

## **GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND INTER-ETHNIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE OGONI AND THEIR SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** Geography has tremendously influenced the complex network of contacts and interactions in human relations from time immemorial. These connections, which were at various times competitive, co-operative, conflictual or a combination of these, had resulted in profound inter-ethnic, cross-cultural and cross gender dividends. As a result, there has been significant manifestations of cross-cultural borrowing of language items, the admixture of cultural traits and ideas. Against this backdrop, this work attempts an examination of the effects of geography and environment on the relations between the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours. The study adopts the historical method of utilizing diverse secondary sources and multi-disciplinary approach in its analysis. The paper reveals that geographical and environmental factors fostered both congenial and conflictual intergroup relations between the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours. It further contends that the inter-ethnic conflict, which was intermittent and short, did not constitute any serious impediment to intergroup contacts. The study concludes that to promote and sustain peaceful co-existence, the Niger Delta and Nigerians at large should appreciate those common real or putative ties and linkages occasioned by geography and ecology which are shared by these groups, the challenges faced by other ethnic groups and the potentials of each group which could be properly harnessed for the mutual benefits of others in the country especially now when disintegrative forces are threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria.

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**Keywords:** Inter-ethnic, Interaction, Geography, Environment, Cultural Traits, Co-existence

### **Introduction**

Ogoni occupy North of the Eastern Niger Delta mainland. The Ogoni territory lies between longitude  $7^{\circ} 10^1$  and  $7^{\circ} 30^E$  and between latitude  $4^{\circ} 30^1$  and  $4^{\circ} 50N$  of the Green which Meridian. The total land mass is approximately 404 square miles ( $1212km^2$ ) which is about 2012 square kilometer of coastal plain terraces of the North East of Niger Delta (Kpone-Tonwe, 1990, Saro-Wiwa, 1992, Poronakie & Oku, 2014, N-ue, 2018). It is currently made up of

four Local Government Areas namely; Khana, Tai, Eleme and Gokana. The people speak mutually intelligible languages. The Ogoni share boundary to the North by the Ndoki and Asa (Northern neighbours); Annang/Ibibio (Easterner Neighbours) to the East, to the west by Ikwerre (Western Neighbours) and to the South by Opobo, Nkoro, Obolo (Andoni), Bonny and Okrika (Southern Neighbours).

The geography of Nigeria (the Niger Delta Region inclusive) has greatly affected the movements of peoples, trade and considerable affinity in antiquity. By virtue of geography, those living in the aquatic environment produced marine products and salt while those living in the hinterland took to farming and the domestication of animals. As the diverse cultures were not self-sufficient, they made frantic efforts to mitigate ecological variations, and occupational differentials by taking to trade and/or exchange of their various produce. The coastal dwellers trade and/or exchange (and are still exchanging) their surplus produce such as fish, periwinkle, lobster, salt, etc with the goods of their hinterland neighbours such as cassava, yam, cocoyam, taro-yam, vegetables, plants, raffia palm fronds, timber, livestock to mention but a few.

This is in tandem with Udo's position (1980, p.15) that "the Delta people whose territory is too swampy for cultivation and who, in consequence, produced mainly fish and salt, carried on a sizeable trade with the forest peoples who supplied them basic foodstuffs in exchange for fish and salt". Alagoa (1981, p.354) concurs that "the earliest forms of exchange occurred between the fishing settlements of the salt water swamp and beach ridges with the fishing and farming communities of the adjacent freshwater swamp". He further enthuses that:

Economic factors are among the most potent for forging linkages between peoples and region within the Niger Delta, for example, its different ecological zones were united by exchanged of goods. The salt water mangrove swamp zone specialized in fishing and salt manufacture. It had to buy agricultural produce (plantain, cocoyam, cassava product, etc) from the fresh water Delta ecological zone, inhabited by communities which

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combined fishing and farming (Alagoa, 2009, pp.396-397).

