and the empirical field it provides for reexamining some propositions about ethno-nationalism. Some of the issues of concern to the study are the origin and leadership of oil-related ethno-nationalism in Nigeria, the underlying motivations, and the role of peasants in movements which call into question externally induced actions that impart negatively on their survival.

As an adjunct concern, the case of the Ogoni ethnic group enables one to contribute to the "historical discussion related to the formation of ethnic groups"¹⁶. The role of colonial powers in the creation of ethnic groups in Africa by the degradation and elevation of peoples, some of whom had constituted states prior to colonialism, is well established in the literature on inter-group

¹⁴ Markakis op. cit. p.236; cf. Ted Robert Gurr **Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts**. United States Institute of Peace, 1993.

¹⁵ Markakis op. cit., p.236

¹⁶ Gurr, op. cit., p. 18.

relations. Yet, the exposition on the role of other forces in the formation of Ogoni ethnic group will be a desirable, even if modest, contribution to that literature.

Above all, this study seeks to stimulate interest in the study of ethno-nationalism in Nigeria. To meet the theoretical and empirical consideration outlined above, the study is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1

In this chapter, the various concepts used in the study are examined. Thereafter, relevant perspectives are considered to enable the construction of a theoretical framework within which the issues of concern to the study can be situated.

Chapter 2

This chapter is concerned with the situation of ethnic minorities of the oil-yielding areas and the problems in the way of concerted effort at securing their independence ideal. Their sporadic acts of resistance and their import are discussed.

Chapter 3

This is the case study section of the study which examines in detail the issues and constraints on ethnic nationalism. As a background, effort is made to trace the origin of Ogoni ethnic identity to see the manner of its transformation into nationalism.

Chapter 4

This chapter analyses the patterns of the state's response to Ogoni nationalism and their effects on Ogoni relations with neighbours and the state.

Chapter 5.

In this chapter, the main issues are summarised. Also, the future of Ogoni nationalism is discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL MODEL OF ANALYSIS

Depending on the disposition of the person involved, the agitations which will be analyzed in this study may be characterized as protest or revolution. They are in the study regarded not as mere protests but as instances of ethnic nationalism and in regard of the Ogoni case, ethnic nationalism of the revolutionary type. A protest usually aims at reform,¹ whereas the agitations sought a drastic restructuring of the Nigerian State in a way that will grant national self-determination to the nationalities involved.

The Ogoni agitation was unique for at least three reasons. First, the types of demands the Ogoni made - political, cultural and economic autonomy were fundamental in nature. If they were to be actualized, the Ogoni would be part of Nigeria only within a very loose federal or confederal political arrangement. Not since the time of the Igbo's attempt to secede did an ethnic group make such radical demands on the Nigerian State. Mention must be made of the fact as shown in detail later on that Ogbia and Ijaw national movements made demands similar to those of the Ogoni's. A demand in the language of the economist is true if it is backed up by purchasing power. In political science, a demand can be regarded as such if there is evidence of the presence of political resources to realize it. Such resources in my consideration, include actual or sustained action and mobilization for action. Since there is no serious evidence of action or earnest effort to mobilize for action by other minority ethnic groups,² compared to the Ogoni, the latter case, remains

¹ Eme O. Awa **Federal Government in Nigeria**. University of California Press, 1964 and Gurr, op. cit.

² Consider, for example, the observation of the paramount ruler of Ekpeye nationality, Eze Robinson O. Robinson on the occasion of the inauguration of Ekpeye Ethnic

exceptional. What accounts for the difference between Ogoni nationalism and other nationalisms, both of which were partly provoked by oil-exploitation, is one major theoretical issue in this study. Second, the Ogoni agitation is surpassing by the manner it was steered. The elements of this distinction include mass action and the very effectual strategies employed.

Mass support comes last of the three phases of the development of nationalist movements. The phases, as outlined by Hroch are: (1) cultural, literary and folklore, (2) emergence of "a body of pioneers and militants of 'the national idea' and the beginnings of political campaigning for this idea"; (3) era of mass support.³ Hroch dwelt on the second phase in his "comparative studies of small European nationalist movements",⁴ while Hobsbawm dwelt on the third phase in his chronology of nationalist movements from 1780 to 1990. This study will explore all the three phases in the chronological analysis of Ogoni nationalism for the insights it will bring into the effectual strategies employed.

Which leads to the third factor of uniqueness of the Ogoni agitation: the actual resistance that became of Ogoni agitation separates it from the agitations of the other minorities in oil-producing areas as unique. No other group sustained the interruption of oil-exploitation on a small much less on a large scale as the Ogoni. By 1996, oil exploitation which was halted in Ogoniland in

Nationality Forum (EENF): "I am not happy that Ekpeyes who have had their eyes widely opened (sic) have not thought of mobilising their people (like the Ogonis(sic)) to protest to free themselves and their forebears from the fetters of poverty in the midst of plenty". Quoted in Nnamdi Douglas, "The Agonies of Oil-Producing Communities in Rivers State", Mimeo, 1994.

³ Cited in Hobsbawm, op. cit. p.12.

⁴ Ibid.

1993 remained so. It is also an evidence of the force and uniqueness of Ogoni agitation that the Ogoni have been recognized as an indigenous population by the United Nations Organization (UNO).

All in all, the agitations have refuted the claim of a top government official in the administrations of Generals Yakubu Gowon and Ibrahim Babangida, Chief Phillip Asiodu, that the Nigerian State could go on presumptuously exploiting the crude oil endowment of the ethnic minorities. After acknowledging the difficulties being experienced by the communities of oil-producing areas in a public lecture he delivered to some civil servants in 1980, he ended on the note that:

Given ... the small size and population of the oil producing areas, it is not cynical to observe that even if the resentments of oil states continue, they cannot threaten the stability of the country nor affect its continued economic development.⁵

It is significant to point out that Chief Asiodu, ironically a minority man who spoke in that vein, became a Director of Chevron Oil Company, the second oil company after Shell-BP that operated in Ogoniland till 1993. More important than these observations are the following issues: (1) How did Ogoni and other minority ethnic nationalisms emerge? (2) What was the locus of Ogoni nationalism within the larger context of minority nationalism in Nigeria? And what were the attitudes of other minorities especially minorities in the north and other non-oil producing minorities to it? (3) Who constituted, bearing in mind the social and occupational differentiations of the populations of the ethnic groups involved, the vanguard of the nationalisms? (4) Why, even though oil is not

⁵ Quoted in *Ogoni Bill of Rights*, Port Harcourt Saros International Publishers, 1992, back cover page.

exploited in every village of, say, the Ogoni, did virtually all Ogonis join the trail of Ogoni consciousness and nationalist movement? (5) Did the state play any role? (6) Were there any external influences?

Let me deal with the claim made earlier on that the throes of the peoples of oil-producing areas which had been violently put down by the military authorities, constitute minority ethnic nationalism by way of conceptual clarification and then the theoretical framework for answering the questions propounded above.

1.1 Conceptual Clarifications

The clarification of concepts is often necessary in social science research to make clear the connotation or meaning of the concept or term and the context of its usage in a study. This need follows from the fact that most concepts are capable of having more than one connotation. Another need for conceptual clarification stems from the fact that such an exercise according to Robert Merton, forms a basic part of theorizing.⁶ In particular, the most important concept of this study, **minority ethnic nationalism**, requires clarification because the phenomenon it is used to denote has been denoted with other terms.⁷

1.2 Minority Ethnic Nationalism

As political concepts, the relationship of power and protest between **majority** and **minority** is borne by the concept, minority ethnic nationalism.

⁶ Cited in Giovanni Satori, "Guidelines for Concept Analysis", in G. Satori ed. **Social Science CONCEPTS: A Systematic Analysis**. Sage Publications, 1984.

⁷ For example, Osaghae denotes Ogoni agitation as **uprising** in his Eghosa E. Osaghae, 'The Ogoni uprising: Oil Politics, Minority Agitation and the Future of the Nigerian State', in **African Affairs**, 94, 1995, 325-344.

This relationship is historically determined. That means that the clarification of minority in a polity boils down to establishing how such a relationship was started. Perhaps, the best starting point is to realize that the minority - majority dichotomy "is the outcome of a nation - state paradigm, of the state as an expression of the right to self-determination".⁸ In Nigeria's case, Ekeh has pointed out that politically disadvantaged demographic minorities emerged during the beginning of nation-state formation starting in the 1950s when serious constitutional reforms were embarked upon.⁹ The framework of analysis thus suggested directs that analysis of the concept of minority specifically aim at identifying "national minorities" to be relevant to the study of ethnic nationalism.¹⁰

About the earliest definition of ethnic group by American sociologists equated it with minority, namely, a culturally and numerically small group within

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, "From Conquest to Consent: as the Basis of State Formation: Reflections on Rwanda", in **New Left Review**, No. 216, March/April, 1996, p.34.

⁹ Peter P. Ekeh, "Political Minorities and Historically-Dominant Minorities in Nigerian History and Politics," in Oyeleye Oyediran ed. **Governance and Development in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Professor Billy J. Dudley**, Ibadan, Oyediran Consult International, 1996, 33 - 63.

¹⁰ One would agree with Hobsbawm who regards the term, "national minority" as "question - begging" when, for instance, its absurdity is revealed by juxtaposing it with the comparative term, "national majority" - Hobsbawm, op. cit. Yet, it makes sense when used to refer to a politically aware non-dominant population as Macartney's definition shows. For him, "a minority becomes a national minority, properly speaking, only when its national aspirations conflict with those of the State". in C. A. Macartney **National States and National Minorities**. New York, Russell and Russell, 1968, p.16.

a large society (State).¹¹ But an ethnic group defined this way needs not be a minority, it can be the numerically and even politically dominant group within the state or "may extend across several states, as do the Arabs".¹² In fact, conflict theorists of 'plural society' associate pluralism with despotic minority rule.¹³ This shows that as a political concept, the advantage or disadvantage of number is not the only determinant of minority status. What is more important is the degree of control of political power. This definition of political minority is underscored by terms such as "ruling minority" or "dominant minority", "marginalized minority", "marginalized majority", etc. But control of political power cannot by itself constitute an explanation of political minority status. Otherwise, the explanation will be circular. Explanation of such status has to be sought in the history and the demographic characteristics of the state.

The significance of number in the determination of political minority status seems today, with the end of white minority rule in South Africa, to be the rule rather than the exception. Hence, such terms as "dominant majority" and "ruling majority" are uncommon in analysis and political vocabulary because they sound, as contradiction in terms.

Before the initiation of the regionalization process in Nigeria in the 1940s,

¹¹ R. Drummond "Nationalism and Ethnic Demands: Some Speculations on a Congenial Note" in **Canadian Journal of Political Science**, (Toronto), x(2); 375 - 387, 1977.

¹² Drummond op. cit. and Walker Connor, "A nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a ...", in **Ethnic and Racial Studies**, 1(4), 337-400, 1978.

¹³ For example, M.G. Smith "Institutional and Political Conditions of Pluralism", in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith eds. **Pluralism in Africa**. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969, pp. 313 - 326.

all ethnic groups, appeared to be equal, thanks to the doctrine of indirect rule which restricted inter-ethnic political interactions.¹⁴ At that time, differences between ethnic minorities and major ethnic groups existed in terms no more than language and territory throughout the country. In the north, the Islamic religion constituted an additional difference. As the regionalization of politics and administration increased, each of the three regions (East, North and West) came to be synonymous with the major group - Hausa/Fulani (North), Igbo (East) and Yoruba (West), it contained. This meant that the major ethnic group, both numerically and politically dominant was the chief spokesman for the region.¹⁵ 'Cultural mobilization around symbols of Islam, traditional hierarchy in the north and, in all the three regions, of speech community', constituted the undercurrent of this ethnicization of politics and administration.¹⁶ Invariably, the term, minority, took on political meaning in addition to the tacit territorial, demographic, and sociological (for instance, religious) meanings it already had. The political discrimination and restriction of 'minorities' most evinced by the Igbo ouster of a minority man, Eyo Ita from the premiership of the Eastern Region in 1952, brought to the foreground the significance of number in the definition of political minority in Nigeria. From that point, regional minorities became advocates of separate political regions where they could enjoy some political autonomy.

¹⁴ Ekeh, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ John A. A. Ayode, "Ethnic Management in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution", in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, XIV(i); 23 - 141, 1987.

¹⁶ Crawford Young *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, Winsconsin, The University of Winsconsin Press, 1976.

Although such minorities have got separate states, they do not enjoy political distinctiveness because of the concentration of political and economic resources at the centre and the corresponding access to them by the major ethnic groups through their numerous states, as in the former era. The assertion made by Hutchful in 1986 that the ethnic groups in the oil-producing areas remained "politically marginal and economically some of the most underdeveloped in the Federation",¹⁷ is still valid today. It is this state of affairs they rose up against in the early 1990s, displaying, in effect, the will to change their situation. Consequently, they fulfil the criteria - numerical inferiority, political non-dominance and a will to effect a change of their situation - commonly used to define political minority as the following sample definitions indicate. A group of Dutch scholars in 1949 defined a minority thus:

A minority is composed of a group of persons differing from the rest of a population with markedly distinct ethnic, religious, linguistic characteristics, cultural bonds or ties, numerically in an inferior and non-dominant position, showing a will, if only implicitly to pressure and develop their patterns of life and behaviour.¹⁸

It is not necessary for a group to have all the distinguishing characteristics as this definition suggests to be regarded as "markedly distinct" and called a minority group if it meets the crucial criteria for defining minority. For one thing, these characteristics are not constant as noted by "situationalist analysis" of ethnicity. The eastern part of Nigeria illustrates that they are not all required for a

¹⁷ Quoted in Eboe Hutchful, "Oil companies and environmental pollution in Nigeria", in C. Ake ed. **Political Economy of Nigeria**. Longman, 1986, p. 113.

¹⁸ Quoted in Gurr, op. cit., p.37.

"markedly distinct" identity of a group. Here, both the Igbo major ethnic group and the various minority groups mostly profess the Christian faith. Yet the feeling of political inefficacy at the nation-state level in comparison with the Igbo which can be linked to numerical inferiority, bears out the existence of minorities in the region.¹⁹ It is thus, sufficient to have some of the defining characteristics combining with a subordinate position and a determination to forge a common way of life to be referred to as a minority. As pointed out earlier on, numerical inferiority may not count in some cases for the definition of political minority. This perhaps explains why the definition offered by the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in 1954 excludes it. The definition states:

The term minority shall include only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserve ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest population.²⁰

In line with the definition of minority based strictly on power holding as the above one is, Ekeh argues that all ethnic groups in contemporary Nigeria, including the so-called major ethnic groups - Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba - except the Fulani, are minorities. In his words, "the only group that still retains power at the national level is the Fulani aristocracy which was not a demographic

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Quoted in David B. Knight, "Territory and People or People and Territory?: Thoughts on Post-Colonial Self-Determination", in *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1985, p.264.

majority in the first place".²¹ Since, Ekeh continues, the terms 'minority' and 'majority' are now emptied of their power content, they should 'be pushed out of the dictionary of Nigerian usages'.²² But just as the Fulani draws on 'craft' to paraphrase Ekeh, to retain a **veto power** in Nigerian politics, there are ethnic groups who contend seriously for national power and do indeed share 'substantially' from it, on the basis of their relative numerical superiority. I think, it is in this sense that the so-called major ethnic groups still retain majority status. They should be distinguished from other kinds of political minorities. This implies that we can talk of different classes of political minorities in Nigeria. Thus, if the numerically strong ethnic groups who contend for national power on the basis of their numerical strength are put in one category, another category of minorities would be ethnic groups who are numerically and politically inferior and whose contention for power is based on their endowment with a 'national' economic resource. The ethnic groups in the oil-producing areas fit this description. In that case, a minority may be defined as a group that is non-dominant numerically and politically, whose contention for power at the national level is derived from the possession of a 'national' economic resource.

If as claimed here, the ethnic groups in the oil-bearing areas are a minority, the next important question is whether they are a "national minority". Macartney provides an insight into such a question when he writes that "a minority becomes a national minority, properly speaking, only when its national

²¹ Ekeh, *op. cit.*, p.39

²² Ibid.

aspirations conflict with those of the state".²³ From this definition, a "national minority" is distinguished by the demand for share in state power or self-determination. The latter demand whose doctrine is nationalism is,²⁴ what the minorities in this study, made on the Nigerian state. This demand expectedly, generated conflict just as it is symptomatic of nationalism.²⁵ It follows that they are a "national minority. I turn now to ethnic nationalism.

Ethnic nationalism is one of the types of nationalism in general.²⁶ Granted as Minogue says, any given type of nationalism describes an area of life in which nationalism operates,²⁷ the necessary question to ask is, 'what area of life does ethnic nationalism describe?' Alternatively, 'how do we identify ethnic nationalism?' since Richmond has rightly noted, not every politicized ethnicity is ethnic nationalism.²⁸

It has to be noted, says Richmond, that the goals of politically mobilized ethnicity, may include:

The right to the franchise, the use of the ethnic vote to swing results in marginal constituencies. the achievement of special status for particular

²³ Macartney op. cit.

²⁴ Elie Kedourie **Nationalism**. London, Hutchinson and Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1960, cf. Smith, op. cit.

²⁵ Anthony H. Richmond, "Ethnic nationalism: social science paradigms", in **International Social Science Journal**, No. 111, February, 1987.

²⁶ Smith op. cit.; K. R. Minogue **Nationalism**. London, Methuen, 1967; Walker Connor, op. cit.

²⁷ Minogue, op. cit.

²⁸ Richmond, op. cit.

languages or religions (particularly in education), the removal of injustices, affirmative action programmes, compensation for past deprivation, the restitution of property, or the recognition of claims for special treatment such as exemption from military service.²⁹

However, he continues, politicized ethnicity may lead to nationalism if claim to territory is involved and can be historically established. In other words, ethnic nationalism can be defined on the basis of claim to territory or aspiration to statehood or independence within a given area. "By the same token, not all nationalist movements aspire to complete independence or statehood".³⁰ Thus, even where complete political independence is pursued, nationalist movements may make do with internal self-determination if that is what is attainable.³¹

Arighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein give another guide to determining ethnic nationalism by their historical account on "national movements" of which the former is a variant.³² As most Western writers on nationalism, they trace "national movements" to the 19th century and then note that "the national movement ... defined the oppression as that of the ethno-national group over another".³³

The two marks of ethnic nationalism - claim to territory and attribution

²⁹ Ibid., p.4.

³⁰ Ibid., p.5

³¹ For a discussion of internal self-determination, see for example, Issa G. Shivji: **The Concept of Human Rights in Africa**. CODESRIA Book Series, 1989; and Knight, op. cit.

³² Richmond, op. cit.

³³ Giovanni Arighi, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein **Anti-system Movements**. London and New York, Verso, 1989, p. 31.

of their "oppression" by the ethnic nationalists to an ethno-national group(s) are evident from the agitations of the peoples in the oil-producing areas. The peoples themselves as distinctive groups are also marked by numerical inferiority; political non-dominance as can be supported by their lack of influence on the decision on access to the crude oil resources endowed in their "traditional" lands or their enstrangement from the process of "authoritative allocation of values"; and their will, expressed in struggles, to defend and protect their territories and group interests. Against this background, minority ethnic nationalism may be defined as the struggle of a numerically inferior and non-dominant group to reclaim an historical territory and its resources from the control of a dominant group(s) in order to achieve autonomy within it. The goal of the struggle of such a nationalist movement may be autonomy within the existing state or in a new independent state.

The theoretical issues raised by minority ethnic nationalism in the oil-producing areas contain crucial concepts which also need to be clarified. These are peasantry, elites and rural.

1.3 Peasantry

The term peasantry is generally used to subsume farmers whose common characteristics are "simple technology and family labour; some degree of household control of land; a satisfier rather than maximizer attitude towards production (but implying some participation in markets); and obligations in form of rent, interest or tax to power-holders outside the household."³⁴ The peasantry of the Niger Delta Region and environs share most of these broad characteristics.

³⁴ Jan Hesselberg **Two Third World in Transition: The Case of the Peasantry in Botswana**. Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1985, p. 48/49.

The terrain of the area has broadly divided its peasantry into two - land tillers of the north and fishers of the south. Peasants of the north are mainly tillers of the land, while those of the south are mainly engaged in fishing. Some of the peasants in the southern part are full-time fishers while the others till the land to grow some food crops on a part-time basis. The peasants of the northern part practise fishing, collecting and processing of palm-fruits, hunting, crafts, e.g. canoe-building, pottery and basket making in addition to farming, the main occupation.³⁵

Being characterized by a high level of technology, the common industry (oil industry) in the Niger Delta is only able to absorb a very few of the largely illiterate and unskilled population. Majority of the "native" population practise one or two of the occupations outlined above. In Ogoni area, the combination of scarce arable land due to population pressure, pollution of rivers and fishing ponds and creaks through oil exploitation and lack of alternative employment have restricted the majority of the population to strictly subsistent production.

It is sufficient then to see peasants in the oil-producing areas as what peasants are now broadly agreed to be:

Peasants are small agricultural producers with rights of property in their land which they work primarily with the labour of their own families. They consume much of what they produce Finally, peasant families and their holdings generally form parts of larger wholes: the village, which expresses their communication norms³⁶

³⁵ R. K. Udo **Geographical Regions of Nigeria**. Heinemann, 1970.

³⁶ R.G. Goheen "Peasant Politics? Village Community and the Crown in Fifteenth Century England", in **The American Historical Review**, 96 (1), 1991.

Even when as in some parts of Nigeria, peasants' production in the oil-bearing areas is influenced by commercial concerns, they remain peasants in so far as the gains of commercial production are hardly enough to meet basic social, kinship, and community obligations -education, health-care, and community development. In fact, full-time fishers of the region sell most of their fishes to have money to purchase food crop items and meet other essential needs. The use of the quantity of product sold to distinguish the 'peasant' from the 'agriculturalist' proposed by Hesselberg would be confusing in the case of this category of fishers of the area.³⁷ Such a distinction can only be useful if it can be shown that the level of commoditization of product affects the political or social behaviour of the farmer. This is especially because the peasantry is assumed to be an important category of the grassroots populace who may be a fossil or catalyst to the development of a social or nationalist movement. It is

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Hesselberg op. cit., distinguishes among three categories of farmers - peasants, traditional agriculturalists and modern agriculturalists by place or percentage of sale of (surplus) product and demand for labour and production methods. He says that what distinguishes peasants from traditional agriculturalists is that the former sell their surplus product outside the boundaries of their society. On the other hand, the peasants are distinguished from modern agriculturalists by the percentage of sale of product and demand for labour and production techniques. If sale of product is over 50 per cent, then the farmer is an agriculturalist, and if demand for labour and production methods and equipment is higher than 50 per cent, the farmer is also an agriculturalist. Consequently, he situates the peasant between the traditional agriculturalist and modern agriculturalist in his definition of the peasant "as a cultivator or herdsman who carry (sic) out a non-traditional and non-modern production and who lives in a society with a developed market, be it capitalist or socialist" (p.54).

the analysis of the peasantry that contributes to its pedagogical value that should be of serious concern.

So far, the most important pedagogical distinction made between peasants is one that divides them into three - rich, middle and poor. The basis of this distinction is obviously wealth. But insignificant differentials in income patterns and largely similar standards of living of peasants in the oil-producing areas or elsewhere in Nigeria suggests that wealth cannot be a sound basis for differentiating within the peasantry in Nigeria. For this reason, this study does not make a distinction between peasants. All rural dwellers whose livelihood largely involves primary production whether as farming or fishing in the oil-yielding areas are conceived here as peasants. Also, the process of channelling products to meeting basic needs as the use of amount of commoditization to distinguish between peasants suggests, will not be considered as a distinguishing characteristic within the peasantry.

1.4 Rural

Some of the most crucial properties of the world are ... invisible only to the clever ... (The) world is a various place ... and much is to be gained ... by confronting that grand actuality rather than wishing it away in a haze of faceless generalizations and false comforts.³⁸

The above could well be a perceptive comment on the continuing effort of rural sociologists to produce a universal construct of rurality. While the rural space seems very apparent in most parts of the world, some scholars dispute its existence on the ground that it cannot be found in a pure form. Others prefer to

³⁸ K.H. Halfacree "Locality and Social Representation. Space, Discourse and Alternative Definitions of the Rural" in *Journal of Rural Studies*, 9 (1), pp. 23, 1993.

employ the term as though the areal spaces they mean have a uniform character or even undisputably accepted as such.³⁹

The two approaches towards a universal construct of rurality are the descriptive and socio-cultural. The descriptive approach uses physical characteristics to define a rural area. The more salient ones are occupation and ecology. As an occupational construct, 'rural' is used to refer to 'a population aggregate that derives its livelihood from agricultural production or at best, from the extractive industries as mining, fishing and forestry'. The advantage of this is that it can be operationalized.⁴⁰ The problem with it is that it is not all that live in areas spatially characterized as 'rural' who are engaged in agricultural production or derive their living from the land and waters. Some rural dwellers are self-employed - traders, artisans and others are in the employ of government or non-agricultural establishments.

Rural as an ecological construct is a "delineated geographical area characterized by a population that is small, unconnected and relatively isolated from the influence of large metropolitan centres".⁴¹ As the occupational construct, this view of rurality can be delineated and operationalised empirically. It also conforms to social representation of the term. The socio-cultural approach to defining rural ascribes to it certain social and value peculiarities. Modernists are noted for making a clear distinction between the rural and urban

³⁹ Keith Hoggart "Let's do Away With Rural", in **Journal of Rural Studies**, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 245 -257, 1990.

⁴⁰ Michael K. Miller and A. E. Luloff, "Who is rural? A Typological Approach to the examination of Rurality", in **Rural Sociology**, (Montana) 46(4), 1981, p.610.

⁴¹ Ibid.

on the basis of the agents of modernization. In this regard, rural areas are cast as 'traditional' with the traits of tranquil life, social conservatism, religiosity and fatalism, dependence, honesty, etc. On the other hand, urban areas are characterized as 'modern', meaning "openness to new experiences, an abandonment of passivity and fatalism and an assertion of increasing independence from traditional authority figures".⁴² These distinctions have been rejected by several authors in respect of Western societies.

In determining the rural space, Halfcree suggests we should not neglect the social representation or ordinary meaning of the term, rural. Thus, attempts at defining rurality are academic discourses which stand between their objects and lay discourses of objects. It goes without saying that:

there is an alternative way of defining rurality which, initially, does not require us to abstract causal structures operating at the rural scale. This alternative comes about because 'the rural' and its synonyms are **words and concepts understood and used by people in everyday talk**.⁴³

Halfcree acknowledges, however, that the conceptualization of rurality from social representations is fraught with a few problems. First, "the context - dependence of the interpretive repertoires employed ... means that the social representation from which they derive may contain diverse and even contradictory elements".⁴⁴ Second, social representations may lack empirical clarity. Equally, it may be difficult to use them to define a clear image of the rural. Finally, there is the problem of distinguishing between the sign (rurality) and the referent (rural

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p.33, original emphasis

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.32.

locality). These problems may, nevertheless, be overcome by considering the social representation of rurality as "an amalgam of personal experiences and 'traditionally' handed-down beliefs propagated through literature, the media, the state, family, friends and institutions."⁴⁵

In conclusion, Halfacree cautions researchers to be wary of thinking that they can arrive at a single, all-embracing definition of the rural, which is not even desirable. They cannot dismiss with a wave of the hand everyday usage of the term, rural, which is flourishing, even though the causal significance of rural locality may appear to be withering away. They should hold pace with progress in the world of abstraction and simulation wherein according to Baudillard, the map now engenders territory rather than the reverse.

Indeed, Halfacree's solution to unfruitful search for a universal construct of rurality is an important leap forward in that it leaves each people with the task of specifying their rural areas according to perception and references. Following social representations of the central focus of this study (the Ogoni) which draw upon descriptive characteristics as primary agricultural production and simple settlements of virtually homogeneous populations, the Ogoni area is on aggregate in this study, viewed as a rural area. This view, of course, recognizes the variations in occupational and ecological characteristics of the Ogoni area.

1.5 Elites

The concept, elite, has a controversial connotation against the background of idealist thoughts as equality, liberalism etc. It has a heterogeneous conception in that it may mean a group with superior skills and talents; a group that is traditionally superior and possibly unspecialized, or a group with a reservoir of

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Ibid. p.33.

skills and talents. It is an all-embracing concept for ruling class, aristocracy, leadership and more.⁴⁶

Here, elites is used to refer to a privileged few whose training or traditional background can enable their access to state political and economic resources. On the level of state political resources, they could be absorbed into state political office, while on the level of state economic resources, they could link up with prominent holders of state power to secure some benefits, all in an incorporatist setting. From this conceptualization, membership of the elite group includes traditional rulers and other individuals who have some political muscle by virtue of their education.

1.6 Theoretical Model of Analysis

In this section, I examine some perspectives on the conflict that has engulfed the minorities in the oil-producing areas since the commencement of oil-exploration in Nigeria. Thereafter, I outline the model of analysis in the light of Richmond's observation that no single theory can help grapple with the complex social phenomenon that ethnic nationalism is. There are for example, micro-social, economic, and political factors in Ogoni nationalism.

The conflict arising from the diverse responses of the minorities in the oil-producing areas has tended to be interpreted by commentators and scholars as economic. Although there is merit in this perspective, the problem with it is that it is ahistorical. The corollary of its ahistoricalness are first, it simplifies the conflict and obscures its larger context of minority ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. Second, it reduces the cause of the conflict to one factor - economic -

⁴⁶ This section draws entirely from S.F. Nadel, "The Concept of Social Elites", in **International Social Science Bulletin**, Vol. VIII, No.3, 1956, pp.413-424.

discontent over the distribution of oil-wealth - and cannot explain it when its nature changes.

This dominant economic perspective leads me to examine some perspectives of ethnicity that are anchored to economic factors. One of these, that is, internal colonialism model, has indeed been suggested and elaborated in the 1995 journal article of Ben Naanen, himself and Ogoni man.⁴⁷

The background to Naanen's proposition is the discontinuity in the pattern of revenue allocation in Nigeria. Before the discovery of oil or more accurately, before oil became the 'king', to borrow Naanen's term, of the Nigerian economy, the principle of derivation was predominantly applied in revenue allocation. This principle was in varying degrees mitigated by the principle of population and equality of the constituent units of the federation for the distribution of the Distributable Pool Account. All the same, the areas which produced national revenue yielding commodities - cocoa in the Yoruba dominated West, groundnut and cotton in the Hausa-Fulani dominated North, and palm oil in the Ibo dominated East - derived maximum and proportional benefits from the system of revenue allocation. But with the dwindling fortunes of the revenue yielding commodities and the inverse rise in the fortunes of oil, the revenue allocation formula was gradually revised to deemphasize the principle of derivation until it was virtually displaced. The predominant use of other

⁴⁷ Ben Naanen "Oil-Producing Minorities and the Restructuring of Nigerian Federalism: The Case of the Ogoni People", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 1., 1995.

criteria, namely, population and equality "in the recent years"⁴⁸ and the concomitant disadvantage suffered by the minorities in the oil-producing areas, has led some to interpret their situation as 'internal colonialism'. This widely held view of prominent minority ethnic nationalists, for example, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, finds its most elaboration in Naanen's work (supra). As he put it, internal colonialism of minorities of oil-producing areas, rests on the:

conjuncture of three principal developments: first, the ethnic-based political domination, which is used to expropriate the resources of the oil communities for the benefit of the dominant groups; second, the alliance between dominant groups, the oil companies and state enterprises, which restricts the minorities' access to the modern and more rewarding sectors of the oil economy; and third, oil-based environmental degradation, which undermines the traditional peasant of fishing economy of the oil-producing areas without providing a viable economic alternative.⁴⁹

The main assumption of Naanen's internal colonialist thesis is that the oil-wealth derived from the autochthonous land of the minorities is exploited by the major ethnic groups for their own development. The problem with this assumption is that the use of criteria such as equality of states, land mass and need for revenue allocation ensures that the benefits of oil-wealth do not accrue exclusively to the major ethnic groups. Minorities in non-oil-producing areas in the north also benefit from oil wealth. Then, Naanen's internal colonialist thesis cannot place such minorities without difficulty.

⁴⁸ C.O. Ikporukpo "Federalism, political power and the economic power game: Conflict over access to petroleum resources in Nigeria", in **Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy**, 1996, Vol. 14.

⁴⁹ Naanen op. cit., p. 4

Another ambiguity of the internal colonialist thesis is that ascriptive stratification in Nigeria is not dichotomous to use Hoetink's term, but fluid.⁵⁰ While it is granted that the major ethnic groups enjoy relative political and economic dominance as can be seen in their share of political and other public service (including parastatals) posts and share from oil-wealth through their numerous states of the federation, it has to be conceded as well that a finely-drawn competition based on cultural differences does not exist between the minorities and the major ethnic groups of Nigeria.

Finally, the internal colonialist thesis draws attention only to one source of the grievances of the minorities and as well fails to come to grips with the development and nature of the resistance mounted by the minorities. To take a specific example, the internal colonialist thesis cannot account for the difference between Ogoni consciousness and other ethnic consciousnesses which are assumed to be provoked by grievances from the manner of sharing oil-wealth. Therefore, the thesis cannot help us to fully comprehend the conflict involving the minorities.

The second 'economic' perspective that may be applied to the conflict involving the minorities focused upon here derives from the Clientelist paradigm whose two most important assumptions are: (i) Relationships cut across social boundaries (ethnic or class) and (ii) Local patrons of a group are linked with

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Harmanus Heotink "Resource Competition, Monopoly, and Socioracial Diversity", in Leo A. Despres ed. **Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies**. Mouton Publishers, 1975.

office holders for some benefits for the group.⁵¹ This model cannot also apply to the minorities due especially to the second assumption. While it is true that state officials and individuals have served as patron-link between individual oil-producing communities and oil companies, it has not been the case for whole ethnic groups of oil-producing areas.⁵² Politics of disengagement attests to this in Ogoni's case. Yet it must be conceded in regard of the Ogoni that a patron-client relationship was near being established with the state under Garrick Leton's leadership of MOSOP. This leadership's attempt to forge a patron-client relationship with the state can be seen from the relationship it was forging with Chief M.K.O. Abiola, whom it reckoned would assume state authority. It used the instrumentality of MOSOP to present Abiola to potential Ogoni electorate in the presidential election of 12 June, 1993. Leton showed a willingness to assume the role of a patron or what Chazan *et. al.* called "ethnic intermediary", between Ogoni-people and the Federal Government of Nigeria.⁵³ Consider Leton's letter to Nigeria's Head of State, General Sani Abacha wherein he asked for US five million dollars (\$5m) "to mobilize mass support in Ogoni for the government through promises of jobs and security, especially for the young school leavers".⁵⁴ Granted that sustained separatist agitation really took place and that

⁵¹ See Sandra T. Barnes **Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos**. Manchester University Press, 1986, for a summary of cases where the Patron-client paradigm applies.

⁵² Hutchful, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Naomi Chazan *et. al.* **Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa**. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 1988.

⁵⁴ This letter apparently leaked to the press and was published in the AM News (Lagos) of January 30, 1996, p. 11.

patron links are difficult to maintain in such circumstances, the clientelist mode of analysis cannot be applied.

The third economic perspective that may be applicable to the subject-matter here is the elite perspective on ethnicity. Hinged on three main assumptions, the elitist mode of analysis explains ethnic conflict as a consequence of inter-elite competition for scarce resources. These assumptions are: (1) The initiative for ethnic mobilization for group interest originates with the elites,⁵⁵ (2) Ethnic nationalist movements are led by the elites,⁵⁶ (3) Ethnic mobilization is primarily, if not totally, for the benefit of the elites.

Empirical evidence confirms the first two assumptions. Thus, I do not wish to contest them. The last assumption portrays only the materialist goal of ethnic mobilization and all ethnic nationalists as self-seekers, whereas it is not so. Not every elite mobilized ethnicity expresses inter-elite competition for scarce resources nor is everyone aimed at personal material gain. The profile of some ethnic nationalist movements show they were initiated and led by individuals of privileged backgrounds. da Silva gives the example of the first leader of Basque nationalism in Spain, Mr. Sabin de Arana Goiri, a young lawyer from a wealthy background. As da Silva also demonstrates, concern for material enhancement even of the Basques as a group, was remotely connected to the rise of Basque nationalism since they were more materially prosperous than any other Spanish ethnic group.⁵⁷ Even where material factors appear to be very relevant to an

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Chazan *et. al. op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Gurr, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Milton, M. da Silva, "Modernization and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of the Basques", in **Comparative Politics**, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1975, 227 - 251.

understanding of an ethnic nationalist movement, it is first necessary to understand the lives and material backgrounds of the elite leaders of the movement for accurate conclusions on their motives.

However, the observations about the elite model do not suggest that it is, like the client-paradigm inapplicable to the subject-matter of this study. They simply point to the need for a larger framework within which its insights can be complemented for fully understanding the issues.

