



Land Boundary Disputes Resolution: A Qualitative Study of Peace and Conflict Resolution between Erinle-Offa Communities in Kwara State, Nigeria

Seun BAMIDELE¹
Olusegun O. IDOWU²

Abstract

The study focused on land boundary disputes and the resolution challenges in the Erinle-Offa communities of Kwara State, Nigeria. The history of the two communities is laced with hostility and aggression, which has resulted in violent disputes at various times. Quite a number of works have emerged on the causes and consequences of the violent clash. However, the aftermaths of the dispute, especially the tense relationship and peacebuilding process in the area, are yet to be sufficiently interrogated. This study investigated the state of relations between Erinle and Offa as well as land dispute resolution processes in the locality involving complex actors after the last violent clash. It also examined the factors responsible for land boundary disputes between the two communities. The findings showed that negative peace currently exists in the two communities and the land conflict is a perennial one that could arise at any time. The study used both primary and secondary data. The main method of data collection was the unstructured interview, which was conducted with 120 people, made up of traditional rulers, and local, political, religious and youth leaders. Secondary data was sourced from texts, newspapers, magazines, official gazettes, archival materials and the Internet.

Keywords: Erinle, Offa, Boundary, Territorial Boundary Resolution, Nigeria, #SDG16.

¹ Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9782-6543>

² Department of Intelligence and Security Studies, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.
Corresponding author's e-mail: idowu.olusegun@abuad.edu.ng
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2751-4784>

Introduction

Land boundary disputes, most of which are triggered by both majority and minority community groups, have remained major sources of violent clashes in a good number of the developing countries of the world (Lund, 1997; Lund, 1998; Le Billon, 2001; Peters, 2004; Theron, 2009; Seay, 2014). One continent suffering this widespread challenge is Africa where several states experienced violent disputes related to land, with serious consequences for development efforts as well as land control and peaceful coexistence (Odgaard, 2005; Bogale, Taeb & Endo, 2006). Being a major resource, land generates considerable income in Africa (Basset, 1993; Sekeris, 2010; Bob & Bronkhorst, 2010). Indeed, boundaries are a perennial subject in land protection and conservation, and many times, they have been centres of inter-communal disputes or even battlegrounds in different parts of Africa (Bob, 2010; Verpoorten, 2012). In several instances, violent disputes triggered by land boundaries have assumed transnational dimensions, with armed groups finding havens across national boundaries, such as the cases in Indonesia, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Malaysia (Sekeris, 2010; McDougal & Almquist, 2014). The phenomenon of boundary-related violent disputes is thus a serious and complex issue that has implications for national, regional and international peace.

In Nigeria, violent disputes related to boundaries have been a recurring decimal, dating back to pre-independence because of the economic importance of land resources, especially along boundaries. The same trend continued right into post-independence Nigeria, leading to intense rivalry and struggle for ascendancy among the various communities making up the polity. The intensity at which violent boundary land disputes occurred after independence led to the promulgation of a blanket ban on land rights and other conditions relating to land boundaries throughout the Nigerian state - the Local Boundary Settlement Edict, as one of the first acts of successive military governments after assuming a political leadership position. The same tenets were reinforced in Decree No. 9 of 1970 on Local Boundary Settlement; Decree No.16 of 1975 on Land Use (revocation of customary or statutory rights of occupancy) and Decree No. 16 of 1987 of Federal Republic of Nigeria Land Use Policy (Ututama, 2008; Udoekanem., Adoga, and Onwumere, 2014). These edicts were based on assumptions that community and group formations were manifestations of primordial attachment, and claim to land, with violent means to acquire it being inimical to community development programmes.

Eventually, this line of action turned out to be illusory and sparked up more intensified forms of primordial identifications because rather than subside, primordial identifications continue to wax stronger. Communities have persisted in organising themselves into self-help groups aimed at community protection and preservation or

even waging war against other communities for rearrangement or restructuring of local boundaries and national resources, and thereby vicariously threatening the Nigerian state (Fatile, 2011). This tendency assumed a violent dimension from the early 1990s with the emergence of community armed youth groups and, as might be expected, led to grave consequences for coexistence, order and stability (Kagwanji, 2009).

Such adversarial rivalries exist between the Erinle and Offa communities in Kwara State, Nigeria (Akinmusi, Alao & Mavalla, 2019a). For a long time, the communities have suffered from inter communal boundary disputes (Alao, 2012). In 2013, another round of devastating violent disputes broke out between the two communities because of counter-claims over the same portions of land and boundaries, struggle for resources (land) control and the fear of domination (Akinmusi, Alao & Mavalla, 2019b). Although the violent dispute lasted only just over a year, the consequences are enormous in terms of disturbances, deaths and destruction of property on both sides. To resolve the violent disputes, some peace processes were put in place. However, a few years after the end of hostilities, peace remains fleeting in the locality. This study therefore traces the origin of hostility between the two communities and identifies the boundary dispute resolution processes that were put in place in the communities. This study also identifies the social and political actors involved in the peace process.

Study Area and Methodology

Fieldwork for the study was carried out between August and September 2018 in two communities in Kwara State inhabited by Erinle and Offa people respectively (See Fig. 1). In order to investigate and empirically analyse the drivers of land boundary disputes and peace process between the two communities, a qualitative case study-oriented research design was employed. Case studies, by definition, are rich empirical inquiries that investigate a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2014; Gerring, 2016). By emphasising the study of a phenomenon within its real-world context, the case study method favours the collection of data in natural settings, compared with relying on “derived” data (Bromley, 1986, p. 23).

