

## **Violent Land Disputes in Igbo land in Elech Amadi's *The Concubine, Their Educational, Traditional Resolutions*'**

Christian Nwakanma \*

Ph.D.

Department of Business Education

Faculty of Education and Arts

Madonna University Okija, Anambra state.

### **Abstract**

*This paper investigated violent land disputes in Igbo land by Elechi Amadi the concubine; education and traditional resolutions. This study is descriptive therefore, descriptive survey research was used to find out various land disputes in Igbo land. Lands are economic resources for building and Agriculture. Land could generate conflicts when not properly shared, pledged or leased out without recourse for the owner or owners redeeming them for long period of time. Majority of families in Igbo land have family lands, they also share communal lands and make use of resources that come from those lands. Violent land conflicts have caused devastations, loss of human lives at various quarters in Igbo land. Myriads of communal conflicts over lands decades ago have constrained development in some communities and villages in Igbo land. It has thus retarded infrastructural developments planned by different successive government in Igbo land. Numerous land conflicts evidenced in some communities in Igbo land have in no small measure devastated manufacturers of industrial products situating in Igbo land thus, causing relocation of industries to other states in Nigeria. Igbo man is meant to inhabit graze or forage on lands inherited on bought by his own money but frowns at trespasses on his land. It was recommended from this study that government should stop incessant killings during land disputes. This would enable innocent people especially travelers along the roads that connects various communities in disputes to go about their normal businesses without being killed or molested. It was suggested from this study that more studies on land disputes should cut across other states in Nigeria. This would enable people know about the various forms of land disputes in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Igbo land, Cultural practices in Igbo land, Efficacy of Land (Ala), Violent land disputes, Resolution of land disputes with Education, Traditional dispute resolutions.

## **Introduction**

Igbos are people domiciled in the east part of Nigeria. Igbo land is made up of 5 states, they includes: Abia, Anambra, Imo, Enugu and Ebonyi state. Igbo people are among the oil rich

\* Corresponding Author: Christian Nwakanma

Email: [christiannwakanma6@gmail.com](mailto:christiannwakanma6@gmail.com)

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geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Igbo people speaks Igbo language as their main dialect. Igbo people believe in communal living and are majorly farmers, civil servants and traders residing in both urban and rural areas. Igbo land has existed for centuries before white men visited Nigeria and long before the amalgamation of North and South called Nigeria. In Igbo land, male children are mostly the benefactors of properties. Female children gets married and benefit from the properties of their husbands. Male children will not have full knowledge of their fathers' properties unless he gets to know them through traditional education he acquires from his parents and other adult members of his immediate and extended family. Uruakpa (2001) defines traditional education as the socialization of the learner into cherished cultural norms, values customs and traditions of his society to enable the learner get fitted in the environment where he or she hailed from.

Parents and other members of family sacrifice their time, energy and material resources for teaching and inculcation of right values to children in traditional Igbo society without much regards on the personal benefits they could achieve or gain but, to ensure that the child he or she trains gets mastery of the cultural heritage from a particular Igbo land where he or she comes from. In Igbo society, struggle for survival is expeditious adventure, people survives through hard work and perseverance. Lives are laid down so that others might have peace, Igbo people cherish traditional education and imbibe in it. Both the young and adult members of families in Igbo land are equipped with valuable skills, knowledge and competences, which they need to become acceptable member of their community.

### **Cultural Practices in Igbo Land**

Acquisition of traditional educations in Igbo land are achieved from various socializing processes namely: naming ceremonies, songs, rights of passage, initiation, festivals, apprenticeship among others. It is from traditional education that a child born into a family gets to know about the lands and other properties that belongs to his family. The immediate family members and his extended families play vital roles that enables the child acquire traditional education. Traditional education inculcated, the children by adult members of various families that ensure conformity to Igbo norms and traditions. Those virtues which various communities treasures are inculcated to children by adult members of families and other members of communities in Igbo land at large. Families and Igbo traditional society, determines the curriculum contents the child should receive mostly, respect for elders, different roles by females and males in Igbo society are acquired. At the age of six, female children are instructed

to work in close association with their mothers and elderly female members of families where they hailed from such as how to cook, fetch fire woods, water, and ensure orderly housekeeping and farming. In like manner, the boys learn by working closely with their fathers and adult members of the extended family in such masculine jobs such as, farming, wine tapping, hunting, masonry, basket making, mat-making and blacksmithing among others.