A theory of nationalism that would explain the minority ethnic nationalism as an expression of economic grievances is the painful threshold theory. This states that the dissatisfaction of men lead them to nationalism.⁵⁸ Smith concedes that 'dissatisfaction may help to turn men towards nationalism' but adds that 'nationalism does not express discontent but the solution to it'.⁵⁹ He also adds that nationalism is a programmatic project for infusing hope and purpose into the future. Expressed differently, in Smith's own words, nationalism expresses "the new sense of history". Then, the difference between a nationalist and a non-nationalist, continues Smith, is that the latter lacks "the new sense of history".⁶⁰ Such a programmatic design was apparent from Ogoni nationalism as should be clear from the analysis in Chapter 3.

In view of the position taken here that a mono-factor based explanation is inadequate for understanding the rise and differences between the recent minority ethnic nationalisms in the oil-yielding areas, a multicausal model which will be employed in this study is now outlined. The model is a modified version of

⁵⁸ Smith *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 107.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.109

Smith's 1971 model of ethnic nationalism, which I consider particularly well-suited to explaining the rise of Ogoni nationalism.⁶¹

I do not however, share his relegation to the background economic problems in the rise of nationalism⁶² The more serious criticism of Smith's model of ethnic nationalism and nationalism in general is that his rather rigid distinction between what he terms the core doctrine of nationalism comprising "a set of legitimizing ideas" and the accretions of nationalism which refer to cultural artefacts among the more fundamental of which are language and history, prevents him from constructing a full-theory of nationalism.⁶³ How? Stokes points out that Smith reckons with the so-called accretions of nationalism as mere instruments of legitimation or mobilization whereas they can and indeed have been seen to be basic to nationalism. Where it is so, Smith is handicapped. No wonder, Stokes concludes, Smith's effort ended up in the construction "of a theory rather narrow and disappointing".⁶⁴ For his analysis "describes how one possible variant of ethnic nationalism might develop".⁶⁵ Smith, Stokes adds, cannot explain why elites choose the national option rather than the other of the options of legitimation that may be available.

The key variables in Smith's model are the roles of the state and elites. To this I add the role of ruralites including the peasantry in my model. This

⁶¹ Smith *op. cit.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Gale Stokes, "The Underdeveloped Theory of Nationalism", in *World Politics*, Vol. XXX1, No. 1, October 1978, p. 154.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.160.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.159.

addition arises from the fact that this category of ethnic group from which Ogoni nationalist movement developed, constituted the greater part of the population sharing "certain variants of feelings", Hobsbawm calls "bonds" or "proto-national" which Ogoni nationalists mobilized on a macro-political scale for the emergence of Ogoni nationalism.⁶⁶ Like Smith, Gellner accords exclusive importance to the conditions of the above in the creation of nations and emergence of nationalism, hence he gives priority to "modernization from above" in his analysis.⁶⁷ Granted that nations are constructed from above, writes Hobsbawm, conditions of the below must also be considered for understanding their emergence.⁶⁸ In my model, the Colonial State marks the beginning of the historical sequences of the state in contrast to Smith's Empire or 'Possessive State'. Another difference is that Smith's last sequence of the state - Nation - State - is for me, post-colonial Nation - State and/or 'Possessive State'.

Smith's Historical Sequences of the State

Empire	'Scientific State'	Nation - State
'Possessive State'	'Scientific State'	Nation - State

Source: A. D. Smith **Theories of Nationalism.** Duckworth, 1971, p.231

My sequence of the state is represented as follows:

⁶⁶ Hobsbawm *op. cit.* p. 46.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, cited, p. 91.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

'Scientific State' Colonial State 'Possessive' State/
Post-Colonial Nation-State

While the three characteristics, ('Conquest', 'Cosmopolitan outlook' and "'personalist' levelling and homogenizing features") with which Smith identifies the 'Scientific State' fit the Colonial-State, they do not describe the Post-Colonial Nation-State.⁶⁹ It is no wonder that this state at times exhibited features of the 'possessive state'.

Instead of 'conquest' feature of the Colonial State, what needs to be stressed about the Post-Colonial State is the monopolization of high status positions by the dominant ethnic group(s), especially before the military intervention of 1966. The quota principle which was adopted during the decolonization process and formalized as the Federal Character Principle coupled with the role of 'god fatherism' in appointment into public offices seriously constrains one to submit that the 'cosmopolitan feature' which describes the throwing open of opportunities to aspirants on the basis of merit or wealth is a characteristic of the Nigerian post-colonial state. The dominant public opinion is that the Federal Character Principle and 'godfatherism' have promoted mediocrity rather than merit in high places. In fact, this state is inefficient. The third aspect of Smith's 'scientific state' - "'personalist' levelling and homogenizing features" - has not been shaped by Smith's classic process under the post-colonial state. Language is in that process for instance, a crucial instrument. Rather than language, the "'personalist' levelling and homogenizing features" of the post-colonial state can be seen as the centralization of economic resources by Laws and Decrees and the phenomenon Okoth-Ogendo has termed

⁶⁹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

"imperial presidency".⁷⁰ The latter also fits the description of a 'possessive state' by Smith:

Such states are typically viewed as the personal possession of their rulers, client polities of individuals, whose resources and populations could be harnessed for personal-political ends. They are generally based on secular law, divorced from any theoretical notions; they are unified under a strong central government, whether of a monarch (military ruler) or an oligarchy of powerful families; their aim is to weld together into a compact solidarity unit diverse cultures and religious groups; and they insist on their absolute sovereignty over their territory, which they look on as their personal resource.⁷¹

Both elements of 'homogenization' have rendered nugatory the basic constitutional powers of constituent units in a putative federal set-up and in a situation wherein aspirants of the minority ethnic groups in the oil-producing areas can only play a second fiddle.

For Smith, the role of the elites is situated within the social process called 'modernization'. It is nationalism's chief cause, whose key determinant is what he calls 'new education' that is acquired by a disaffected minority. Having been produced by 'modernization' through the 'new education', the

⁷⁰ 'Imperial presidency' in Nigeria dates back to 1985 when Babangida seized power. Its distinguishing feature is the supremacy of the office of the President or Head of State. For further description of 'imperial presidency' in Africa, see N.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo "Constitutions Without Constitutionalism: Reflections on an African Political Paradox", in Issa G. Shivji, *op. cit.*, p.3-25.

⁷¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

intelligentsia, in turn, serves as the vanguard of modernization. For Smith, the role of the intelligentsia or elite in the emergence of nationalist movements is indisputable. This view is generally accepted among scholars of nationalism. What then require investigation could be the elite-related micro-social variables, how they came to have the "new sense of history" and the "reasons for their involvement and leadership" of nationalist movements.⁷² Smith put the role of elites in his theory of ethnic nationalism thus:

Nationalism is born among the intelligentsia, when the messianic 'assimilationists' try to realize their former vision by adopting the ethnicity solution of the defensive reforming 'revivalist'⁷³

In this regard, Smith suggests research focused on the reformists. Ken Saro-Wiwa of Ogoni, in my consideration, is an outstanding example of a reformist whose role in Ogoni nationalism is explored in this study.

The model of this study may now be summarised. The challenge posed to the traditional cosmic world was from the colonial state. Ogoni elites or any other minority elite perceived this state as efficient. Hence, faced with the crisis of authority of the traditional cosmic world and the grim authority of the colonial state or what Smith alternatively calls "**dual legitimation**", Ogoni elite or other minority elite chose the **assimilationist** 'solution' to their dilemma. However, the post-colonial state that succeeded the colonial state was doubly loathsome - it was inefficient and at the same time it perpetuated the subordination of the

⁷² Ibid. p. 84.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 255.

traditional authority through the centralization of political and economic resources. This situation convinced the minorities' elites of the post-colonial era of the inadequacy of reforming assimilationist 'solution', hence they embarked upon reforming revivalist solution which gave rise to the spate of minority ethnic nationalism in the oil-yielding areas in the recent times. The superiority of this model to the various 'economic' perspectives examined above is in its being historical; able to help us appreciate the change in the nature of conflict in the oil-producing areas from localized protests to nationalist agitations.

CHAPTER TWO

ETHNIC MINORITIES OF OIL-PRODUCING AREAS IN THE NIGERIAN STATE

Though a known historical fact, it bears repeating that the Nigerian state was a British creation: several autonomous states with homogeneous and semi-heterogeneous cultures were herded together by British conquest, in the beginning of a new state formation. When on the eve of political independence some minorities expressed fears of political domination by the major ethnic groups, the British Secretary of State for the colonies set up the Willink Commission to enquire and suggest means of allaying the fears. Instead of the much desired separate political regions which the minorities thought was the antidote to political domination, the commission recommended the entrenchment of fundamental human rights in the proposed independence constitution with a special provision entrusting their enforcement with the courts.

However, despite several states reorganization exercises since 1963 when the Mid-West Region was created primarily from the strategic political calculations of Hausa-Fulani-Igbo coalition, complaints about political inequality have persisted, because of the centralization of political and economic power and what appears to be territorial dimension of ethnic political domination. As Ake puts the latter,

...we do not know how to be equals, we bully and dominate whenever we can... Not knowing how to be equals we do not know how to share.¹

¹ Claude Ake, *The Guardian*, Lagos, 2-10-95. p.29 cf. Claude Welch, Jr "The Ogoni and Self-Determination: Increasing Violence in Nigeria", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, (Cambridge), 33, 4(1995), pp. 635 - 649.

Partly as a result, demands for new states continue with the call for reform of sorts by disaffected communal groups including some so-called major ethnic group(s).² With regard to the Yoruba, the fear of northern political domination and call for structural reform finds basis in the annulment of the 12 June, 1993 Presidential Election which was widely believed to have been won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola - a Yoruba. Opinion is divided among the Igbo between the wish for revision of structural relations and redistribution of resources.³ The North except the Middle-Belt Minorities who are also calling for "readjustment in the formula for distribution of political power and economic wealth", favours the present power structure.⁴ For minorities in oil-producing areas whose position in the Nigerian State has been made even more precarious by the environmental consequences of oil exploitation, justice consists both in political restructuring and economic redistribution based on the origin of wealth.⁵ This dual goal has been pursued in the past six years in the manner of what this study terms minority ethnic nationalism. The impact of such display of loyalty is not so much as the attainment of tangible results but its intellectual challenge of the juridical composition of the Nigerian state as for example expressed in the words of the Rivers State Study Group:

² There is a consensus of opinion among commentators on states creation in Nigeria that the demand for states is now more out of a desire to have more share from the so-called national cake.

³ Naanen, *op. cit.*

⁴ Tell, Lagos, May 21, 1994, p. 15. For Professor J.A.A. Ayode, the "Middle Belt" is meaningful as a heuristic concept than a geographical one. Personal communication, April 21, 1996, Ibadan, Naanen, *op. cit.*

⁵ Naanen, *op. cit.*

At the moment the colonial government left Nigeria ... there was no doubt in the minds of the Oil Rivers peoples that natural resources and the other economic potentialities belonged to the autochthonous peoples of 'Nigeria' wherever they were and we had no misgivings of the magnitude that a Petroleum Decree and a Land Use Decree would emerge, whereby all the most important natural resources of our peoples would be confiscated by the central government ... and be left with a ridiculous and capriciously awarded 3 per cent of the huge revenues that our territory produces. We cannot bear this any longer.⁶

The causes and essence of the struggle of these minorities are the focus of this chapter.

2.1 Historical Background

The minorities of the oil producing areas are located in the Niger Delta and environs in the southern part of Nigeria. In terms of administrative divisions, they are scattered in seven out of the nine states where oil is exploited. These are Ondo, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Bayelsa and Edo. The two other states, Imo and Abia, belong to the Igbo ethnic group. The Ijaw are the most populous of them all, straddling Ondo, Delta, and Rivers States.⁷ They are also the oldest settlers and most sub-ethnically fractionalized group with about forty sub-ethnic

⁶ Ibid., p. 60/61

⁷ Michael Crowder. **The Story of Nigeria.** London, Faber and Faber, 1978.

groups.⁸

Majority of the minorities in oil-producing areas practice fishing and farming, the main occupations in the Delta area and environs since the pre-colonial time. Except for a few groups, the minorities were severely affected by the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade.⁹ Internal trade among them involved exchanges of fish, palm oil and other farm products. With European traders, they exchanged slaves, yam, palm oil, etc., for European commodities such as mirror, firearms, salt, dried fish, cloth and tools.

Imoagene points out that before the advent of colonial rule, the peoples' political life was enfolded by one of these two main political organisations: (1) uncentralised, pyramidal systems, (2) strong centralized monarchies.¹⁰ Examples of the latter were the Trading states of Bonny, Okrika and Warri who frequently fought over trading markets, being encouraged sometimes by British trading interests.¹¹ Peace treaties concluded under British mediation in 1871 and 1879 and containing severe punishment for transgressors, did not prevent war from breaking out between Bonny and New Calabar over inland markets in 1881 and 1882. They also did not check the deadly hostility between the Okrika and Kalabari who are of the same Ijaw nationality. Concerning their relationship,

⁸ Oshomha Imoagene, **Peoples of the Cross River Valley and Eastern Delta**. Ibadan, New Era Educational Company Ltd., 1990.

⁹ Ken Saro-Wiwa claimed on the basis of an Ogoni proverb that the Ogoni are a group in the South-East who were not taken into slavery. See Ken Saro-Wiwa **Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy**. Port Harcourt, Saros International, 1992.

¹⁰ Imoagene, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Crowder, *op. cit.*

a commission of enquiry reported:

Might was right and the Kalabaris (sic) being strong held sway over the rivers and swamps. It was only common sense and only an elementary precaution against disaster for individual Okrika fishermen to face facts in spite of the Treaty of 1871.¹²

Intercommunal conflicts have continued to occur to this day in the region just as political life there is interspersed by traditional political authority.

The eastern flank of the Niger Delta and environs' fame for the production of palm-oil led the British colonialists to nickname it The Oil Rivers Protectorate. It was renamed The Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893 after being expanded inland. Although less famous today, the area still produces much of the palm oil for domestic consumption and industrial uses locally and for export. Since the early 1970s, the bulk of federal revenue has derived from crude oil and natural gas exploitation from the entire delta area and environs.¹³

Whereas they all bemoan inadequate share from oil revenue derived mainly from their homeland, these minorities are hardly united politically. The most serious factor responsible for this being age-long intergroup rivalry which sometimes resulted in violent clashes. Often cited examples of clashes which involved segments (villages or towns) are Ogonis and Adonis and Urhobos and Itsekiris (the former is given detailed treatment in chapter 4). In 1993, Urhobo-Itsekiri traditional struggle for cultural and traditional political supremacy in

¹² G.G. Robinson (Chair) **Report of the Commission of Enquiry into The Okrika-Kalabari Dispute**, 1950, p.12.

¹³ Actually, oil-exploration began in the region in commercial quantity in 1958 at K. Dere (Bomu), Ogoniland.

Warri left twenty persons dead¹⁴. This rivalry often filtered into party alliance. During the First Republic, Itsekiris gave their support to the Action Group (AG) while Urhobos supported the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). In the Second Republic, the Urhobo pitched tent with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) while the Itsekiri associated with the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN).

Other well cited but very destructive intercommunal rivalry between communities of minorities in oil-producing areas are between Ibeno and Eket, Nembe and Kalabari and Ikwere and Okrika. Eket and Ibeno are different ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State. Nembe and Kalabari are of the Ijaw ethnic group in Rivers state. The Ikwere and Okrika, an Ijaw sub-ethnic group are two of the more than twenty ethnic groups in the Rivers and Bayelsa States.

The rivalry between the Eket and Ibeno on 28 June, 1993 culminated in the invasion of Esit-Urua an Eket-speaking village by a group of Ibenos who destroyed both life and property worth about two hundred million naira (N200m). They also left in their trail, 20,000 refugees. The immediate causes of the invasion were: (1) the unfulfilled quest for autonomy by the Ibeno when new local governments were created. TO compound their disappointment, they were joined in a newly created local government where they were given four wards as against Ibenos' six wards plus having the local government headquarters and (2) the calculation that a disputed "long stretch of land forming the Atlantic coastline" would bring great financial returns from off-shore oil when the dichotomy between off-shore and on-shore oil in the derivation of oil revenue was

¹⁴ **Newswatch**, Lagos, May 31, 1993, p. 20 and 21.

abolished.¹⁵

In April 1994, the Ikwere and Okrika violently re-enacted what an observer has described as "one of the longest inter-ethnic problems" in Rivers State.¹⁶ The violent outburst which was as a result of counter claims to the ownership of Port Harcourt razed down the Creek Road Market in Port Harcourt. Within the period of this occurrence, the Nembe and Kalabari fought over fishing rights. One attack allegedly by the Kalabari on a boat carrying 27 passengers, claimed 15 passengers of Nembe origin, including women and children. Others only managed to escape alive¹⁷ (see Plate 1).

¹⁵ *Newswatch*, Lagos, August 16, 1993, p.18.

¹⁶ *Newswatch*, Lagos, April 18, 1994, p.10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10-16.

Plate 1



711. Photos



712. Photos

In the opinion of Don-Pedro, a former Rivers State legislator, the beneficiaries of the disunity among the peoples of the oil-producing areas are oil companies and the federal government. According to him, the disunity was being fueled by them to prevent a united challenge of their exploitation by these people¹⁸. This reasoning is plausible given the oil companies and federal government's high stake in the oil industry and their record of resort to repressive measures in response to protests over neglect.

Related to intercommunal rivalry are mutual prejudice and stereotypes between the minorities who force majeure coinhabit the same administrative areas. A most distinct manifestation of this is the statement credited to the former Governor of old Rivers State, Chief Melford Okilo which he uttered on an occasion of a campaign rally. He was quoted as saying, "Money no dey wear coat" meaning a high office such as of Governor of a State is not meant for the proverbial "little dogs" to denigrate the gubernatorial aspiration of Chief Kemte Giadom, an Ogoni man.¹⁹ The statement is also indicative of political inequality among the minorities if it is remembered that Okilo is a member of the Ijaw ethnic group, the most populous in the old Rivers State and that Giadom is of the Ogoni ethnic group a minority, also in the old Rivers State.

A third factor for lack of unity among the minorities is that, though not very sharp especially among contiguous groups, cultural differences exist. The most significant cultural difference is language. Cultural differences probably militated against communication and interaction among the minorities for concerted political action.

¹⁸ *The Guardian*, Lagos, 29-3-94, p.9.

¹⁹ Personal Communication with Mr. Boniface Kobani, Port Harcourt, 28-1-95.

Self-regarding patron-client ties are a fourth factor against unity among the minorities. Mr Saturday Kpakoi, an Ogoni conceded in an interview with **Tempo** that he became a "small Millionaire" on the platform of the Council of Concerned Indigenes which he formed actually for securing personal gratifications from Shell-BP²⁰. There are many more unprobed accusations of traditional rulers and other elites of oil-bearing areas involving themselves in patron-client relationships with oil companies.

A fifth factor concerns ameliorative and repressive response of the state to seemingly oil-provoked ethnic political action. A notable example of state ameliorative measures is the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). The commission was established and allocated three per cent of oil revenue by Decree 23 of July 1992 to ensure the physical, economic, human and other forms of development for the peoples of oil-producing areas. When it was established, an Ijaw (Kalabari), Chief Albert Horsfall was appointed its chairman and Chief executive. Rather than be a rallying point for articulating and enforcing the interests of the minorities of oil-producing areas, the commission was turned into a hot-bed of strife and bitter acrimony over allegations of favoritism and improper running of its affairs. Paradoxically, when an unanimous interest group from the north was working through some northern delegates to the 1994 Constitutional Conference arranged, in my opinion, as an instrument of legitimization by the Abacha Administration, these minorities joined other communities of oil-producing areas from Imo and Abia states to express confidence in the commission to save it from being scrapped. Typical of the effort to save the commission was the assertion of the

²⁰

Tempo, Lagos, 2 January, 1996, p.13.

Movement for the Protection and Survival of Oil Mineral and Natural Gas Producing Communities of Nigeria (MPSOMNGAPCON) in a letter signed by eleven of its members:

Today, OMPADEC is building and constructing roads in these areas. Some of our areas have today gotten cottage hospitals, good drinking water and reclaimed areas of land for comfortable habitation ... give the OMPADEC leadership the support it needs at all times to enable it continue the good work its (sic) has started.²¹

Other organisations which were formed to defend and win more funds for OMPADEC were National Association of Concerned Citizens of Oil Producing States (NACCOPS), National Association of Oil Mineral Producing Communities (NAOPC), Organisation for the Restoration of Actual Rights of Oil Communities (ORAROC), Concerned Youths of Oil Communities (CYOC), Conference of Traditional Rulers of Oil Producing States (CTROPS), and OMPADEC Contractors Association.²²

State repression took the forms of repressive laws and brutality wrought by security agents to check nascent political action. No law best typifies the former as the infamous Treason and Treasonable Offence Decree of 1993 which states in part.

A person who unlawfully displays anything or publishes any material which gives or creates the impression that a particular country, state or local government has been created or is being

²¹ **The Guardian**, Lagos, 8-3-96, p.11.

²² Ibid.

created or established out of Nigeria is guilty of treason.

Similarly guilty of treason is a person who flies or exhibits in any open or public place in that part of Nigeria, state, local government, a flag whether or not the flag is a national flag or is similar to the national flag and represents that such flag is a flag of the country, state or local government.²³

This Decree which carried the death penalty and was seemingly targeted at Ogoni nationalism, was repealed in consequence of national and international condemnation. Before ethnic based mass action became widespread among the minorities, their individual communities often blamed their neglect on the oil companies with which they directly interacted. It was within this context that some of them mounted blockade against the oil companies operating in their land. Here is a brief though recent history to illustrate the perception of "oppressor" - response - state-repression trajectory. When in 1987 Iko in Akwa Ibom state tried this tactic which Mkpamak Community of Ikono ethnic group in the same state fruitfully used on Mobil Oil, on Shell-BP, they reaped dire results because the police were called in. In the ensuing conflict, "38 houses were burnt, property were looted and women were assaulted by the police".²⁴ Umuechem in Rivers State had an even worse experience because shell-BP invited the police to quell their peaceful demonstration in 1990. The senseless destruction of life and property attendant with police involvement in the conflict so 'irked' public sense of decency that the state authorities were compelled to set up a panel of enquiry to investigate allegations of human rights abuses levelled against the

²³ **Newswatch**, Lagos, May 24, 1993, p.14.

²⁴ **Ibid.**, July 2, 1990, p.18.

police. In its report, the Justice Opubo-Inko-Tariah panel noted,

the mobile police (squad) who attacked Umuechem village was like an invading army that had vowed to take the last drop of the enemy's blood. They threw all human reasoning to the wind, shot people and razed down a total of 495 houses in the village with blast grenades ... the mobile police force men ... forgot that their duty was to protect life and property and not to destroy them.²⁵

The panel subsequently recommended that certain police officers be prosecuted for wanton destruction of life and property and that adequate compensation be paid to the victims of the invasion. None of these recommendations had been implemented at the time of this study.²⁶

In 1992, Bonny youths resorted to peaceful demonstration once dialogue with Shell on the issue of recruiting from among them as seamen failed to yield positive response. As usual, Shell-BP invited the police to quell their protest with force. As a result, a 21-year old youth, Owusa Brown lost his life while several others sustained serious injuries from police bullets.²⁷ Similarly, three lives were lost in addition to injuries sustained by several others as Chevron Oil Company called in the police to break the blockade mounted against its installation by Opueke community in Delta State in 1994.²⁸ Other protests

²⁵ Quoted in Nnamdi Douglas, "The Agonies ..." *op. cit.*, p.2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ **African Concord**, Lagos, August 1992, p.19.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch/Africa, **Nigeria: The Ogoni Crisis - A Case Study of Military Repression in Southeastern Nigeria**, Vol. 7, No.5, July 1995.

visited with state violence were by Uzere in 1994, Yenegoa in 1991, Obagi in 1992, Brass in 1993, Nembe Creek in 1993, Biara in 1993 and Rumuobiokani in 1994.²⁹ Further comment on the state's response to ostensibly oil-spurred ethnic nationalism, is reserved to the discussion of the state's response to Ogoni nationalism in chapter four.

As a result of the factors discussed above, the minorities of the oil-producing areas lacked cohesion which is most expressed by "dense networks of communication and interaction".³⁰ They were also not politically mobilized in the real sense of the term despite the advantage which geographical contiguity bestows on them. Lack of cohesion among them is evinced by the towering individualistic political action. It can even be argued that it was the awakening to economic and political rights which MOSOP generated in the 1990s that led to the spawning of several other ethnically based political organisations of these minorities. Some of them actually borrowed from the phraseology of MOSOP both in name and demands as if to emphasise that MOSOP inspired them. Thus there were Movement for the Survival of the Izon (Ijaw) Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), Ijaw Ethnic National Rights Protection Organisation of Nigeria (IENRPON), Movement for Reparation to Ogbia (MORETO), Council for Ikwere Nationality Forum (CIN), Kokori Progressive Union (KPU), Ekpeye Ethnic Nationality Forum (EENF), etc. Some organisations formed to embrace and promote the rights of the minorities included the Nigerian based Ethnic Minorities Rights Organisation of Africa (EMIROAF), Southern Minorities Forum (SMF), Southern Minorities Movement (SMM), Ethnic Minority Rights

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gurr, 1993, *op. cit.*, p.127.

Organisation of Nigeria (EMIRON), The Nigerian Society for the Protection of the Environment (NISOPEN), Core South Movement (CSM), and the proscribed Association of Mineral Oil States (AMOS). Before its proscription in 1993 by the Federal Government, AMOS was the most inclusive minority organisation encompassing virtually all the elites from the southern minority states.³¹ These seemingly all embracing minority organisations were ineffectual perhaps because objective class conditions were too tenuous and the homogenization of political and economic oppressive elements (in the Nigerian state) for unified political action an uphill task to accomplish.

2.2 Resource Competition

Resource competition in Nigeria is first and foremost groupal. The individualist dimension via state of origin basis twists the groupal, actually ethnic character of resource competition. Evidence of group competition can be found in the predominance of ascriptive loyalties over economic ones and the presence of two or more roughly equal competing ethnic groups.³² To understand all this, one must first perceive the interface between the constituent units, called states, of the Nigerian federation and ethnicity or ethnic group. It is the state and not the ethnic group that is recognized by the constitution as the unit for allocating resources to both the individual and the group, at the national or federal level. That is the quintessence of the Federal Character Principle. It was pointed out at the onset that the "regional dominance at the centre has its

³¹ R. T. Suberu, **Minority Ethnic Conflict and Governance in Nigeria**, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd. and IFRA, 1996 ; C. O. Ikporukpo, *op. cit.*

³² These constitute, for Hoetink, basic elements of group competition. See Hoetink, 1975 *op. cit.*

parallels at the state level".³³ It follows that the group which dominates a state has more access to resources than other groups within it. At this juncture, this state coincides with the dominant ethnic group, being so to speak, synonymous with it. This explains why those groups which are non-dominant often struggle for their "own" states. When this dominant ethnic group pursues its interests, it may do so using its ethnic identity or hide behind its state, using the latter as an 'alternative organizing principle'. The point then is that it is at times necessary to look beyond the state government "representative" to discover the real constituency for which he is acting. It should also be recognized as noted earlier on, that sometimes, minority ethnic nationalists work through otherwise larger frameworks such as a region which from the 'situational' analysis of ethnicity's view point is an ethnic group, even as state government representatives.

The criteria that have been variously used for revenue allocation to states which, to emphasize, sometimes serve as organizing instrument of ethnic groups, are land mass, population, source of derivation and need as determined by state managers at a particular time. Since colonial times, the groups from whose land the bulk of revenue-yielding commodities have been derived have argued for a sharing formula that takes contribution to state wealth into account.³⁴ A short review of the development of revenue allocation principles should aid the appreciation of the general context of the demand by the minorities of oil-producing areas for an allocation principle which respects the source of wealth.

UP until 1948, there was no laid down principle for sharing revenue. But

³³ Welch Jr. *op. cit.* p. 638/639 and Ake, *op. cit.*

³⁴ cf. Ayode, 1987, *op. cit.*

it was plain from the financial policies of the colonial government that it "was not concerned about relating expenditures in each major-geographical area of the country to revenues derived from the area".³⁵ The 1946 Richards Constitution which introduced regionalisation of administration, provided that rents on mining rights and leases be paid to the regions. In a similar vein, the first commission to be ever set up on revenue allocation, Phillipson Commission, recommended principles of derivation and even development. Hence, between 1948 and 1952, the derivation principle was used substantially to share federally collected revenue between the federal government and the regions despite the difficulties in computing revenue derived from each region.³⁶

When the north alleged that it was being cheated in the application of the derivation principle, the Ibadan Constitutional Conference of 1950 ratified an investigation proposed by the colonial government. Equity was so much of concern that the Hicks - Phillipson Commission the colonial government set up was directed to look into past allocations to determine the magnitude of unfair treatment of any region with a view to making bloc repayment as compensation. The commission found that it could not prove that the north had been unfairly treated. However, it recommended two million pound sterling grant (£2m) which the government increased to three million pound sterling (£3m) for the north. Moreover, the commission disagreed with the prevailing emphasis on derivation for revenue allocation for two reasons:

- (1) the technical difficulty in calculating revenue derived from each region,
- (2) the need to avoid regional fiscal independence which could undermine state

³⁵ Eme A. Awa, *op. cit.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

cohesiveness.

It therefore, recommended principles of equality and need.³⁷ All the same, the principle of derivation was continued. In fact, against the Louis - Chick Commission's recommendation of limited application, the derivation principle was used 100 per cent to allocate revenue between 1953 and 1959.³⁸

The East spoke vehemently against the principle of derivation between 1948 and 1957 expectedly because the fortunes of palm oil, its primary export product, had declined by this period.³⁹

Regarding mining rents and royalties, the Constitutional Conference of 1958 agreed on this formula: "50 per cent to the contiguous region, 20 per cent to the federal government, 30 per cent to the distributable pool".⁴⁰ This formula was upheld by the 1960 Independence Constitution and the 1963 Republican Constitution.⁴¹ Except for "the principle of need in sharing the distributable pool revenue" introduced in 1964,⁴² the sharing formula was continued till after the military seized power in 1966.

Between 1966 and 1979 six reviews of the revenue allocation formula

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Naanen *op. cit.*, also notes that the Raisman Commission of 1957 did not radically deviate from the recommendations of the Chick's Commission.

³⁹ Awa *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 207/208.

⁴¹ See Sections 134 (1&2) of the 1960 Constitution and Sections 140(1&2) of the 1963 Constitution.

⁴² Naanen, *op. cit.*, p.56.

were carried out by the military.⁴³ Four of these occurred after the states creation exercise of 1967 and drastically changed the principle of derivation, causing greater concentration of resources at the centre.⁴⁴ Three factors contributed to this concentration.⁴⁵

- (1) increased federal expenditure in the areas of education, health, roads, and industry which by 1975/76 had risen to about 70 per cent.
- (2) the federal government's assumption of exclusive authority over the collection of "the fastest-growing revenues (petroleum profits tax and company income tax)".
- (3) the 1979 Constitution's reservation of the power to collect all revenues except personal income tax to the federal government.

A distinct feature of this period of concentration of economic powers at the centre is the ascension of crude oil as the 'king' of the Nigerian economy (Table 1 shows oil sector statistics from 1970-1993). Still, it should be mentioned that the derivation principle was applied to oil revenue up to 1974, during which time former Bendel (now Edo and Delta) and Rivers (now Rivers and Bayelsa) States benefitted handsomely. "After 1975, the principle was applied to only 20 per cent

⁴³ See Tom Forrest **Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria**, Westview Press, 1995 for details.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 51; cf. G. F. Mbanefoh, "Military Presence and the Future of Nigerian Fiscal Federalism". Faculty Lecture, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 1986.

Table 1: OIL SECTOR STATISTICS, 1990 - 1993.

Year	Annual output (million Barrels)	Average Price Index	Oil Exports as Per Cent of Total Exports	Government oil Revenue (Nmillion)	Per Cent of Total Revenue
1970	396	5.3	58	166	26
1972	643	7.8	82	767	54
1974	823	31.7	93	3,726	82
1976	756	36.3	94	5,365	79
1978	692	39.5	89	4,556	62
1979	840	58.5	93	8,881	81
1980	753	100.0	96	12,353	81
1981	525	108.4	97	8,563	70
1982	470	99.4	99	7,814	66
1983	451	84.6	96	7,253	69
1984	508	83.3	97	8,268	74
1985	544	79.9	97	10,915	75
1986	534	42.4	94	8,107	66
1987	464	52.1	93	19,027	76
1988	507	41.1	91	20,934	77
1989	614	49.5	95	41,334	82
1990	648	60.8	97	55,216	79
1991	677	54.1	96	60,316	77
1992	691	52.3	98	115,392	83
1993	689	47.0	98	106,155	76

Source: Tom Forest, *Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria*, Westview Press, 1995, p.134.

of onshore oil production".⁴⁶ That was during the Muritala/Obasanjo Administration. "The most drastic cut came in 1982, during the civilian administration of Shehu Shagari, when the derivation component was reduced to two percent".⁴⁷ Still, "the military government of General Muhammad Buhari that over-threw the NPN government at the end of 1983 slashed further the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Naanen, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

derivation principle".⁴⁸ The government of General Ibrahim Babangida increased it marginally to 3 per cent in 1992.

The effect of revenue allocation on interethnic relations is not explicit because of the intermediary role of the states in the competition for resources. However, the patterns of the debate on access to oil wealth starting in 1967 when Boro led a rebellion against the Nigerian state furnishes some insights into how it does affect interethnic relations. According to Ikporukpo, the debate has basically two flanks with two others in between them. One of the two major sides states that the federal government should have control over oil wealth. "The arguments of this school of thought, which has followers from many groups, individuals, and governments from the non-oil producing areas, are articulated in the memoranda (and their presentation) by Bauchi, Kano, and Sokoto State governments to the Okigbo Commission".⁴⁹ The opposite side asserts that "the producing areas (States, local governments, or communities) should have an exclusive right to petroleum resources".⁵⁰ Exponents of this side of the debate are mainly from the minorities in oil-producing areas.

'The middle-way school of thought' which sides to a large extent, with exponents of producing areas' exclusive right claim, explains the disadvantage of oil minorities in the pattern of access to oil wealth in ethnic terms. In this regard, it points the finger at the major ethnic groups whom a pioneer member of the SMM and First Republic Minister - Dr. Mofia-Akobo in 1996 accused of

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ikporukpo, *op. cit.*, p. 171. See for details of arguments of all sides.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 170.

using 'divide and rule tactics to destroy the oil minorities'.⁵¹ It is worthy of note that Dr. Akobo was speaking at the launching of SMM's "awareness of political mobilization" campaign barely two months after the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni men over what may be termed oil-derived offence. An oil-minorities' collective ethnic view of the pattern of access to oil wealth was expressed in 1992 by AMOS. Declaring the pattern as "politics of minority suffocation", AMOS explained:

When the majority ethnic groups were in control of sources of revenue, derivation was held as a principle of justice. The derivation principle then asserted, on equity grounds, that the region from which the bulk of revenue is obtained should receive an extra share beyond what every other side received. The derivation earned them 100 per cent of revenue. When the minority States came into the revenue scene through oil, derivation was reduced to 20 per cent and finally to the present 1.5 per cent which might be taken away any day!⁵²

The other glimmer to the effect of revenue allocation on interethnic relations is provided by the grievances of the oil minorities which are discussed below.

2.3 Grievances

The point that was made in the review of the development of revenue allocation principles was that the greater access to oil revenue which the minorities enjoyed, at least, through their states, from the application of the derivation principle, was lost to the concentration of the power over oil wealth to the federal government. How did this happen? How does this loss reflect the

⁵¹ **The Guardian** , Lagos, 7-2-96, p.36.

⁵² Quoted in Ikporukpo *op. cit.*, p. 171.

powerlessness of the oil minorities and lend credence to their complaint of political marginalization?

Hutchful on the one hand and Obi and Soremekun on the other hand, explain the loss of greater access to oil revenue by the minorities by economic nationalism of the Nigerian state. Thus, the desire of the federal government to gain control of the oil industry started the concentration process and cut-off the minorities' greater access to oil revenue. These writers are not suggesting that the minorities had control over oil wealth prior to Nigerian economic nationalism. For the power to collect revenue from mining activity had always resided with the federal government.⁵³ Nor are they saying that the federal government determined to seize the technology involved in oil exploitation and shed its mere rental status. By economic nationalism of the federal government, they mean the display of greater interest and determination to participate in the distributive section of the oil-industry to reap more rent. As Hutchful put it, the purpose of economic nationalism was to increase "the access of the state to surplus".⁵⁴ Oil minorities generally share this view and charge that the revenue allocation formula was maneuvered by the major ethnic groups to have more share in oil revenues.⁵⁵ What is of concern here is not the indication of a majority

⁵³ Hutchful *op. cit.* and Cyril Obi and Kayode Soremekun "Oil and the Nigerian State: An Overview", in Kayode Soremekun ed. **Perspectives on the Oil Industry**. Lagos, Amkra Books, 1995.