Adding credence to the above assertion, Olali (2005, p.54) observes:

The Nembe and Kalabari, inhabiting the salt water regions of the Niger Delta in West Africa, exchange products such as salt and other aquatic produce as fish, shrimps, etc with their distant hinterland neighbours such as the Ikwerre (Obio), (Ogoni) and Igbo neighbours; and with their coastal and Western Delta Izon neighbours who live hundreds of miles away. From the hinterland, neighbours, the Nembe, Kalabari, and their Okrika and Bonny coastal neighbours derived such as farm produce as yam, plantain, banana, cocoyam, etc... Besides, farm produce, the Nembe and their Eastern Niger Delta Neighbours also got their livestock supplies of cows, goats, dogs, sheep, and chicken from their aforementioned hinterland neighbours.

The point, therefore, is that the progenitors of the various ethnic groups that make up today's Nigeria had intricate contacts, implying that they were not strangers to each other. They never lived in splendid isolation or what Afigbo (1987, p.xi) aptly describes as "the Hobbesian state of nature in which life is said to be inevitably nasty, brutish and short". The aim of this piece therefore, is to examine the extent to which geography and environment have fostered strong bonds of unity and conflictual relations between the Ogoni of the Niger Delta mainland and their Southern neighbours. Attempt would also be made to investigate the dividends of such historical ties. The paper ends with conclusion, summarizing all the salient points raised in the work.

**Geography, Environment and Trade Relations  
Between Ogoni and Her Southern Neighbours**

Geographically, the Ogoni Southern neighbours are located in swampy areas. By reason of their unique ecology, these coastal communities cannot live in isolation of their Ogoni hinterland neighbours who produce tuberous products and domestic animals. To survive and enrich their diet, the coastal dwellers exchange their aquatic products with the hinterland products from Ogoni at strategic places, creeks, rivers, creeklets as well as nodal places. It is imperative to emphasize that although the Ogoni coastal communities like Opuoko, Kalaoko, Kono, Bane, Kereke Bo-ue, Bodo, Kaa, etc. are fisherfolk, the bulk of marine products consume in Ogoni came from her Southern neighbours. Attesting to this trading relations, Jaja (2003, p.225) sharply notes:

Long distance traders traded between Opobo kingdom and her neighbours. These women traded with distant neighbours like the villages of Duyaakara known to Ogoni coastal neighbours as Inyaba. Because these communities are far removed from Opobo, these women do not return the same way. They sold their wares and waited to collect their money before they started to return journey. On the return journey, they bought goods that were scarce and in great demand in Opobo. This they sold to the inhabitants while they rested from their previous journey.

Speaking of the trade link between the Ogoni and Obolo (Andoni), Ejituwu (2010,p.91) has this say: "In normal situation, (Ogoni) would be seen at Kaa waterside, ready to transport Obolo (Andoni) fish to various markets in the hinterland. Kaa (Ika) in Ogoni or Ikot-Ibom in Akwa Ibom state are the first take off points into the hinterland". Gobo (2008, p.309) stresses the mutual inter-connections between the Ogoni and their Okrika neighbours in this manner:

The Ogoni have had a longstanding relationship with Okrika, both economically and socially. The Ogoni were both farmers and fishermen; and were usually very useful to the Okrika who depended on their farm produce and used them as helpers in their fishing occupation ... On the other hand, the Ogoni have equally benefitted from the dexterity of the Okrika in their fishing occupation, with some Ogoni, eventually becoming absorbed into the Okrika community.

Tradition collected from the field discloses that the migrants Ibani (Bonny) traders migrated to Ogoni coastal communities of Bodo, Bomu, Ko, Bo-ue, Gwarra, Sii and others in the night and lodged with their Ogoni trade partners until the following day which was the market day. Most times when they couldn't dispose off their wares, they handed over their unsold goods to their Ogoni trade associates. The latter at a later date would sell them and kept the proceeds for their Bonny principals when they came for another business transactions. Kpone-Tonwe (1990, p.149) concisely remarks:

The Ibani (Bonny) people used to come to *Kwuri* market. When they came to *Du Kwuri*, they brought wine and spirit in casks, which they bought from the Europeans. They kept some in our compound where all Boue came to buy. Other things included tobacco, pipes, cloth, fish, etc. The geographical difference between the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours had greatly and significantly contributed to inter-ethnic relations. Through the exchange of fish and other aquatic products for food items between these peoples; there were movements of people across ethnic

boundaries, healthy relations and inter-cultural borrowing.