In the same manner, cultural mores, norms, traditions and values are inculcated in the lives of children and youths which they later transfer to other new generations of children and youths in Igbo land on mutual reciprocity. Mere (1987) opines that respects for elders, agricultural practices, household chores, riddles, proverbs, legends, folktales, customs that convey knowledge Igbo culture and traditions are transmitted to the child from oral and practical training. It is from these teachings that children born into families in Igbo land hold firmly up to their adult age. Majority of people in Igbo land are educated because, they want their children to be educated. This is evidenced in high quest for education among the people. About 150 cultures and traditions are celebrated in Igbo land. For example, Nmanwu, Owu verses Okoroshe cultural festivals are celebrated on yearly basis. Owu verses Okoroshe are celebrated from June to August every year in Umunoha and Arondiizuogu in Imo state. In some occasions, Nmanwu and Owu festivals are celebrated in Igbo land. However, Nmanwu or Owu verses Okoroshe may be celebrated to praise and herald an Igbo son that have achieved. Wooden musical instruments and incantations said by Nmanwu or Okoroshe signifies the tune of the achievements made by such Igbo son. Igbos practice and imbibe many cultures in Igbo land but, violent conflicts on land disputes, political, social and ethnic violence makes people get relapsed from practicing those cultures in Igbo land.

### **Efficacy of land (Ala) in Igbo land**

Land (Ala) in Igbo dialect is ‘The beginning and end of life’ it existed long before Igbos converged and brought one name Igbo to signify their origin. Igbos hailed from the Eastern part of Nigeria. As stated earlier children were taught different traditional skills that make them fit very well as acceptable members of Igbo society. Majority of Igbo people did not receive western education when it was newly introduced in 1802. Importance placed on land (Ala) cannot be over emphasized. In Igbo land, the mother of the earth is Ala, the greatest deity after Chukwu (God). Barren women in Igbo land pray to (Ala) land for child birth while the male pray for success. Ala punishes evil doers and reward the easy going ones in Igbo land. Chukwu, Igbo deity dislikes selling lands to strangers and if they do, they make sacrifices and libations

to appease the god of Igbo land. Lands in Igbo land are birth rights of Igbo sons. Sons of various families in Igbo land share communal lands and make use of resources that come from such lands. The elders of Igbo communities are leaders of communities in Igbo land. White men who came to settle in Igbo land, domineered some Igbo culture and introduced their own such as dressing pattern, currency, building, hospitals and schools. In the same vein, religion and politics were another tools the white used to convert some Igbo to some of the European culture. But still, Igbo culture exists and un-perverted. According to Igbo belief (Ala) land is a gift from God (Chukwu) that is guided by the ancestors. Land (Ala) produces food, water vegetables, and minerals which sustains lives. Majority of Igbo communities make sacrifices before they eat what was harvested from Igbo land every year especially, new yams harvested in Igbo lands. Whatever threaten Igbo on their land threaten their economic, social, moral and religious lives. In the bible, it was explained that humans beings will be threatened by natural disasters as far as they graze and forage on lands (Ala), such threats or menaces are: Flu, volcanic eruption, landslides and droughts. These threats could be regarded as sin caused by humans inhabiting in the land (Ala) in Igbo land. Igbo people seeks solutions to these menaces from God (Chukwu) who later better their lands. Land, Ala can be used for building homes or houses for living. Denial of an Igbo man land (Ala) which he is supposed to inherit as his birth right could lead to serious conflicts or misunderstanding.