⁵⁴ Hutchful, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ The conspirational charge against the major ethnic groups is apparent from Ledum Mitee, "Changing the Formula", **Constitutional Rights Journal**, Vol.3, No.9, January - March 1994. Saro-Wiwa on his part, referred to the 1976

conspiracy but that of the powerlessness of the oil minorities as to the decisions on how oil wealth is disposed. There is no doubt that the possession of power is and has been crucial to the group's access to federally collected revenue in Nigeria. Offensend comments on the era of the regional structure that "the principle adopted and the degree to which they were given operational effect, depended largely on which Region benefitted from each and how powerful the beneficiary was relative to the other Regions".⁵⁶ A few examples may help to illustrate the powerlessness of the minorities.

In 1968, the Gowon Administration set up a 9-member Committee headed by a Yoruba, Chief I. O. Dina. This committee put forward among other 'centralist' proposals that the States should thenceforth be paid five per cent (5%) of royalties and mining rents.⁵⁷ At this time, the percentage of petroleum in total revenue was 13.95, having fallen from 18.26 in 1966/67,⁵⁸ implying that the revenue-yielding commodities of the major ethnic groups were still very important. The 'centralist' recommendation of the committee did not, apparently, find favour with the Regional politicians who indeed were able to delay its implementation till 1970 by which time, with the end of the civil war, oil's share

and 1991 state and local government reorganizations, which for him, increased the major ethnic groups' share of states, and in consequence, oil revenue. See Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide...*, pp. 84 & 85.

⁵⁶ David G. Offensend, "Centralization and Fiscal Arrangements in Nigeria", in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14, 3 (1976), pp. 507 - 573; Ayoade *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Saro-Wiwa *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) *Contributions of Federal Military Government and Oil Companies to Oil Producing Areas*, Vol. 1, 1992, Lagos, Scann Publications.

of total revenue was 26 per cent (26%) and with the high prospect of its assumption of dominance in the economy. When later on a dispute arose between the minority states of the then Mid-West (now comprising Edo and Delta States) and Rivers (now comprising Rivers and Bayelsa States) States on one side and the federal government on the other, over who should derive revenue from off-shore oil fields, the latter resolved it absolutely in its favour by Decree in 1971, retroactive to 1969.⁵⁹

During the heated debate on revenue allocation in 1981/82, the former Bendel and Rivers States argued for increase of the role of the derivation principle. They did not only loose their struggle for such increase, the 20 per cent (20%) derivation that they enjoyed was further slashed to 2 per cent (2%). If all this does not suffice to prove the powerlessness of the oil minorities, the fact of their complaint of political marginalization should.

Saro-Wiwa asserted in respect of the Ogoni that "a central reason for the success of the crimes against Ogoni is that the Ogoni people did not administer themselves".⁶⁰ At the inaugural meeting on 31 January, 1996 of the Southern Minorities Zone comprising former Governors, Commissioners and Council Chairmen, the oil minorities lamented: "although our zone produces over 80 per cent of the economic wealth of the country, we are still politically disadvantaged and marginalized".⁶¹ When Chief Alex Ibru, the publisher of **The Guardian** newspapers and former Minister of Internal Affairs was attacked by unknown assassins with a view to doing away with him a few days after the historic

⁵⁹ Offensend, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Ken Saro-Wiwa *Second Letter to Ogoni Youth*, Port Harcourt, Saros International Publishers, 1993, p.9.

⁶¹ **The Guardian**, Lagos, 1-2-96, p. 32.

meeting, SMM described it as "an intolerable provocation of the peace-loving and long suffering Southern Minorities Movement".⁶² Another evidence of the complaint of political marginalization by the minorities can be found in the demand by the Southern Minorities Forum (SMF), a regional minority nationalist movement comprising Rivers, Bayelsa, Edo, Delta, Cross-River and Akwa-Ibom States at the forum of the 1994 Constitutional Conference. The demand states:

Nigeria has not given these states any sense of belonging. No love, no brotherhood. Since we are not wanted, we now demand our true independence from Nigeria. We demand a Federation of Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers State where we can control our resources and destiny and enjoy a sense of belonging and remove all shackles of marginalization.⁶³

The complaint of political marginalization of the minorities was also expressed in the separate demand for local political autonomy if separate independent State was not forthcoming, by MOSOP, MORETO, MOSIEND, and IENRPON. By the complaint of political marginalization, they are not claiming that they have been "systematically limited in their enjoyment of political rights and access to political positions by comparison with other groups" in Nigeria.⁶⁴ Rather, their point, to borrow Gurr's excellent phrase, is that "the playing field" has been tilted against them.⁶⁵ True, a handful of minority elements have occupied visible positions, to draw examples from Ogoni, Late Saro-Wiwa

⁶² **The Guardian**, Lagos, 21-2-96, p.40

⁶³ **The Masses**, Lagos, Vol.2, No.3, February 21, 1995, p.3.

⁶⁴ Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

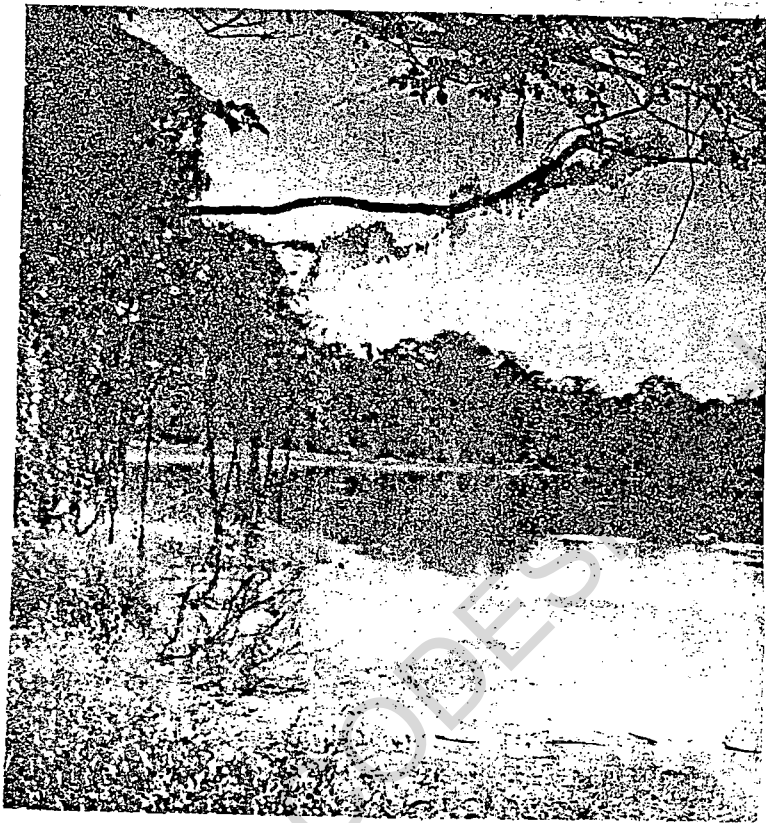
(former Federal Administrator of Bonny), Dr. Garrick Leton (former Federal Commissioner) and Dr. Kenneth Birabi (former Senate Minority Leader). As Gurr rightly noted, "the presence of token or 'tame' members of a minority group in visible political positions may be evidence of remedial public policy, but it is not evidence that the group has attained political equality".⁶⁶ Thus, the main complaint of the minorities is that despite their contribution to the nation-state's wealth, they are at the fringes of political power. The realness of their complaint of political marginalization may be appreciated by contrasting it with the situation of the Hausa/Fulani who are generally believed to control political power in Nigeria and who have never been heard complaining of political marginalization.

The environmental dimension of the minorities' grievance derives from land alienation; disruption of the natural terrain from construction of oil industry infrastructure and installations; and pollution. Land alienation has exacerbated demographic stress, where as in Gokana area of Ogoni, arable land is very scarce. Worse still, Nigerian law permits alienation of land by the oil industry without consultation with the indigenous owners.⁶⁷ A spokesman Chief Johnson Odhegba of Uzere Community of Isoko ethnic group in Delta State where there are 39 oil wells and 2 oil fields from which 56,000 barrels of oil are produced per day, noted this situation thus: "In fact, there are no young men in the town because the farms have been taken over by the oil companies".⁶⁸ (See Plate 2 for a graphic view of a burrow pit which is one of the gulpers of land in oil-

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.47.

⁶⁷ Hutchful *op. cit.* By indigenous owners is meant occupants or claimant to the land, whose claim can be historically established.

⁶⁸ *The Guardian*, Lagos, 1-6-94, p.9.



One of the hundreds of borrow pits in Bendel State. Uzere alone



has about 72 such pits.

producing areas). Uzere was said to have about 72 such pits by 1980.

Pollution results from explosions from seismic surveys, pipeline leaks, blowouts, drilling fluids, refinery effluent and gas flaring. Notable examples of oil blow-outs that caused heavy pollution of farmlands and drinking streams are K-Dere (Bomu) blow-out of 1970 and Funiwa -5 flow-out of 1980. Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company of Nigeria (TOPCON) Ltd, (the operator company for the oil companies in joint venture oil exploration in Funiwa) itself estimated that 146,000 barrels of crude oil were spilled in the Funiwa incident.⁶⁹ Between 1976 and 1991 alone, official figure of oil spills was 2796.⁷⁰ The destructive effects of such spills were candidly acknowledged by former Chief of General Staff and later Vice-President in the Babangida Administration (1986-93), then Rear Admiral Augustus Aikhomu:

As long as petroleum prospecting and exploration continue, so long shall we have to bear with these inevitable problems of oil spillage of various dimensions ... there is no doubt that contamination has seriously interfered with the farming, fishing and leisure activities of a number of communities.⁷¹

Plates 3, 4, and 5 show the sites of oil-pollution. Plate 6 is a picture of victims of oil-pollution. Plate 7 is a picture of former President Shehu Shagari and former Governor Melford Okilo of Rivers State at the site of an oil-spillage disaster area. Finally, Plate 8 shows relief materials purchased

⁶⁹ Hutchful, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ FGN, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

at the cost of over ₦2m naira for oil-spillage victims. In sum, the good health and means of livelihood depriving effects of the activities of the oil-industry - exploration, production, refining and transportation, go to compound the hardship which some of the oil-bearing communities suffer from the difficult natural terrain of their land.⁷²

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⁷² For a checklist of the natural and oil related problems in the Delta region, see the Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES) report, 1996.

Plate 3



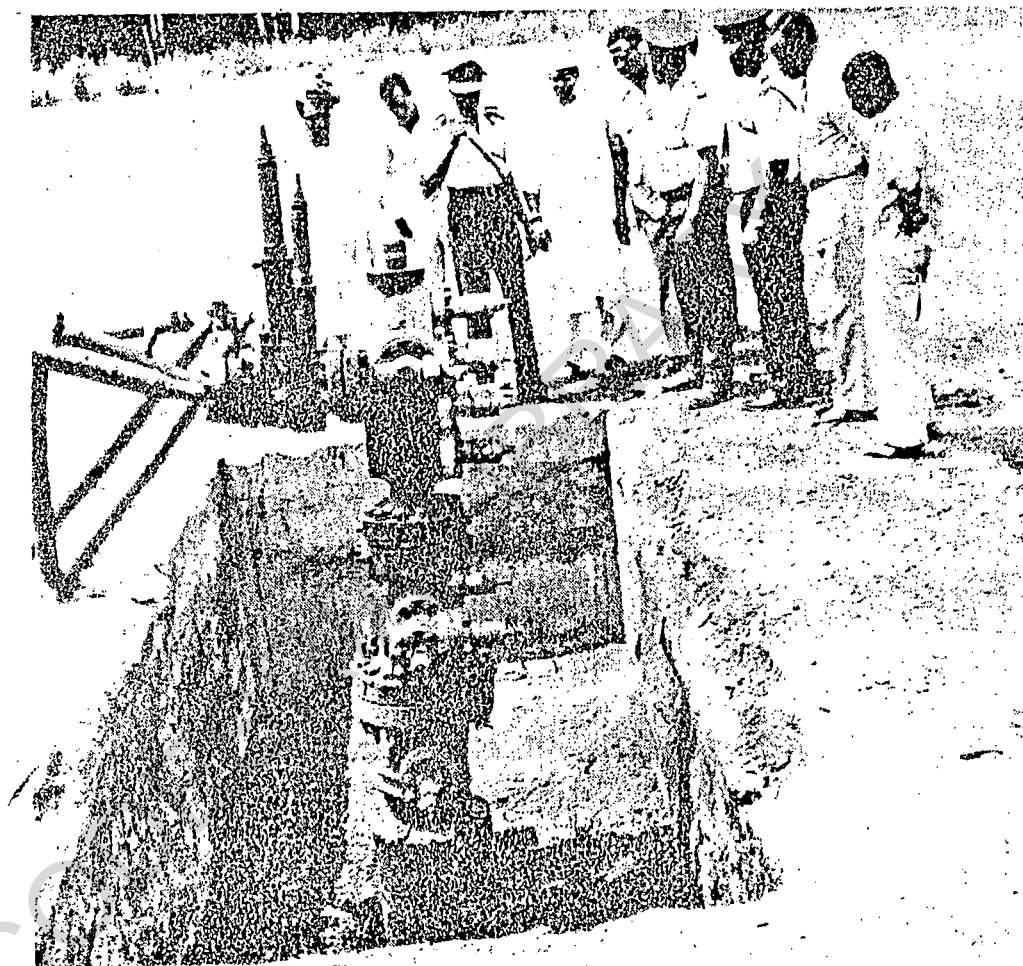
Governor (below) bailing out crude oil from a stream during one of his visits.

Plate 4



The Governor inspecting a burnt farm land.

Plate 5



Oben fire disaster oil well.

Plate 6

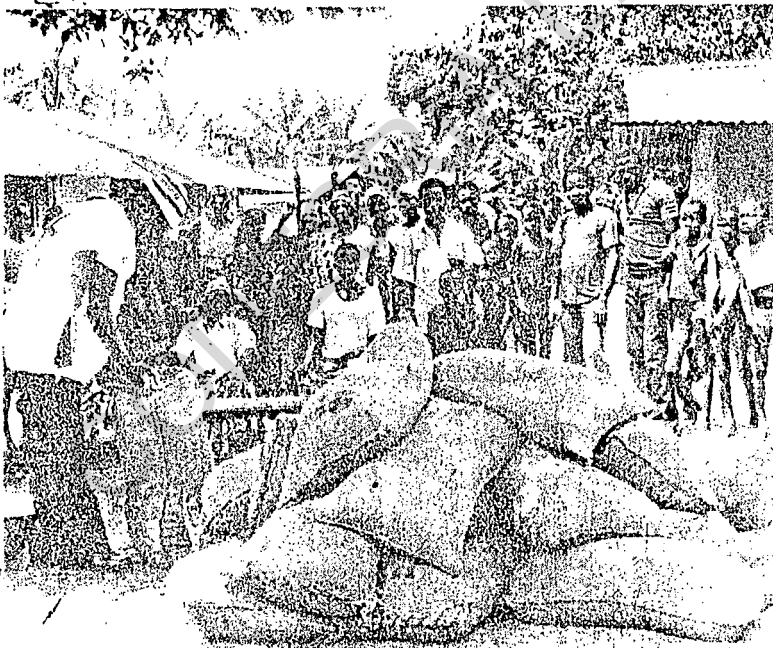
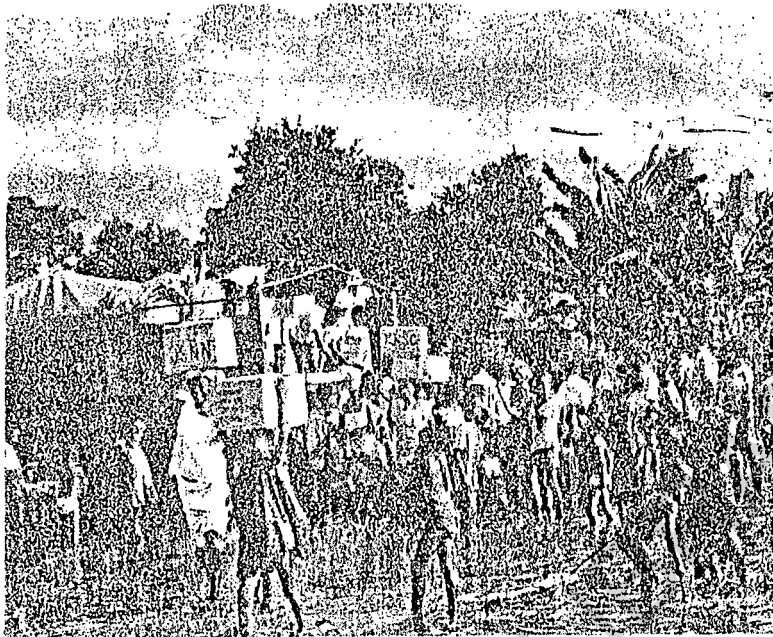


Some of the spillage victims.



President Shagari and Governor Okilo visit victims of the Oil Spillage disaster areas.

Plate 2



The Bendel State Government spent over N2 million naira for the rehabilitation and the provision of relief materials for the oil spillage victims.

Other grievances of the minorities derive from their lack of social infrastructure (potable water, good tarred roads, electricity, etc) and inadequate compensation where it is paid at all, for alienated land and polluted environment. The dearth of amenities in most of these communities which may be related to the 'urban bias' for towns, in most of these communities is an accepted fact even to government representatives who could double as minority spokespersons.⁷³ At a meeting in 1993 between the Secretary to the Federal Military Government and oil producing companies on one side and these communities on the other side, the then Rivers State Governor, Mr Rufus Ada-George, noted candidly:

The oil company workers at site live in comparative luxury, leisure and affluence, with the provision of electricity, potable drinking water and communication facilities, in well laid camps or site-villages. In contrast, natives of the host communities remain in conditions that are strikingly deplorable.⁷⁴

Furthermore, **The Guardian** wrote in 1993 that

Demands for the provision of basic amenities, like potable water, electricity, health centres and good roads, from oil companies, more often than not, constitute the basis of discontent in oil producing areas.⁷⁵

While the communities blamed their conditions on oil companies, the latter on their part put the blame on the federal government which derived the greater

⁷³ For comprehensive review of the dearth of basic amenities in these areas, see **Newswatch**, Lagos, 2 July, 1990, p. 15 - 22.

⁷⁴ **The Guardian**, Lagos, 24-5-93, p.9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

financial benefit from oil-prospecting.⁷⁶ In actuality, no Nigerian law makes the provision of social amenities for communities of oil-producing areas a responsibility of the oil-companies. Nonetheless, those communities who could not or better still, were not persuaded to make the fine distinctions the oil-companies often read to them, vented their spleen on their face-to-face guests, the oil-companies. Such was the case when within a month, three communities - Uzere, Olomoro and Opuana in Delta State resorted to violent-demonstration involving blockade of Shell's installations. In Olomoro's demonstration, 17 vehicles belonging to Seismograph Services Ltd (SSL), an oil service company to Shell, were seized.⁷⁷

Although, the Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations Decree of 1969 provides that compensation must be paid for appropriated land, polluted lands and waters, it is awfully silent on the issue of adequacy or prompt payment. As a result, 'often compensations are paid for polluted lands and waters after protracted negotiations and expensive law-suits'.⁷⁸

It bears repeating that the combination of economic and ecological difficulties have decimated the means of livelihood of the mostly peasant occupants of the oil-yielding areas.

2.4 Responses

By means of the three main strategies minorities are known to adopt in

⁷⁶ 95 per cent of oil revenue goes to the federal government in its joint-venture through the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) with oil companies. See Shell-BP Nigeria Brief: The Ogoni Issue, 1994.

⁷⁷ The Guardian, Lagos, 1-6-94, p.9.

⁷⁸ Hutchful, op. cit., p.121.

reacting to their condition - non-violent protest, violent protest and rebellion,⁷⁹ the minorities have in varying degrees, reacted to their situation. Elements of their non-violent-protest strategy included "verbal opposition (public letters, petitions, posters, clandestine publications, agitation)"⁸⁰ demonstrations, rallies, paid adverts and court action (see Plate 9 for the picture of youths demonstrating during Governor Ambrose Alli's visit to Uzere in 1980).

In all of these, ethnic identity was the organizing principle. Under civilian rule, state governments sometimes provided the 'non-ethnic' means of non-violent protest. The court action taken against the federal government by the former Bendel State government under (see Plate 9) the late Professor Ambrose Alli over revenue allocation formula in 1981 is a case in point. Also, the Rivers State Government under Chief Melford Okilo at times displayed a militant attitude over the despoiling effects of oil exploration. But as it was with patron-client based ethnic mobilization, the self-interest of patrons - state politicians and bureaucrats, limited the effectiveness of this strategy.⁸¹

Sabotage and limited rioting involving blockade of oil companies' installations were the elements of the violent-protest the minorities often employed. The only time rebellion was resorted to was in 1967 when Isaac Adaka Boro declared the Niger Delta Republic. The importance of the oil factor in that rebellion is clear from Boro's final address to his troops in the course of

⁷⁹ Gurr, *op.cit.*, Ikporukpo *op. cit.* would rather divide the responses into four - Advocacy-based protests, protest marches and civil disobedience, sabotage and armed struggle.

⁸⁰ Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸¹ Hutchful, *op. cit.*

Plate 9



Placard carrying children demonstrating during the Governor's visit to Uzere.

defending his embattled 'republic' against the government of Nigeria:

... remember your seventy-years old grandmother who still farms before she eats; remember also your poverty stricken people; remember too your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins, and fight for your freedom.⁸²

2.5 Summary

This chapter examined the causes and the goal of the struggles of the oil minorities. The minorities exhibited common aspirations arising from similar economic and environmental conditions occasioned by oil exploration. Those of the core Niger Delta contend with a naturally difficult terrain. In spite of their common characteristics, majority of them were known for interethnic rivalry which sometimes resulted in violent clashes. This and other factors - mutual prejudice and stereotypes, differences in cultures, self-regarding patron - client-ties, dispute over the distribution of state palliative measures and oil companies' patronage, and state repression, prevented the development of a strong regional movement. These explain why the minorities pursued separate ethnic and regional political actions at the same time.

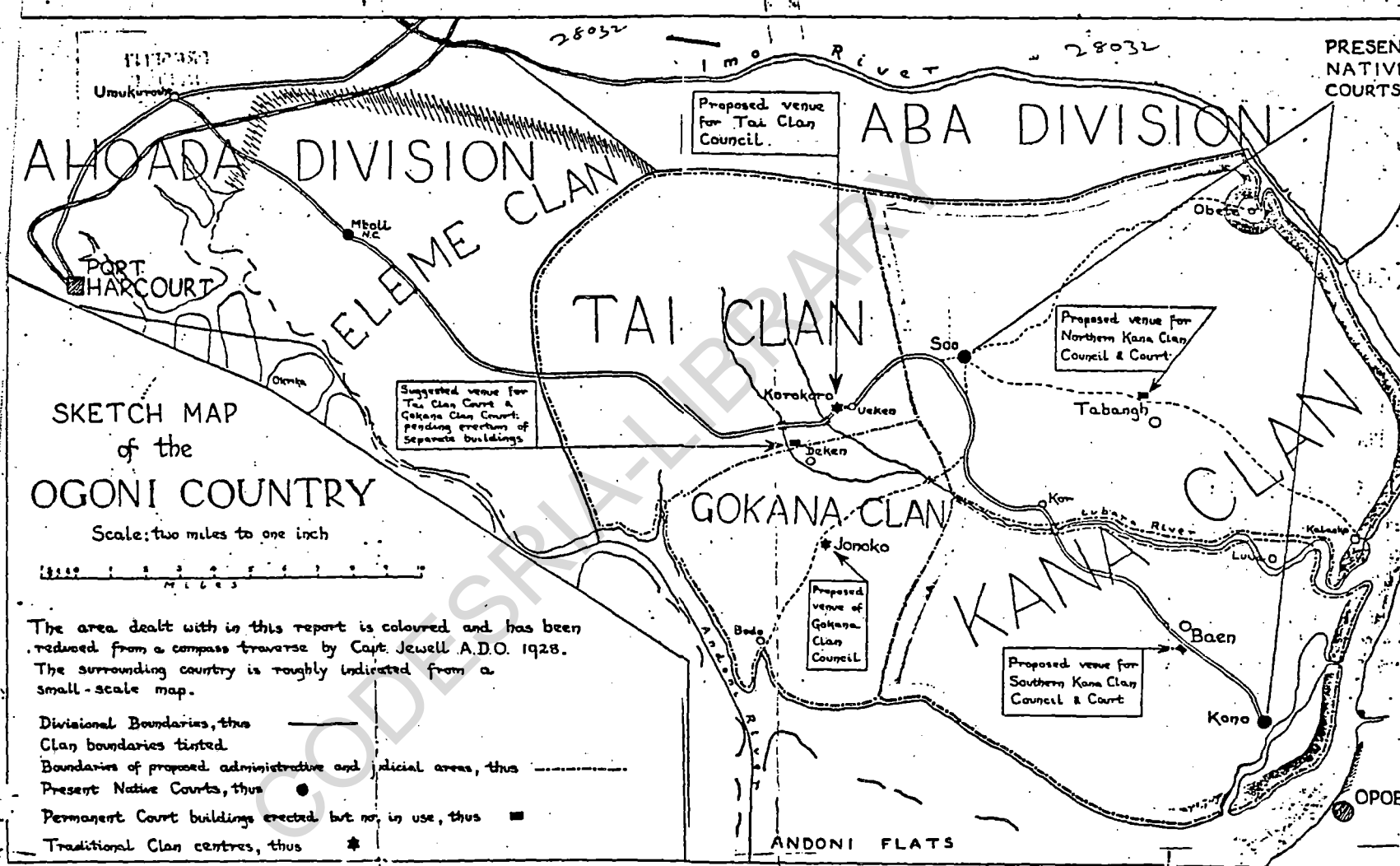
The vertical modes of political action, especially the ethnic mode, preferred by the minorities are to be understood within the framework of the ethnic and groupal nature of resource competition in Nigeria. Since states serve as the unit for resource allocation at the federal level, they sometimes provided the framework for pursuing minority ethnic nationalist goals.

The main grievance of the minorities was lack of political autonomy within which they could determine how to dispose the oil wealth their

⁸² Quoted in *The Masses*, Lagos, Vol. 2, No. 3, February, 1995, p.5.

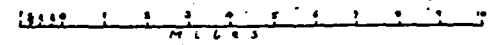
autochthonous land is endowed with. This grievance was the main cause of the nationalism identified with them. Others are degradation of the environment through the disruption of the natural terrain and pollution from oil-exploitation. the minorities reacted to their situation in three main ways - non-violent protest, violent protest and rebellion.

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SKETCH MAP
of the
OGO NI COUNTRY

Scale: two miles to one inch



The area dealt with in this report is coloured and has been reduced from a compass traverse by Capt. Jewell A.D.O. 1928. The surrounding country is roughly indicated from a small-scale map.

- Divisional Boundaries, thus ————
- Clan boundaries tinted
- Boundaries of proposed administrative and judicial areas, thus - - - - -
- Present Native Courts, thus ●
- Permanent Court buildings erected but no, in use, thus ■
- Traditional Clan centres, thus *

CHAPTER THREE

TRENDS IN Ogoni NATIONALISM

Ogoni ethnic group was conceived as an idea and then concretized through appeal to objective factors on the ground. As any other ethnic group, it has performed certain functions which are invariably the functions of ethnicity. These are as identified by Hertzog: (a) maintaining social boundaries, (b) political organization, (c) competing for economic and social resources, and expressing class conflict.¹

Before the formation of MOSOP in 1990, the Ogoni ethnic group was politically salient only within Rivers State. It probably was not so within the Eastern Region or before the creation of Rivers State in as much as Jones referred to the Ogoni as a "linguistically obscure people."² At any rate, Ogoni feelings, goals, and identity have been primarily directed to the Nigerian State and its ramifications since the 1990s. Much of the initiative and leadership of this ethnic nationalism came, as they were when Ogoni ethnic identity was being shaped, from Ogoni elites. In this chapter, the strategies used to mobilize the entire Ogoni, effectiveness, obstacles to mobilization and their repercussions will be discussed.

3.1 Origin

There are diverse accounts on the origin of the Ogoni. However, one account upon which there is a fair consensus among the few writers on Ogoni is

¹ Hanna Herzog, "Political Factionalism: The Case of Ethnic Lists in Israel", in *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No.2, 1986.

² G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil rivers - A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*. Oxford University Press, 1963, p.10.

that their forefathers migrated from across the Imo River about the late 18th or early 19th century.³ Another account states that those who founded the earliest settlement of Ogoni were given the name, 'Igoni', meaning 'stranger' as they arrived, by the Ibani, an ethnic minority in Akwa-Ibom State. The account concludes that Igoni was later corrupted as Ogoni.⁴ Yet another account (oral tradition) traces the origin of the Ogoni to Ghana. The similarity of some Ogoni and Ghanaian names is cited to support this account.⁵

3.2 Population, Land and Settlement

The Ogoni number about 500,000 and live in 124 villages and small towns.⁶ Their population density varies from 400 to 1,251 on a land area of 404 square miles. The Ogoni were the third largest ethnic group in the old Rivers State, the first two largest being Ijaw, and Ikwere. They were, therefore, a minority in population in the State. Their competitive capacity in the politics of Rivers State shows that they were also politically, a minority.

From the social representation of Ogoni settlements, even by Ogoni elites and objective features of space, housing, occupation and culture, the entire Ogoni

³ E.J. Alagoa and C.B. Kiebel, "Traditions of Origin", in E.J. Alagoa and Tekena N. Tamuno **Land and People of Nigeria: Rivers State**. Port Harcourt, Riverside Communications, 1989 and Ken Saro-Wiwa, **The Ogoni Nation: Today and Tomorrow**, Port Harcourt, Saros International Publishers, 1993.

⁴ Saro-Wiwa, *Ibid.*

⁵ Personal communication with Monsi Gogo, an Ogoni and final year student in Law at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 10-3-96.

⁶ Saro-Wiwa, 1993, *op. cit.*, Loolo puts the number of and villages at III. See Godwin Namene Loolo. **A History of the Ogoni**. Monograph, Port Harcourt, 1981.

area may be referred to as a rural area.⁷ This description does not deny variations, especially in the physical space among Ogoni settlements.

The population density of Ogoni land of 1,238 persons per square mile is by far higher than the Nigerian average of 300. High population density, really demographic stress, is severest in the Gokana area where land is so scarce for population expansion that the villages overlap.

Ogoni land is bounded on the south by Andoni; south-east by Opobo; north-east by Annang; north by Akwete (Ndoki); north-west by Ikwere and west by Ijaw.⁸ Its stretches to the north continue to be a subject of dispute between the Tai (Ogoni) and Akwete (Ndokis) in Rivers State.

3.3 Occupation

Most of the Ogoni people are farmers and fishermen. Their elites live mostly outside of the land, in Port Harcourt and other places and practise other kinds of occupation. Fishing is practised across Nigerian territorial boundaries into neighbouring African countries as Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Ogonis in these occupations live in these countries most part of the year and visit home in the months of May, June and July to join their kith and kin in celebrating some traditional festivals.⁹

⁷ For example, G.B. Leton, the first President of MOSOP, and Ken Saro-Wiwa the epitome of Ogoni nationalist movement, characterized Ogoni area rural. See **Ogoni Bill of Rights**, p.6.

⁸ These are ethnic minorities mostly in Rivers State and Akwa-Ibom State.

⁹ Barinem N. Kiobel, "The Ogoni Saga: Our Case, Our Struggles". Mimeo, 1993

3.4 Culture

Ogoni ethnic group has a distinct culture, but it contains adopted elements of Ijaw and Ibiobio customs.¹⁰ The people speak three main languages - Khana, Gokana and Eleme. Eleme is "more divergent from both Khana and Gokana though it is closely related with them".¹¹ Within each language are mutually intelligible dialects.

The divergence of the Eleme language from Khana and Gokana languages may explain in part the aloofness of the Eleme clan till the latter period of colonization. Another factor is physical distance compounded by colonial administrative divisions.

The Ogoni worship a multitude of gods including Bari - the Supreme deity and animal creatures.¹² The more relevant aspect of religious life of the Ogoni to this study is idolatry, defined as great reverence for a man. The confidence the masses repose in a leader who has a proven record of relevance to the Ogoni ethnic group is total. To Dr. Kenneth Birabi, son of T.N. Paul Birabi (the precursor of Ogoni nationalists), this followership quality of Ogoni people was a liability to their struggle for more share of oil revenue and political autonomy. His reason is that the people uncritically believed Saro-Wiwa's assessment of other Ogoni elites who disagreed with him.¹³ More important, blood-oath taking aspect of 'traditional' religion was used to embolden the masses

¹⁰ Saro-Wiwa, 1992, *op. cit.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹² Saro-Wiwa, 1992, *op. cit.*

¹³ Personal communication, Port Harcourt, 2 March, 1995.

of Ogoni who before the mass mobilization were timid and docile.¹⁴

According to Saro-Wiwa, Ogonis had been very jealous of their environment. They fought to retain and preserve it. The ferocity with which they went about this, earned them a reputation for cannibalism. Such attitudes and behaviours are elements of the phenomenon Hobsbawm has termed 'proto-nationalism'.¹⁵ Their current struggle is, consequently, an attempt to reclaim control of their homeland.¹⁶

Until very recently, Ogoni people rejected twins and their mothers. If a woman gave birth to twins, she was sent away from Ogoni land across the river to Andoni land. Even Saro-Wiwa with his education and fervent love for Ogoni people, could not resist this tradition when his wife, daughter of Mr. S.N. Orage, one of whose murders, the state took excuse to execute him and eight others, gave birth to twins.¹⁷

3.5 Political Organization

In Saro-Wiwa's account of Ogoni history, the Ogoni had an established social system before the advent of the Atlantic Slave Trade. This enabled them to preserve an Ogoni society. The introduction of firearms into the Delta region decimated the Ogoni society with the result that the Ogoni was forced to administer their affairs in independent villages. In spite of the decimation, the

¹⁴ Personal communication with Mr. Boniface, Kobani; 28 January, 1995, Port Harcourt.

¹⁵ Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Saro-Wiwa, 1992, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Personal Communication with Mrs. S. N. Orage, Port Harcourt, 25 January, 1995.

Ogoni resisted slavery as a popular Ogoni proverb and **Polyglotta Africana** show.¹⁸

The account of a decimated Ogoni political organization is corroborated by the survival of village administrations into the colonial period. During this period, each Ogoni village was ruled by the body of elders or what may be called village council, comprising **Pyā kabari** (village head) and **Kabari** (elder). The village council was assisted by the village secret societies, for example, **Djim**, **Amarikpo**, **Kpa** and **Eluta**. The **Eluta** served as the executive force of the village council. Below the village council was the compound level of administration headed by the compound chief and finally the family head, who administered the affairs of the family. At the clan level, villages comprising the clan met on equal terms. The title of **Gberemene** or **Gbenemene** (head of clan or kingdom) probably originated with colonial rule, and for the convenience of the indirect rule system of administration.

The kingdom political organization still exists. There are six kingdoms or clans - Nyo Khana, ken Khana, Babbe, Tai, Gokana and Eleme. This kingdom political structure of Ogoni was an instrument of political mobilization for MOSOP. The Ogoni fall into three local government councils, namely, Khana, Gokana and Tai-Eleme, in the Nigerian local government structure.

3.6 The Creation of Ogoni Ethnic Identity

Colonial rulers stigmatized various Ogoni sub-cultural categories, 'clan' and the entire Ogoni culture group, 'tribe'. While a cultural category colonial rulers rightly described as Ogoni 'tribe' existed, there was no pan-Ogoni consciousness. Only two of the sub-cultural groups exhibited 'clan' consciousness

¹⁸ Saro-Wiwa, 1992, *op. cit.*

during colonial rule as an ethno-graphic study commissioned by colonial administration discovered:

The TAIS (sic) and GOKANAS are clans in the accepted sense of term, having a common clan centre and a certain amount of clan consciousness.¹⁹

Lack of pan-Ogoni ethnic identity by the time of the report in 1932 could have been due to the lack of political contact between the people of Ogoni cultural zone and other cultural groups as well as the separation of the Ogoni area into two administrative divisions. At the time, all the clans except Eleme which belonged to Owerri Province, were in Calabar Province. On the one hand, Ogoni clans remained "independent one of the other and their organization not interdependent".²⁰ On the other, there was "no trace of Ogoni tribal organization".²¹

The process towards an Ogoni identity was initiated by the colonial regime which wanted to constitute the entire Ogoni area into a Native Administration. When first proposed in 1932, the people did not wish to unite 'perhaps because they did not understand the idea'.²² Though the colonial Governor of the Eastern Region approved in 1937 the joining of Eleme clan to the other Ogoni clans to form one administrative area, it was not realized (and not without Ogoni

¹⁹ G.H. Findlay, "Intelligence Report on the Ogoni Tribe, Opobo Division, Calabar Province", November 1932, p.3; Achive No.

²⁰ Ibid., p.2.