An appraisal of the foregoing clearly shows that these market places go beyond the business of distribution and exchange of goods and services. They serve as centres of intricate contacts as the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours met, discussed or gossip and acquired new ideas. Also, they were avenues where they initiated sexual adventures, renewed broken friendship ties, hard news, dispatched messages and gifts and get socialized in order to be functional members of the society (Diayi, 1991, N-ue, 2011; 2012).

### **Geography, Environment, Fishing and Inter-Ethnic Connections**

The Ogoni living near the rivers are fishermen as well as farmers (Gibbons, 1932). However, some Ogoni migrant fishermen moved from their home bound creeks and settled in fishing camps, ports and settlements owned by their Southern neighbours in search of better fishing grounds as a result of the migrating nature of certain species of fishes. According to Jones (1965) it is the natural habit of some certain type of fishes to move with the water currents. This vividly explains why most Ogoni fisherfolk lived and co-existed with the Ibani in fishing sentiments like Okorobie, Opokiri, Alaiti, Kporobite, Mapu, Boromabie, Bekiri, Mbikiri, Sufiakiri, Agbrama, Legakiri, Tuumu, Finitnsengi, Ogbomuna to mention but a few (Tanen, 2005; N-ue, 2018). Saro-Wiwa (1989,p.115) was absolutely correct when he avers:

Bonny is very well known to the Ogoni people. Many fishermen from the Ogoni villages which fringe the Imo, Andoni and Bonny Rivers often spend the fishing seasons in the area fishing for mudskippers, shell-fish, lobsters and other fish. The Ogoni are very friendly with the Ibani (the people of Bonny)

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who depend on them for their food supplies.

Besides, the desire for better catch also drove the Ogoni fisherfolk to Andoni fishing settlements and camps like Oyorokoto, Aong-Out-Ogwan, Emem-ofor, among others. This is the same thing in Okrika fishing ports and camps. It is pertinent to add that the practice of hiring canoe paddlers by wealthy fishermen of these Southern neighbours also facilitated intergroup contacts. It was the practice for well-to do fishermen to expand their labour beyond their immediate household by hiring helpers while they concentrate on net casting. For example, oral tradition of the people recorded by N-ue (2018) has it that Random T. Hart, a prominent Bonny fisherman hired labour from Bomu and Bodo (Both in Gokana Local Government Area). Often times, the fishing crew journeyed to Uruamby (Ramby) where they stayed for a year or more at the fishing camp. They only returned home during the *Fongu* period which occurs from the months of June to August. It has to be noted that *Fongu* is a period when the rain is at its apex and the sea is extremely rough with great waves and storm. Strikingly, this period is not conducive for fishing activity to thrive.

### **Geography, Environment and Masquerade Plays**

The Ogoni are exceptional and skilful carvers. They indigenously, masterfully and artistically carved face masks used for masquerade plays or dances. These marks were carved to reflect their forest environment. Some of the masks include Koromum, Amanikpo, Kanutete, Awugbo, Duu, Ikpong, Zimpie, O-u-o-lu (if you want to die, come!), Ndeede, Zimfere, Kpaan Kpaan, Teekara, etc. A striking example is the Karikpo masker who wears mask to represent animals found in their environment. These include both bush animals (deer, antelope, bush cow, buffalo, etc) and domestic animals – dogs, goats, and sheep. The masker performs exactly like the character of the animal he

worn. Kpone-Tonwe and Salmons (2002; p.285) attest:

The Karikpo mask ... represents a mammal and it's worn on the front of the face, is used for an acrobatic play performed nowadays for recreational purpose throughout the years, but originally it was employed in association with the planting and harvesting of crops in order to ensure fertility. A special drum, known as *kere* Karikpo is utilized, and a 'run' set up in appropriate place allow the masquerades to perform feats of great agility and bravado-car wheel jumps, and backward and forward somersaults.