### **Overview of Conflict**

Conflict is defined as disagreement on political, social, economic, cultural and technological resources which could be relatively scarce to be possessed. These results to competitions, struggles that dovetails in conflicts. Conflicts normally occur in various families, villages and communities where human beings cohabits or interacts together. This is so because, human beings are created and exist with divergent opinions in their lives. Human beings can disagree with their fellow in offices, schools, sports fields and religious organizations especially on things they consider inordinate in their organizations or groups and on what the government of their country holds tenaciously at the detriment of the masses (Ezenwoko & Osagie 2014).

### **Violent Conflicts Over Lands**

Violent conflicts over land have been a recurring decimal among Africans, especially in Igbo land in Nigeria. Igbos people had for long exhibited violent conflicts over lands in different communities in Igbo land. Families, villages and communities create tensions in their different enclaves due to the method of land sharing. An individual or individuals who feels cheated

uses various means to establish his anger against the people who cheated him in their family or their community. These may dovetails to violent conflicts that destroys lives and properties from the family and community where the individual or group of individuals were cheated. Igbo people in their various fora, have stakeholders for conflict resolutions which ranges from family heads, council of elders, chiefs, age grades, Umuada, Umunna and religious leaders in Igbo land. Conflicts over lands continues to crop up on daily basis in Igbo land. Disgrement over land (Ala), could result to use of weapons if the disagreement over land is not settled (Ayokhai, 2010).

Issue of land disputes in Igbo society, date backs from the preliterate Igbo society. Its ugly trends have continued to linger up to this new age. Frequent agitation on control of resources happening from one family to the other could generate serious conflicts especially, land conflicts. Violent conflicts emanating from families perhaps in communities over land disputes have caused devastations, loss of human lives and properties at various times in Igbo land. Issues about land (Ala), occurring for over 20 decades ago in Igbo land have constrained development in some villages and communities in Igbo land because, huge amount of financial resources are used to re-claim justice at the detriment of any new development in some families in Igbo land. It has thus retarded infrastructural developments and closure of private and public learning institutions in some communities in Igbo land. Adetua (2004) explained that the numerous land conflicts evidenced in some communities in Igbo land had in no small measure caused human devastations and recess of manufacturers of industrial products situated in Igbo land Fellman & Quan (2000). These misnomers have caused relocation of industries to other states in Nigeria and its environs.

## **Literature Review**

The Book: Concubine, by Elechi Amadi, x-rayed violent conflicts over land dispute in Igbo land. Elechi Amadi hailed from Rivers state. Perhaps the Igbo speaking side of River state. Conflict over land in Igbo land is reoccurring on daily basis between blood related or family members, community verses community. Conflicts over lands have caused population displacement, devastations, loss of lives and properties in Igbo land. Elechi Amadi explained how the strong dominate the weak especially in struggles over land ownership. Elechi Amadi maintained that the consequences of land grabbing results back to the offender with infliction of diseases, curses and death in Igbo land. Elechi Amadi's book the concubine on land disputes

in Igbo land is a replica of land disputes in Igbo land, it is still, happening in this present generation.

In this era, cases of land dispute are enormous. Majority of land dispute cases have flooded the tables of leaders of traditional and customary courts. Resolving most of these conflicts have been so encompassing. A lot of monetary resources that could be used for children training and other family needs are wasted over land disputes. These have led to untold hardship, hunger and backlash on economic development in many communities in Igbo land. The case of Aguleri verses Umuleri, Ezza and Ezillo, Onitcha and Obosi and several family clashes are indelible facts about land disputes that resulted to violent conflicts in Igbo land.