²¹ E.J. Gibbons, "Intelligence Report on the Ogoni Tribe, Opobo Division, Calabar Province", p.30, Achive No.

²² Findlay, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

participation) until 1947. This Ogoni participation was coordinated by the first mini-Ogoni ethnic association, that is, Ogoni Central Union (OCU), formed in 1945.²³ Through its joint advocacy with the Rivers Association, led by an Ogoni, T.N. Paul Birabi, Eleme clan was joined to other Ogoni clans and constituted into one administrative area, viz, Ogoni Native Authority, in 1947. The same effort yielded the creation of the Rivers Province comprising, Ijaws and Ahoadans, also in 1947.

The role of ethnic associations as an important element in the creation and maintenance of Ogoni ethnic identity, received a boost in 1950 with the formation of the all-inclusive Ogoni State Representative Assembly (OSRA). Created for the promotion of all Ogoni peoples' interests, OSRA helped to launch some Ogoni indigenes into state and federal political participation. Thus in 1951, its President, T.N. Paul Birabi and Secretary, F.M.A. Saro-Wiyo were elected into the Eastern House of Assembly on the platform of the NCNC. It was not long after that Birabi left for the federal House of Representatives from where he participated in the 1953 London Constitutional Conference.

Despite the unifying portent of OSRA, the Ogoni spoke with a divided voice when the colonial administration proposed to convert Ogoni Native Assembly into a Local Government to be known as Khana County Council, in 1956. Eleme clan preferred a separate council of its own, probably to a council that will be named after Khana.

OSRA died with Birabi in 1953. Thus, there was no functional Ogoni ethnic association until 1962 when Saro-Wiwa and Dennis Atu-Komi formed the Ogoni Divisional Union (ODU). This association became the medium for

²³ OCU was not subscribed to by all Ogonis in spite of its contrary suggestion by name.

fostering Ogoni interest in the creation of Rivers State till it was realized in 1967. It kept alive Ogoni consciousness even during the Civil War of 1967 - 1970. In a memorandum to the Rivers State Military Governor, then Lt. Commander A.P. Diette-Spiff, its Lagos branch averred:

... the people of Ogoni have suffered untold hardships at the hands of the Ibos (sic) in the past. Our experiences at that time made us join hands with our brothers in other parts of the Rivers area to struggle for our own state. In preparing ourselves for the future, we are only too conscious of the past; we are determined to learn from the mistakes of the past, and to so order our affairs as to be a shining example to those who will come after us.²⁴

It then requested, based on, as they claimed, the overriding wish of the peoples who constituted the Ogoni Division, that the Division be considered as an "indivisible unit for the purposes of administration within the Rivers State".²⁵

In addition, they requested that

educational qualification need not be a barrier in the way of the Ogoni people filling posts in the public service of the Rivers State Having regard to our disappointment and suffering in the past, we insist that, as far as possible, personnel sent to Ogoni Division be of Ogoni Divisional origin.²⁶

The reasons for the last request were their wish to avoid the problem of communication between the administration of the Division and the ordinary

²⁴ Memorandum dated sometime in May, 1968.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

people, and the use of administrative instruments for oppressing the people as in the past.

The memorandum was concluded on the note that Ogoni people "do not want to be treated or regarded as second-class citizens". The Secretary to the Rivers State Government - Mr. W. P. Daniel-Kalio - acknowledged receipt of the memorandum and noted that "necessary steps will be taken to implement those issues which on examination prove to be reasonable".²⁷

ODU was ostensibly replaced by three equally inclusive but definitively less political Ogoni ethnic associations - Ogoni Klub (association of young Ogoni graduates), Kagote Club (association of top Ogoni elites)²⁸ and Ogoni Central Union which was probably a reincarnation of the first broad based Ogoni ethnic association. The broad consensus achieved through consultations aided by Saro-Wiwa resulted in the formation in 1990 of the second all-inclusive, after OSTRAL yet, foremost Ogoni ethnic association, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

MOSOP drew its existence from Ogoni numerous ethnic associations, namely: the Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers (COTRA), Council of Ogoni Professionals (COP), Federation of Ogoni Women Association (FOWA), Ogoni Teachers Union (OTU), Council of Ogoni Churches (COC), National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), National Union of Ogoni Students (NUOS) and Ogoni Students Union (OSU). These associations had branches in Ogoni villages and at the centres of the six Ogoni Kingdoms. Ogoni ethnic associations in Europe and America were also arms of MOSOP.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kagote is a synonym for the names of the four main Ogoni clans, namely, Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme.

MOSOP's fleeting membership probably explains why it could not be banned. From the Babangida Administration to the Abacha Administration, government seemed to be aware of the vanity of such a ban hence it did not succumb to the clamour for banning MOSOP by its critics.²⁹

NYCOP was possibly the most radical arm of MOSOP. It served as its 'enforcement arm'. The one instance of this was the enforcement of the decision to boycott the June 12, 1993 presidential election. COP had the mandate to prepare and update blue prints for future activities so that if the minimum Ogoni demand of a state was ever granted, the Ogoni would not be caught unawares. COTRA served as the custodian of Ogoni customs and traditions and also helped with communicating the decisions of MOSOP and its affiliates to the people at the grassroots. OTU served as a local wing of the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

MOSOP had a Steering Committee or Executive Committee comprising the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Ogoni holders of government position.³⁰ This body coordinated the activities of MOSOP's

²⁹ Apparently speaking for Rivers State chiefs and elders after their meeting in February 1994, the Chairman of Rivers State Council of Chiefs and the Amayanabo of Okrika, Chief P. U. Ogan, called on the federal government to ban MOSOP on the ground that its methods were "running foul of any good reasoning". See **The Guardian**, Lagos, 1-3-94, p.5. In a press statement issued on behalf of some Ogoni chiefs and elites, Dr. Garrick Leton urged the federal government to ban MOSOP. See **Nigerian tide**, Port Harcourt, 29-5-94, p.1. In an interview with **The Week**, Lagos, 22-8-95, p.1., the then Rivers State Sole Administrator, Lt. Col. Dauda Komo declared, 'once the federal government gives me approval, I will ban MOSOP'.

³⁰ Owens Wiwa "The Agony of the Ogonis", in **African Notes**, March, 1993, pp.1&2.

affiliates . The Executive Committee Members of the affiliates were qualified to 'sit on the Central Working Committee where they helped to formulate the policies of MOSOP'.³¹ The meetings of these various organs were held publicly,³²so that MOSOP could not be described as a secret cult.

A third element in the molding of Ogoni ethnic identity was the other definition by these other ethnic groups whom individual Ogonis shared common social and political institutions/processes. MOSOP leader, Saro-Wiwa, disclosed in an interview with the press that he had no scruple of doubt believing that he belonged to a different ethnic group from being teased and taunted by Igbo school mates during his secondary school days at Government College, Umuahia.³³ A similar and well-publicized experience was by Chief Kemte Giadom.³⁴ As Nnoli has noted, the effect of such experiences is that the victims' fear and feeling of insecurity lead them towards in-group solidarity and exclusiveness.³⁵

During the hearing at the Willink Commission of Enquiry into Minority fears in 1957/58, and before it, the Constitutional Conference of 1957, the Ogoni demanded the creation of a state to comprise them and Ijaws out of Eastern Region to ostensibly escape the political domination of the Igbo. As an

³¹ Saro-Wiwa, 1993, *op. cit.*, p.39.

³² see fn 30.

³³ *The News*, Lagos, 17 May, 1993. His disdain for the Igbo perhaps, as a result, is clear from his words: "arrogance of a people who thought and behaved like a master race". See his *The Ogoni Nation*, p.22.

³⁴ This was fully related in Chapter 2.

³⁵ See O Nnoli *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu, fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980 for discussion of the effects of intempere utterances on tension of ethnic conflict.

expression of displeasure with this demand, ordinary Igbo people jeered at Ogoni traders in Port Harcourt and Aba. The impact of this experience on Ogoni ethnic solidarity was fully expressed by Ogoni protest vote against the Igbo dominated NCNC in 1957 and the temporary ascendancy of the Action Group in Ogoni ethnic politics which won the two Ogoni seats in an election marking the granting of self-rule to the Eastern Region.

The fourth and very strong factor in the creation of Ogoni ethnic identity was socio-economic differential which resulted from historical circumstances, deliberate discrimination and the activities of 'ethnic missionaries'³⁶ who wanted to launch their people into the modern sector.

Awareness about socio-economic differential between the Ogoni cultural group and neighbouring ethnic groups, particularly the Igbo, was first stimulated by some individual Ogonis who had been exposed to education, the earliest element of modernization in Nigeria. T.N. Paul Birabi is outstanding in this endeavour. He was reputed for travelling by bicycle to all Ogoni villages, sensitizing parents to the need to send their children to school.³⁷ Another model was Saro-Wiwa whose literary works did a lot to persuade the Ogoni to perceive that socio-economic differences existed between them and the other groups in Nigeria.³⁸

Residues of historical circumstances that impacted upon what the Ogoni

³⁶ David Abernethy used this term to refer to elites who took ethnicity from the urban to the rural areas. cited in Goran Hyden, "Problems and prospects of state coherence", in Rotschild and Olorunsola eds. *op. cit.*

³⁷ Loolo, *op. cit.*

³⁸ See, for example, his book *Second Letter ... and The Ogoni Nation...*

perceived as socio-economic differential whether real or imagined include the effects of the civil war and a "revenue allocation formula, under which the federal, state, and local governments have almost complete discretion over the distribution of oil proceeds".³⁹ In the perception of Ogoni ethnic nationalists, the revenue allocation formula enabled the siphoning of resources derived from the crude oil found in their land for the development of the people and homelands of other ethnic groups. Saro-Wiwa put it thus, "revenue from oil has been allocated on premises which are detrimental to the Ogoni people and all those who live in oil-bearing areas of the country".⁴⁰

The Civil War, which was itself a demonstration of ethnic nationalism⁴¹ willy nilly put the Ogoni in the defunct Biafria Republic. Previous mistrust of the Igbo coupled with the exigencies of the war situation created their own contradictions which further sharpened Ogoni ethnic identity. As it were, "Ogoni lay on the route of the Federal Troops to Port Harcourt"⁴² and as such, the Ogoni could not have escaped the charge of sabotage after the fall of the area to federal troops. N.U. Akpan, an Ibibio "Biafria" government adviser gives a lead on this: "every Federal victory (in the minority areas) was ascribed to the work

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p.17.

⁴⁰ Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Ogoni Moment of Truth*, Port Harcourt, Saros International Publishers, 1994, p.53.

⁴¹ See, for example, Milton da Silva "Modernization and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of the Basques", in *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 7, No.2, 1975, 227 - 51 and Nzongola-Ntalaja "the National Question and the Crisis of Instability in Africa", in *Social Science Research Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1985, 73 -101.

⁴² Saro-Wiwa, 1992, *op.cit.*, p.28

of saboteurs or lack of cooperation by the people in the areas concerned".⁴³ Since "Biafran resistance in the Ogoni sector was very poor,"⁴⁴ not a few Ogoni "were molested and harassed"⁴⁵ on the suspicion of complicity.

Besides, many Ogonis suffered in other ways which the Ogoni promptly associated with ethnic differences between them and the Igbo. For various reasons including the threat of the use of force, thousands of Ogonis were evacuated by Biafran authorities into Biafran enclaves. Some of these, being deceived into thinking that their evacuation was temporary, left their homes with the barest necessities. As a result of exposure to the harsh weather and starvation, many died. In Mr. Peter Akere's estimation, himself an Ogoni victim of evacuation, "more than four thousand Ogonis died" between May and August, 1968 alone.

Some of those 'taken captive' in 'Biafran' refugee camps died fighting a cause they did not believe in as conscripted soldiers, about nine were suspected to have been cannibalized, while most others suffered molestation,⁴⁶ discrimination in the distribution of relief items and in appointment as refugee officials. It is beyond doubt that after the war, those who survived the times related their sad experiences to others with the effect that they became "more self-conscious about

⁴³ Cited in Ibid., p.28

⁴⁴ Peter Akere, an Ogoni, cited in Ibid., p.30.

⁴⁵ N.U. Akpan cited in Ibid, p.28.

⁴⁶ Mr. M.N. Onwuma, an Ibo, and Provincial Administrator of Aba Province acknowledged 'molestation of a monstrous kind' in a reply to a letter by Ogoni refugees in Aba Province. Cited in Ibid.

their common bonds and interest".⁴⁷ Keller cites, as an example, the Oromo whose ethnic consciousness or solidarity was sharpened by the oppression they experienced at the hand of Ahhara dominated Ethiopian state.⁴⁸

The leader of secessionist Biafra, then Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu acknowledged he was told by the minority groups of the Eastern Region he met before war broke out that they had suffered discrimination "in the distribution of amenities, the siting of industries, and opportunities to public offices, banks and corporations".⁴⁹ Saro-Wiwa cites specific examples in education in respect of the Ogoni: "In September 1966 ... a total of 600 secondary school scholarships were awarded by the Government: only two of these went to the Ogoni. Of University scholarships only one, and that after due to protests".⁵⁰ According to Saro-Wiwa, Shell-BP also discriminated against the Ogoni. The company he said gave Ogoni 'only 8 of 450 scholarships' awarded by 1964.⁵¹ In respect of employment also by 1964, 'no more than 6 of Ogoni people were employed in either the junior cadre of the Company's services'.⁵²

It can be deduced from the above discussion by way of summary that

⁴⁷ Gurr notes that differential treatment either in form of denial or privilege produces this effect. See Gurr *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Edward J. Keller, "The Ethnogenesis of the Oromo Nation and its implications for Politics in Ethiopia", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33, 4 (1995), pp. 621 - 634.

⁴⁹ Cited in Saro-Wiwa, 1992, *op. cit.*, p.27.

⁵⁰ Saro-Wiwa, 1993, *op. cit.*, p.13.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.12.

⁵² *Ibid*,

Ogoni ethnic identity was created first from historical union supported by objective features of contiguous territory, similar customs and traditions, and life ways. And second, from common group status forged through colonial stigmatization⁵³ and administrative policies, ethnic associations and socio-economic conditions. The greater credit, however, goes to Ogoni elites who used various strategies of ethnic mobilization to nurse Ogoni identity to its present status. In the height of their activities, they were consistent in painting a unique Ogoni situation.⁵⁴

Having established the basis of Ogoni identity, there is now a platform from which the rise of Ogoni nationalism may be expounded.

3.7 The Rise of Ogoni Nationalism

Ogoni nationalism had both intangible and tangible sources. Majority of these also constituted Ogoni grievances. From these grievances derived the recent

⁵³ For a discussion of the role of colonial stigmatization in the creation of ethnic groups in Africa, see Antoine Lema **African Divided: The Creation of "Ethnic Groups"**. Lund University Press, 1993.

⁵⁴ In an interview with **Tell** magazine, Saro-Wiwa bemoaned, "The tale of Ogoni is that oil has ruined them. It's ruined their land, polluted the atmosphere and killed a lot of people". See **Tell**, Lagos, 2 May, 1994, p.14. In another interview, with **Daily Times** newspaper, he reiterated, "My people are faced by a powerful combination of titanic forces from far and near, driven by greed and cold statistics". See **Daily Times**, Lagos, 19-9-92, p.13. Dr. Garrick Leton, the first leader of MOSOP asserted, "The Ogoni case is of genocide being committed in the dying years of the twentieth century by multinational oil companies under the supervision of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria". See **Ogoni Bill op. cit.**, p.6. It is doubtful whether Leton meant his words since he later justified state violence against the Ogoni.

demands and aims of Ogoni nationalism. These sources may be more concretely distinguished as cultural, political, economic, environmental, demographic as well as the international climate. In what follows, the grievances and demands of the Ogoni are discussed.

According to Gurr, since governments tend to challenge ethno-nationalist movements or discredit or minimize their claims as indeed, the federal government did to Ogoni nationalism, for instance, describing its claims as having "no basis in law or fact",⁵⁵ "the fact remains that the best evidence we have of the interests and grievances of most communal groups come from their political movements. Their statements and strategies provide the basis for our coding of group grievances".⁵⁶ In this regard, he provides four specific guides. First, recognizing that collective interests are not unitary, the question to ask is, does a collective interest exist despite the diverse and segmented interests held by individuals, clans, and factions? Second, does a political organization exist for the formulation and expression of collective interest - Are subjective interests organized with a defined strategy for mobilizing a substantial group of people, for example, association? Third, where there are competition and factional fighting within the communal group, then, the observer can only discern the political expression of collective interest from the organizations "whose claims have greatest current validity ... largest and most durable".⁵⁷ Finally, group interests

⁵⁵ **OGONI: Facts of the Matter.** Undated unanimous publication which newspaper reports credited to the Federal Government of Nigeria, before and after its release, p.10.

⁵⁶ Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.69

and objectives change during the course of communal conflict. "What is clear is that shifts in policy by movements and governments cause some individuals and segments to reassess their interests and strategies".⁵⁸

The Ogoni political grievance derived from undisputed claim to a past history of political autonomy and the power structure of the Nigerian state. In their representation to the Government and people of Nigeria, Ogoni leaders argued:

That the Ogoni people, before the advent of British colonialism, were not conquered or colonized by any other ethnic group in present-day Nigeria.⁵⁹

They also noted that the Ogoni people had (1) "no representation whatsoever in ALL institutions of the Federal Government of Nigeria", (2) "that the ethnic policies of successive Federal and State Governments are gradually pushing the Ogoni people to slavery and possible extinction" and (3) "that successive Federal administrations ... have by administrative structuring and other noxious acts transferred Ogoni wealth exclusively to other parts of the Republic".⁶⁰ They therefore, as a minimum, demanded an Ogoni State within "undiluted federalism" based on the equality of all ethnic groups big or small and where Ogoni people will be adequately represented in federal institutions and parastatal organizations. In that case, Ken Saro-Wiwa, the then President of MOSOP swore,

Should any other ethnic group, for any reason whatsoever, be split into an equal number of states, Ogoni-land will also be split into an equal number

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ **Ogoni Bill** , p.9.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp.10 & 11.

of States. This is a minimum demand for remaining in the Nigerian Federation and is not negotiable.⁶¹

Apart from Saro-Wiwa, other non-Ogoni Nigerians had at one time or the other criticized the structuring of the Nigerian federal system as the history of separatist agitations shows.⁶² To take a recent example, the Movement for National Reformation, led by Chief Anthony Enahoro, in 1993 advocated 'true' federalism or confederalism. What the Ogoni demanded was, therefore, not unique. What made the difference was the way and manner they pursued the goal and whether they had the requisite resources to realize it as some groups had in the past.⁶³ The economic grievance of the Ogoni was profoundly expressed in a popular song among them;

The flames of Shell are flames of hell
We bask below their light
Nought for us save the blight

⁶¹ Saro-Wiwa made this declaration in an address he delivered to the visiting delegation of Federal Ministers of Petroleum Resources, Internal Affairs, and Commerce and Tourism at Bori-Ogoni, 10 January, 1994. Published in his *Ogoni Moment* ..., p.24.

⁶² Tekena N. Tamuno, "Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 8, 4(1970), pp. 563 - 584.

⁶³ The major ethnic groups - Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani in the past secured autonomy in consequence of dissatisfaction with the structuring of power of the Nigerian state.

of cursed neglect and cursed Shell⁶⁴

The Ogoni noted that oil exploitation had by 1990, put thirty billion US dollars (US\$30b) into the coffers of successive federal governments of Nigeria though this might be an exaggeration. And that notwithstanding, their land was physically underdeveloped just as they were "one of the poorest" people in Nigeria: there are "no pipe-borne water", "no electricity", "no social or economic project of the Federal Government" and Ogoni had received "nothing" from oil wealth "but misery, hunger and pain" quite in contrast to the fact that 'the common man in the Western State benefits directly from cocoa as does the man in Kano State from groundnut'.⁶⁵

In the light of the above, they made the following demands from the Federal Government:-

The right to the control and use of a fair proportion of OGONI economic resources for Ogoni development.⁶⁶ Payment of rent and royalties from oil mined in Ogoni-land since 1958.

Social Development in roads, electricity and water, health and housing.⁶⁷

With the upsurge in the 1990s of protest by communities of areas where oil is exploited, the two effects the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo warned against had appeared. He had warned that revenue should not be allocated "in such a manner as to outrage the feelings of those sections of Nigeria which are the main source

⁶⁴ Saro-Wiwa, *Ogoni Nation* ..., p.10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp 11 - 21.

⁶⁶ *Ogoni Bill* ..., p.11

⁶⁷ Saro-Wiwa, *Ogoni moment* ..., p.36.

of derivation, and to induce a sense of financial irresponsibility in some other sections".⁶⁸ Oil revenues contributed to the loss of control at the centre in that they flowed freely without the source acting as a brake to those who had access to the centre's desire to increase state expenditures.⁶⁹ Saro-Wiwa's argument that it was unfair for an oil company to pay 'more in rent in one year for ONE two-bedroom flat for one of its middle-level employees in Lagos among the Yorubas (sic) than it had paid in a total of ten years to the Ogoni landlords whose land it expropriated' oil,⁷⁰ could not be dismissed with a wave of the hand at least on moral grounds. The precedents of how peoples affected by oil exploration in the US, United Kingdom and other places are being treated help to buttress his contention.

One of the precedents Saro-Wiwa cited is the satisfactory treatment being given to the inhabitants of Shetland in Britain where oil is not found but which "serves as the centre for all installations related to the exploration of North Sea oil"⁷¹ Incidentally, Nigeria was living through the paradox of precedent-citation starting in 1986 when the Babangida Administration embarked on the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The minders of the state cited precedents if they enabled them to support measures that would infallibly make life difficult if not more difficult for majority of their people. They disclaimed them where they were cited by any members of the public for more humane treatment of their

⁶⁸ Awo cited in Ibid, p.25.

⁶⁹ Tom Forrest *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide ...*, p.83.

⁷¹ See *ibid* for precedents and compare fiscal federalism in Canada, United States of America, Australia, India and Brazil. For this, see Ikporukpo *op. cit.*, pp. 162 - 164.

citizens. For example, costs of fuel in other countries were cited as precedents when the government contemplated the withdrawal of the so-called subsidy on the prices of petroleum products. Meanwhile, social welfare schemes of especially the developed ones among the 'model countries' were never an example for state action. In such circumstances, a dispassionate consideration of precedents could not be easily forthcoming.

Government's own newspaper, the **Daily Times**, made the following comment on the neglect of Ogoni:

Ogoni is good example of where one must keep a safe distance even as he points it out as the goose that lays the golden egg for Nigeria. Ogoni is the pioneer in the oil industry in Nigeria: first oil field, first refinery (now two), first petrochemical industry, first and most viable fertilizer industry, a maze of oil pipelines; all concentrated in one tiny land of 500,000 inhabitants.... It is a very manageable and easy-to-develop community. (But) in terms of thoughtless pillaging, plundering, plumbing and pumping away of gasoline, acid rain and petroleum fumes and flares all over their lives, Ogonis can be easily overrun. We must look our conscience in the eyes; point the accusing finger at ourselves as the predatory, rapacious, even sadistic society which just takes without giving.⁷²

Ogoni's third main grievance and source of their contemporary nationalism is the degradation of their environment through oil exploration since 1958. Its adjunct effect is demographic stress caused by a multiple of factors. The oil companies had ninety-six "oil wells hooked up to five flow-stations in

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Excerpt from a **Daily Times** editorial cited in Naanen, *op. cit.*, p. 2

Bomu, Kokoro, Yorla, Bodo West and Ebubu".⁷³ The Eleme Kingdom contains the petrochemical complex, a fertilizer plant, two oil refineries and a seaport. A new chemical plant was being proposed in the area as well; while another new project, a pipeline for aluminum smelter was also on the drawing board for Ogoniland. These various projects and their activities further aggravated the problem of scarce land the Ogoni were already facing. Siting of oil wells and flow stations spanning actual locations, roads, cemented areas with pipelines criss-crossing surface land meant loss of land for farming purposes. Besides, exhaustive reaction of crude oil with soil-cells destroyed the immediate farm areas by either rendering them barren or leading to poor yields.⁷⁴ The Scarcity of land and the aggravating effect of oil-related activities are best summarised in the words of Saro-Wiwa,

Ogoniland is seriously short of land. Whereas UN agencies estimated that each person requires four acres of land for survival, the Ogoni only have 0.5 acres per person. Less land (sic) taken for industries, access roads to the oil-fields, oil-fields and pipelines with right of way, the Ogoni now have less than 0.3 acres per person.⁷⁵

Pollution of rivers and creeks from oil spills added to pollution of the land to make precarious the earning of livelihood for the Ogoni who directly depended on land.

According to Shell-BP, between 1985 and early 1993 when oil exploitation

⁷³ Nigeria Brief, op. cit., p. 2.

⁷⁴ See letter by Dere Students' Union to Shell-BP published in Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide*

⁷⁵ Ogoni Moment ..., p.30

was halted by Ogoni protest, "5,352 barrels of oil were spilled in 87 incidents".⁷⁶ Granted, as Shell-BP claims, 60 of these were caused by sabotage,⁷⁷ all without fail caused unsolicited effects on the survival of the people of the affected areas. An example of the inevitable impact on the environment which is true in Ogoni, to paraphrase Shell-BP,⁷⁷ of oil operations was the highly damaging Bomu-blowout in 1970.

Other causes of demographic stress were emigration and health hazards from oil exploration. Noise from heavy vibrating machines, trucks and rig-heads disturbed the peace of the area. And heat generated from the blazing of natural gas led to the discomfort of the people living in the area. Some of the effects of oil operations on the Ogoni, according to Dr. Owens-Wiwa, Saro-Wiwa's younger brother and MOSOP activist, were "respiratory disorders, asthma, cancer, and birth deformity".⁷⁸ He relates the situation in his village as follows:

In my village ... more people die than are born. You find that because of the extreme hardship... most people of child-bearing age have emigrated. Most of the women marry other men and bear into other tribes while those they have at home are dying faster than they are procreating.⁷⁹

The scenario painted above portended what MOSOP leaders called 'genocide' for the Ogoni. To avert such a doom, the Ogoni demanded "the right to protect the

⁷⁶ Nigerian Brief , p.7

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.6

⁷⁸ The African Guardian, Lagos, 4 October, 1993, p.15.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

OGONI environment and ecology from further degradation".⁸⁰ They also demanded a special grant for "the remedy of the damage done by oil exploration and exploitation"⁸¹ and the "provision of alternative employment within Shell organization for all those displaced by Shell's activities".⁸²

Ogoni nationalism also emanated from cultural concern which was, of course, the fuel for its emotionalism. Saro-Wiwa said he believed so much in "Ogoniness". Ogoni, he felt, lost self-identity and self-respect by 100 years of British and Nigerian internal colonialism. He expressed concern over the phenomenon of educated Ogonis living, working and raising children out of Ogoni culture with the possibility of the culture dying out.⁸³ Ogoni folktales, he continued, were a source of pride to him because they tell how Ogonis lived in self-worth and fulfillment "... When I turned to examine closely what is happening to our Little Paradise, our Ogoni, in today's Nigeria, I became very angry. The more I thought about it, the angrier I became".⁸⁴

Saro-Wiwa felt and urged a sense of community among the Ogoni. In his **First Letter to Ogoni Youth** and quoted in his **Second Letter to Ogoni Youth**, he noted, "no one except he is grossly bestial or stupid can be happy in a situation of individual success and communal failure".⁸⁵ In his acceptance speech of the Ogoni National Merit Award in 1992, he declared that "if there is

⁸⁰ **Ogoni Bill** ..., p.11.

⁸¹ Saro-Wiwa, **Ogoni Moment**, p.36

⁸² Ibid, p.37.

⁸³ Ibid,

⁸⁴ Saro-Wiwa, **Ogoni Moment**....., p.4.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.1.

anything an Ogoni man should honour, it is the respect of another Ogoni man".⁸⁶ Logically, he asserted,

I have personally dedicated myself to the Ogoni nation. For me, the struggle is my first priority, taking precedence over all other interests. For I believe that the achievement of the Ogoni will serve as an example to other ethnic minorities and oppressed peoples throughout Africa.⁸⁷

The above statement also contains Saro-Wiwa's belief in the vanguardist role for Ogoni minority ethnic nationalism in Africa. He was for that reason an active member of EMIROAF which he co-founded and presided over to his end.

Saro-Wiwa's commitment to Ogoni nationalism has to be judged by what he did and his material background. Materially, he was reported to be worth more than five million US dollars (US\$5m) at the time of his execution.⁸⁸ He could therefore, not have been motivated by personal material advancement considering the setting of his actions. It is granted that the tendency among men is to go on increasing their wealth. But the use of ethnic political mobilization for personal enrichment is presumably underlined by rational behaviour. A rational actor will not, as Saro-Wiwa did, consistently employ patently anti-state strategy at the risk of personal life in a setting where praise-singers and loafers get what they want and at the same time enjoy the protection of the state. To act otherwise is self-contradictory and amounts to a denigration of mankind's rationality. Avoiding such self-contradiction for the analyst, means looking for the motive of actions outside considerations for personal material advantage. This

⁸⁶ Saro-Wiwa, *Second Letter* ..., p.4.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 12.

⁸⁸ *AM News*, Lagos, March 11, 1996, p.1.

has to be for Saro-Wiwa, who knew that "struggle is a pain, to be symbol of a struggle is to suffer".⁸⁹ He claimed he was inspired in 1980 at two different times to start the struggle. One was a "voice" ostensibly from the spiritual realm. The other in a dream in which the late and first zealot for Ogoni identity, Birabi urged him to continue the work he started.⁹⁰ The material undertone of the Ogoni nationalism which he promoted to great heights came from the concern for group (Ogoni) survival and not his personal survival.

Ogoni nationalism had a spiritual component which was jointly manifested by visits to Birabi's grave, night vigils and other religious activities. The aim of Ogoni nationalism, then, consisted not just in material rewards but also the struggle for intangible goals of dignity, self-respect and identity. Owens-Wiwa put it thus, "our struggle is not just an economic struggle, but a struggle for dignity and the basic rights for survival".⁹¹ In accordance with the fear that Ogoni culture may possibly become extinct through the non-development of Ogoni languages and other factors earlier noted, Ogonis demanded,

- (1) The use and development of Ogoni languages in Ogoni territory.
- (2) The full development of Ogoni culture.
- (3) The right to religious freedom.⁹²

Since most of the oil operations were concentrated in Gokana and Eleme and therefore, did not immediately, even if remotely affect all Ogoni villages and

⁸⁹ Ken Saro-Wiwa "My Story" in *Liberty*, Lagos, vol.7, No.2, 1996.

⁹⁰ Saro-Wiwa, *Second Letter*....

⁹¹ *Africa Notes*, op. cit., p.1.

⁹² *OGONI BILL*, p.11.

towns, one question may be raised, 'why were demands made for the entire Ogoni?' One answer relates to the ethnic character of resource competition in Nigeria and in effect, the belief that what directly affected one Ogoni village or town affected other Ogoni villages and their inhabitants, certainly indirectly. Oil was not exploited in Saro-Wiwa's hometown, Bani in Ken-Khana. Yet, he put his material resources and himself into the struggle. Another answer is that all Ogonis living in a "small, highly populated area" to use Shell's words, perceived through their leaders that they were all affected by the gradual effects of oil activities.

As earlier mentioned, there was also an international factor in Ogoni nationalism. Saro-Wiwa himself said that three developments on the international scene encouraged him to "place the Ogoni issue before the world: the end of the cold war, the increasing attention paid to the global environment, and the insistence of the European Community that rights be respected".⁹³ It was no accident then that some Ogoni nationalist activities were arranged to coincide with international activities. A most notable example was the 4 January, 1993, mass demonstration involving about 300,000 (government put the number at 10,000)⁹⁴ Ogonis which coincided with the United Nations International Day for Indigenous Peoples.

MOSOP leaders and followers were further encouraged by the international support for their struggle. After Saro-Wiwa's widely publicized participation in the 10th Session of the UN Working Group on indigenous population in July, 1991, Ogoni was admitted into the Unrepresented Nations and

⁹³ **Genocide...**, p.7.

⁹⁴ **OGONI: Facts....**

Peoples Organization (UNPO).⁹⁵ This international recognition probably contributed to the huge response of ordinary Ogonis to the mass mobilization of MOSOP.

The international support for Ogoni action took various forms. One form as already noted, was recognition as by admission into UNPO. Another was the award to Saro-Wiwa and MOSOP the Right Livelihood Award in Sweden (worth US\$250,000) in 1994. In a press statement, the Award Foundation based in Stockholm, Sweden, said, "The jury honours Saro-Wiwa for his exemplary and selfless courage and in striving non-violently for the civil, economic, and environmental rights of his people".⁹⁶ In addition, in April, 1995, Saro-Wiwa was one of the recipients of the Goldman Environmental prize, in USA. Others were the Foulon Nichols Award for excellence in creative writing and the struggle for human rights, eight Bruno-Koroisky Foundation Award for human rights, 1995 British Environmental and Media Special Awareness Award and the 1995 Hammett Award of Human Rights Watch. Finally, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for 1995 before his execution in November of that year. Related to recognition was the hearing Ogoni's case received by UNPO, UN Human Rights Commission, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A third form of international support the Ogoni nationalism received was in the form of appeals to the Nigerian government authorities shown as follows.

⁹⁵ Saro-Wiwa was elected Vice-Chairman at the United Nations Peoples Organization's Third General Assembly in Hague, Netherlands.

⁹⁶ **NewsWatch**, Lagos, October 31, 1994, p.33.

The Community of the Peace People, an Association of Nobel Peace laureates, in 1993 wrote President Ibrahim Babangida to grant Ogoni people a state within the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to allow them to use some of their oil resources to develop themselves. They also urged him to prevail on oil companies to observe high standards of environmental care for the good health of Ogoni people. The European Parliament also made several representations to the Nigerian government on Ogoni. By appealing to the Nigerian and other governmental authorities and exposition of the deplorable condition of the Ogoni and state repression, UNPO, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Earthaction, Friends of the Earth, Sierra Club, International Federation for the Rights of Ethnic, Linguistic, Religious, and other Minorities, based in New York, and foreign media gave tremendous support to Ogoni cause.⁹⁷ In particular, when Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogonis were condemned to death, International Foundation for Freedom of Expression appealed for clemency for Saro-Wiwa.⁹⁸

The fifth type of international support for the Ogoni political action was publicity. For example, Greenpeace, an international environmental group sent representatives to witness Ogoni symbolic march on 4 January, 1993 together with the London Rain Forest Action Group also an international environmental organization.

Ogoni nationalist movement also received moral support, support in relief grant and expression of concern for the life of the Ogoni from the international community. One example of international relief support the Ogoni struggle

⁹⁷ See footnotes 19, 20, 21 of *Human Rights Watch, op. cit.*

⁹⁸ Claude Welch, Jr., *op. cit.*

received was the relief grant of approximately US\$535,200 in early 1995.⁹⁹ When Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots were on trial, the European Union representative and representatives of member states periodically attended their trial. The US embassy in Lagos was not exempted. Lastly, international support for the Ogoni movement also manifested in the global outrage that greeted the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight other MOSOP activists in 1995. This was followed by military and economic sanctions imposed on Nigeria and a UN Resolution condemning human rights abuses by the Abacha Administration.

It should be pointed out, however, that it was part of MOSOP's strategy to reach out for international support. In that case, the international support it initially received as publicity of its activities was not gratuitous, but earned.

3.8 Strategies

The Ogoni struggle was defined by MOSOP, its protagonist, from the beginning as a non-violent one, building on the lead of Ogoni 'proto-nationalist' groups before it. The struggle reaped, in consequence mass support or majority participation from this now popular strategy of many oppressed peoples in the Third World.¹⁰⁰ But the actual struggle was a mixture of non-violent and violent protest. The latter is in the sense of scattered acts of sabotage, blockade

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Human Rights Watch ... op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the factors for the decline in armed resistance and the corresponding popularity of unarmed insurrections in the Third World, see Stephen Zunes, "Unarmed insurrections against authoritarian governments in the Third World: a new kind of revolution", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No.3, 1994, pp. 403 - 426.

of oil installations and limited rioting.¹⁰¹ It got into the Ogoni struggle in the first place, as a result of harassment of Saro-Wiwa and violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations by the state. In the second place, it was a fall-out of the enforcement of symbolic actions as the boycott of the presidential election of June 12, 1993.

In the addendum to Ogoni Bill of Rights which was issued in 1990, is stated,

... the Ogoni people abjure violence in the just struggle for their rights within the Federal Republic of Nigeria but will, through every lawful means, and for as long as is necessary, fight for social justice and equity for themselves and their progeny.¹⁰²

Most elements of this non-violent strategy were meant to produce two broad effects. The first was to appeal to Ogoni corporate identity and the individual Ogoni's sense of relative deprivation; to help the Ogoni perceive that the Nigerian state was primarily the source of the discontent while the oil companies played the role of an accomplice; to appeal to the Ogoni to be part of the movement for political, economic and social rights; and finally, to appeal to the normative justification for collective action.¹⁰³ The second intended broad effect was to move oil companies, specifically, Shell-BP and Chevron (Nigeria) Ltd and the

¹⁰¹ See Gurr, *op. cit.*, for elements of violent protest.