Continuing on;

Individual members wear masks representing specific bush animals, especially species of deer... but also domestic animals such as goats, dogs, and sheep. Some antelope masks have antlers up to three feet tall, which means that the wearer has to jump spectacularly high in order to execute somersaults. Each animal will act according to character, staking its head, pawling the ground perhaps unpredictably charging the crowd – thus creating lively entertainment.

These masquerades perform during funeral rites, festivals like new yam festival, Christmas, and New Year, visiting of dignitaries, chieftaincy installation or coronation, state festivals to mention but a few. Generally, they serve religious, socio-cultural and political functions.

Most interestingly, the colours used to make the masquerades dramatic, dreaded or frightful are sourced locally from their immediate environment. Mostly, the colours are black, white, red, yellow, and brown. They mixed the earth colours with gum or white of eggs to colour the carvings. Also, dyes from

root, barks and leaves are used for staining them. Some carvings are polished with a mixture of white of egg, or oil palm. Furthermore, the costumes used by masquerades are made to fit the characters depicted by the mask. Customarily; these marks are given costumes made with fibre or from leaves of raffia palm (*sege*). The *sege* covers the waist and shoulders. Some masks have iron bells, scarfs, wrappers, etc to add to the beauty of these masks.

On the other hand, the Ogoni Southern neighbours due to their aquatic environment carved their masquerades to reflect their watery environment. Many masquerades of carved headdresses or headpieces often represent predatory fish, menacing reptiles, lobster, crab, mermaid (*egbelegbe*) and python. Their costumes are also designed to impersonate water spirits. However, cloth and raffia formed parts of the costumes of the masquerades (Ejituwu, Jones, & Enemugwen, 2009). Oral tradition of the people is satiate with the fact that water spirits introduced most masquerades. This is very true of the legend of *sekiapu* (in Okrika parlance). It is also claimed that “their ancestor who observed water spirits performing on sand banks stole their masks and drums, then returned to their villages to stage plays there” (Anderson, 2009, p.122). Alagoa (2009, p.394) adds fillip to this claim when he writes that:

The power of the environments shows in the culture and history of the Ijo (including the Ibani and Kalabari) people. Their long sojourn in the Niger Delta over millennia has turned them into people attuned to water or aquatic people. They developed an affinity to aquatic environments in the Niger Delta; they have naturally bounded with other people living through the length and breadth of the region.

Implicit in the foregoing excursion is that the invitation relay of these masquerade plays between

the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours serve as a vital bond of friendship and unity. During these plays, members of the community and troupes invited their trade partners, in-laws, friends, grandchildren and distant relatives. Often, they often spent days or weeks in their host community. Through this method inter-ethnic marriages were established, friendship ties renewed and developed and inter-cultural borrowings enhanced. As a matter of fact, masquerade plays dictated by geography and environment sustain and cultivate the culture of peaceful co-existence between the Ogoni and their Bonny, Opobo, Nkoro, Andoni and Okrika neighbours.

### **Geography, Environment and Conflictual Relations**

Traditions collected from the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours, especially Okrika and Obolo indicated that their interactions were not only characterized by congenial relations but also occasional tense moments of disagreements over rights to fishing grounds and claims and counter claims over ownership of land. Smith (1989, pp.29-30) considers this as “a fundamental cause of most west African and indeed the most prevalent cause of wars in any part of the world was the desire of the more vigorous societies for territorial expansion and to exercise physical control over their neighbours”.

Recall that the principal occupation of the Obolo (Andoni) and Okrika is fishing. They carry on this activity both on the creeks and rivers bordering the Ogoni and the sea. Conflict brew between the Ogoni and their Andoni neighbours as the latter argued that the Ogoni coastal communities should maintain their farming occupation while they should continue to exercise unrestricted monopoly over the fishing grounds. Citing Nla Iran, N-ue (2018, p.412) explains:

The Obolo (Andoni) are full time fisherfolk due to their aquatic environment and as such they divided

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some of the fishing grounds, especially areas that are close to their homes, between families and houses. In time of difficulty, they pledged their portion in order to generate income to solve family problem. The pledge continued to fish there until the money is returned by the pledger. The number of period or years that the fishing grounds is used to automatically serve as the interest on the money.