It is important to know that conflicts Igbos had suffered in agitation for self-governance in the colonial period are not only conflicts suffered by Igbos, conflicts over lands abounds in Igbo land and are tremendously consuming resources that could be used for other human development in Igbo land. Facts are evident that family verses family, community verses community clashes observed in Igbo land are mostly on land disputes which led to destruction of human lives and properties. Apart from internal conflicts over lands in Igbo land, there are violent boundary disputes between various states in Igbos land. For example, Boundary disputes between Abia verses Akwaibom, state, Abia verses Ebonyi state. However, issue of conflicts over land are observed in other states in Nigeria are still not ended especially conflict between Benue verses Taraba, Nigeria and Camerouns over Backasi Peninsula, Akawibom verses Crossriver, Idoma, and Tiv Jukuns. Ife verses Modo kekes. Outside Nigeria, there are conflict over land between Ukraine and Australia. Lives and properties are lost in these conflicts due to clashes over land and its resources. It is evident that in Ebony state. Conflicts observed between Izza and Ezzillo communities are because of land disputes. Violent land disputes are caused by a party appropriating land and its resources to their best interest (Ayokhai 2013). Ebony state was created by the military regime on October 1, 1996 by then military government of General Sani Abacha after Igbos had struggled for its creation since 39 years ago (Elechi 2017). Ebony state, has boundary with Cross River state, Benue state, Enugu state and Abia state in the south. These communal clashes over land were on contestations over land ownership and boundary disputes. These situation has continued till date. Contestation on land and its resources are not new in the whole world. Little mistake over land could generate conflicts. Natural resources particularly, land, water, soil, forest, vegetation and animal rearing are the major economies generated from lands that maintain human lives. No human can survive without making use of land recourses for survival (Chkaire & Nnadi



2017). Land is a free gift of nature. God employs man over it to graze, and forage and bio degrade. All living things depends on land for survival. Land is supposed to be carefully managed and sustained to benefit all that depends on it. Issues of land dispute taking place in various families, communities and states, are as a result of how to control or manage lands and its resources (Collier, 2003). According to Baranyi and Weitznner (2001) Lands has been existence before those who claims their ownership were born thus, land (Ala) is generating conflicts when not properly shared among family members, villages and communities. As stated earlier failure to control controversies generated from land disputes have tremendously led to killing, maiming, famine, hunger and poverty in Igbo land (Oji & Eme 2015).

It is evident that conflicts over lands have perverted, defiled all mediation strategies used by various villages, communities and states in Igbo land (Nwaefuru & Nnaji 2008). Land is controlled by the government through traditional leaders and other legislative authorities in Igbo land. A situation where lands lacks constitutional and customary barking, It is usually subjected to conflicts in various communities. Continuous rise in violence conflicts among people from the same blood ties and communities cannot be over emphasized. Meanwhile, Itumo, (2014), Onwe, Nwaogbaga, e tal (2015), Oji, Eme etal )2015), Ani & Samuel (2017), Nwefuru & Nnaji(2018) explained that violent conflicts over land have led to serious displacement of vast population of people from communities especially in Igbo land.

### **Land Dispute Resolutions Through Education in Igbo Land**

Education is the process by which the young and adult members in various societies are socialized. It is the key for surmounting every conflict in societies. Through education, young and adult members of various societies are informed and reformed. It is used as vanguard for ameliorating the rumbles prevalent in various cultural and land dispute in Igbo communities. Specialists in education stands as peace advocacy group mediating and bringing solutions to conflict ridden cultures and land disputes in various Igbo communities where conflicts are observed. Different agents of education such as clubs, religious organizations and mass media are used in educating vast number of people rage violence in communities. Also, pictures which describes the agonies caused by conflicts are used to educate people on the dangers inherent from conflicts in Africa and Diasporas communities. Educators form peace brokerage groups to counsel and ensuring better way of managing conflicts in Igbo land. Counsellors and special education experts for the special needs persons educate ensure that those deviating from normal due to the agonies brought about from violent land disputes and other crises are quarantined.

Other management strategies such as gift sharing and managed and religious teachings are used to make prop ganders to turn over a new leave. Education is panacea whereby the young and adult members of communities gets fitted in communities and do their legitimate businesses, communicating to each other in accordance with the norms of the communities. It enables individuals in various societies to know how to get rid of civil obedience to the law. Information in picturesque forms, video shows which describes devastations, famines, poverty and hunger prevalent in conflict ridden states and communities are used in educating and young and adult members of societies to stop fermenting troubles in Igbo land.