¹⁰² *Ogoni Bill*, p.14.

¹⁰³ cf. Will H. Moore and Keith Jagers, "Deprivation, Mobilization and the State: A Synthetic Model of Rebellion", in Quee - Young Kim, ed. *Revolutions in The Third World*, 1991, 17 - 36. They acknowledge that their five-point typology of appeals benefitted from Gurr's insights.

Federal Government to design ameliorative measures and grant certain concessions including political autonomy to the Ogoni. Sometimes too, non-violent strategies were meant to appeal to the sensibilities of internal and external consciousness for sympathetic view of the plight of Ogoni. Such non-violent strategies were literary writings, chiefly books by Saro-Wiwa, articles in the press and learned journals, demonstrations and rallies where public speeches were made and newsletters and newsflashes.

3.9 Non-Violent Strategies

The first category of non-violent strategy was publications. As already noted, Saro-Wiwa was outstanding in this respect. For he published more than twenty books basically on the Ogoni condition. In his **Second Letter to Ogoni Youth**, he exhorted all Ogoni men, women and children to join the struggle noting that everybody including academics had a role to play. In this work also, he extolled the virtues of knowledge and urged all Ogoni youths to use every opportunity to get educated.¹⁰⁴ A notable journal article focused on the Ogoni case was Naanen's 1995 "Oil-Producing Minorities and the Restructuring of Nigerian Federalism: The Case of the Ogoni People". Ledum Mitee's 1994 journal article, "Changing the Formula" was likewise intended to expound the cause of the Ogoni struggle. Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni individuals published several articles in local newspapers on the Ogoni condition. In one of such articles, Saro-Wiwa identified the "general" issues emanating from oil exploitation as social justice which borders on power-sharing, environmental care, the question of to whom oil rents and royalties were rightly due (government or the

¹⁰⁴ He had done so in his **First Letter to Ogoni Youth**.

community?) and human dignity and self-realization.¹⁰⁵

Letters were written as petitions to oil companies and appropriate government quarters by individuals and ethnic associations. Shell-BP in 1970 acknowledged the receipt of one by Ogoni Divisional Committee (ODC) as "one of a series" of petitions that had originated in Ogoni Division, then. The petition, by Ogoni elites including Late E. N. Kobani on behalf of themselves and the entire people of Ogoni Division, listed the effects of oil exploitation and the baneful neglect of Ogoni area. It noted that only one Ogoni son was on the senior staff and less than a dozen others in the junior cadre of Shell-BP company. The petition deplored the non-representation of the Ogoni "in the process of law-making" which produced decisions that conducted the exploitation and distribution of oil resources. The petitioners, therefore, requested the Rivers State Government to help in the reversion of petroleum laws to reverse sheer exploitation of oil reserves to the destitution of indigenous populations. They also asked that compensation fees be increased to adequate levels.¹⁰⁶

In reply to this petition, Shell-BP noted that the ODC 'exaggerated or misrepresented in one direction (e.g. the amount of land occupied for oil operations in Ogoni Division) and minimized in the other (e.g. the amount of compensation paid by it in the Division over the years)'.¹⁰⁷ What is more, 'the incidental benefits accruing to the Division from its presence there greatly outweighs any disadvantages'.¹⁰⁸ A physical spin-off benefit from their

¹⁰⁵ **The Guardian**, Lagos, 1-4-94, p.17.

¹⁰⁶ Published in Saro-Wiwa, **Genocide**, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*.

presence in Ogoniland was the construction of "more than 20 miles of new roads connecting the drilling locations in the Division".¹⁰⁹ What is apposite to note here is that two decades before MOSOP was formed to challenge the Nigerian State over how oil wealth was distributed, eminent Ogoni elites had begun to feel strongly about Ogoni status in relation to oil wealth. The Bomu blow-out which occurred immediately after Shell-BP's reply to the petition attracted many more petitions from individual educated Ogonis and students' groups and heightened concern over the unfavourable effects of oil exploitation among many more Ogonis.¹¹⁰

Publicized statements were the instrument with which MOSOP periodically communicated its positions to outsiders. In response to the spate of arrest and detention of Saro-Wiwa, NYCOP issued a press statement stating that "the Ogoni people remain undaunted to any form of intimidation, or harassment and remain wholly committed to our quest for self-determination, political autonomy and ecological war and genocide being presently unleashed on us"¹¹¹ (sic). When MOSOP was embroiled in turmoil in late 1993 to early 1994, it issued a press statement reiterating commitment to non-violent struggle "no matter the effort to bait them to violence"¹¹²

Other forms of MOSOP's non-violent strategy in the category of publications were press interviews, newsletters or newsflashes and leaflets. Through press interviews, Saro-Wiwa brought to public attention Ogoni

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ See Ibid for some of these.

¹¹¹ Quoted in *The Guardian*, Lagos, 26-6-93, p.3.

¹¹² Quoted in *The Guardian*, Lagos, 18-4-94, p.2.

grievances and stated the aims of Ogoni struggle. The Ogoni monthly newsletter, "Ogoni Review" was used to educate Ogonis on the social, economic and environmental problems facing their nation. An example of leaflets used to prod Ogonis to political action was the "1993 presidential election, why Ogoni must not vote". Ironically, Saro-Wiwa, Messrs Nnibarwi Dube and Kadaari Nwiewe were docked over this pamphlet by the same government that had annulled the election both Nigerian and foreign election monitors adjudged to be free and fair.¹¹³ For the federal government under a new leadership, MOSOP's leadership under Saro-Wiwa mobilized Ogonis not to participate in the election because it saw "Ogoniland as another country".¹¹⁴

A second category of the non-violent strategy of MOSOP was secessionist threat. The first insinuation of Ogoni's attempt to secede spawned from the alleged plan to fly 'Ogoni flag' which Saro-Wiwa admitted was being produced in Lagos, side by side with the Nigerian flag. In swift reaction, state agents arrested and detained Saro-Wiwa. Then, the Treason and Treasonable Offence Decree 1993 was promulgated. Part of the Decree states:

guilty of treason is a person who flies or exhibits in any open or public place in that part of Nigeria, state, local government, a flag whether or not the flag is a national flag or is similar to the national flag and represents that such flag is a flag of the country.¹¹⁵

Actually, just before government stopped the production of "Ogoni flag", and barely three months after the January 1993 mass demonstration, Ogonis held a

¹¹³ The Guardian, Lagos, 15-7-93, p.3.

¹¹⁴ OGONI: Facts ..., p.12.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Newswatch, 24 May, 1993, p. 14.

night vigil during which they chanted, "Go down, go down, go down to Abuja/and tell Government, Government let Ogoni go",¹¹⁶ an apparent suggestion of secessionist ambition. Later, Ogonis threatened to stop paying tax if 'the government continued to ignore their demand for self-determination and protection from ecological degradation and external aggression'.¹¹⁷

In his **Ogoni Moment of Truth** published in 1994, presumably a few months to his arrest, and later trial and execution, Saro-Wiwa reiterated 'Ogoni's desire for adequate and direct representation AS OF RIGHT in all Nigerian institutions' and added that the desire underlined Ogoni's wish to remain within the Nigerian state. The desire to remain in Nigeria, he concluded, was not out of fear of the consequences of secession nor as to its rightness but due to the belief "in the brotherhood of black people worldwide and sharing the blessings of God on an equitable basis with all".¹¹⁸ In a similar vein, Saro-Wiwa told a delegation of the Federal Ministers of Petroleum Resources, Internal Affairs, Commerce and Tourism that an Ogoni State was "a minimum demand for remaining in the Nigerian Federation and was not negotiable".¹¹⁹

Besides these open threats, there was the strong feeling among the mass of Ogoni immediately after Ogoni case received a compassionate hearing by UNPO in 1991 that Ogoni sovereign state was an assured expectation. Consonant with this feeling, MOSOP's head office located in Saro-Wiwa's personal three-storey building on 24 Aggrey Road, Port-Harcourt, was known among Ogoni

¹¹⁶ **The Guardian**, 21-3-93, p.A3.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in **The Guardian**, 21-8-93, p.4

¹¹⁸ **Ogoni Moment . . .**, p.17.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.24

youths as "Ogoni Embassy" in Nigeria.¹²⁰

However, Ogoni secession threats and their symbolic representations were simply intended to win concessions from the Nigerian state and not to secure an actual secession as many times used by the three regions up to 1967.¹²¹ Saro-Wiwa in an interview with the press, noted that he knew within him that Ogoni could not achieve sovereign status. His clarification on this issue possibly prompted Abacha to dismiss previous security reports which amplified Ogoni secession threat as real irrespective of the perceptible absence of the military wherewithal to back it up, as "false security reports".¹²²

As already indicated, a critical part of MOSOP's non-violent strategy was propaganda aimed at winning the sympathy, support and if possible, the intervention of the international community. The intention to exploit all of these from the international community is clearly indicated in Saro-Wiwa's forward to Ogoni Bill of Rights:

It is the intention of the Ogoni people to draw the attention of the American government and people to the fact that the oil which they buy from Nigeria is stolen property and that it is against American Law to

¹²⁰ Personal communication with Boniface Kobani, Port Harcourt, 26-1-95

¹²¹ For a discussion of session threat as an instrument of bargaining in the Nigerian federation, see John A.A. Ayode, "Secession Threat as a Redressive Mechanism in Nigerian Federalism", in **Publius: The Journal of Federalism**, Spring 1973, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 57 - 74.

¹²² **Tempo**, 2 January, 1996, pp.8 - 13. Nevertheless, the federal government under Abacha has reasserted the perception by the government of Ogoni struggle as being aimed at independent statehood as real. See **OGONI: Facts...**

receive stolen goods.

The Ogoni people will be telling the European Community that their demand of the Yugoslav tribes that they respect human rights, minority rights and democracy should also apply to Nigeria and that they should not wait for Nigeria to burst into ethnic strife and carnage before enjoining the civilized values on a Nigeria which depends on European investment, technology and credit.¹²³

In fact, MOSOP so expressed confidence in the positive role of the international community in their struggle that their leader, Saro-Wiwa declared in the address he delivered to the 10th Session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations on 29 July, 1992:

Only the international community acting with compassion and a sense of responsibility to the human race can avert the catastrophe which is about to overtake the Ogoni.¹²⁴

As part of this belief, much attention was at the beginning of the struggle devoted to popularizing the Ogoni plight through the international print and electronic media. This certainly paid off as the international media published and publicized activities and issues related to Ogoni struggle. Part of the belief in the positive role of the international community was why MOSOP adopted 4 January of the year which is the UN Day for Indigenous Peoples as Ogoni Day. Hence its greatest mass demonstration was held on that day in 1993.

It is symptomatic of all non-violent strategies to embrace dialogue whenever the opponent showed a willingness for it. MOSOP which defined its

¹²³ Ogoni Bill ...addendum.

¹²⁴ Quoted in *Second Letter* , p.17.

strategy as non-violent at its birth was no exception. Thus, whenever the managers of the Nigerian state extended the olive hand of dialogue, MOSOP enthusiastically embraced it. It was precisely because the federal government and oil companies operating in Ogoniland (Shell-BP and Chevron) ignored MOSOP's invitation to dialogue that its non-violent strategy degenerated into a violent one. A chronology of MOSOP's strategy would show that these targets of MOSOP's struggle showed interest, even if feeble, in dialogue, when MOSOP's strategy had already degenerated into a violent one.

MOSOP decided to internationalize its campaign after waiting in vain for about a year for the Government of General Babangida to respond to its demands as presented in the Ogoni Bill of Rights.¹²⁵ Before embarking on the 4 January, 1993 mass demonstration, MOSOP gave Shell-BP at least a month within which to respond to its demand for a total of US\$10b in rent and royalties and for environmental devastations. But the company showed no visible interest in entering into dialogue with MOSOP perhaps because of its attitude up to that time that requests for oil related rights were not to be directed to it but to the federal government. As the company maintained, MOSOP's demands "are outside the business scope of oil operating companies and within the government's sphere of responsibility".¹²⁶

After the mass demonstration, Ogoni leaders were invited to meet the Inspector-General of Police, and State Security Service (SSS) officials at Abuja. After the shooting incidents at Biara in which eleven protesters were injured on

¹²⁵ The Babangida government acknowledged receipt of **Ogoni Bill of Rights** but apparently took no concrete steps towards making concessions to the Ogoni.

¹²⁶ **Nigerian Brief.....**, p.2

30 April, 1993, MOSOP leaders again met on 13 May, 1993 "with military officers representing General Babangida's government".¹²⁷ This meeting was preceded, according to Saro-Wiwa, by the Treasonable Felony Decree (1993) which a columnist of *The Observer* of London described as "the most wide-ranging legislative dismissal of human rights in Africa".¹²⁸ However, MOSOP delegation to this meeting was asked to detail Ogoni demands, make a list of unemployed Ogoni youths and produce a summary of how oil-bearing areas of other parts of the world were being treated.¹²⁹ An appeal was also made to this delegation by SSS Director-General for the laying of pipelines halted by the Biara protesters on 30 April, 1993, to resume. But when Dr. Garrick Leton and Chief E. N. Kobani the then president and Vice-President respectively of MOSOP, tried to sell the resumption of laying of pipes at public meetings while Saro-Wiwa was away abroad, it was rejected by Gokana villagers whose farmlands would be affected.¹³⁰

Much later in 1993, MOSOP representatives met with representatives of Chief Ernest Shonekan's interim government which succeeded the government of General Babangida. When Abacha seized power, Saro-Wiwa as President of MOSOP and Mr. Ledum Mitee as Vice-President met with representatives of his government, i.e. Lt. General Oladipo Diya, Chief of General Staff (CGS) and Major-General Chris Alli the then Chief of Army Staff. This meeting was followed by the setting up of the ministerial committee whose members visited

¹²⁷ See fn. 122.

¹²⁸ Quoted in *The Guardian*, 25-7-93, p. 35

¹²⁹ See fn. 122.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Ogoni in early 1994.¹³¹ Truly as Saro-Wiwa posited, "the Ogoni people are willing to go into discussions with Shell and the Federal Government in order to achieve a resolution of the conflict which has arisen".¹³² This quest for dialogue led MOSOP to support a constitutional conference where the Nigerian constitutional system they blamed for Ogoni's powerlessness could be discussed.

By far the most influential of MOSOP's non-violent strategies were demonstrations or mass rallies, because they more than anything else facilitated the education and mobilization of the Ogoni. MOSOP's first mass demonstration took place on 4 January, 1993. On that occasion, Saro-Wiwa thanked all Ogonis for responding to the awakening to their rights and the care of their environment. He then urged them to "fight relentlessly" for their rights. And as widely acknowledged, "it was peaceful because the security agencies who were crawling all over Ogoni on the day, did not themselves resort to violence".¹³³ Tens of hundred of mass education rallies were subsequently held before the state began intensive surveillance on MOSOP's activities.

On the occasion of mass rally and launching of the One Naira Ogoni Survival Fund (ONOSUF) at Bori-Ogoni on 27 February, 1993, Saro-Wiwa told his mainly Ogoni audience:

In establishing this Fund, we want to emphasize, not money, but the symbols of togetherness, of comradeship, of unity of endeavor, of the total commitment of young and old. Money cannot win the war of genocide against the Ogoni people. God Himself will win the war for us.

¹³¹ With the benefit of hindsight, such a meeting was a stabilization instrument of the new government.

¹³² *Ogoni Moment* . . . , p.38.

¹³³ *Tempo*, 2-1-96, p.8.

But all Ogoni men, women and children, including newborn babies will contribute to ONOSUF as a statement of their will to survive as individuals and as one indivisible nation.¹³⁴

Furthermore, Saro-Wiwa asked for not just contribution to the Fund from Ogonis but "total commitment and dedication".¹³⁵

Additional demonstrations, some of them plainly violent though provoked by MOSOP activists, followed Saro-Wiwa's brief detention twice in April and for 31 days from June to July, 1993. Despite the copious presence of state security agents in their land, Ogoni youths demonstrated on 21 and 22 June, 1993 in protest of Saro-Wiwa's detention over the presidential election boycott. The use of teargas on protesters in Bori by the police angered them so that they ransacked the Police Station. In the event also, some houses of certain Ogonis including a traditional ruler thought to be working against MOSOP were touched.¹³⁶

3.10 Violent Strategies

One violent strategy in itself not violent but violent because of the manner of its actualization, was the boycott of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. Although the decision to boycott the election was democratically made, MOSOP activists (NYCOP youths) used road-blocks to ensure full compliance. Since Ogoniland serves as the shortest route to Andoni travellers, molestation of any travellers be they Ogoni or not in the attempt to enforce the boycott was clearly inevitable.

In all events, the successful boycott of the election was a big publicity plus

¹³⁴ Address published in *Ogoni Moment*, p. 18.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.19.

¹³⁶ *Tempo*, *op. cit.* cf. *Newswatch*, 26-9-94, pp 21-26.

for the Ogoni protest. It helped as intended, (1) to register the neutrality of the Ogoni between the two political parties (SDP and NRC), (2) to express the dissatisfaction of the Ogoni with the Nigerian Constitution which contained provisions resented by the Ogoni protest under which the election was held.¹³⁷

According to Shell-BP, staff were withdrawn "from Ogoni in January, 1993 in the face of increasing intimidation and attacks from the communities that included physical beatings, theft and destruction of personal belongings and equipment".¹³⁸ Shell-BP's claim obviously suggests that MOSOP employed blockade and related strategies to achieve its aim. Given that Shell-BP stopped oil exploration in Ogoni during the time it claims above, and that it had been given notice of a month in December 1992 to pay compensations amounting to US\$10b or quit Ogoniland, and further that it failed to pay the compensations, it is logical to conclude that MOSOP used the blockade strategy to achieve some of its aims.

Finally, the one violent strategy which some MOSOP zealous youths used to enforce mobilization for the Ogoni movement was witch-hunting. It was reported that individuals "discovered" to be witches by a juju man from Abua village who was taken round Ogoni villages, were tried in mock courts and publicly executed by vigilante youths. Newswatch estimates that those executed in the process number into tens in different villages.¹³⁹ In his description of the social atmosphere created by the mischief of those youths associated with NYCOP, the Gbenemene of Nyo-Khana, W.Z.A Ndidee asserted: "We were not

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Nigerian Brief..., p.1.

¹³⁹ Newswatch, 26-9-94, pp. 21 - 26.

part of the Nigerian society because NYCOP introduced an entirely new administration here".¹⁴⁰ This much was attested to by Saro-Wiwa and the first Vice-President of MOSOP, Elder Lekue Lah Loolo.

In Loolo's view, witch-hunting proceeded from inadequate enlightenment by MOSOP's leadership as to good conduct while acting on behalf of MOSOP. While waiting with this author to see Lt. Col. Paul Okuntimo at his office in Bori Military Camp in Port-Harcourt, he commented:

I was telling Ken Saro-Wiwa that the mistake we made was not to properly enlighten the people. The thing started and they went haywire.... The struggle is now being misused to settle personal scores among the Ogoni people.¹⁴¹

Saro-Wiwa on his part, traced the menace of witch-hunting to vigilante groups formed as a panic measure to defend Ogoni villages in the wake of armed attacks on some of them. "However, when the armed attacks on the villages stopped, the vigilantes became a social problem",¹⁴² he stated conclusively. Whatever originated the menace, it doubtless marred the non-violent posture of MOSOP and lent credence to Shell-BP's claim that 'violence had been a feature of its campaign'.¹⁴³

3.11 How Successful Was Ogoni Ethnic Mobilization?

It is only apposite at this juncture to examine the success of Ogoni ethnic mobilization. For Gurr, "the ability of a movement to remain active for five

¹⁴⁰ Marshall, Port Harcourt, 16-10-94, p.7.

¹⁴¹ Port Harcourt, 25-1-95.

¹⁴² Tempo, op. cit.

¹⁴³ Nigeria Brief, p.1

years in its region of origin suggests that it draws on a significant under-current of support".¹⁴⁴ Judged by this and other indices, MOSOP qualified to be regarded as a mass movement. In the first place, it is notable that about 300,000, in popular estimation, out of about 500,000 Ogonis took part in the 4 January, 1993 symbolic march. In the second place, Ogoni youths defied the intimidating presence of military personnel in Ogoniland and the emotional strain from the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight other MOSOP activists barely two months before to troop out to mark 'Ogoni Day' on 4 January, 1996. Chanting anti-government and revolutionary slogans, the youths vowed that Shell-BP could not resume oil exploration in Ogoni land while the issues raised by Ogoni protest remain unresolved.¹⁴⁵ Thus, from all indications, MOSOP is not dead though it is somewhat restrained.

Finally, MOSOP has remained the only organization championing Ogoni struggle for political and economic rights, even though it was rocked by elite dissension and other constraints. Ogoni is, therefore, one of the few minorities in the world that are represented by one organization: most minorities are represented by multiple movements and spokes-persons.¹⁴⁶ Some individuals particularly eminent Ogoni elites just dissociated themselves from MOSOP and did not form any rival organizations. In any case, dissensions in social movements are normal. Beyene reports that the Eritrean Liberation Front

¹⁴⁴ Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁵ *The Guardian*, 5-1-96, p.1.

¹⁴⁶ Moore and Jagers *op. cit.*

(ELF) "underwent several changes with splinter groups emerging".¹⁴⁷ He goes further to note that "fighting broke out among various groups until the Eritrean People's Liberation (EPLF) emerged as the most dominant movement".¹⁴⁸ The opposition to Saro-Wiwa by some Ogoni elites cannot be generalized as support for the **status quo**. The important thing to consider is the side on which the majority of Ogoni was. The field part of this study showed that majority of the Ogoni supported Saro-Wiwa's leadership. There is no nationalist movement in the world that can boast of 100 per cent support from the people it claims to represent. Even if there are no visible opposers within, there will be neutrals for various reasons including religious. If there is visible opposition within an ethnic category, it may point to the "interplay between class and ethnicity".¹⁴⁹

It seems appropriate then, to distinguish among Ogonis in relation to MOSOP, following Moore and Jagers' typology of rebels at the level of the individual.¹⁵⁰ (1) Those who identified with MOSOP and were ready to act upon it (i.e. adherents). (2) Those who started as adherents but withdrew when their preferences of orientation as consequence of individual quest clashed with the general trend (i.e. withdrawn adherents). (3) Those who identified with MOSOP but did not contribute to its struggle (i.e. free riders). (4) Those who did not identify with MOSOP and of course, were not prepared to act with it (i.e.

¹⁴⁷ Asmelash Beyene "The Nationality Question, Secession and Constitutionalism: the Case of Ethiopia", in Shivji ed., 1991, *op. cit.*, p.135.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Lionel Cliffe, "Forging a nation: the Eritrean experience", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No.4, 1989, p.140.

¹⁵⁰ Moore and Jagers, *op. cit.*

spectators). With this distinction, it is obvious that not all Ogonis could have been mobilized for action. By far greater majority of Ogoni were mobilized as two important factors made possible. The first is that individual Ogonis were already experiencing a high level of what revolutionary theorists of the socio-psychological persuasion call 'relative deprivation'. The petition by ODC to Shell-BP in 1970 indicates that as far back as that time, Ogoni peasants who were mostly affected by oil exploration, were feeling helpless.¹⁵¹ The second is that a strong group identity was already formed with networks of communication spanning the entire Ogoniland.

With the widespread discontent over the consequences of oil exploration, it was easy to mobilize majority of the Ogoni behind a history of common group identity to achieve both a high level of 'relative deprivation' at the level of the individual and a high level of 'fraternalistic relative deprivation' at the group level for political action.¹⁵² The level of MOSOP's support and indeed, the level of Ogoni mobilization has been summarised. Now, what caused dissension within MOSOP leading to the withdrawal of some of its prominent supporters and the resultant consequences?

It is important to begin by noting that the dissension among Ogoni prominent leaders and MOSOP supporters did not weaken the Ogoni organized resistance nor the goals¹⁵³ of this resistance, but contributed to the violence

¹⁵¹ See Saro-Wiwa *Genocide* *op.cit.*

¹⁵² Moore and Jagers, *op. cit.*

¹⁵³ It is noteworthy that Ogoni submitted a request for state after the disagreements within MOSOP which contributed to the murder of four of its notables and execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight others in January, 1996.

against them by the minders of the state as it has with Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq.¹⁵⁴ It is also important to be aware of the fact that a nationalist movement expresses "solidarity and antagonism" at the same time such that "despite its emphasis on unity a nationalist movement or ethnic is rarely monolithic".¹⁵⁵ Thus, despite the emphasis on solidarity and one Ogoni which MOSOP projected, internal strife existed within Ogoni as between villages of the same clan.¹⁵⁶ There is, however, no evidence of inter-clan rivalry during the period of contemporary ethnic mobilization for realizing political and economic rights.¹⁵⁷

In his defence statement which he was not allowed to read before he was

¹⁵⁴ Abdollah Ramazanzadeh, "The Future of the Kurds". Paper read at the Second International Conference of Ethnic Studies Network and Eight Conference of the International Association for Conflict Management, 11-14 June, 1995, Lo-Skolen, Helsingnor, Denmark.

¹⁵⁵ Adam cited in Peter Ratcliffe. "Introduction", in Ratcliffe ed. **Race, Ethnicity and Nation - International Perspectives on Social Conflict**, London, UCL Press, 1994, p.8.

¹⁵⁶ A very recent example of strife within Ogoni was that between K. Dere and Bodo in Gokana clan. One of Chief Edward Kobani's close relations was of the view that youths from K. Dere killed Chief T.P. Orage as a consequence of this strife. Personal communication with Charles Kobani, 1-3-95, Port Harcourt. For this strife and previous ones, see Chief E. N. Kobani's unpublished letter to Chief Solomon N. Zorvule, Chairman, K. Dere Council of Chiefs, "My Agony and Distress over Declaration of Full Scale War on Bodo Community by K. Dere", February 1994.

¹⁵⁷ Prominent Ogoni sons including Dr. B. Birabi in personal communication with this author denied the existence of strife within Ogoni. This is significant because Birabi was one of the prominent Gokana indigenes who disagreed with Saro-Wiwa.

sentenced to death excerpts of which were later published, Saro-Wiwa rejects the popular understanding promoted by the Nigerian print media that the dissension within the foundation steering committee of MOSOP which led to the resignation of Dr. Leton and Chief Kobani, president and vice-president respectively, was over the methods of MOSOP. He even claims, contrary to popular belief that Dr. Leton was opposed to the formation of NYCOP that he (Leton) personally swore in its officers in February, 1993.¹⁵⁸ The democratic decision to boycott the presidential election, he says, was singularly responsible for their resignation.¹⁵⁹ For the decision denied them the fulfillment of their boast that they would deliver Ogoni.¹⁶⁰ Besides the decision, MOSOP had an unwritten rule that it should be neutral in partisan politics, and that no one holding a MOSOP post should at the same time be an active member of a political party. That meant that any holder of MOSOP post who chose to go into party politics had to relinquish it. It was for this reason that Loolo resigned as the foundation vice-president of MOSOP to become the treasurer of NRC in Rivers State. But Leton continued to retain his post as president of MOSOP even as an active member of SDP. He was a national delegate of the party to the Jos convention in 1993. He was also a member of Chief Abiola's campaign organization. Loolo's successor as vice-president of MOSOP, Chief Kobani also continued to retain his post as an active member of the SDP. He had contested for the Chairmanship of the party in Rivers State and lost to Dr. Matthew Mc Marah but

¹⁵⁸ **Liberty, op. cit.**

¹⁵⁹ Leton confirmed this in evidence to Justice Auta Tribunal which tried and found Saro-Wiwa guilty of murder charges. See **Tempo**, 29 June, 1995, p.7.

¹⁶⁰ Fn. 122.

was later appointed Abiola's campaign manager. For Loolo, "their main intention was to use their position in MOSOP to turn that mass movement to vote for the SDP in the presidential election".¹⁶¹ It had been noted that they took Abiola to Ogoni, using the facilities of MOSOP and presented him to Ogoni as the man they should vote for.

Admittedly, the election boycott decision caused the resignation of Leton and Kobani from MOSOP. Their previous and later actions and those of others who favoured participation of Ogonis in the election, point to differences between their approach and that of Saro-Wiwa and his cohorts. This suggests that the thesis of the Nigerian print media should not be dismissed outright; that the decision to boycott the election proved to be the final impetus for the dissociation from MOSOP of those withdrawn adherents. Leton and members of his group withdrew from MOSOP in the same manner most elites of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in Kenya dissociated themselves from the Association in 1952, when they finally lost control of it.¹⁶² The difference in approach was that this group was disposed to incorporation while MOSOP's popular set up led by Saro-Wiwa favoured the politics of disengagement. The latter was probably guided by the understanding that "broader values of equity and legitimacy have no place in the politics of wheeling and dealing, that they could only be sought through direct resistance to exploitation and oppression"¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Personal communication, Port Harcourt, 21-1-95.

¹⁶² Leton admitted in evidence ... that he resigned from MOSOP because of Saro-Wiwa's stand that Ogonis should not participate in the election.

¹⁶³ Gavin Williams, "Nigeria: A Political Economy", in Gavin Williams ed. **Nigeria: Economy and Society**, Rex Collings, London, p.43.

On 28 April, 1993, just four months after the 300,000 mass demonstration, "Willbros, a US pipeline contractor commissioned by Shell, began bulldozing crops on farmland in the Ogoni village of Biara in preparation for the construction of the Rumuekpe-Bomu pipeline".¹⁶⁴ This work was promptly halted through a peaceful demonstration on 30 April by Biara villagers who had become sensitive to mindless appropriation of land in the course of oil exploration. While the issues of consultation and adequate compensation before land acquisition raised by this protest and the greater one before it remained unresolved, Leton and Kobani at public meetings in mid-May when Saro-Wiwa was travelled abroad, tried to sell the idea of resumption of the laying of pipeline to Ogoni common folk. This was in acquiescence with the appeal made by the Director-General of SSS to Ogoni delegation to the meeting with government representatives on 7 May, 1993.¹⁶⁵

In what they termed Giokoo Accord, chiefs and leaders (elders) of Gokana on 13 May, 1994 made the following observations and resolutions:

The chiefs, traditional rulers, women, elders and youths regret that the generality of the people were misled through false propaganda and misinformation.

That Gokana interests be vigorously pursued by Gokana people using all legitimate and lawful channels.

That Gokana people welcome all agencies of government and hereby commit themselves to giving them active cooperation.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p.10.

¹⁶⁵ See Fn. 122

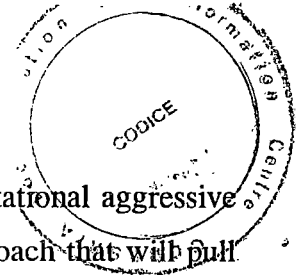
¹⁶⁶ See *Daily Sunray*, Port Harcourt, 14-5-94.

Signatories to this Accord included Chief E.N. Kobani, Mr. A. T. Badey, Mr. S. N. Orage, T.P. Orage (all of them were murdered in cold-blood a week later on 21 May, 1994), Dr. Kenneth Birabi, Miss V. Vikue and Chief I. S. Kogbara. The image of Ogoni- state relations portrayed by the Accord was a contradiction of the resolution in 1991 of Ogoni chiefs and other elites including the signatories mandating Saro-Wiwa to go and inform the international community that the Ogoni people had been neglected by the Nigerian state despite their enormous contribution to its wealth after waiting in vain for almost a year for the state to respond to the Ogoni Bill of Rights. Not only did the Accord deny the antecedents of the Federal Government's unwillingness to go into dialogue with the Ogoni or take concrete steps to address their grievances, it also fell short of demonstrating how "the pursuit of justice and fairplay for the Ogoni people within the Federal Republic of Nigeria was to be realized".¹⁶⁷ The impression of Gokana's withdrawal from Ogoni nationalism by the Accord is untenable considering the mass support which MOSOP enjoyed in Gokana after the murder of the four Ogoni (Gokana) notables.¹⁶⁸ To be sure, the Accord upheld some consensus of purpose of Ogoni nationalism by its reference, for example, to "the pursuit of justice and fairplay for the Ogoni people". A reply to Saro-Wiwa's letter by one of the Accord Signatories, Mr. Badey, at an earlier time which noted that the Ogoni "have a good case" attests to the existence of Ogoni common interests.

The reply also pointed to the disagreement over approach when Badey wrote that his

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Interviews with the low and high people in Gokana in January, 1995, Port Harcourt., Bori and Yeghe.



aim was to veer the effort of MOSOP from a confrontational aggressive posture which will not yield fruits to a calculated approach that will pull the chestnuts out of the fire without making enemies for ourselves in Nigeria.¹⁶⁹

The original president and leader of the so-called faction of MOSOP, Dr. Leton, acknowledged the disagreement between him and some Ogoni elites on one side and the mass set-up of MOSOP led by Saro-Wiwa on the other side over MOSOP's structure and strategies. He affirmed that his 'faction' disagreed that 'MOSOP should become an umbrella for such sub-groups as NYCOP, FOWA and COTRA'.¹⁷⁰ This "faction also alleged that Ken Saro-Wiwa sought complete control of the organization and had encouraged his supporters to employ 'militant tactics' on several occasions".¹⁷¹

The preparations for the delegates conference to the National Constitutional Conference in early 1994 exposed the irreconcilable divisions among Ogoni elites. MOSOP, seeing the Constitutional Conference as a genuine opportunity to advocate its vision of Nigerian federalism, decided to participate in it and set up a machinery to determine who would participate in the delegates' election. MOSOP's intention was also proof of its readiness to embrace dialogue, if possible.

There was no doubt that Saro-Wiwa was the favoured candidate of MOSOP to the conference. MOSOP's opposing camp within Ogoni made plans to sponsor a candidate to challenge Saro-Wiwa, that is, Ken Saro-Wiyo, a

¹⁶⁹ Marshall, Port Harcourt, 9-10-94, p.9.

¹⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch, p.11.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

businessman. The tension which the opposing preparations generated, culminated, in the view of some people, in the Giokoo murder of Ogoni four notables. Regardless of its cause, the Giokoo murders further tore Ogoni elites apart. Thus, Vikue, a prominent Ogoni woman who with Leton and others disagreed with Saro-Wiwa could say while the latter along with others were being tried in connection with the murders, "I want to tread on Saro-Wiwa's grave before I die".¹⁷²

The devastating set-back for the Ogoni struggle as a result of elite dissension which culminated in the murders, and later the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight other MOSOP activists is a pointer to the limits of ethnic mobilization and the force of individual quests over common interests. However, the consequences are a test of MOSOP's resilience: they are a test of the level of individual relative deprivation among the Ogoni which determines the resilience of an organization such as MOSOP in the face of adversity.¹⁷³

From whatever angle one looks at it, one would agree with Ledum Mitee, MOSOP's vice-president under Saro-Wiwa's leadership, in his appeal to Ogoni for reconciliation just before the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight others was effected that "we all lose whenever we are divided".¹⁷⁴ This is because Ogoni common interests remained as agreed to as existing by all Ogonis.

Using the criterion of approach or the fact of dissension between Ogoni

¹⁷² Personal communication, 26-1-95, Port Harcourt.

¹⁷³ Moore and Jagers *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁴ *The Guardian*, 3-11-95, p.1.

elites, they may be classified into militants versus moderates,¹⁷⁵ or 'neotraditionalists or conservatives (zealots or fundamentalists) who seek to preserve and restore the cultural norms and practices of their ancestors versus liberals or modernizers (herodians) who prefer to adapt to the prevailing practices and power structures of the outside world as a more realistic and advantageous response'¹⁷⁶ or reformists or professional intelligentsia versus intellectuals.¹⁷⁷ The last possible classification by Smith is particularly valuable in that it can help explain the rise of ethnic nationalism and account for the differences in commitment between elites.

According to Smith, the intellectuals "formulate ideals and definitions" but do not go, if at all, to far in pushing them. Leton, Kobani, Birabi, Vikue, Kogbara and all the Ogoni elites who belonged to the so-called Leton's faction, belonged to this category of Ogoni elites. As indicated earlier on, they still believed in certain ideals of Ogoni struggle which they helped formulate, notwithstanding their disagreement with Saro-Wiwa and those Ogoni elites on his side who qualified as professional intelligentsia. This second category of elites 'actively pursued nationalist goals which it perceived as being in personal as well as collective interests'.¹⁷⁸

Smith's scheme also gives insight into the differences in intensity between

¹⁷⁵ **OGONI: Facts**

¹⁷⁶ Fred Riggs, "Ethnonationalism, and industrialism, and the modern state", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No.4, 1994, p.595.

¹⁷⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3

Ogoni minority ethnic nationalism in the oil-yielding areas, though they were all circumscribed in the same objective material conditions. The difference was that Ogoni had professional intelligentsia or revivalists while other ethnic minorities had not.