The stern determination of the Ogoni coastal communities of the Southern fringe like Kaa, Sii, Teenama, Kpean, Gwara, Kereke-Bo-ue, Bomu, etc to exploit the fisheries resources in the river that demarcated them from the Andoni and the latter’s objection was the major trigger of the inter-ethnic conflict between the two communities. For instance, in October, 1937, some Gwara fishermen in October, 1937 who went out for fishing expedition on the aforementioned river were indiscriminately harassed, abused and severely wounded while some got missing in the process (Smith, 1937, Thwaites, 1937).

Also, oral evidence also shows that the Ogoni–Okrika contacts were punctuated with hostilities over fishing grounds. The face-off between Bodo (Ogoni) and Bolo (Okrika) in 1973 was precipitated by claims and counter-claims over fishing rights in some creeks shared by these communities. As a result of huge casualties arising from the fracas, both communities’ thought-out ways to ensure perpetual peace between them. They agreed on oath taking. To seal the blood-oath, a slave called Vinen who was bought from the hinterland, was slaughtered into two equal parts; each part was sacrificed to the respective deities of these groups. Through this means, friendship ties were restored and sustained. Since then both ethnic groups “discharge themselves honourably without engaging in any act detrimental to their collective security.

Undoubtedly, it was in keeping with the terms of the agreement that Bodo maintained an attitude of benevolence neutrality in the Bolo-Kegbara Dere conflict in the early 1980s” (Tanen, 2005, p.66).

The contention is that peace and conflict are basic features of the Ogoni relations with their Southern neighbours, particularly Okrika and Andoni (Obolo). Nevertheless, friction due its short dramatic interlude presented limited alteration of the peoples’ long-standing peaceful history of relations as replicated in the huge volumes of trade, interflow of contacts and ideas. Infact, conflict is a major avenue of intergroup relations of the charms of the other side is been captured or stolen. At a point, war lords or warriors or medicine men of another community are being hired to ensure their victory. Commenting on this, Gobo (2008, p.297):

War on the other hand did not create any break in intergroup relation which encouraged cultural exchanges. Even enemies learned from one another’s military strategies and tactics, borrowed or stole war medicines, weapons and warlike social institutions like the closely integrated age grades and secret societies which emphasized manliness, self-reliance and learning in martial arts. It is also possible to learn the enemy’s language and the borrowing of his dressing habit and other cultural traits for reasons of intelligence and espionage.

### **The Dividends of Ogoni and Her Southern Neighbours’ Interactions**

1. **Linguistic Borrowing:** An important result of the Ogoni and their Southerner neighbours’ relations was language assimilation. For proper exchange and/or buying and selling, the trade partners learned the language of their neighbours. Most Ogoni due to trading relations and geographical proximity became speakers of their

languages of their immediate and distant neighbours. These languages were used interchangeably for commercial transactions. As Awagiokinor and Ozo-Mekuri (2013, p.61) put it;

To break the barrier of inter-ethnic communication in the olden days, the people of the Eastern Niger Delta learnt the languages or dialects of their immediate neighbours with whom they traded. Consequently, most of the adult populations in Rivers State are bilingual in local languages.

2. **Mutual Fattening Room Practice:** Another remarkable practice shared by the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours was/is the fattening room custom. This practice, which is almost in all communities in the Eastern Niger Delta is the coming-of-age ceremony in which the female folk are confined to a restricted room. They are restricted from all forms of sexual intercourse and barred from strenuous domestic work. They are to be well fed so as to enable them look plumpy. The instructors taught them the do’s and don’ts of marital life and how to take care of their prospective husbands. At the end of the fattening period, an outing dance is performed in order to showcase their beauty (Ababulu, 2011, Igbara & Keenam, 2013, Loolo, 1981, Yirakina,, 2012). Oke-Sona (2006, p.20) describes the Nkoro fattening room custom in the following superlative terms:

The Nkoro also perform the Oboko (fattening dance). Some young girls confined in a fattening room for a period not less than six (6) months before the outing ceremony performed by kasi-Ogbo and other special traditional dance groups. During this period, she grows fat and develops fully into womanhood and their performance feature prominently.