Education is the way and eye through which members of society can use to solve their problems in various ways. Leaders of various communities are the pivots through which peace education and counselling geared towards socialization of every member of communities are carried out. Education aids in socializing both children and adults in communities especially when used to quell misunderstanding. Education chastises, differentiates evil from good and enable individuals who condescend achieve knowledge and understanding about the world and resources in it.

Education is in conformance with mediation and arbitration in society. Conflict ridden cultures are also revamped through mediation and arbitrations platforms established in various communities to ensure peaceful co-existence of all people in society. Mediation and arbitration interpret civil wrongs and provide solutions to the wrongs. Experts on conflict resolutions wade into matters arising in communities through the Ezes (Kings) title holders, and other community leaders. Traditional rulers and other leaders of various communities in Igbo land establish traditional laws that guides young and adult members of Igbo land.

### **Tradition Dispute Resolution in Igbo Land**

According to Charles (2016) conflicts in Igbo land occurs over land ownership, leadership, chieftaincy title tussle, tribalism, boundary disputes, domination or marginalization. Major conflict in Igbo land is conflicts of land disputes. Land is an economic asset that can be cultivated, converted into building, industry, schools, trade zone, sports or rearing of domestic animals. Land speculations in Igbo land has raised so many dust or conflicts in Igbo land, this is because of Igbo spirituality placed over land Charles (2016). There is scarcity of land in Igbo and subsistence farming is preoccupation of Ibo people. These are reasons there are heightened tensions or disputes over land ownership in Igbo land. Major disputes over land has continued to linger especially, among Aguleri verses umuleri in Anambra state, Ezza and Ezzillo in



Ebonyi state among others. Conflict over land has been a deadly issue in Igbo land. Nwoli (2004) observed that serious pressures shown on land disagreements in the south and east part of Nigeria have resulted in expropriation, rising population explosion, degradation and resurgence of communal competitions thus, making lands in Igbo land as “primal casus belli” in the rural and perhaps in urban areas of Igbo land. Because lands are non-renewable resources, the high growth in population density of humans in Igbo land have caused relative scarcity of lands which thus, generates continuous conflicts in Igbo land. Mediators and disputes resolutions practitioners wade into most of the land conflicts and establish modalities that ensure that human fundamental rights are not perverted. Representatives of various states and communities should stand against incessant killings during land disputes in Igbo land. Families in Igbo land are responsible for addressing land conflicts or violent issues over land. The eldest member of a family known as the Okpara is the head of family meetings. He is in control of all lands in the family and as well deal with other issues in a family. If he desires to sell or lease any of the land that belongs to the family where he was born, he must contact his brothers who own the land together with him. Land is mapped out for Okpara as the head and leader of the family (Nwogwugwu 1974). When an adult married man dies in Igbo land, his personal belongings are shared among his male children (Chubb 1961). Umunna, as the young and the elderly people of Igbo land who hailed from closely related families in one’s village, maintaining decency left by their ancestors ensures peace in the community through justice (Ebisi 2016). Umunna is the next in traditional dispute resolution after the family. Umunna conflicts resolution system is headed by the eldest member of a village known as the Okpara. Umunna in English is kindred assembly or our fathers’ sons. The kindred assembly Umunna deals with issues or matters that concerns members in the kindred. Cases that are not well treated by Umunna are brought or sent to the village union for more adjudication. Umunna also known as (kins men) and village union are two groups of disputes resolutions or arbitrations in various communities in Igbo land. Umunna and Village union (Oha) nonetheless, have shown great responsibilities in resolving conflicts in Igbo land especially, conflicts that borders on lands. Leaders of government and various communities, clans should guard against land disputes that results into serial killings in Igbo land. Despite human frailty, Umunna and village union (Oha) maintains modicum of peace and harmony in Igbo land. Umunna, meets at agreed times at the venue of the meetings, especially in the palace of their kings. Matudi (2016) explained that conflicts to be resolved in the villages are carried out by the elders and leaders of villages that maintains the norms, mores or values of the society. Umunna maintains serial harmony by ensuring speedy intervention in conflicts in Igbo land even in the night they gather