3.12 The Giokoo Murders

Our role in the social sciences is to help in identifying the nature, the aspects and the causes of a situation, without hiding contradictions.¹⁷⁹

... scholars have values. Inevitably, these colour their research The question is, how can we get intellectual controls over our values so that we can produce reliable knowledge validated by evidence?¹⁸⁰

One irony in the story of the murder of Chief Edward Kobani, Mr. Albert Badey, Chief S.N. Orage, and Chief T.P. Orage, all former Rivers State Government officials at different times and Bodo indigenes, is that the meeting at which they were killed had on its agenda, planned reception for Mr. Mene Gbaragba, Chairman Caretaker Committee of Gokana Local Government and Dr. Barinem Kiobel (Rivers State Commissioner at the time) who was later to be tried and executed for the murders.

There are four versions of the story of the murders. One holds Saro-Wiwa and MOSOP responsible. Another holds Ogoni youths responsible but on the one hand, associates them (youths) with MOSOP and on the other claims that they used the murders to settle personal scores with the deceased. The third

¹⁷⁹ Jean-Pierre Chretien, "Burundi: Social Sciences Facing Ethnic Violence", *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. XIX/1, 1990, p.39.

¹⁸⁰ Ann Seidman, "A Reply to L.H. Gann", in *Issue*, Vol. XVIII/2, 1990, p.44.

traces the cause of the murders to intra-communal tussle between Bodo and other peoples in Gokana clan. The fourth account is unsure, but then, credits the killings to Shell-BP.

According to some Ogoni chiefs and leaders, the murders were "a well-planned and carefully executed action by Saro-Wiwa and his followers in MOSOP."¹⁸¹ The following day of the murders, May 22, 1994, Lt. Col. Dauda Komo, the Military Administrator of Rivers State, wasted no time in crediting MOSOP and its leadership with them at a press conference in Port Harcourt. For I. S. Kogbara (a MOSOP withdrawn adherent), "Saro-Wiwa organized the murders and pulled back".¹⁸² According to him, "I was one of those invited but I couldn't go because of an incident at the waterside that Saturday morning and I was going to the Army Commander in Bori". The incident in question was the indiscriminate shooting ashore from Andoni at Bomu by armed troops.¹⁸³ Dr. Leton noted in evidence to the Justice Auta's tribunal which tried Saro-Wiwa that "security agents were consistently kept in Ogoni even a year before the killings of the Ogoni leaders".¹⁸⁴ What may be said about Kogbara's definite attribution of responsibility for the murders to Saro-Wiwa then, is that he fell prey to the truism that men rarely own-up to opposing facts when troubled by resentment. From a letter which was after all not sent to General Abacha and

¹⁸¹ Undated press release by "Ogoni chiefs and leaders on the brutal murder of Ogoni leaders".

¹⁸² **The Nigerian Tribune**, Ibadan, 8-3-95, p.2.

¹⁸³ Unpublished letter to General Sani Abacha by Mr. Nwigbo Nwankwo, Chairman, Interim Crisis Management Committee, MOSOP, 1-6-94.

¹⁸⁴ **The Nigerian Tribune**, Ibadan, 8-3-95, p.2

signed by Leton and a host of Ogoni elites including Kogbara, death sentences were "pronounced by the NYCOP National Coordinator to a crowded meeting of Gokana chiefs and prominent leaders at the Palace of the Gbenemene of Gakana on Saturday 13th November, 1993" on Badey, Kobani, Kogbara, S.N. Orage, Kpakol, Vikue and Birabi. While Kogbara and other surviving withdrawn adherents of MOSOP base their attribution of responsibility for the murders to MOSOP and Saro-Wiwa's leadership on the outcome of this meeting, the letter just referred to contains no slight implication of Saro-Wiwa as a person. It is important to point this out in view of the fact that there was no patent indication as at the time of this study that NYCOP president, Mr. Goodluck Digbo who was specifically implicated in the letter was to be prosecuted for the murders. The logic of Saro-Wiwa's implication on the basis of the outcome of that meeting is invariably called into question.

The leadership of MOSOP countered the above claims asserting that the state master-minded the murders in order to have an excuse to destroy it. Speaking on behalf of MOSOP, its chairman of Interim Crisis Management Committee, Mr. Nwigbo Nwaako wrote a letter dated 1 June, 1994 to General Abacha:

We believe the state government collaborated with the enemies of Ogoni to plot the events that led to the death of four distinguished Ogoni men of Gokana in order to have an excuse to destroy MOSOP and Saro-Wiwa.¹⁸⁵

This conclusion draws from the fact of the meeting Lt. colonel Dauda Komo (Rivers State Military Administrator) held with some Ogoni elites perhaps

¹⁸⁵ See fn. 183

including those murdered at Government House, Port Harcourt on 20 May, 1994, the day before the killings. The deduction from this is that the state used its meeting to confirm that the meeting at which the men were killed was certainly going to hold. The state is also suspected of plotting the murders on the ground that Saro-Wiwa's itinerary on that fateful day was unusually given publicity by the Rivers State government owned print and electronic media.

The greatest cause for suspecting the state's complicity in the murders derives from then Major Okuntimo's memo to Lt. Colonel Komo. In the memo, dated 12 May, 1994, Okuntimo recommended that the state should cash in on the divisions among Ogoni elites to carry out "wasting operations" in their ranks. Okuntimo's recommendations were:

Wasting targets cutting across communities and leadership cadres, especially vocal individuals in various groups.¹⁸⁶

Later events, especially the trial and execution of Saro-Wiwa and others seem to confirm the genuineness of Okuntimo's memo and the state's acceptance of its recommendations. An Ogoni youth wondered aloud why the state security agents stationed in various parts of Ogoni did not stop the killings if the state had no hand in them. According to him, two of his secondary school classmates and several others lost their lives on that day from indiscriminate shootings by soldiers.¹⁸⁷

Saro-Wiwa's testimony that he went to Ogoni on the fateful day under military escort by Stephen Hassan of the Police Mobile Force and Navy Lt. P. C. Nwatu was never refuted. According to him, in the middle of the journey to

¹⁸⁶ *The Masses*, op. cit.

¹⁸⁷ Personal communication, Ibadan, 10-12-95.

pay a private visit to Ledum Mitee, "the escorts suddenly blocked the road and advised me to return to Port-Harcourt 'in my interest'. I obeyed without demur, I did not alight from my car, did not speak to anyone. The military escorts drove behind me and saw me out of Ogoniland".¹⁸⁸

The third account links the murders to the youths. An Ogoni man who claimed that by his religious faith, he keeps neutral regarding such struggles by MOSOP relates one-half of the account: 'on that fateful day, soldiers were already stationed in various parts of Ogoniland where Saro-Wiwa was to campaign. When he was finally turned back, some Ogoni youths sought to know why. The soldiers told them that they were brought there by the murdered men. Then, they went straight for them where they were meeting. They were killed by their own boys whom they had trained as thugs and were owing and failed to settle. Saro-Wiwa could not have known anything about the killings. Let me illustrate the alliance of some Ogoni elites and state security agents. The Ogoni now celebrate what has come to be known as Ogoni day (4 January). As early as 1 January, 1995, reinforcement of troops in Ogoni was being made. In the course of this, a vehicle carrying some soldiers had an accident in which five soldiers died. There arose the riddle of who invited them in the first instance, for the soldiers already in Ogoni argued that reinforcement was unnecessary. The colleagues of the victims of the accident resolved the riddle that they were brought in by the Chairmen of Bori and Gokana Local Government Areas. As a punishment for their misuse of state security apparatus, the army authorities ordered, them to contribute the sum of one million naira (N1m) each to

compensate the families of the deceased'.¹⁸⁹

The second part of the third account states that when Saro-Wiwa was escorted to Port-Harcourt, the youths around thought that he was arrested. They then felt that if Saro-Wiwa who was catering to their welfare could not address the people, why must the 'vultures' (meaning sell-outs) be holding a meeting in a free atmosphere, they attacked and killed the four men.¹⁹⁰

The fourth account regards the murders as the consequence of the Gokana communal feuds between Bodo which jealous Ogoni neighbours regard as the 'Hausa' of Ogoni owing to their prominence in Gokana. In this account, Saro-Wiwa's 'blackmails' merely fueled these feuds and resulted in the killings. According to Comrade B. Naagbaton, former MOSOP activist and activist in the National Conscience Party and a host of human rights organisations including the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and Amnesty International and local ethnic associations, earlier before the killings, communal feuds within Gokana clan had resulted in the death of a Bodo community leader in early 1994.¹⁹¹

Giving his part of the account which is unsure of the cause of the murders, an Ogoni private medical practitioner posited:

Up till now, no Ogoni man can say what exactly happened and why they died. Perhaps Shell-BP might explain better why the people died. Perhaps Shell felt that if they can cause confusion by the death of this people, they can then come in and that is what has happened. It is the

¹⁸⁹ Personal communication, 26-2-95, Bori, Rivers State.

¹⁹⁰ Personal communication, 25-2-94, Yeghe, Rivers State.

¹⁹¹ Personal communication, 1-3-95, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

case of giving a dog a bad name in order to hang it.¹⁹²

Speaking in a similar vein, a **Daily Sunray** newspaper columnist and of Ibo ethnic group claimed that the killings were remotely controlled using Ogoni youths.¹⁹³

3.13 The Trial and Death of Saro-Wiwa and Eight Others

The executions of Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa, Dr. Barinem Kiobel, Mr. John Kpunien, Mr. Baribol Bera, Mr. Saturday Dobe, Mr. Paul Kevura, Mr. Nordu Eawo, Mr. Felix Nwate and Mr. Daniel Gbokoo on 10 November and the outcry they generated are now part of history. Yet, many will hardly forget the numb days they experienced after the executions.

For Loolo, the trial these men underwent represented the trial of the entire Ogoni. As he put it, "the issue is not just that some Ogoni were killed but that they (government) are charging Ogoni for economic sabotage".¹⁹⁴ From the viewpoint of judicial process, a British Law expert and a Queen's counsel, Mr Michael Birabaum who witnessed the trial, dismissed the judgements of condemnation to death passed on those men as a "travesty of justice" on the grounds of lack of adequate evidence and reinventing the law of murder.¹⁹⁵ How was it so? Gluckman's comment on the role of judicial character is apposite. He states,

... instance of that professional justice ethic which has so markedly

¹⁹² Personal communication, 26-3-95, K- Dere.

¹⁹³ Personal communication, 23-1-95, Obigbo, Rivers State.

¹⁹⁴ Personal communication, 25-1-95, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

¹⁹⁵ **National Concord**, . No. 4, 3-4-96, p.12.

influenced South African judges through a series of treason trials, so that operating within laws which increasingly restrict the expression of any opposition to the policy of apartheid, they have thrown out indictments and discharged accused, even when politically their sympathies lay with the government.¹⁹⁶

This comment contrasts two judicial situations. The first was where the judge was prepared to stay on the side of fairness in a politically motivated trial. The other was where he was fully prepared to do the bidding of the government in power in an equally politically motivated trial. In the latter situation, the chances of coming out unscratched could only be by miracle. The MOSOP Crisis Management Committee saw the trials in the latter situation. For just before the trials began, the committee lamented: "we are certain that even before trial, Government has fixed the death sentence for the detained Ogoni leaders."¹⁹⁷ Absolutely true to their lamentations, the accused MOSOP activists ended up fatally bruised.

Numerous calls including newspaper editorials were made to the government to try the suspects of the murder of the four Ogoni prominent sons in the ordinary court of law after an independent judicial panel of enquiry had confirmed their "roles". Notwithstanding, government set up the Judicial Tribunal headed by a high court judge, Justice Ibrahim Auta to try the men.

Long before the trials commenced, the **Observer** (London) warned, "there are some scared people in Nigeria right now. The world should ensure that they

¹⁹⁶ Max Gluckman, "The Tribal Area in South and Central Africa" in Kuper ed. *op. cit.*, p. 384.

¹⁹⁷ **Dateline**, Lagos, No.4, 26-1-95, p.4.

do not make Ken Saro-Wiwa their scape-goat".¹⁹⁸ That was in reaction to the detention and unconcluded trial of Saro-Wiwa, Nnibarwi Dube, and Kadaari Nwiewe over the June 12, 1993 presidential election.

When the trials commenced, Saro-Wiwa and co-accused were charged with the murder of Badey, Kobani, and the Orages under item 13 Schedule 1 Cap 53 of Section 316 of the Criminal Code, a non-existent law according to the Defence. The charge was consequently adjusted by the prosecution led by Mr. Phillip Umeadi, Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and Chief Obafemi Awolowo's running mate on the platform of the UPN in the 1979 presidential election to an existing law.

Umeadi led three other lawyers for the prosecution, while Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Lagos popular lawyer, led sixteen other lawyers including human rights activists Messrs Olisah Agbakoba and Femi Falana for Saro-Wiwa and some of the accused. The tribunal frowned at the presence at the opening of trial of international observers - representatives of international organizations, European Union, British and American High Commissions in Lagos.

Lapses in the charge which exposed the unpreparedness of the prosecution which the Defence dramatized, seemed to convey good omen for the accused. It was not to be since the formidable Defence team withdrew from the trials not longer than they began accusing the Tribunal and prosecution of deliberately frustrating them. One lapse had already been mentioned. Another was that the Defence presented a document which showed that the fifth accused, Baribor Bera had been listed as one of the witnesses of the prosecution.

Again, before the trials began, 'exposure' of the state's schemes to have

¹⁹⁸ The Guardian, 25-7-93, p.B5.

Saro-wiwa and his co-accused roped in could have provided a ray of hope to MOSOP and its well-wishers that the state would make about turn. Such an expectation would have rested on the logic that skillful schemers stop short of carrying out their scheme to prove their innocence and turn the expose into a fraud, when they are found out. This, again, was not to be with a determined schemer. One of the proposed prosecution witnesses, Charles Danwi had confessed that himself and other proposed witnesses had been bribed or promised to be bribed to bear false witness against Saro-Wiwa and others. Danwi deposed,

... they wanted me to make sure I made the statement that will involve (sic) Ken, Mitee and MOSOP officials so that they will kill them (see annex 1).

In a paid advert signed by Mr, Nwibani Nwako, MOSOP claimed that some Ogoni youths mostly "criminals" were being tutored in mock trials by appointed government lawyers on how they should bear false witness against Saro-Wiwa and others. Those proposed witnesses mentioned in the advert, included Celestine Mmeabe, Saturday Mimin, Charles Suanu Danwi, David Keenom, Baridom Daabee, Nanyone Biragbara and Kemwin Badara (see annex 2). Kemwin Badara who turned out to be a witness during the trial and former Chairman of Ogoni Vigilante¹⁹⁹ told this author in a personal communication at Miss Vikue's house in Port Harcourt that he went there to claim the material benefits he was promised if he assisted in getting the foremost culprit of the murders arrested. According

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The Ogoni vigilante which turned its entire membership into NYCOP, according to Badara, existed before MOSOP. The Government, he continues, sponsored its formation as a kind of civil defence corps. This account on the origin of Ogoni vigilante is at variance with Saro-Wiwa's account which traces it to 1993 when Ogoni was embroiled in turmoil with its neighbours.

to Badara, he was at the meeting where the killings took place. What could be deducted from his confession on the reason he was at Vikue's house was that even Vikue who called Saro-Wiwa a murderer of the men was not convinced Saro-Wiwa was a culprit. Else, she would not have promised Badara some gifts if he assisted in getting the foremost culprit arrested. She must have translated her resentment towards Saro-Wiwa into so much hatred that she wished him dead. Furthermore, under cross-examination as the first prosecution witness, Leton admitted that "though Mr. Saro-Wiwa formed many militant affiliates he (Saro-Wiwa) was not a member of the affiliates".²⁰⁰ He added that the killings were done by members of NYCOP of which no attempt to prove Saro-Wiwa's membership was made much less established.

Nevertheless, the trials dragged for months and then suddenly the sentences of death passed on all of the accused but Ledum Mitee who was discharged and acquitted.²⁰¹ Those who frequented Bori Camp before or during the trial could certainly predict with utmost accuracy Mitee's fate for the freedom he enjoyed within detention. When this author was at Lt. Colonel Okuntimo's office to hear government's version of the Ogoni crisis, he met Mitee there enjoying freedom in and out of Lt. Colonel Okuntimo's office. It was confirmed to this author by an informant later that Okuntimo had affection for Mitee. But neither Okuntimo nor Mitee blabbed about this as the following conversation shows:

Okuntimo: Leave everything to God. If God will send you to jail or he will exonerate you, if he will kill you, it's left to him.

²⁰⁰ **The Nigerian Tribune**, 8-3-95, p.2.

²⁰¹ The government claims that five accused persons had been acquitted earlier. See **OGONI: Facts...**

Mitee: God does not kill people like me. God will kill the system that we are fighting.

In particular, Saro-Wiwa's sentence was based on the views of his opponents. For example, the Tribunal cited Leton's claim that Saro-Wiwa was a very "insistent person" whose will must be done. It also relied on Vikue's claim that when her house in the village was burnt down, Saro-Wiwa told her that a revolution was on in Ogoni and that "if you are not part of it, you will go with it. Heads will roll".²⁰²

Saro-Wiwa's response to the sentence of death passed on him was merely a restatement of MOSOP's claim all along. He said that he was 'adjudged guilty ever before he was charged to the tribunal. And that the verdict was delivered fifteen months before in fora (Shell's meetings) as far away outside Nigeria'.²⁰³ He indicted the Nigerian state and Shell over his travails noting that 'what his arraignment meant was that even the best of black man is no better than a criminal'.²⁰⁴ MOSOP's indictment of Shell-BP finds corroboration in Okuntimo's admission to Mitee that he was being paid by Shell-BP.²⁰⁵

An avalanche of reactions to condemnation greeted the death sentences from Nigeria and the international community. Nigerian Nobel Laureate for Literature, Professor Wole Soyinka described the whole trial process as a "legal charade".²⁰⁶ For MOSOP, the process was "politically motivated from the

²⁰² **The Guardian**, 1-11-95, p.4.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ **Tempo**, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁵ **Tempo**, 2-1-96, p.13

²⁰⁶ **The Guardian**, 2-11-95, p.2.

beginning to the end ... to silence critics of the neglected oil-producing areas and other minorities".²⁰⁷ The Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) described the sentences just as the British lawyer cited earlier, as a "travesty of justice".²⁰⁸ The National Secretary for Legal Services also described the trial as "politically motivated criminal charges".²⁰⁹ Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) described the sentences as "part of a scheme to destroy a minority ethnic group or liquidating its leadership".²¹⁰ Lagos based lawyer, Mr Fred Agbaje noted that the "tribunal from its composition, mandate, covert and overt attitude, never intended to be fair to the accused persons".²¹¹ Among the other numerous civic associations and non-government organizations which condemned the tribunal's verdict were National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Legal Aid Foundation (LFA), Association of Catholic Journalists (ACJ), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), National Conscience Party (NCP), Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) and Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP). These responses from individuals and groups from both minority and majority groups in Nigeria show that the Ogonis were not seriously, if at all, begrudged for their struggle by other non-oil ethnic groups.

From the international scene came serious reactions. A British Foreign Office spokesman declared, "we deplore the death sentences passed on Ken Saro-

²⁰⁷ **The Guardian**, 1-11-95, p.1.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 2-11-95, p.4

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Wiwa and his co-defendants following a flawed judicial process".²¹² The US noted the absence of "due process" in the trial. In a letter to General Abacha by the country's Senate, it observed that the tribunal 'failed to meet minimal international standards of fairness. And that there was evidence that some witnesses were paid to testify against Mr. Saro-Wiwa'. The letter continued, "we believe it would be unconscionable to execute these individuals after what many believe to be flagrantly unfair trial". Finally, noted the letter, "we regret that US-Nigerian relations are at a difficult juncture at this time. However, we believe that there would be further damage to the relationship if those sentences are carried out. Therefore, we urge you to consider seriously our appeal".²¹³

The US Congress also wrote the Minister of Justice, Mr. Michael Agbamuche pointing out the flaws in the trials. In a letter to General Abacha, Human Rights Watch urged him 'to commute Saro-Wiwa and others' death sentences and provide them a new trial'. Reproduction Rights Organization of Norway, Kopinor, said the sentences were "meaningless and unfair". Other members of the international community who expressed displeasure at the sentences included Canada's Secretary of State, Australian Government, Ireland Ministry of State, Amnesty International, African Studies Association in Germany, etc.

When a few days later the sentences were confirmed even though Human Rights groups were pursuing an appeal as provided for by the law, more reactions amidst pleas for clemency and committal of sentences flowed. Ogoni Community in the United Kingdom asked the government to set aside the execution of the

²¹² Ibid, p.1.

²¹³ Ibid, p.2.

sentences. Fred Agbaje, who was cited earlier, considered the speed with which the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), the executive and legislative organ of the Abacha Administration, confirmed the sentences as a "morally and constitutionally questionable judgement". He added that the PRC's action was a testimonial of "the fact that the FG had vested interest in the prosecution and persecution of Ogoni people". Fawehinmi warned that Saro-Wiwa's killing will throw the country further into chaos and catastrophe.

Mr. Ledum Mitee wrote a personal letter to the PRC in plea for his compatriots. Four wives of the condemned men, Mrs Hauwa Saro-Wiwa, Mrs. Esther Kiobel, Mrs Blessing Kpunien and Mrs. Victoria Bera sent a passionate appeal to General Abacha: "Your Excellency will be endearing yourself to us and more of Ogoni people, if our husbands' lives are spared".²¹⁴ The Commonwealth Governments meeting in Auckland, European Union and Organization for African Unity also pleaded for clemency for the men. The *Times* of London in an editorial entitled, "Ken Saro-Wiwa: Let all in Auckland condemn the Nigerian Regime", expressed unequivocal disapproval of the confirmation of the sentences.

All the threats, warnings and most passionate pleas for clemency failed to save the men. What is worse, the bereaved were not allowed to mourn the dead. The situation has been described in a lucid poetic language by a newspaper columnist:

No tears for the dead, no respite for the bereaved

Cry for the dead and the guns will cry to you

Betray an emotion and you'll betray your life

²¹⁴ Ibid, 11-11-95, p.95.

Dead or alive, the Ogoni is "dangerous".²¹⁵

After the executions as it was before judgements of condemnation, the entire Ogoniland was polluted with the presence of armed security forces. There was total news blackout just as news censorship continued till the time of the conclusion of this study. No one could take into Ogoni a newspaper nor be found to be reading one without severe reprisal by state agents. Travellers to Ogoni were thoroughly searched for any printed matters which were seized whenever found by illiterate soldiers who could not distinguish the information in them.²¹⁶ The government orchestrated calm and a no-cause-for-worry by the restriction of even religious activities and wearing of mournful look or black attire was later dramatized on the National Television Authority (NTA) network news broadcast. A comment on the rise of Nazism could not be more apt to the situation machinated by the State:

Propagandists think the people have short memories. It is their intention to erase past history, presenting themselves in the modern disguise of benefactors, their incriminating record being covered up.²¹⁷

Meanwhile, more reactions followed the executions from within and outside Nigeria.

Mr. Clement Nwankwo, Executive Director of the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) voiced, "we condemn the execution. It is a callous and evil act on the part of the government to have carried out the execution which arose from a

²¹⁵ **The Vanguard**, 5-12-95.

²¹⁶ Personal communication with an 18-year old Ogoni University undergraduate. 27-12-95, Ibadan.

²¹⁷ **Awake**, August 22, 1995, p.12. Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society.

flawed trial".²¹⁸ Professor Bolaji Akinyemi who went into self-exile on account of the Abacha government's attitude to the voice of dissent reacted, viz,

We have just had a jungle trial. All the people who have complained about this trial are not Ogonis, people who have appealed for him (Abacha) to show clemency are not Ogonis. So since when does Abacha have more wisdom than all these other people (sic).²¹⁹

Association of Episcopal Conference of Anglophone West Africa (AECAWA) in its reaction exclaimed, "They have stripped Nigeria naked before the world".²²⁰ That this was true could be seen in the continued international reactions to Nigeria.

Professor Ben Nwabueze, Nigeria's acknowledged foremost constitutional lawyer penned his thoughts on the whole trial and outcome: The issue is, not about the guilt or otherwise of the accused persons or about whether they deserved to die. It is simply that the method used in securing their conviction, sentence and execution falls short of internationally accepted standards, because it did not enable it to be seen by everyone that their guilt has manifestly been proved - that justice has manifestly been done.²²¹

The US Ambassador to the UN, Mrs Madeline Albright described the execution as a "heinous act" which "offend our values and darkens our hope for democracy

²¹⁸ **The Guardian**, 11-11-95, p.4.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid, 13-11-95, p.2.

²²¹ Ibid.

in the region" (Africa).²²² Albright added later that the execution was "a lawless act masquerading as an act of law".²²³ British Prime Minister John Major described the execution as "a judicial murder".²²⁴

Other international statesmen received the news of the execution with "great alarm", "utter dismay", "shock and horror" and "profound repulsion". The Italian Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Francesco Fulci drew consolation from the existence of ideas and ideals beyond man: "Let me say strongly, very loudly and very clearly that you can hang people but you can never hang ideas and ideals".²²⁵

As part of their expression of dismay with the executions, fifteen EU ambassadors, the US, South African, Israeli, Canadian, Australian and other western nations' ambassadors to Nigeria were recalled by their home governments. The International Finance Corporation (IEC) promptly cancelled a one hundred and fifty million dollar (US\$150m) loan facility earlier approved for the Liquefied Natural Gas Project. The Commonwealth who were meeting in Auckland, Australia at the time of the executions, in a swift reaction, suspended Nigeria from the organization for two years and imposed a two-year transition to democratic rule period as a condition for readmission. Virtually all the western countries announced the suspension of bilateral aid to Nigeria "for lack of commitment to democracy". EU and US also stopped arms sale to Nigeria.

²²² Ibid, 11/11/95, p.4.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

In addition, EU slammed sports embargo on Nigeria, and withdrew all its military attaches and visas to government officials.

In a Resolution of the UN General Assembly and supported by 101 votes against 14 with 47 abstentions, the executions were condemned and the Nigerian military regime asked to take "immediate and concrete steps" to restore democracy. The resolution also urged the Human Rights Commission based in Geneva to pay "urgent attention" to the situation of human rights in Nigeria.²²⁶ The South African government cancelled the invitation to Nigerian Super Eagles for a dress rehearsal for the January, 1996 Africa Cup of Nations competition in South Africa. There were demonstrations in London, Johannesburg and other western cities in protest over the executions as well.

The reaction of the Nigerian military authorities consisted of what a national news magazine described as "blowing hot and cold". On the one hand, they threatened "fire and brimstone". On the other, they appealed for "understanding of the Nigerian situation" by the international community. The main sports casualty of Nigeria's reaction to the mounting hostility of the international environment was the loss of what sports analysts called the bright opportunity to win the African Cup of Nations competition held in South Africa by withdrawing from it.

There were indications that the lives of Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots would have been spared if especially Saro-Wiwa had renounced the Ogoni struggle. After their execution, Shell-BP confirmed holding secret meetings with

²²⁶ Ibid. 28/11/95, p.1. There was an attempt earlier, in February, 1995 to pass a resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights on the human rights situation in Nigeria. It was defeated by 21 votes to 17 with 15 abstentions. See *Human Rights Watch, op. cit.*

Dr. Owens-Wiwa the outcome of which showed according to the latter, the former could have successfully intervened if it wanted. Birabi also regretted that Saro-Wiwa refused to bend to the condition that he recant the struggle.²²⁷ What all this further demonstrates is that the trial and execution of the MOSOP activists were politically motivated.

Summary

The thrust of this chapter is the historical analysis of the development of Ogoni nationalism. While as Osaghae has rightly observed the Ogoni do not have a myth of common origin,²²⁸ they at present, display a strong group identity, whose sources include: colonial stigmatization; elites who were at once product and agent of modernization; common experience of suffering from the repressive control of the defunct Biafra and the contemporary Nigerian state and the negative externalities of oil exploitation and so forth.

One can speak of a phenomenological relationship between the role of Ogoni elites and other factors in the rise of Ogoni nationalism in the sense that the latter existed as mere conditions until the former transformed them into factors. There is evidence that the exploitation of oil started causing discontent among the peasants almost at the same time it commenced. They expressed their discontent, at best, in the forms of sabotage, theft and other clandestine actions. They never perceived their situation in ethnic terms, that is, the perception of being cheated and that the oil wealth which their ancestral land was endowed

²²⁷ An informant who hails from the same village, Yeghe with Dr. Birabi told this author the latter expressed regrets at his Port Harcourt residence that Saro-Wiwa did not yield.

²²⁸ Osaghae, 1995, *op. cit.*

with was being exploited for the benefit of other ethnic groups. They also did not link their situation to the nature of the state structure in which they were circumscribed. This is indicated by their directing resistance to the oil companies which they were face-to-face with. They could not, then, cultivate the 'new sense of history' necessary for the emergence of nationalism.

At some point in the history of oil exploitation in Ogoniland, some elites emerged as reformists, writing letters and making proposals (to oil companies and the state) that would help effect reforms of sorts. These elites were concerned about their social and political situation within the old Rivers State, and by extension, their imagined Ogoni community. Some of them could also have been influenced by their experience in micro-social relations involving elements of other ethnic groups. The reformists failed to achieve reforms either because the oil companies and the state were not willing or not capable of undertaking them or both. Meanwhile, the state on its part, was busy centralizing political and economic power in itself. This situation which the reformists perceived and found objectionable, transformed, one would say, some of them into revivalists who sought a restoration of their communal socio-political organization as an expression of self-determination. The state's intransigence to call for a 'renegotiation' of the terms of 'union' and intimidating tactics (arrests and detentions and restriction of activities) went further to fuel feelings of personal and collective insecurity and to provide justification for the demand for self-determination.

In pursuing the quest for self-determination, Ogoni nationalists exploited the favourable international climate as an important part of their non-violent strategy. "The federal government woke up to the realities of the situation in Ogoniland"²²⁹ by resorting to repression. This dominant approach of the state subsequently introduced violent tactics into the original non-violent strategy of Ogoni nationalism. Some of the effects of the state's response to Ogoni nationalism were first the murder of four prominent Ogoni leaders and withdrawn nationalists and the execution of some of the foremost Ogoni ethnic revivalists in 1995 after a controversial trial.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF OGONI NATIONALISM ON OGONI RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURS AND STATE

Ogoni nationalism had short-run and potential long-run impact on the Nigerian mono-economy - one which depends almost solely on oil for sustenance. The state's response was actually meant to stave off the latter. Thus the clashes with neighbours - Andonis and Okrikas in 1993 and Ndokis in April 1994 which entangled the Ogoni in rapid succession within eight months from 5 August, 1993 to 3 April, 1994 were, as available evidence shows, a strategem of the state for preventing the long-run effect of Ogoni nationalism. The ethnic differences which appear to be original variables in the eruption of the clashes indeed served as a means to that strategem. As Saro-Wiwa put it in a pungent question, "why were there no communal clashes before we started asking for our rights?"¹ Besides the evidence alluded to, the timing and scale of the clashes bespeak their strategic use by the state and shell-BP to frustrate the contagion of Ogoni nationalism. A related indication is that the entire Ogoni had never been involved in dispute at least as portrayed by those clashes. In the reasoning of Lekue Lah Loolo, those Ogoni neighbours were used against the Ogoni to provide an excuse for bringing in the army into Ogoni-land. The analysis of each case and the undisguised involvement of the state in the Ogoni crisis offered below should assist in delimiting more conclusively the causes of the clashes. First, the short-run effects of Ogoni nationalism on the state.

One of the short-run effects of Ogoni nationalism was the halting of oil-exploitation in Ogoni in 1993. Up to the time of writing this report (1996), oil

¹ The Guardian, 10-6-94, p.11

exploitation had not resumed in Ogoni. In the words of government, "this meant the loss of substantial revenue to the country".² One will appreciate that the halting of oil operations in Ogoniland caused the government substantial loss and pain on realizing that an average oil production in Ogoniland of 108,000 barrels per day,³ and at, say, \$20 per barrel, the government was losing about \$2.2m a day. The second was the halting of two vital projects - the Trans Niger Pipeline (TNP) project, designed for conveying crude oil in Ogoni to Bonny Terminal when completed to convey gas to Aluminum Smelter Plant in Ikot Abasi, Akwa-Ibom State.⁴

A British journalist sums up the short-run effects of Ogoni nationalism in his reaction to the execution of the nine (9) MOSOP activists:

The Ogonis (sic) defiance posed one of the most serious challenges to Nigeria's power structure since the Biafran war because it was an example of effective organized resistance that could not be quelled with money or threats. It also raised the specter of separatism in a country of 250 ethnic groups. And it touched one of the army's rawest nerves - its source of cash. When Shell was forced out of Ogoniland in 1993, the army lost a slice of its pie.

Once the attempt to incorporate Ogoni revivalist nationalists failed, the state resorted to violent suppression of Ogoni nationalism to prevent other apparently oil-motivated nationalism from escalating to "effective organized resistance" which the former represented. For example, Saro-Wiwa was reported to have

² **OGONI: Facts**, p.11

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ **Newswatch**, 28-4-94, pp. 10-16; and 26-9-94, pp. 21-26.

resisted the attempt by the Babangida Administration to bribe MOSOP'S leadership into subjection at a meeting between government and MOSOP's representatives shortly after the mass demonstration of 4 January 1993.⁵ While this allegation cannot be substantiated, the notoriety of that government for the use of bribery as a neo-patrimonial instrument of statecraft indicates that it is not unlikely to be true.

4.1 Preventing the Spread of Ogoni Example: The Violent Way

This cosy, if criminal, relationship [Military dictatorship and Shell-BP's alliance] was perceived to be rudely disrupted by the non-violent struggle of the Ogoni people under MOSOP. The allies decided to bloody the Ogoni in order to stop their example from spreading through the oil rich Niger Delta.⁶

Many are likely to agree with those submissions by Saro-Wiwa, the popularly adjudged symbol of contemporary Ogoni nationalism. Some may even add that the Ogoni "example" had already spread to some minority nationalists in the oil-yielding areas, except that the latter fell short of following Ogoni footsteps closely. This section not only seeks to demonstrate how the state used repression to prevent the 'spread of Ogoni example' but periodises state repression for appreciating how MOSOP's original non-violent strategy became smeared with violence through state repression.

Saro-Wiwa was twice arrested in April, 1993. The first about two months after the first meeting between MOSOP's delegation and government

⁵ Information by an informant.

⁶ *Tempo*, 2-1-96, p.13.

representatives in January. This first arrest on 3 April in Warri was to prevent him from giving a lecture organized by the National Association of Itsekiri Students. The second on 18 April followed with detention for a few days was over Ogoni flag which was being produced in Lagos. In the event of this arrest, documents relating to MOSOP, EMIROAF and UNPO and his passport were seized. His international passport was impounded ostensibly to prevent him from attending the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria, slated for June, 1993.

In June, 1993 he was arrested, detained and later charged in July with N.G. Dube and Kobani Nwile for championing Ogoni boycott of the presidential election. From 2 January 1994, he was put under house arrest and his younger brother, Dr. Owens Saro-Wiwa and Ledum Mitee detained to derail the actualization of the planned launch of "Ogoni Agenda for 1994". This happened despite General Abacha's earlier apology to Saro-Wiwa that previous harassment of MOSOP leaders was as a result of the misinformation by the police and other security agents that the Ogoni were seeking to secede from Nigeria.⁷

If nothing else, the fact of Saro-Wiwa's contrasting experience with his contemporaries - Leton, Kobani, Badey, Orage, etc. who suffered not even one arrest much less detention, is an unassailable testimony that he was the pillar of the Ogoni struggle for political and economic rights. He was the undisputable target of state surveillance.

On 30 April, 1993, that is barely 4 months after Ogonis protested in a mass demonstration against exploitation, armed soldiers violently quelled the peaceful demonstration by Biara villagers against the demolition of newly

⁷ National Concord, 29-12-93, p.1.

cultivated farms by Wilbros. Shell-BP admitted part of the responsibility for the soldiers' action when it admitted requesting assistance from the Nigerian military authorities to defend the company's installations in a correspondence with Human Rights Watch.⁸ This violent turn of the state's attempt to suppress Ogoni nationalism coincided with the publication of the editorial by **The Guardian** (Lagos) on 30 April, 1996 that the state was adopting violence and blackmail against Saro-Wiwa's "reasoned opposition".

The refusal of the government to investigate the killing in July, 1993 of 130 of 132 Ogoni travellers from Cameroon at Oyorokoto gave room for suspecting the complicity of security agents in the tragedy. Immediately after the Ogoni successful boycott of the 1993 presidential election, soldiers of the Amphibious Brigade, Bori Camp, Port Harcourt began to mount check-points on all roads leading to Ogoniland. A detachment was even stationed at Kaa, an Ogoni border village with Andoni. Even so, Kaa market which was on Ogoni's bank of the Andoni River, Kaa primary and secondary schools were razed down on August 5 and 6. The destruction was smoothly effected because the soldiers were "tactically" withdrawn on Tuesday 3 August, then the destruction and returned on Thursday 6 August, 1993.⁹ Equally,

the removal of all Ogoni policemen from the region three weeks prior to the attack on Kaa and the military's failure to intervene when the attack occurred ... suggest that the government supported or indeed orchestrated the attack.¹⁰

⁸ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*

⁹ Open letter to Governor Ada George by Nwinee H.B. Williamson, an Ogoni.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, p.13.