According to Constance Saro-Nwiyio:

The *Boko-Koo* in Gwara (Ogoni) was a special occasion used by the Ogoni to foster cordial relationship with their Andoni neighbour. The practice was for the Gwara during the period of ceremony to send five virgins to Andoni where they stayed for five years. The Andoni in turn sent five maidens to Gwara for a period of five years. During this duration of time, they both learnt and imbibed the cultures of each other. It was not uncommon to see the Andoni speaking Khana language spoken by the Gwara. Likewise, the Ogoni maidens spoke Obolo language proficiently (cited by N-ue, 2018, p.348).

3. **The Establishment of Markets:** The robust trading activities later developed from trading at ports, creeks, creeklets and nodal places to the establishment of new coastal market centres. In time, markets like *Kisao*, *Kibodo*, *Dumaa Laala*, *Gio*, *Kigbee*, *Kibani* and *Dubiade* emerged between the Ogoni and their Southerners neighbours. Also, *Du Biade* was transferred in 1823 from the interior of Sii community to the waterside due to ceaseless complaints of the Ibani traders. With this transfer, the Bonny and Obolo were given enough space to participate actively in the trade between them and their Ogoni neighbor (N-ue, 2018).

4. **Admixture of Masquerade Plays and Dances:** New cultural ideas cross-fertilized beyond the ethnic boundaries of the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours. This is replicated in the exchange of masquerades dance called *Amanikpo* by the Ogoni and *Akumuti* by the Andoni. In the cult world, members were admitted across borders into the various lodges. So, the Ogoni and Andoni oscillated between the *Amanikpo* lodges in Kaa (Ogoni) and other lodges in Ogoni and *Akumuti* lodges in *Ajakaja* (Andoni). Both *Amanikpo* and *Akumuti* play in the night at the exclusion of non-members. It was gathered that Frank Waribo of

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*Ajakaja* once emerged as a leader of the Kaa *Amanikpo* lodge (N-ue, 2013).

Also, the Ogoni communities of Sii imbibed *Ofiokpo*, play from Andoni. Again, the people of Bo-ue (Ogoni) borrowed what they called *Ewu* from Andoni. The *Ewu* play goes with different types of masquerades, representing different species of fishes. Members of these plays always invite each other when the masquerade is staged. The *Owu-Ogbo*, an indigenous of *Ekine* dancing society, was also borrowed by the Ogoni. The *Owu-Ogbo* was a cultural group of men talented in the art of masked plays, dancing, singing and drumming. Gbenenye (1988, p.70) noted that the *Awugbo* was generally regarded by members of the public as a pragmatic means of confronting perfidious agents of social ills like murderers and rogues, including adulterers". Kpone-Tonwe and Salmon (2002, p.286) describe the functions of the *Awugbo* in Kono-Boue thus:

In Kono-Boue a masquerade called *Awugbo* was used until the 1950s to chase and punish womanizers. The mask has a hollow container on top of the head into which the guilty person would be required to place appeasement offering. In 1990, Chief Matthew Tonwe, *Menebue* of Kono-Bo-ue, ordered that the mask be hung from the neck of a proven thief, who was then paraded naked, in great humiliation, around the village before being publicly flogged.

The Ogoni and Okrika share the culture of somersaulting known to the Ogoni as *Karikpo* (in Khana parlance) and periangala or Kpotin (in Okrika dialect). These popular plays which are mostly staged for the purpose of entertainment, especially during burials, ceremonies and state functions are social performances done by youthful acrobats. Other socio-cultural borrowings are manifested in the Ogoni's borrowing of Okrika's masquerades like



the *Owu* and Ekpete. Kpone-Tonwe and Sahmon's (2002, p.298) observation is helpful here:

As might be expected from long-term trading with Bonny, Opobo, and Okrika, many masquerades have been introduced from the coasted region. True water spirit masquerade is prevalent among coastal Ogoni villages and under the generic term *Owu* through villages often have specific names for such plays. For example, masquerades incorporating large masks-mostly worn horizontally on top of the masker's head and representing various types of marine creatures are popular in the waterside of Bodo and Kono.