at specified area of the town during moonlight or absence of moonlight (Achebe 1959). Conflict resolution in Igbo land a dramatic adventure absence of actors or dramatists. In conflict resolution system in Igbo land, three parties must form quorums for resolutions carried out by village leaders and elders to be upheld though, several seating's are called before final resolution. Land disputes are resolved by elders in Igbo land from histories recounted over the land in dispute which creates understanding to the two disputants on who actually owns the land. Words of elders are used to bring solutions to the land in dispute and the owner or owners goes home with jubilation (Shedrack 2014). Umunna our fathers sons as the name implies ensures maintenance of peace in families and communities. The following are the principles that village unions and Umunna uses to mediate on land and other disputes resolutions in Igbo land.

1. Integrity: Elders maintain integrity in their judgment and refrain from accepting monies gifts and other resources that could discourage them from saying the truth. Elders show neutrality unbiased in their judgments no matter whose ox is gods.
2. Objectivity: Elders and leaders of villages ensures that the purpose of allowing themselves to be used by their communities on land and other traditional dispute resolutions are achieved without fear or favour. The elders and the leaders of their communities ensure full participations and representations that germane to dispute resolutions in the communities where they hailed from.
3. Traditional and professional behaviour: The leaders and elders ensure unanimous agreement to their decisions on any disputes and refrain from any actions that preclude an offence or discourage members from the genuine opinions they have.

### **Recommendations**

1. Peace brokerage modalities such as general town hall meetings, should be organized to educate and ensure that land disputes in Igbo land are stooped
2. Special counselling sessions on both the aged and the youth in various Ibo communities should be upheld. This would help to restore peace during land dispute in Ibo land.
3. Religious organizations should carry out more crusade on communal living. This would reduce quarrels over land and its resources

4. Community and leaders of government should make laws in accordance with land use act to address land disputes that results into conflicts in Ibo land. This would reduce series of violent conflicts and use of lethal weapons during community clashes over land in Ibo land.

## **Conclusion**

Some communities in Igbo land are wrought with communal violent conflicts or disputes over lands. Vast number of these conflicts had lingered because of the way they are perpetrated. Violent conflicts on lands have displaced people from their villages, those who cannot withstand these menaces resorts to settle at safer areas until the conflicts subsides. Violent conflict had in no small measure resulted to killing, maiming, and destruction of properties. Violent land conflicts or disputes have caused lock down on pedestrians and motorists access roads thereby, making government to swiftly declare state of emergency on major roads in some state, communities and villages in Igbo land. Violent land disputes in families and communities are intricate they have caused business men and industrialists to relocate to safer areas where they harnessed their resources and development of some states in Nigeria. Those displaced due to fear of being attacked or injured settles in quarter camps begging alms for survival. Umunna and village union have dispute resolutions mechanisms for addressing any disputes in various communities in Igbo land. They are the custodian of peace, they discharge their responsibilities in very efficient and effective manner. The good ones among them avoids receipts of gifts and monies that could make them get swayed in the opinion they strictly hold. On the other hand, education is used to call people to obedience. Those who cause violent and beat more drums of war over land disputes are meant to know the implication of their deeds. Different counselling means are used to educate and counsel youths who have not tested the agonies of war. Pictures that showcases internally displaced persons and people suffering from hunger, famine and starvation are used for youth counselling and rehabilitations. Violent clashes over lands have stagnated and hampered economic development that would have taken place in Igbo land. Family meetings, Sons of our father (Umunna) and village unions establish and uphold the objectives of their union in maintaining peace and harmony in families, villages and communities.

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