Above all, soldiers interviewed by **Human Rights Watch** admitted to having participated in the attacks against the Ogoni.¹¹ More evidence on the state's involvement in the attacks against the Ogoni is offered in the section on Ogoni - Andoni clashes. Meantime, an estimated 247 people died in the Kaa imrhoglo.¹² On 7 August, 1993, Tesame and Tera'ue, Ogoni villages on the Andoni border were attacked causing loss of lives and destruction of property.

Saro-Wiwa and Dr. Birabi visited Kaa on 9 August in the company of representatives of the State Security Services (SSS), Army, Navy, Air-force and Police. The team agreed that the attacks were carried out by well-trained troops and that each segment (of the team) should report findings to the Commanding Officer of the Amphibious Brigade. Saro-Wiwa confirmed later from the Brigade Major of the Amphibious Brigade, Major Buraimoh and Wing Commander Alli of the Air-force that the matter was discussed at a state security meeting. But nothing followed!

After the death of the four Ogoni notables in controversial circumstances, state violence against the Ogoni through the Internal Security Task Force (ISTF) increased. The task force was set up by the Rivers state Administrator, Lt. Colonel Dauda Komo in January 1994 as soon as he assumed office. It was composed of personnel from the army, air-force, navy, police and SSS and headed by the then Major Paul Okuntimo. Its unstated *raison d'être* as revealed by Okuntimo's memo to Lt. Col. Komo, was to suppress oil-related ethnic nationalism in the Rivers State. Okuntimo had recommended in the memo:

- press monitor and lobby

¹¹ See Ibid for details, pp. 12 and 13.

¹² See fn. 6

- surveillance on Ogoni leaders considered as security risk/MOSOP propellers
- MOSIEND and MORETO in Ijaw territory as targets for clamp down.

The link between Okuntimo's memo and the events culminating in the death of four Ogoni notables, the trial and execution of nine MOSOP activists is well made in chapter 3. More comments still on the memo. In a press conference broadcast by the NTA and communication with this author/journalists in his office, Okuntimo testified to the application of the "psychological tactics of displacement/wasting" his task force employed against the Ogoni. He claimed in the press conference:

The first three, the first three days of the operation, I operated in the night. Nobody knew where I was coming from. What I will just do is that I will just take some detachments of soldiers, they will just stay at four corners of the town. They ... have automatic rifle(s) that sound death. If you hear the sound you will freeze. And then I will equally now choose about twenty [soldiers] and give them ... grenades ... explosives - very hard one(s). So we shall surround the town at night ... The machine gun with five hundred rounds will open up. When four or five like that open up and then we are throwing grenades and they are making 'eekpuwaa!' what do you think the ... and they know I am around, what do you think the people are going to do? And we have already put road block(s) on the main road, we don't want anybody to start running ... so the option we made was that we should drive all these boys, all these people into the bush with nothing except the pant(s) and the

wrapper they are using that night.¹³

The above summarizes Okuntimo's "involvement in Ogoni land after the May 1994 murders".¹⁴ And in communication with this author and others in January 1995, he explained,

There is no way you can carry out a military operation without burning some houses. We burnt just a few of them.¹⁵

Okuntimo's boasts about his military skills were well reported.¹⁶ For example, in an open meeting with some Ogoni communities, he told his audience that he learnt 204 ways of killing people but had so far used only 3 ways. He added that he would be delighted if the Ogoni would give him the chance to use the rest on them. Professor Claude Ake related this to Komo urging him to disband the task force but Komo dishonestly claimed he had. On the activities of the task force in Ogoni land, he noted,

The government says it is trying to establish peace and order but it is spreading war, terror and division. No one else is fighting except the government forces fighting against the people.¹⁷

Ake added that not even the 21 May murders warranted the assault on Ogoniland which needed a judicial investigation and trial of those suspected of the murders. He concluded that "the assault on Ogoni- land was intended to silence demands

¹³ Quoted in Human Rights Watch, p.16.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 25-1-95, Port Harcourt.

¹⁶ See Claude Ake, "War and Terror", *The News*, 22-8-94, p.9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

that were entirely just.¹⁸ The activities of the task force were also condemned as "the most unconventional, premeditated and destructive methods of investigation" by the National Union of Rivers State Students in a letter addressed to Abacha.

Another tactic used by the task force which derived from Okuntimo's memo was news blackout on the destruction of life and property in Ogoniland. To enforce news blackout on the gory activities of the task force in Ogoni, journalists, local and foreign and other interested persons who ventured to know what was going on in Ogoni were severely reprovved. In 1994, Garaldine Brooks, a magazine reporter; Oronto Douglas, a human rights activist; Nick Ashton Jones, an internationally renowned British environmentalist and Uche Onyeagocham of the Democratic Alternative were arrested, beaten and detained by men of the task force for nosing for information on Ogoni.

The actions of the task force left fear, destruction, rape, detention, destruction, maiming, deaths, plundering and extortion in their trail. A few examples will suffice (see Plate 10 for the picture of a ruined village). Ogoni coastal home towns razed to the ground included Kaa, Eeken, Kpean, Tenoma, Sii, Gwara, Kuri and Bane.¹⁹ A Catholic sister, Majella Mccarron and representative of African Europe Faith and Justice Network, reported from her experience in Ogoni that 'fear was the daily companion of the Ogoni villagers,

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Dr. Barinem N. Kiobel, "The Ogoni Saga: Our Case, Our Struggle". Mimeo, 1994. This author visited some of these places in March, 1995.

of ... MOSOP, of those in detention and of those who were declared wanted'.²⁰ Another report put it that 'fear was the only thing that was certain in Ogoniland.'²¹ Sister Mccarron's summary of the consequences of the

CODESRIA-LIBRARY

²⁰ Centre for Research Documentation (CDP) **News**, Issue 1, No.2, Spring 1995, p.5.

²¹ Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), **Terror in Ogoni, Action Report**, 1-8-94.

Plate 10



Destroyed residential buildings: Aftermath of fratricidal conflicts

activities of the task force in Ogoni tally in phrasing and content with that of the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO). According to her,

No international inquiry into genocide has yet been programmed. The Ogoni struggle has not made headlines that Rwanda has, but the pattern, though much smaller, is the same.²²

The CLO's Summary:

Whenever Nigerians including members of Abacha's ruling junta flinch each time the CNN flicks on the horror photos of Rwanda's golgotha, in the 404 square-mile oil yielding Ogoni land, the very picture of golgotha, as equally gripping as the Rwanda spectacle is being enacted. The result is a fast growing population of refugees in the forests and swamps of Ogoni and an overstretched number of aid workers.²³

Overstretching of aid workers as a result of the actions of the task force was reported in a letter by a Catholic sister to another, Sister M.M. Mc bannon in May even before the Giokoo murders. Her report:

The military are busy flattening anything left outstanding on the 9th in the six villages and are taking up residence there to eat the goats and crops ... Also, no paper (newspaper) is to mention Ogoni under any circumstances, hence no report whatever (sic) has been given on the mass murder of 800 people on the 9th.

We are still trying to organize lists of families of refugees and reliable helpers. Julie has helped me a lot in this at Sokana, also Brikaa. Then

²² Fn. 20

²³ See Fn. 21

Father Clement has been asked to list those of Bunu Tai and Nonwa and find helpers.²⁴

In addition to the violent effort of the task force, the Rivers State print and electronic media which normally maintained news- blackout on the sordid events perpetrated by its agents in Ogoni- land sometimes disseminated news on Ogoni simply to undermine the tenor of Ogoni struggle. Notable of such reportage was the radio announcement relayed on the Rivers state radio purporting that the democratic decision to boycott the presidential election had been rescinded. The announcement which was issued on 11 June 1993 by MOSOP'S withdrawn adherents and Ogoni prominent party politicians including Leton, Birabi, Kobani, Badey and Apenu read:

The movement for the survival of Ogoni people wishes to announce to [the] entire Ogoni people that following representations and further consideration of our political struggle, we feel it will not serve the best interest of our people not to exercise our civic responsibility in the choice of who will preside over the affairs of the country.

While our protestation against our political, economic and ecological subjugation and demand for negotiation on the Ogoni bill of rights continues, the leadership of MOSOP has decided that the Ogoni people should go out enmasse and vote according to their political convictions.²⁵

What is remarkable in this false broadcast is the acknowledgement by both the withdrawn adherents of MOSOP and the state that the Ogoni struggle had a

²⁴ Quoted in *The Masses*, 21-2-95, p.8.

²⁵ *The Guardian*, 11-6-93, p.5.

genuine basis.

At times, the state approached the Ogoni crisis and other oil-related crises through cosmetic peace initiative. After the so-called Ogoni - Andoni ethnic clashes of August 1993, the federal government through the National Council on Inter-Governmental Relations (NCIR) jointly sponsored a peace conference between Ogoni and Andoni with the Rivers state government own Rivers Peace Conference Committee (RPCC). The chairman of RPCC, Professor Ake, "a well-known and independent Nigerian academic ... condemned the hasty formulation of a peace accord among representatives of the Ogoni and Andoni communities"²⁶ while brushing aside the issue of rehabilitation and compensation for victims which was crucial to peace. He wrote to Governor Ada-George,

A matter like the conflict in question involving so much damage to property, enormous loss of life, a huge tide of refugees and so much suffering deserves more strenuous attention.²⁷

The Rivers state government had itself betrayed its stated desire for peace. For instance, it refused to grant MOSOP's request in 1993 to use primary school classrooms as temporary refugee homes despite the fact that schools were then on vacation. Also, MOSOP had to launch a relief fund for refugees when it was tired of waiting for relief from the government. In fact, even Ogoni neighbours such as Ndoki villagers of Afam village who suffered serious damage to houses and household property, and loss of loved ones from the state's controversial role in

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p.12.

²⁷ *Newswatch*, 1-11-93, p.27.

Ogoni relations with neighbours, had to bear the pain of their losses all alone.²⁸

The quintessence of the state's predetermined role in the Ogoni crisis is made clearer when the Rivers state government's nonchalant attitude to MOSOP's request for relief for Ogoni victims of "ethnic" clashes is contrasted with the actions of the Kaduna state government in respect of the Zango-Kataf bloody encounter between Hausas and Katafs in 1992. As a temporary measure, the displaced were quartered by the government in rehabilitation centres in neighbouring villages.²⁹ And for a permanent solution to displacement, the government undertook the construction of houses for victims.

After Colonel Komo assumed duty in early 1994 as Rivers State Administrator, he undertook peace tours of the most restive oil-yielding areas of the state. In conjunction with those tours, he called for a week's peace fasting and prayer. As soon as it realized that the 'peace' efforts were failing to yield the desired result, the government of Komo promulgated the Special Offence Relating to Civil Disturbances Edict 1994. The Decree stipulated death penalty for a category of offenders and 14 years imprisonment without the option of fine for another. Trial was to be concluded within 14 days with the allowance for appeal to the state High Court, the edict stated.³⁰

On its part, the task force embarked on what Okuntimo termed 'psychological demobilization' of the Ogoni. He claimed that he "visited twenty-seven villages, along with representatives of local governments and the police,

²⁸ Personal Communication with the acting paramount ruler of Okoloma (Afam), Chief Fred Akaya, 23-1-95, Okoloma.

²⁹ *Newswatch*, 25-4-94.

³⁰ *The Guardian*, 25-4-94.

'addressing rallies, addressing people, asking them to have a change of heart."³¹

Having shown the extent of the state's involvement in the Ogoni crisis, the stage is now set for examining the effects of Ogoni nationalism on Ogoni relations with neighbours. The Ogoni have many neighbours who include Andonis, Opobos, Annangs, Akwetes (Ndokis), Ikweres and Ijaws. Two of these, Andonis and Ndokis, clashed with the Ogoni on Ogoni or the other's soil. The third incident of Ogonis' clash with neighbours was between them and Okrikas in far away Port Harcourt. Previous disputes over land and fishing rights between the Ogoni and Andonis or Ndokis may tend to portray those of 1993 as a reenactment. The geographical locations of Ogoni neighbours [Andonis (south), Ndokis (north) and Okrikas (west)] could very well portray the 1993 clashes as a calculated plan, as MOSOP argued, to box in Ogoni to facilitate the suppression of their agitation. As noted earlier, while especially the Ndoki clash with Ogoni appears to have a tangible object of competition, the balance of evidence shows that the 1993 Ogoni clashes with neighbours were engineered by external forces who being in the knowledge of historical and prevailing differences between Ogoni and some of her neighbours, exploited them to serve their ends. This finds parallel in as Osaghae has argued, the so-called uniquely African ethnic conflicts which on close examination, indeed have external sources.³²

4.2 Ogoni - Andoni Clash

Inter-ethnic disputes over fishing rights had occurred between the Ogoni

³¹ Quoted in *Human Rights Watch*, p.16.

³² Eghosa E. Osaghae, "The Persistence of Conflict in Africa: Management Failure or Endemic Catastrophe?", *The South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 2, No.1, Summer 1994.

and Andoni in the past. And as far as recorded history shows, such disputes date back to 1921 when communities of both groups fought over "fishing settlements along common creeks".³³ In response, the colonial government helped to fix a boundary between the warring communities. However, violent clashes occurred again and again between Ogoni and Andoni neighbouring communities in 1922, 1937, 1954, 1972 and 1973. The then military governor of Rivers State - Alfred Diette-Spiff brokered peace at the occurrence of the post-independence clashes of 1972 and 1973.

Whereas these previous clashes had clearly conflict objects as fishing settlements, the same cannot be said for the 1993 clashes. The only precise events upon which there is consensus among some MOSOP withdrawn adherents, Andonis and the former Rivers state governor, Mr. Rufus Ada-George that directly led to the 1993 clash was the enforcement of the boycott of the 1993 election.³⁴

One account reports that while MOSOP youths enforced the boycott of the election, those passengers (Andonis) who could not speak Ogoni were molested. In retaliation, Andonis waylaid a boat carrying 132 Ogoni passengers and killed all except two to convey the incident to their people.³⁵ A related account reports that whilst NYCOP youths protested the arrest of Saro-Wiwa over the boycott of the election, about three Andoni youths were killed and Andoni

³³ **Newswatch**, 8-6-93, p.17.

³⁴ Interviews with Solomon Parakom, - an Adoni, Port Harcourt, 27-3-95; Boniface Kobani and Charles Kobani - Ogonimen, Port Harcourt, 1-3-95; and interview with Governor Ada George by **Sunday Tribune**, Ibadan, 17-10-93, p.9.

³⁵ Interviews, see Fn. 34 except Ada-George.

patients (number not known) with the owner of the clinic, Dr. Job himself also an Andoni, were abducted at a clinic in Kaa waterside. The Andoni, the account continues, revenged by killing all Ogoni and mostly Bodo travellers in a boat except two girls who after being raped were released to relay the incident to their people. The two girls brought the message to the Bodo Council of Chiefs who sent an eight-man delegation to Ngo, the traditional capital of Andoni to enquire from the Andoni what had actually happened. Some Andoni radicals, the same account continues, sought to do away with the Bodo delegates but Andoni chiefs declined. Consequently, Gokana was dragged into the violent hostility that had all along involved only Khana clan and the Andoni, the account concludes.³⁶ As the two related accounts show, the Andoni had avenged their losses in the execution of 130 Ogoni travellers. The second account also notes that Andoni chiefs were opposed to the elimination of the 8 Bodo delegates, indicating that further revenge was not contemplated by the Andoni. But going by the fact that the Ogoni were again attacked by the attack on Kaa on August 5 and 6, it seems reasonable to turn to some other explanation for the Kaa and other incidents of massive destruction involving the Ogoni and Andoni. One is left with a certain alternative explanation on two assumptions. First, as already noted, was Andoni chiefs' successful refusal of some Andoni radicals' quest for more vengeance an indication that there would be no more revenge from Andoni. And second, Andoni's first, as it may be termed, vengeance which claimed 130 Ogoni souls over the loss of about three souls should have soothed the Andoni, making more revenge unwarranted.

The alternative explanation is that the 1993 Ogoni-Andoni clash was

³⁶ Interview with Charles Kobani, 1-3-95, Port Harcourt.

externally, if not provoked, then, supported. This was MOSOP's view which found support both from empirical evidence and independent judgment. Ake observed about the clash from the investigation instituted by government,

I don't think it was purely ethnic clash, in fact there is really no reason why (sic) it should be an ethnic clash and as far as we could determine, there was nothing in dispute in the sense of territory, fishing rights, access rights, discriminatory treatment, which are the normal causes of these communal clashes.³⁷

He added, concerning all the Ogoni clashes with neighbours:

One could not help getting the impression that there were broader forces which might have been interested in perhaps putting the Ogonis (sic) under pressure, probably to derail their agenda.³⁸

In this regard, consider the following factors:

1. Ogoni's population is five times that of the Andoni's. Besides, Andoni's shorter route to Port Harcourt, the Rivers state capital is through Ogoniland. Given these, it would have been irrational for the Andoni to launch a full-scale war, unaided, on Ogonis.³⁹

It also seems logical to observe that these considerations led Andoni chiefs to object to doing away with the Bodo delegates since the contrary would have amounted to a declaration of full-scale war on Ogoni.

2. Before the clashes, all Ogoni speaking police officers were posted

³⁷ Quoted in **Human Rights Watch**, p.12.

³⁸ **Sunday Tribune**, 31-10-93, p.12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

out of Ogoniland.

3. It was alleged that Shell-BP's helicopters were seen flying before and after the attacks indicating that external supporters provided logistical support and information to attackers. According to the then MOSOP's Secretary-General, Dr. Benedict Naanen, 'there had been stray communication signals between ground control and helicopters which were said to ferry military supplies to the other party to the conflict. Such signals according to knowledgeable sources that had heard them were frequently picked up on certain short wave and UHF receivers'.⁴⁰ Another source of suspicion of external involvement, if not, prompting, is the use of highly sophisticated weapons in the attacks which left many Ogoni villages in ruins.
4. Interviews with some soldiers who participated in the attacks buttress the authenticity of Okuntimo's memo to Komo wherein he recommended the military/inter-ethnic option to government for dealing with the Ogoni resistance. A soldier who participated in the attacks on the Ogoni confessed that after one operation, he learnt "from Ogoni villagers that they had believed themselves to be under attack by the Andoni."⁴¹
5. It was also alleged that coffins were used to carry ammunition to the Andoni side.⁴² Comrade Naagbaton who fought on Ogoni

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch , p.13.

⁴² Ibid.

side, in personal communication, disclosed that he was shot with a bullet bearing FGN inscription.⁴³ Mention had been made of the 'tactical' withdrawal of soldiers already stationed at Kaa to pave way for its destruction suggesting the role of external forces.

6. Naanen alleged that at a meeting in Warri of an oil company which is likely to be Shell-BP which ^{Greenspring} Greenspring, an environmental organization, accused of 'developmental racism', a "fresh initiative approach to the Ogoni situation was adopted."⁴⁴ Besides, at an earlier meeting of an oil company in April 1993 in ^{Shell} Benelux - ^{The Nigeria} according to Naanen and Saro-Wiwa - Ogoni radical leaders were marked for close monitoring.

By September 1993, according to MOSOP's estimates, 1,200 Ogonis had been killed, 26,000 others displaced and six villages (Kpean, Gwara, Sii, Kaa, Tenama and Kenwigbara) destroyed. But Goodluck Diigbo, NYCOP's president estimated Ogoni human casualty by January 1994 at 500, with thousands displaced and 8 villages destroyed. The import of these statistics even though conflicting between themselves and those of a foreign aid worker cited earlier, is that the Ogoni suffered great human and material losses.

Andoni's human casualty was estimated at 200 deaths with 50 abducted and 5 villages destroyed - Ajakaja, Samanja, Dema, Otuaga, and Otunmi.⁴⁵

⁴³ 'Comrade Naagbaton, an Ogoni withdrawn activist in personal communication divulged that he picked up a bullet with the inscription of FGN while fighting on Ogoni side, Port Harcourt. 1-3-95

⁴⁴ See Fn.38

⁴⁵ Estimates by Dr. Silas Eneyo, Andoni's spokesman at the ill-fated Ogoni-Andoni Accord.

These villages according to an Andoni informant, were mere fishing settlements made of temporary structures.⁴⁶

4.3 Ogoni - Okrika Clash

Ogoni-Okrika clash occurred in Port Harcourt as already noted, in December 1993 leaving behind some loss in life and property. One source claims that the clash was precipitated by some Ogonis' celebration on the streets of Port Harcourt of the deposition of Governor Ada-George (an Okrika) by the 17 November, 1993 Abacha *coup d'état*. Okrika landlords, in response, began ejecting their Ogoni tenants.⁴⁷ All of this culminated in the clash the source concludes. If this account is true, Ogonis' action may be explained as a perception of Ada-George government's role in the Ogoni - Andoni clash - that the government of Ada-George gave clandestine support to the Andoni against them.

Another account states that Ada-George aided the renaming of some Port Harcourt streets with Okrika names giving the impression of new landlordship. This was the conclusion reached by the independent Rivers Study Group which blamed Ada-George for keeping silent when Okrika people embarked on the renaming of the streets of Port Harcourt.⁴⁸ One can only rely on the judgement of the Rivers study group to believe this account since it may be asked 'how came renaming of streets of Port Harcourt affected only Ogoni people and not Ikwere, and Ijaws et. al.?'

Nevertheless, it is important to relate the circumstances which linked

⁴⁶ Personal Communication with Solomon Parakom, 27-3-95, Port Harcourt.

⁴⁷ See Fn.38

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Governor Ada-George to either Ogoni - Andoni or Ogoni - Okrika clash. First, Okrikas and Ogonis had been friendly neighbours, trading, fishing and intermarrying with themselves. Second and according to Saro-Wiwa, the governor was terribly unhappy that MOSOP leaders ignored his dissuasion to shelve the 4 January, 1993 rally. Thenceforward, he felt uncomfortable with the tension caused by Ogoni agitation in his jurisdiction and was desperate to check it in order to prove that he was in control, added an Ogoni private medical practitioner. The latter informant concludes that were Ada-George not an elected governor, he could have been removed by the federal government who felt he was not handling the Ogoni issue satisfactorily. Therefore, he could have thought that anything that could displace Ogoni was appropriate.⁴⁹

4.4 Ogoni - Ndoki Clash

Before the 3 April - highly destructive and murderous on both sides - clash, there had been dispute over the ownership of the land on which stands the second largest electricity generating station named Afam Power Station, between Ogoni settlers of Okoloma village and Ndoki settlers of the same village. Historical records show that this dispute did not involve the whole of Ogoni nor all Ndoki settlers on the side of the Imo River in Rivers State.

The dispute began according to recorded account, when four Ogoni farm labourers were given some land for farming in 1952 by Ndoki villagers of Okoloma with the following conditions:

- no planting of economic trees,
- no erection of permanent structures,
- no leasing to any other person or persons,

⁴⁹ Personal Communication, 26-3-95, K-Dere, Rivers State.

- avoidance of attraction of kith and kin to swell the population of Ogoni settlers and
- payment of regular tribute

The Ogoni farmers were said to have complied with these terms up to 1954. Their subsequent non-compliance led the Ndoki landlords to sue them to the High Court at Bori, presided over by Justice Icheoku (an Ahoada Rivers). The decision of the court in favour of the Ndoki Okoloma villagers made the Ogoni settlers to resume observing the conditions of the land lease till 1959 when their return to non-compliance forced the Ndoki to return to the court for adjudication. Again, the court decided the suit in their favour, ordering the Ogoni farmers, this time around to quit. Rather than quitting, they appealed at the Court of Appeal in Aba. Meanwhile, their number had increased. The Appeal Court upheld the decision of the lower court and gave the Ogoni settlers six months to quit. Non-compliance earned some of them some term of imprisonment, while others escaped.

As records show, the Ogoni settlers took advantage of the civil war which forced the Ndoki into Biafria enclave to annex the whole of Okoloma land. In addition, they appropriated the village primary school and renamed it in 1968.

Ndokis, it should be pointed out, belong to the Asa sub-ethnic group of Igbo, whose larger number lives in the Igbo flank of River Imo. It was not too surprising therefore that they moved to the Biafria side during the civil war.

The above account, though supported by documents, is as far as the Ogoni are concerned, Ndoki perspective of the ownership of Okoloma (Afam) area.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Court rulings had been cited. Government Notice No.1219 dated 23 May, 1963 and signed by Musa Yar'Adua, Minister of Lagos Affairs, required that 'any person with claim of right or interest in the 6,303 acres of land as shown on

Their claim to Okoloma, which they call Okoroma (land) rests on their belief that Ndoki villagers of Okoloma are Igbo migrants and that they should quit and join their Igbo kith and kin on the other side of the Imo River. They thus use the Imo River to draw the boundary between them and the Igbo ethnic group. In a letter by Ogoni Okoroma Tai dated 13 September, 1969, and addressed to the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 3rd Marine Commando Division, (Main) Nigeria Army Headquarters, Port Harcourt - claim to Okoloma-land is made while a request in the letter unmistakably identifies Ndokis with the Igbo ethnic group. Okoroma Tai requested the GOC

To camp the Ndokis (sic) far away from the Afam oil field area for security reasons of the proximity of the area to Port Harcourt, and the existence of a criss-cross of oil pipes under the land on which rebel-minded elements like the Ndokis (sic) ought not to dwell at this period of emergency.⁵¹

Eastern Nigeria Survey Department Plan No. PH.C. 35 (Tracing No. E.2, 690)' should within six weeks of the issuance of notice "send to the Minister of Lagos Affairs care of the Permanent Secretary to Town Planning (Lands division Eastern Nigeria at his office in Enugu a statement of his right and interest and of the evidence thereof and of any claim made by him in respect of such right or interest". Two letters dated 18 July, 1977, ref. DP/AFAM/32/2128 and addressed to Chief T.O. Dike, and Ndoki concerning NEPA's planned acquisition of an 8,202,892 square meters of land for extension purposes, indicate that Ndokis were the recognized owner of Okoloma, perhaps being the ones who responded to the Government Notice referred to.

⁵¹ Letter by Okoroma Tai, Ogoni Division, Rivers State, dated 13 September, 1969 and addressed to the General Officer Commanding, 3rd Marine Commando Division (Main), Nigerian Army Headquarters, Port Harcourt.

The contents of the letter further show that by September 1969, most Ndoki villagers had been pushed beyond the Imo River.

After the civil war in 1970, the Ndoki in Okoloma and environs were grouped among East Central State, while the Ogoni continued to be part of Rivers State. This led to the running of one primary school by two separate governments, who supplied each a headmaster and staff. The Nasir Boundary Adjustment Commission in 1976, merged the Ndoki with the Rivers State. In spite of the merger of the two schools which are under the same roof, separate staffing has been maintained to date by Rivers and Abia State Governments.

Disturbed by the loss of control over the land, the Ndoki again headed for the court in 1978 and got a favourable hearing in 1987. The appeal which Okoroma Tai made was also decided in their favour in 1988, according to the panel of the Court of Appeal Justices Olajide Olatawura, Sylvester Umaru Onu and Braimoh Amen Omosun, sitting at Enugu on 17 November, 1988.⁵²

In a letter dated 28 February, 1994 and addressed to Lieutenant Colonel Komo, alerting him of an imminent Ndoki-Ogoni violent clash and copied to the Chief of Army Staff, the Inspector-General of Police and others, Okoloma Ndoki noted that

Instead of the Ogoni settlers to comply with the decisions of the courts, they have resorted to using government functionaries to thwart the orders of the court, thereby indulging in acts which might cause another saga of Andoni-Ogoni communal war in the area.⁵³

⁵² The Court of Appeal Judgement with respect to Suit No. CA/E.295M/87.

⁵³ Okoloma-Ndoki Community (Afam) letter to Military Administrator, dated 28 February, 1994.

They then made the following requests:

- stop "nefarious" acts of Ogoni settlers;
- execute the decisions of Bori High Court with respect to Suit No. BHC/12/78 and Federal Court of Appeal with respect to Suit No. CA/E/295M/87;
- provide a cantonment of the Nigerian army to reinforce the Police Post in the area for adequate protection;
- influence Ogoni chiefs, party leaders and elders in the Okoloma area to stop making false claim to the land;
- direct State Government functionaries to stop recognizing the false claims to the land and Ogoni names of parts of the area;
- stop the running of an illegal school by another local government (Tai/Eleme) in Okoloma; and
- delimit the boundary of Oyigbo Local Government Area to which the Ndoki belong and Tai/Eleme Local Government Area to which Ogoni settlers of Okoloma belong.

The letter indicates that all federal security branches were already aware of the tensions between Okoloma Ogonis and Okoloma Ndokis before the 3 April, 1994 clash. By the time the letter was written, there were already incidents of machet attacks, confiscation of bicycles and even murders on the farm between Ndokis and Ogonis of Okoloma village. As an informant put it, anything could have sparked violence. He also reasoned that the awareness to rights to land which MOSOP created among the Ogoni could have fueled the tensions.⁵⁴

Considering the above, one is persuaded to believe that the tensions were

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Personal Communication with an Ogoni private medical practitioner, 26-3-95, K. Dere.

exploited by external forces to wrought more destructive attack on the Ogoni. Indeed, there had been similar tensions in the past as indicated by a letter dated 16 December, 1982, which the Okoloma Ndokis addressed to the then Rivers State Governor - Chief Melford Okilo - without them erupting into the large scale violence that was the 1994 clash.

Two separate personal communication with an Urhobo staffer of Afam Power Station and Ogoni private medical practitioner revealed that the 3 April clash immediately followed a fight between an Ndoki (Asa) and an Ogoni, both young men. The medical practitioner believes that this incidence provided the excuse for soldiers to invade seventeen Ogoni villages. He argued that that was why those who went to see for themselves the destruction attendant with what he termed 'army invasion' of Ogoni following the 3 April so-called Ndoki-Ogoni clash such as the journalist attached to the **Wall Street Journal**, London; **The Guardian** (Lagos) journalist and others, were arrested, severely beaten and detained apparently to keep what had happened out of the news. For him and other MOSOP activists, the Ogoni-Ndoki clash was not ethnic *per se*: the federal Government and Shell-BP simply exploited the tensions between them to invade Ogoni with a view to suppressing their agitation.⁵⁵

In reflecting on the impact of Ogoni nationalism on Ogoni relations with neighbours and state, one has to agree with Esman's assertion that formal or effective organization such as Ogoni nationalism was, whether non-violent or

⁵⁵ Personal Communication with Ephraim Adje, Afam Power Station, Okoloma (Afam), 23-1-95.

violent in its strategy, is inherently risky.⁵⁶ Ogoni's experience also lends empirical support to Richmond's observation that "nationalist ideologies and counter-ideologies frequently give rise to violence by both majority and minority groups".⁵⁷

Summary

This chapter began by periodising the state's violent strategy for containing Ogoni nationalism to bring to bold relief the interface between the declared non-violent strategy of Ogoni nationalism and the violent tactics that later characterized it. It is argued that Ogoni clashes with neighbours were a product of federal and state governments' violent/repressive response to Ogoni ethnic nationalism. The alternative argument that is made here is that whatever differences that existed between Ogoni and their neighbours were exploited to the end of preventing the spread of Ogoni example of organized resistance to other minority nationalities from whose lands oil was also being exploited.

Of these case-studies analyzed above, Ogoni-Ndoki clash had a concrete conflict object, namely, land. However, the nature and effects of the encounter should cause one to look beyond the conflicting claim to land by both Ogoni and Okoloma Ndoki in search for explanation.

⁵⁶ Milton, J. Esman, "Commentary", in Forrest D. Culburn ed. **Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance**, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989.

⁵⁷ Richmond *op. cit.*, p.16.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: THE LESSON OF ETHNIC MOBILIZATION

Ethnic political mobilization should not be mistaken as a weapon only of the weak, non-dominant group also known as minority. Even the government employs the language of ethnicity as a divide and rule tactic. Such was the situation in apartheid South Africa wherein the government created artificial ethnic political divisions and used them as a non-violent means for perpetuating the dominance of the white minority. The apartheid regime also presented the political conflict between the social groups of the marginalized majority as ethnic to provide it with the justification to perpetuate artificially created ethnic political divisions.¹ The incumbent regime in Nigeria employed the language of ethnicity as well, as a means for stabilizing its hold on to power by ethnicizing the 12 June, 1993 Presidential Election - referring the struggle to actualize its outcome as a Yoruba problem.

Nor should ethnic political mobilization be seen as the usual weapon of the weak. The case of the marginalised majority under white minority rule in South Africa disavows a contrary perception.² The choice of ethnic political mobilization depends on the circumstances and conditions of the group. Likewise, state response to such mobilization cannot be said, as Rummel and Gurr claim, depend on the type of regime given obvious exceptions.³

¹ See Andrian Guelke, "Ethnic Rights and Majority Rule: The Case of South Africa", in **International Political Science Review**, Vol.3, No.4, 1992, 343-358.

² Ibid.

³ Cited in Riggs, 1994, op. cit.

One may distinguish between the two users of ethnic mobilization normatively by saying that its employment by an oppressed group is idealist because it is about a quest for change and egalitarian community whether of the nation-state or the world, while that of the dominant or oppressor group is pragmatist and to that extent, unprogressive. The crude type of usage of ethnic political mobilization by a dominant group brings disaster to a polity that is unfortunate to be subject to it. This is the type of usage, according to Ekeh, the dominant Fulani minority has made of it from pre-colonial through **post bellum** era in Nigeria.⁴ The disastrous result of crude ethnic political domination is hardly surprising. It is simply because the dominant group disregards the fact that its dominated polity is living in a world where a polity's relevance in endeavours that can improve man's lot and enable him live a dignified life will remain drowned with crude ethnic political domination. Its overriding concern is to maintain its grip on power and damn the consequences of economic, social and political underdevelopment. This study was concerned with the employment of ethnic political mobilization by minorities if you like, oppressed groups towards idealist ends.

In the rest of this chapter, attempt is made to summarize the findings on the issues raised earlier on. These are the initiation and leadership of the various minority ethnic movements focused upon, the goals and strategies employed to 'secure' them, the conditions which were conducive to ethnic mobilization, the constraints on mobilization and the response of the state. Then finally, some reflections on the response of the state and the future of especially the Ogoni movement.

⁴ Ekeh, 1996, *op. cit.*

5.1 Oil Exploitation and Peasant Resistance

In contrast with Asia and Latin America, peasant and rural studies in Africa are a very recent phenomenon. They started in the 1970s and concerned cultural, structural and economic aspects of peasant life.⁵ There have also been political studies on the peasantry except that they have not produced statements on the precise nature of the resistance culture of African peasants as there are of Asian and South American peasants.⁶ There are, however, some reflective statements on the subject by some Africanists.

Frantz Fanon, the African revolutionary, posits rather reflectively that the peasant is the most revolutionary or has the highest potentiality for revolution.⁷ Speaking from his experience in the mobilization of Guinea Bissau's peasants for revolutionary action, Amical Cabral observed that the peasantry is not naturally revolutionary.⁸ With regard to the entire rural people of which peasants are a

⁵ Archie Mafeje, "Peasants in Sub-Saharan Africa", in **Africa Development**, Vol.X, No.3, 1985.

⁶ For statements on the resistance culture of Asia and South American peasants, see, for example, James C. Scott **The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia**, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976; and Samuel L. Popkin **The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam**, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979.

⁷ Cited in Hamaza Alavi, "Peasants and Revolution" in Ralph Miliband and John Saviile eds. **The Socialist Register**. London, The Merlin Press, 1965, 241-277.

⁸ Cited in Basil Davidson, "The African Prospect, Some Notes and Comments", in **Socialist Register**, 1970, cf. Issa G. Shivji "Peasants and Class Alliances", in **African Review of Political Economy**, No. 3, 1976 and "Class Struggles in Tanzania", **Monthly Review Press**, 1976. In the latter work, Shivji strongly suggests that

part, Otite has noted that they break their passivity only under conditions of extreme deprivation.⁹ Isaacman has asserted from an extensive review of the literature on peasants and rural social protest in Africa that "the existence of peasant inspired social movements and their prominence in nationalist campaigns suggests that peasants could construct an oppositional culture".¹⁰ In the specific case of Nigeria, examples of peasant protest include, **Egba farmers revolt** of 1918 and **Iseyin-Okeho rising** of 1916, both of which were over the imposition of taxation; **Agbekoya farmers protest** which was both over taxation and abuses of state authority; and the 1980 **Bakalori peasant uprising** stimulated by the poor handling of the **Bakalori Dam Project**.¹¹

Given the fact that African history is replete with examples of peasant and rural resistance and the cases of peasant and rural political inaction or indecision, the question that needs be asked, therefore, is not whether the peasants or rural

the urban working class or proletariat compared to the rural peasantry will act as vanguard of socialist transformation of Tanzania.

⁹ Onigu Otite **Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria (With Comparative Materials)**, Shaneson C.I., 1990.

¹⁰ Allen Isaacman, "Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa", in **African Studies Review**, Vol. 33, No.2, 1990, p.55.