These masquerade plays apart from performing recreational functions, carried out executive and social engineering duties in the society before the arrival of modern police.

#### 5. **The Consultations of Common Oracles:**

Finding reveals that the consultations of oracles or well-known deities were very common between the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours. The fisher folk believed that gods like Gbenebeka of Ogoni, Ikuba of Bonny and Yok-Obolo of Andoni were those of fertility which influence their fishing endeavours. Making reference to Bonny and Ogoni migrant fishermen, Kpone-Tonwe and Gbenenye (2009, p.608) remark that "the belief was so strong that if an Ogoni or Bonny fisherman experienced bad omen, he could equally invoke Gbenebeka in the case of Ogoni or Ikuba in the case of Bonny fisherman". Believing that Yok Obolo, who is revered by everybody in Andoni including both clergy and laity, educated and non-educated, has power over Andoni territory and the water resources, some Ogoni migrant fishermen and their Andoni partners consulted the oracle for better catch. Oracles were widely consulted given the fact that deities outside

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one's environment were thought to be unbiased and precise in their divinations and revelations.

#### 6. **The Adoption of Modern Fishing Gears:**

The close ties between the Ogoni migrant fisherfolk enabled them to adopt the modern technique of fishing from the Okrika, Andoni and the Ibani who have been acquainted with the new method of fishing from the Portuguese visitors. Oral evidence points to Mr. Nwinee as the first Kpean man to experiment the casting net (*Igbo*) in Kpean River. The method totally changed the Kpean fishing activity as it caught all kinds of fishes at a time. Being completely ignorant of the newly borrowed technology, the entire Kpean community accused Mr. Nwinee of attempting to destroy the river with his new net. According to N-ue (2018) his new fishing gear and kits were confiscated and burnt on the order of the village council at the town's square. Accordingly, he was arraigned at the town's square and forced to swear an oath never to use the dangerous gear in Kpean River.

What is to stress, again, is that the *Edek* fishing techniques of the Andoni was adopted and modified by the Ogoni fishermen of Gwara, Kaa and Kpean (N-ue, 2018). Ejituwu (2010, pp.86-87) seems to confirm this when he declares:

The fence is used to block a creek at full tide and, at ebb tide, the fish, crabs, and other marine life that had entered the creek at that full tide, emptied into the trap, and man and woman would go there and scoop off the catch. This method can catch all kinds of fishes, crabs, and shrimps. It has been borrowed by many non-Obolo (Andoni) neighbours in the Niger Delta.

7. **Marriage and Concubineage:** Marriage and Concubineage also resulted from the Ogoni relations with their Southern neighbours particularly, the Opobo, Bonny and Okrika. Most of these migrant traders who lived with the Ogoni and those who

occasionally visited the area satisfied their sexual urge by having amorous relations with pretty Ogoni women. Likewise, the Ogoni traders and fishers who travelled with or without their wives had intercourse with the women of these groups. Many Ogoni nationals from Gokana axis naturalized in Bonny and married Bonny's daughters as wives (N-ue, 2018).

### Conclusion

Thus far, this paper has been able to discuss the relations between the Ogoni and their Southern neighbours like the Okrika, Opobo and Ibani (Bonny), Nkoro, and Obolo (Andoni), noting that in spite of the diversity occasioned by environmental differences, they have been able to build a community of people that were bound by the economic and socio-cultural ties.

The position of this paper is that the location of these culture groups in relation to its distance from the shoreline of the Atlantic Ocean is a major determinant of their principal traditional occupations of the peoples under review. The geographical location and environment of the people led to smooth exchange of goods and services. It was established that although there were occasional tense moments of disagreements, they never served as strong barrier to the free flow of goods and human traffic as they were short dramatic interlude. In view of the foregoing analysis, it is necessary to promote and enhance peaceful co-existence by appreciating the impact of geography and ecology on their lives, and improve on those common real or putative ties shared by these ethnic groups, the challenges faced by other culture-groups and the potentials of each ethnic group which could be harnessed for the mutual benefits and development of mankind, especially now that disintegrative variables are threatening the co-operate existence of Nigeria.

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