¹¹ For **Egba** and **Iseyin-Okeho** revolts, see C. E. Beer and Gavin Williams, "The Politics of the Ibadan Peasantry", in Gavin Williams ed. **Nigeria: Economy and Society**, London, Rex Collings, 1976; for **Agbekoya** revolt, see Christopher E. F. Beer **The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria**, Ibadan University Press, 1976; and for **Bakalori** uprising, see W.M. Adams, "Rural protest, land policy and the planning process on the Bakolori project, Nigeria", in **Africa**, Vol. 58, No.3, pp. 315 - 336.

dwellers are or are not politically docile, but, rather under what circumstances do they become politically active'?¹² In pondering a similar question, Alavi and Wolf suggest that the peasantry should be differentiated within to determine the category that impacts well on the making of revolution.¹³ Consequently, they assign the middle peasant the vanguard status in revolutionary action. In their view, the poorer and richer peasants are not revolutionary for different reasons. The poorer farmer who depends largely on large land-owners is too weak to think of much less execute a rebellion, writes Alavi. Wolf writes in the same vein that the poorer farmer lacks tactical ability while the richer farmer is so privileged in the present order of things that he seeks to preserve it. Beer considered the interwoven character of differentiating variables - wealth, land-ownership, status, subsistence or capitalistic etc., and concluded that Yoruba farmers could not be represented as rich, middle and poor.¹⁴ For a similar consideration, the peasants of the oil-bearing minority areas of Nigeria cannot be grouped neatly into three. The issues of initiation and leadership of the ethnic movements analysed in chapters II and III are dealt with taking the peasantry as one entity.

Many scholars on the subject of peasantry are of the view that peasants cannot initiate nor lead a political organisation. For Marx, isolation, poor communication leading to lack of interconnection and a measure of self-sufficiency are obstacles to peasant political organisation. About the French peasantry of the 1850s, he writes with an air of finality, given those obstacles,

¹² This is a reformulation of Alavi's question on the revolutionary potential of peasants. See fn. 7.

¹³ Fn. 7 and Eric R. Wolf **Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century**. New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1969.

¹⁴ Beer *op. cit.*

that

They are ... incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them.¹⁵

While conceding that peasants have led movements at the local level and those confined to a certain region, Landsberger submits that they generally do not have ideologies of their own. Mostly, he continues, persons from outside the peasantry who often impart ideologies to it, played important leadership roles even at the local level. Peasants have to be led because, as he put it, "a person who devotes much of his time to any organisation necessarily, of course, ceases to devote his time to tilling the land, or operating a machine or being a lawyer."¹⁶ This suggests that some leaders of the peasant political organisation might have been deriving their sustenance from the land and waters before. The essential point is that as leaders of peasant movements, they ceased to be undertakers of the occupation relating to primary extraction. Kiernan also notes that peasants need guidance in terms of ideas, proper organisation and tactics.¹⁷, Archetti and Aass likewise posit that they are usually led by intellectuals in social

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, With Explanatory Notes*. New York, International Publishers, 1963, p.124.

¹⁶ Henry A. Landsberger ed. *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change*, Macmillan, 1974, p.47.

¹⁷ V.G. Kiernan, "The Peasant Revolution: Some Questions", in R. Miliband and John Saville eds. *op. cit.*, p.47

movements as anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, and anti-colonialism.¹⁸ The lack of tradition of literacy, for Landsberger often causes "supplementation of leadership cadres from outside the peasantry."¹⁹ But is the consensus of scholars derived from studies of peasantries outside of the African continent that peasants or rural dwellers have to be led in social movements, true of African peasants or rural dwellers as well?

Answers to this question are so far inconclusive, meaning that the study of many more concrete historical cases is needed to enable a more authoritative answer. Meanwhile, Welch Jr. submits that "pressures for common action appear to require spokesmen, awareness and concepts brought to rural dwellers from outside their usual ranges".²⁰ Beer and Williams grant that elites gave leadership to the Agbekoya uprising in Nigeria in some respects but note that on the whole, it was led by the peasants themselves.²¹ The areas where the peasants in this situation could have required the leadership of elites include articulation of positions and communication - lacking the tradition of literacy as they were, with the state. Isaacman points out that studies on rural dwellers have in different ways analysed "the dialogue, contradictions, and cross-fertilization that took place between radical activists and local peasant communities, and they

¹⁸ E.P. Archetti and S. Aass, "Peasant Studies: An Overview", in Howard Newby ed. **International Perspectives in Rural Sociology**, Chichester, John Willey and Sons, 1978.

¹⁹ Landsberger *op. cit.*, p.49.

²⁰ Claude E. Welch, Jr., "Obstacles to 'Peasant War' in Africa", **The African Studies Review**, Vol.XX, No.3, 1977, p.125.

²¹ Beer and Williams *op. cit.*

also recognize that peasants had nurtured oppositional notions before this encounter."²² That peasants create their own ideologies or, at best, do not merely react to external initiatives, is very well demonstrated by Feirman's 1993 work on Northern Tanzania.²³

Since the peasant segment of the population of the oil-minorities' area has borne the effects of oil-exploration than any other one - land alienation, spillage, blow-outs, pollution, all of which endanger both the peasant physical environment and health, have they proved to be architect and leader of their resistance? To understand their choice of strategies, it is necessary to recognize the constraints which generally face peasants. As articulated by Landsberger,²⁴ they include: (1) autonomy of organisation of production activity which precludes linking with other peasants for political action (2) The "tyranny of work" and the necessary monotony of the peasant production routine, (3) Partial autonomy the peasant enjoys over the labour process which predisposes him to "hidden forms of resistance than to broader social movements."²⁵ (4) Kinship networks which help to cushion the "shocks of distortion." (5) Previous exclusion from the learning process relating to the manner of interest articulation in the modern state.

Ogoni and other peasants in the oil-yielding areas have responded to the hazards of oil exploration in ways which fit into two of Hirschman's oft cited

²² Allen Isaacman, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²³ Cited in *Ibid.*

²⁴ See Landsberger, *op. cit.*, pp. 289 and 290.

²⁵ Isaacman *op. cit.*, p.33.

courses of action open to patrons within an organization or state - exit and voice.²⁶ In terms of exit, some among them had emigrated to the towns. When this proved not to be a more attractive alternative to squaring up to the hazards they were faced with, they sought redress through negotiation, petition, the court or the state, all of which express voice. Still, when these forms of non-violent expression of voice failed, the peasants resorted to blockade, sabotage, demonstrations, forcible seizure of installations and theft. These various forms of resistance were remarkably localized.

The exit strategy sprang, of course, from autonomous choice. While some of the elements of voice, particularly some of their violent ones, were independently initiated and executed, others were initiated and led by local elites who sometimes acted through the state. As to the initiative and leadership of collective action towards securing political and economic rights on the basis of oil exploitation in their [peasants and rural dwellers] land which stimulated varied interest including this study, it is only fair to say that they came entirely from the elites. It was they who helped to identify the state or the Nigerian legal order as the cause of the plight of communities of oil-producing areas. Before collective action, the peasant and rural dwellers engaged in localized resistance to the oil-companies as a result of their limited perception of what was responsible for their condition. It was also the elites who conceived and led the agitation for economic and political rights against the state.

As such, the ethnic movements analysed here confirm the assertions of Gurr, Stavenhagen and Chazan et al in respect of the initiative and leadership of

²⁶

See Albert O. Hirschman **Exit, voice and Loyalty: Response to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States**, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1970.

pursuit of communal interests. For in Chazan et al's words, "initiative on the part of an elite remains indispensable to the promotion and defense of group interests."²⁷ Gurr's 1993 book believes totally that communal ethnonationalism is led by a well - placed few or "modern political entrepreneurs."²⁸ Stavenhagen also put the point unequivocally:

Though individuals may be victims of discriminations or genocide simply because of their ethnic affiliation, ethnic claims and demands are usually formulated and fostered by militant elites before the rank and file members of an ethnic even become aware of them, let alone adopt them as their own formulations.²⁹

Saro-Wiwa buttressed the view of these scholars, commenting on his role in the sensitization of the Ogoni people to the problems surrounding them. He said that he began educating Ogoni people because he "realized quite early that an indigenous people on the verge of extinction are always the last to know it and by the time they do, it is normally late."³⁰ (see Plate 11 for a picture showing Saro-Wiwa mobilizing Ogonis).

One other theme implicit in the assertions of Gurr and Chazan et al is the issue of the organizing principle that was employed by the elites to mobilize the peasants, other rural dwellers and all those involved in the resistance to oil

²⁷ Chazan et. al., *op. cit.*, p.102.

²⁸ Gurr, *op. cit.*, p.91.

²⁹ Rodolf Stavenhagen. "Ethnic Conflicts and their impact on international society", in *International Social Science Journal*, 1991, p.124.

³⁰ *The Masses*, Vol.2, No.1, 1995, p.2.

companies and the state. Tied to it is the issue of how it was operated. Welch, Jr. is quite explicit on the former when he writes that "primordial

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Ogonis: *Epitome of minority consciousness in Nigeria*

TELL, May 2, 1994

sentiments provide more substantial foundations for collective mobilization in rural areas in contemporary Africa than does class solidarity.³¹ The organizing principle used by elites to organize for collective action as the analysis of the movements shows, was ethnic mobilization. This was operated through appeals to a common history and group status. Specifically, violent means such as blockade, threats, demonstrations, etc., were resorted to when non-violent campaigns such as propaganda, petitions, etc., were failing to bring desired results but more to counter the state's repression.

5.2 Motivation of Elites; Problems and Prospects of Ethnic Mobilization

... any explanation of political conflicts which simplifies human motivation to one interest as fundamental is limited theoretically. It is too tidy.³²

Ogoni nationalism illustrates the import of Marenin's words above. While a common interest which aggravated it in the recent past remained, the motivation of the elites who conceived and led it, was at best, ambivalent. Its symbol and principal originator, Saro-Wiwa who articulated the Ogoni demands³³ and most of the strategies used and who more than anyone else publicized it, was motivated by an unalloyed allegiance to the Ogoni nation. In his **Second Letter to Ogoni**

³¹ Welch, Jr., 1977, *op. cit.*, p.125.

³² Otwin Marenin, "Review: William D. Graf **The Nigerian State**", in **African Studies Review**, Vol. 32, No.2, 1989, p.116/117.

³³ Leton in evidence to Tribunal revealed that Saro-Wiwa coined the name MOSOP and wrote the **Ogoni Bill of Rights**. The federal government's claim that Saro-Wiwa begged Leton that he be appointed MOSOP's Public Relations Officer (PRO), flies in the face of this evidence. See **OGONI: Facts**.

Youth, he writes, "no one except he is grossly bestial or stupid can be happy in a situation of individual success and communal failure."³⁴ This pledge is better appreciated against the knowledge that he was an acknowledged successful man.

It would be little doubted, if at all, that Saro-Wiwa lived up to his words:

I have personally dedicated myself to the Ogoni nation. For me, the struggle is my first priority, taking precedence over all other interests.

For I believe that the achievement of the Ogoni will serve as an example to other ethnic minorities and oppressed peoples throughout Africa.³⁵

For Saro-Wiwa who conceived the ethnic political mobilization of the Ogoni, it did not constitute an instrument for competing for public sector resources for private interests as Claude Welch, Jr. suggests. Writes him, "Because the public sector appears to reward the private interests of those who control it, persons outside the privileged inner circles turn to kinship networks and emphasize personal ties".³⁶ Similarly, corporate interest led youths with the privilege of higher education including Saro-Wiwa in the early 1960s, that is, within a few years of the commencement of oil exploitation to use the press to warn Shell-BP against neglect.³⁷

In contrast to the motivation of Saro-Wiwa and other elites on his side when MOSOP was faced with adversity, some elites and pioneer leaders of Ogoni nationalism attempted to hijack it to serve their political career aspirations. But the fact that they failed to gain popular support leads one to conclude, **cateris**

³⁴ Saro-Wiwa, **Second Letter**, p.1.

³⁵ Saro-Wiwa, **Ogoni Movement**, p.12.

³⁶ Welch, Jr., 1995, p.636.

³⁷ Saro-Wiwa, **Ogoni Nation**.

paribus, that Ogoni nationalism of the recent past was not borne out of the careerist interest of the elites who initiated and led it. Given that ethnic mobilization could be initiated by a group of elites who may not be uniformly motivated, the determination of elite motivation of a particular ethnic mobilization has to be resolved on the side of the elite faction which is demonstrably in control of the movement that is begotten. As noted earlier, the motivation of elite leaders of a movement can be known by looking at their backgrounds including material worth, utterances and actions connected with the movement, and even susceptibility to compromising the goals of the movement.

Ethnic mobilization of the Ogoni in particular, and of other ethnic minorities of the oil Delta and environs was facilitated by the existence of ethnic organizational infrastructure, intense feeling of individual relative deprivation and promise of material bliss to the mass of Ogoni. By the time mass mobilization began, there were indications that peasants, other rural dwellers and youths were already highly frustrated. Reported though sporadic incidents of sabotage, blockade, theft, etc., show, for example, that youths and peasants were already into oppositional behaviors. They were only waiting for a willing and articulate leadership for mass mobilization to set off!

As for peasant mobilization, Ake has suggested that peasants are not a constitutive element of the Nigerian state: their little integration [no physical presence] in the state makes them amenable to charismatic and ethnic or primary rather than class mobilization.³⁸ The political marginality of the peasants, according to this insight, may also have accounted for the massive response of the peasants to ethnic mobilization.

³⁸ Claude Ake, "The State in Contemporary Africa", in Ake ed., 1986, *op cit*.

However, ethnic mobilization of the ethnic minorities in the oil-producing areas was limited by a number of internal and external constraints. The major internal constraint was the conflict between individual quest and common interest. Some privileged and well-connected elites at one and the same time accepted the existence of a common group interest while pursuing incorporatist policies with the state. On the other hand, the major external constraint on mobilisation was the state who was determined to crush ethnic mobilization through intimidation, physical liquidation of individuals and where necessary through neighbours.

5.3 Reflections on State Response to Minority Ethnic Mobilization and the Future of Ogoni Nationalism.

There is no gainsaying that ethnic mobilization which is an important feature of Nigerian politics was started by the major ethnic groups - Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. Hence, 'political positions have come to have geographical rather than class significance.'³⁹ The objective of ethnic mobilization has been the desire of each group to have a 'satisfactory' share of economic resources at the central level. During the First Republic, victory depended on the balancing of the factors of population, electoral competence and bureaucratic leverage.⁴⁰ In the past decade of the ascendancy of personalization of political power and neo-patrominialism, victory has depended on access to the Head of State and his disposition.

³⁹ Olayiwola Olurode, "Grassroots Politics, Political Factions, and Conflicts in Nigeria: The Case of Iwo, 1976-1983", in *Rural Africana*, African Studies Centre, Michigan State University, No. 25 & 26, Spring-Fall, 1986, p.119.

⁴⁰ Ayoade, 1987, *op. cit.*

Granted that communal and mass conflicts of which the Ogoni nationalism was an example, "call into question, in quite different ways, not only the legitimacy of specific regimes but also ... the existing distribution of power",⁴¹ it is understandable that minority ethnic nationalism of the recent past has been crushed by a regime of personal hegemonic project. But while the nature of the regime in power helps in explaining the outcome of ethnic separatism, for example, secession is possible only in "extraordinary conjuncture of a virtual decomposition of their state,"⁴² it does not appear to be relevant in explaining its emergence. The case of Basque nationalism shows the type of regime, whether it is the one which allows democratic freedom or one which is inclined towards political repression, is not relevant in explaining the rise of ethnic nationalism in an ethnically plural state.⁴³ Therefore, any association of the rise of Ogoni nationalism with the democratic space 'provided' by the democratic transition embarked upon by Babangida's military dictatorship, is peremptory. In spite of the democratization project of that regime, the political space remained restricted, illiberal and characterized by repressive uses of law, detention without trial and press censorship. The more relevant factors in explaining the rise of Ogoni contemporary nationalism are the charismatic leadership of Saro-Wiwa, cues from peaceful achievement of self-determination by minorities in Eastern Europe, adverse effects of oil-exploitation and neglect and the calculation that ethnic mobilization could win for the Ogoni recognition of Ogoni identity, political autonomy and material rewards.

⁴¹ Chazan et. al., *op. cit.*, p.191.

⁴² Ibid, p.193.

⁴³ da silva, *op. cit.*

Likewise, the evidence of violent suppression of communal protests by democratic regimes in Nigeria and India, indicates that the type of regime is irrelevant in explaining the state's response to communal protests.⁴⁴ Ideological, partisan and religious differences as Indian and Nigerian experiences have variously shown, are a better guide to understanding the state's response.

The state has responded to oil-inspired ethnic minority nationalism in Nigeria mainly by the use of force to suppress it. However, repression may temporarily quell opposition, it does not erase the conditions which gave rise to it. In fact, opposition often reappears in a distinctly violent form. That is to say, that repression merely postpones the explosion of suppressed opposition.⁴⁵ When Basque nationalism first arose, it was suppressed by a central government which was determined to crush it. But later, it reemerged when a new Basque nationalist organisation sprang in the 1960s and when the tight control of the central government was relaxed. This latter Basque nationalism became explicitly violent in its tactics than the former.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Harf has observed that repression has not been effective in wiping out ethnic rebellion, and rather, it has been found, in general, to increase ethnic solidarity in most of Africa and the

⁴⁴ The Nigerian First Republic civilian government of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa used army to violently put down Tiv riots in 1964. Also in 1980, the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari used the police to crush the Bakalori peasant uprising. The assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 was not unconnected with violent suppression of ethnic nationalism.

⁴⁵ T. David Mason, "Indigenous Factors", in Barry M. Schultz and Robert O. Slater eds. **Revolution and Political Change in the Third World**. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990, 31-53, and Riggs, 1994, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ da Silva, *op. cit.*

Middle East.⁴⁷

Political action of minorities has in different countries around the globe won for them some concessions. Basque nationalism won for the Basque autonomy in 1936 though it was lost in a civil war before long.⁴⁸ Similarly, agitations of minorities yielded positive results in the West Indies in the 1960s as they in the western democracies led to the adoption of "regional devolution and reallocation of public resources".⁴⁹ In the 1960s, widespread agitation won for some minorities partial autonomy in form of states in Nigeria. The establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board, since scrapped (see Plate 12), was also the fruit of minority agitations as expressed, in this instance, by the demand for a Rivers state, submitted to the Willink Commission of Inquiry of 1957/58. In spite of the state's largely repressive approach to the agitations of ethnic minorities in the oil-yielding areas, they have elicited some positive response. The agitations led to the establishment of OMPADEC in 1992, for providing the basic economic and social infrastructure in the oil-producing areas. These agitations forced the multi-national oil companies operating in the Delta Region to set up the Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES) in 1995.

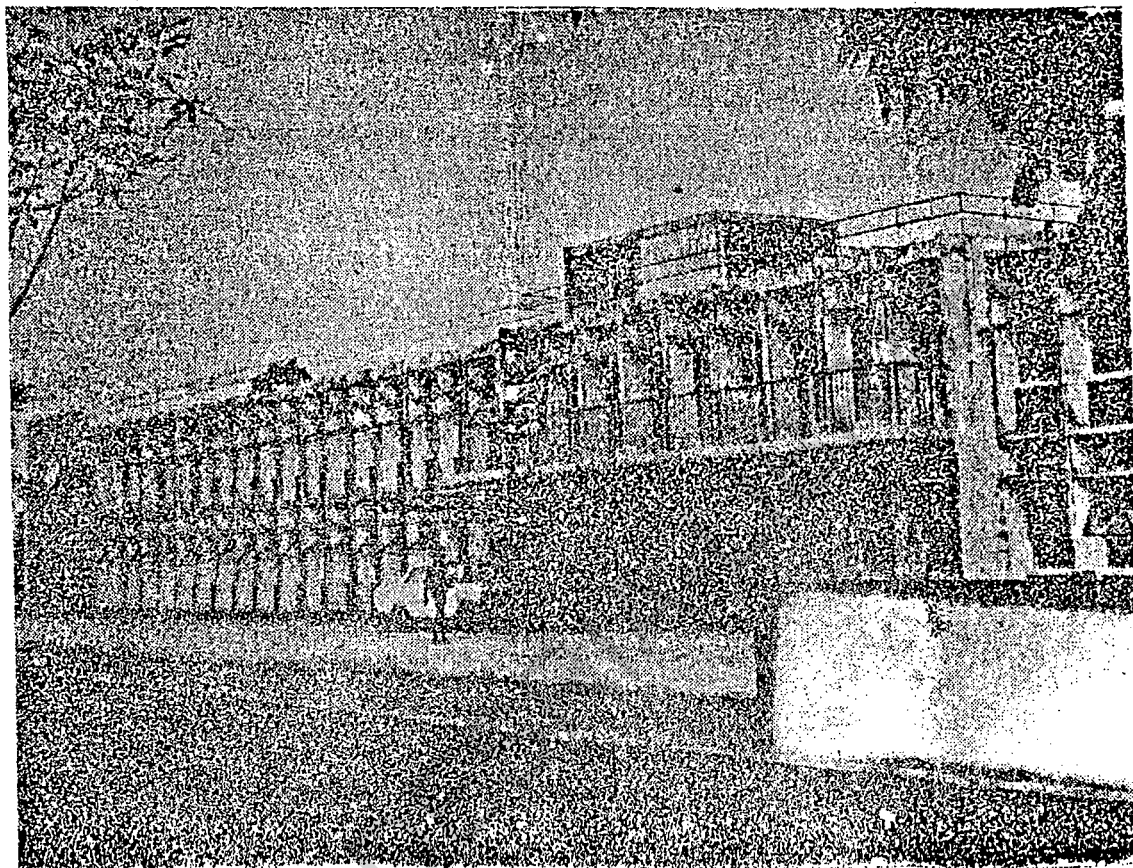
The NDES has been expected to appraise the environmental situation in the Region with a view to making suggestions for alleviating the sufferings of the oil-producing communities. Its preliminary report was submitted in May 1996. Its approach has been ferociously criticized so that opinion leaders in the Region

⁴⁷ Barbara Harff, "Minorities, Rebellion and Repression in North Africa and the Middle East", in Gurr *op. cit*, 217-257.

⁴⁸ Fn.46

⁴⁹ Gurr, *op. cit*, p.63 and Hoetink *op. cit*.

Plate 12



The administrative block of the former Niger Delta Development Board Headquarters, Port Harcourt.

do not seem to have confidence in its ability to cause a significant change in the situation of the Region. In a paper delivered at a seminar organized by the NDES in 1995, Chief J.O.S. Ayomike, an Itsekiri leader of thought made the following observations:

A perception exists of two different communities within the Delta region ... This perception which breeds envy and resentment against oil producing companies lies deep down behind the negative attitudes of some local communities and semblance of arrogance, lack of vision and sympathy on the part of their field staff could quickly ignite troubles. Again, one can say that this syndrome may be evident in Ugborodo-Escravos, where both the Chevron and SPDC factories dwarf the fast - declining communities.⁵⁰

The general pessimism and resentment that have greeted the initiative of the oil-companies led by Shell-BP, has been fostered by three decades of a somewhat non-challant attitude of Shell-BP which for a long time had a monopoly and even now, the greater share of oil operations, to the demands for infrastructure by the oil-producing communities.

With reference to Ogoni intense agitation, the greatest dilemma which confronted the state in the direction of meeting a substantial part of Ogoni demands was the risk of encouraging similar intense agitation among other minorities of the oil area. For as Osaghae has rightly noted, Ogoni was not the worst of the ethnic minorities of the oil Delta.⁵¹ The state has so far resolved the dilemma by violently putting down Ogoni nationalism after the Ogoni refused

⁵⁰ Quoted in *The Guardian*, 26-6-96, p.15

⁵¹ Osaghae *op. cit.*

to be placated by the establishment of OMPADEC for all oil-bearing areas.

Yet, Lt-Colonel Komo's retort to Ogoni nationalism that the Ogoni should remember that they are not the only ones in whose homeland oil is exploited⁵² could not be the proper posture on moral grounds just as the violent quelling of their agitation. The Ogoni agitation had a moral basis as had been widely acknowledged. What Komo unwittingly implied was a call to all the ethnic minorities of the oil-bearing areas to unite and rise up in protest against their neglect. One does not require any special gift of discernment to realize that the Nigerian state as presently constituted, is not prepared to respond to such an occurrence by taking action that would be seen by the minorities to be equitable, fair and just with the consequence of a drastic political and economic restructuring of the polity. As is very true of Nigeria, "demands ... for guarantees of group identity and survival are not easily negotiable."⁵³ Even so, sincere efforts to reduce rural neglect and poverty in the oil-bearing areas will suffice in preempting intense ethnic nationalism in the future.⁵⁴ This optimism is based on the fact that, as scholars on the peasantry have shown, peasant actions are usually specifically directed at eliminating abuses against them.⁵⁵ Also, Gurr has noted that communal conflicts in Africa are easier to handle than

⁵² Cited in Ibid.

⁵³ Chazan *et.al.* *op. cit.*, p.193.

⁵⁴ James O'Connell, "Peasants, Politics and Economic Growth", in O. Otite and Okali eds. **Readings in Nigerian Rural Society and Rural Economy**. Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd., 1990, 253-262.

⁵⁵ See for example, Landsberger, *op. cit.*, and Ibid..

elsewhere because they are rooted in material concerns.⁵⁶ Riggs would recommend strategic democratization, meaning "externally supported efforts to establish non-majoritarian democracies based on the principle of inclusiveness and intercommunal cooperation" as a solution to the negative consequences of ethnonationalist conflict and their threat to international peace and security.⁵⁷ But the problem really is not with thinking out solutions such as this, it is the willingness of the minders of the state and the international system to restrain their self-regarding interests for broader community (country or world) interests. The advanced democracies (call them bourgeois democracies) that Riggs' proposal, presumes, will implement strategic democratization have been known to back brazen autocratic regimes for their economic interests. Great Britain was reported to be flouting the arms embargo placed on Nigeria by the European Union (EU) as part of its effort to force the country's military authorities to democratize, following the controversial execution of Ogoni nationalists in 1995, barely two months of the 'imposition' of the embargo⁵⁸. It with Holland moved speedily to block a proposal by the EU to place embargo on the importation of Nigerian oil, also as part of the effort towards helping Nigeria to democratize. In short, the advanced western democracies often show preference for strong authoritarian regimes in the Third World where their economic interests are at stake. The fact that they sanction, even if surreptitiously, the

Shell is
Anglo-Dutch!

⁵⁶ Gurr, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Fred W. Riggs, "Ethnonational Rebellions and Viable Constitutionalism", in *International Political Science*, Vol. 16, No.4, 1995, p.391.

⁵⁸ Ike Okonta, "Nigeria: 'If I live to Tell the Tale'", in *African Topics*, Issue Eleven, Jan-Feb., 1996, pp.11-13.

opposite of their cherished political values in other lands for economic advantages leaves one wondering whether they can pin-point what they are jealous for.

The demise of Saro-Wiwa was a big blow to Ogoni nationalism. For his charisma was in the recent past a fountain of its energetism. Yet, his exit will serve as a litmus test to the resilience of a mass based movement that was the Ogoni partly oil-spurned ethnic nationalism which he initiated and led with other elites. But in pursuing the Ogoni dream he, expectedly made some blunders. He misjudged history in at least two respects. First, he reposed extraordinary confidence in the efficacy of international diplomacy in successfully interfering in Ogoni's behalf. He has earlier been quoted as saying,

Only the international community acting with compassion and a sense of responsibility to the human race can avert the catastrophe which is about to overtake the Ogoni

Past and current histories show that the international community and supranational organizations have not been very helpful in guaranteeing ethnic minorities' rights. The League of Nations used treaties to no avail.⁵⁹ Its offshoot, the UNO and sub-regional organisations (e.g. ECOWAS) have intervened through peace keeping force in some countries in Africa namely, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia only when blood-letting engulfed them without successfully restoring peace, much less resolve their ethnic differences. The successful procurement of rights on the basis of oil-exploitation, it seems lies in internal solidarity and collaboration with other minorities of oil-producing areas. There is, as Suberu has pointed out, the urgent need for some infrastructure for the articulation and

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Rita Jalali and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Racial and Ethnic Conflicts: A Global Perspective". **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 107, No.4, 1992-93, pp. 585-606.

promotion of interests which have arisen from the precarious circumstances of oil exploitation these minorities have been subjected.⁶⁰

Second, apart from turning out to be the bait for him, Saro-Wiwa's desire to participate in the Constitutional Conference was a misjudgment of history. He wrongly trusted in the instrument of the conference for promoting his radical vision of Nigerian federalism. He should have realized from his disqualification by the Babangida Administration to participate in the politics of the so-called Aborted Third Republic that he would not be allowed into the conference however much those he believed to be representing might have wished.

However, the ethnic mobilization which Saro-Wiwa championed has brought to the Ogoni more awareness about the effects of oil-exploitation. The period of interruption of oil exploitation has enabled the Ogoni to once more live and breathe in an atmosphere free of pollution and disturbance from oil exploitation. Unless there is sincere effort on the part of both the state and oil companies at addressing Ogoni grievances, oil exploiters will not know peaceful relations with their Ogoni host communities. It will amount to warped judgment to think that memories of the very recent past acts of painful repression of Ogoni agitation have disappeared under the present restraint on their nationalism. Judging by the experience of the Basque, it is appropriate to hazard that Ogoni nationalism which even now exists will bounce back in a stronger and virulent form if the circumstances which intensified it in the recent past persist. Furthermore, state repression which has cost the Ogoni great losses in life and

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Suberu, *op. cit.*

property is likely to increase Ogoni consciousness and solidarity.

More studies are needed on the conduct of mineral exploration in Nigeria to determine the relationship between exploiters and the state on one side and the local usually rural community on the other side. Except oil and other major minerals which the state has taken total or partial interest in, the benefits of mineral exploration seem to accrue to private business enterprise and local clients or intermediaries rather than the state and the entire local community.

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"I lied against Saro-Wiwa

A prosecution witness in the Ogoni trial recants his statement to the security agents, saying that he was bribed and forced to sign the statement

THE Ed has now been blown off the conspiracy to get Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ledum Mitee and three other Ogoni leaders hanged for alleged murder. The three others are Dr. Barnine Nubari Klobet, John Kpulisen and Barbor Bera.

They are all currently facing a four-count charge of murder before a Special Military Tribunal headed by Justice Ibrahim Awa. They are alleged to have on May 21, last year murdered four men, Chief Albert Badey, Chief Edward Kobani, Chief Samuel Orage and Chief Theophilus Orage at Gioko, Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

However, a new twist has developed in the case as one of the proposed principal prosecution witnesses, Mr. Charles Stang Danwi has disowned the statement purportedly made by him to security agents. According to Mr. Danwi, pencilled down by the prosecution as the 22nd prosecution witness in the prove of evidence prepared by Chief Philip Umadi (CAN), the prosecutor, he and other proposed prosecution witnesses were forced to copy

down an already written statement (see box) and made to sign. To secure the witnesses by ally and prevent them from squealing, Mr. Danwi, a musician stated that he was given N30,000 made available by Shell and the government adding that the amount meant for that purpose could have been up to N1 million. He and other prosecution witnesses were also promised other perquisites which include contracts from Shell and

OMPADDEC and a house. It was promised that after the case is over, I will be given a house in any price in the country, a contract from Shell and OMPADDEC and some amount of money to buy my musical instruments", he stated in his new statement dated February 14, 1995. (See Box).

Mr. Danwi on Thursday, February 16, 1995 went to the Federal High Court to swear to a third paragraph affidavit to back up the new statement recanting his forced statement being relied upon by the prosecution.

My statement under duress (unedited)

STATEMENT OF P. W.
 NAME: Charles S. Danwi
 AGE: 34 Years
 OCCUPATION: Musician
 ADDRESS: Norder's Compound Beka Gokana L.G.A.
 NATIONALITY: Ogoni
 RELIGION: Xian

I Charles S. Danwi (M) freely elect to state as follows: I was born in the year 1960 to Mr. Danwi and Mrs. Sarah Danwi. I attended Accession High School Elemo from 1972-1973. I later left St. Plus X College Bodo city in the year 1974-1976. When I left school in 1976, I went straight into music. Before on 21-5-91 I was staying in my home town Bera in Gokana Local Government Area. I know that there is an agitation known as (MOSOP) Movement for the Survival of Ogoni not a member of MOSOP because of my profession. Because I am not a member of MOSOP, do not know their leaders OR Executive members. On 21/5/94 at 11.30 a.m. I was going to the market, Kibagha market to buy empty cassette for my practice when I saw a white car stopped by uniformed men who were in a motor truck. Those uniformed men were Army and mobile police men. They stopped the car and asked the Driver of the car to go back. The spot where the uniformed men stopped that car was a bad spot. There was a cowshed built across the road there the place was very close to Gioko Junction. When I got there I saw so many people gathered round the place. There was a big argument between the occupants of the car and the uniformed men. It was during the argument that I came to know that the men inside the white car who was arguing with the informed men was Ken Saro-Wiwa. I also saw Mr. Ledum Mitee inside his own car near Ken Saro-Wiwa's Car. After much argument, when they were about to go back, I heard Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa said in Ogoni language "GBO BEDERE EBADFI GIOKO EBAOE DOMA KPEOE NI EBA LEELA GRO BE KO BAA SIMEE AALII SI-GIOKO A KOLA NU EALEEMAI ONAA NI-VA" meaning in English language that it is those vultures who are at Gioko sharing money that send the uniformed men to arrest.

He told the crowd who gathered around there that they should go to Gioko and deal with the vultures. The whole crowd moved toward toward Gioko. I then left to the market to buy my cassette. After buying my cassette I entered into a taxi and left to Elemo for my music practice. It was in Elemo I heard that four (4) Ogoni men were killed on that day. I can be able to identify some of the people in that crowd. I am in all I know please.



* Danwi... they want me to implicate Ken Saro-Wiwa & Co.

My true statement (unedited)

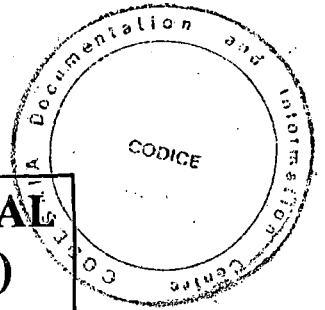
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Handwritten note: ... drop because he insulted ... of mosop during meeting ... was going about to make the ... Orage, Bodey and others ... what is called Gioko ...

Signature: Charles S. Danwi

Annex 2



MOVEMENT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF Ogoni PEOPLE (MOSOP) The Plot to kill Ogoni Leaders: Ken Saro-Wiwa & Ledum Mitee's lives in danger

The Rivers State Government, in collaboration with the Federal Military Government has finalized the plan to try and finally execute Ken Saro-Wiwa and Ledum Mitee and other Ogonis arrested since the Giokoo killings in the manner of the Zango - Kafaf contrivance in which Lekwot was sentenced.

Under this plan, the following actions are being implemented:

1. A decree drafted by Lt. Col. Komo, Military Administrator of Rivers State and assented by General Abacha has been put in place, having found that no Ogoni leader could be grounded in connection with the Giokoo murder under existing laws.

2. MOSOP has evidence that some Ogoni youths, mostly criminals have been bought and given several statements to sign to implicate Ogoni leaders, particularly, Ken Saro-Wiwa and Ledum Mitee.

3. The above set of government - paid criminals were earlier taken to Abuja to testify before the Head of State to assure that they will stand in the tribunal to lie against the Ogoni leaders.

4. The same group of paid youths are camped and coached weekly by appointed government lawyers mock court trials to learn their parts in the plot.

5. Among those paid to incriminate our authentic leaders, according to our sources in Abuja, are the following:

1. Celestine Mincabe (From Biara)
2. David Keenoni (Barako)
3. Saturday Mimim (B'Dere)
4. Baridom Daabee (Nweol)
5. Charles Suanu Danwi (Bera)
6. Nanyone Bragbara (Barako)
7. Kenwin Bazara

These people have been promised two million naira and a house each in any part of Nigeria as well as contracts once the dirty job is concluded.

MOSOP, under the present leadership has worked so hard, non-violent for the emancipation of Ogoni with the mandate given them by all Ogonis. It will be a shame if few Ogonis would lend themselves to be used against this collective struggle.

MOSOP hereby calls on all Ogonis to stand for truth and prevail on the paid-witnesses to have a change of heart in the plot to implicate and execute innocent people.

MOSOP calls on all well-meaning people of Nigeria and International Community to prevail on government to tread the path of justice and truth by bringing Ken Saro - Wiwa, Ledum Mitee, and others before a legitimate court of law and not a military tribunal.

MOSOP condemns all falsehood and scheming to implicate any innocent Ogoni in the Giokoo murder.

MOSOP calls on all Churches and Christian denominations to pray against all plans to implicate Ogoni leaders.

Nwibani Nwako, Chairman, MOSOP Crisis Management Committee,
ABUJA, NIGERIA.

*Nwibani Nwako, Chairman,
MOSOP crisis Management
Committee Abuja, Nigeria.*