From the perspective of this study, the main strengths of a single case study are at least three-fold. First, the study utilizes a single qualitative case study design in order to focus on detailed, in-depth data collection from multiple sources in a specific location, and for a particular group (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2002), local and external actors in the Erinle and Offa land boundary disputes peace process. A single case study approach is particularly valuable for studying the pathways to land boundary disputes resolution in Kwara State, as it pays particular attention to the historical

context, which is important for an in-depth analysis. As Gerring (2007, p. 1) explains, a single case study approach such as the one presented here can be more valuable than studies that pursue fleeting knowledge from a large number of contexts. We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part. Second, the decision to apply a single qualitative case study approach was also based on the fact that while the rare process of post-land boundary disputes success as observed between Erinle and Offa may not be fit for statistical testing, it still holds great potential for qualitative analysis and theory development (George & Bennett, 2005). Third, and perhaps, the overarching reason for adopting the single case study approach is that it does not run the risk of conceptual stretching (Sartori, 1970, 1984), which is a problem often confronted by statistical and large comparative studies that subject quite dissimilar cases to one-size-fits-all analytical frameworks.

Moreover, the single case study approach allows for high levels of internal validity because it enables the researcher to identify and analyse those indicators that best capture the underlying theoretical concepts. However, case studies also suffer from some weaknesses. These include bias in case selection, indeterminacy problems, and low external validity. In the context of this study, these single case study shortcomings are addressed by a focused logic of case selection and very specific objectives in the actual case study research.

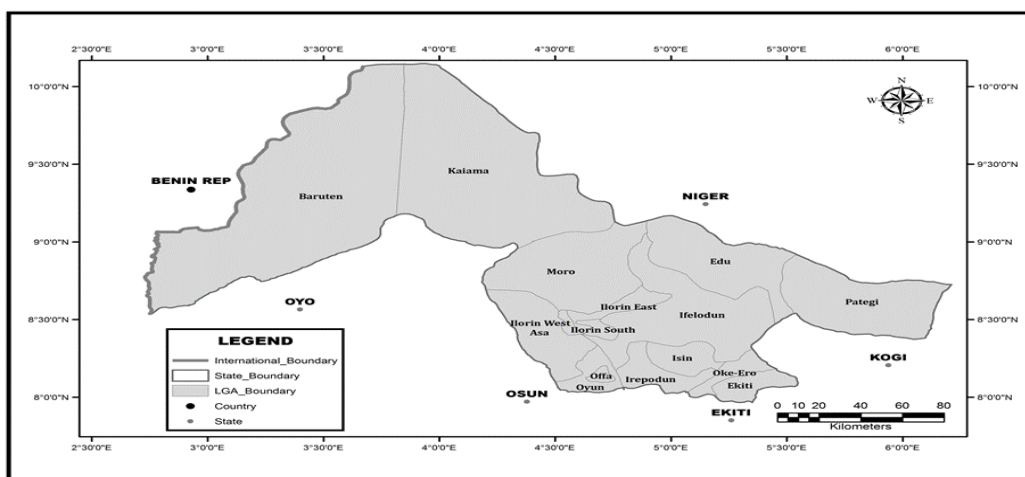
In order to conduct the research and gather the data required for this study, several research tools were employed. These include an extensive desk study, reviewing the existing literature, and collecting secondary data on Erinle and Offa land boundary dispute resolution from Kwara State Government Gazette and non-governmental organisations in order to deepen knowledge on the empirical terrain and to identify existing knowledge and analytical gaps. These were complemented with six months of fieldwork in Erinle and Offa, and in the state capital of Kwara, Ilorin. Most of the community leaders reside in Ilorin. Being the capital city of Kwara State, Ilorin hosts most of the government officials and a number of Erinle and Offa elites. Data were sourced using four methodological approaches: semi-structured interviews, archival research/process tracing, focus group discussions (FGDs), and non-participant observation. Though the four methods in themselves present an incomplete picture, the triangulation strategy (see Denzin, 1978, 2006) employed enabled a comprehensive account of the dynamics of land boundary dispute resolution between Erinle and Offa communities.

First, 20 interviews were conducted with five categories of people. They include (a) chieftains and members of both communities, and youth leaders; (b) members of the general public, including traditional rulers, chiefs, elders and youths; (c) government officials who are saddled with policy formulation to address the conflicts;

(d) security operatives in the area; and (e) members of non-governmental organisations working in the area. These groups consisted of people originating from within Erinle and Offa and including Ilorin who are knowledgeable about the project or played important roles in the pre-land boundary dispute, during land boundary dispute period, or post-land boundary dispute period. In order to guard against bias and reflect diverse perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted at multiple sites in Offa, Erinle, and Ilorin in Kwara State from July to December 2018, with the aim of obtaining a wide range of perspectives. On average, the interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes and one hour but sometimes up to two hours and covered a broad range of issues depending on the respondent's experience or expertise. Out of 120 participants, 80 were from Erinle and Offa. The remaining 40 consisted of participants from Ilorin.

Apart from conducting interviews, documentary and/or archival information on the two communities were sourced from the Oyun Local Government Area, hosting the two communities and the National Archives, Ilorin. Archival resources are especially useful for case study construction as they are stable, broad, and exact (Yin, 2003). These documents provided a wealth of information about the processes and dynamics through which land boundary disputes policies have been discussed, negotiated, and implemented by both communities, Erinle and Offa. Finally, in addition to interviews, archival research, and process tracing, this study is also grounded in observation of non-participants and focus group discussions (FGDs). In analysing the data, transcripts of interviews with Erinle and Offa people were coded in order to identify key themes and issues arising from the data.

Figure 1: Map of Kwara State showing the Local Government Area of Oyun and Offa



Source: Kwara State Ministry of Lands and Surveys, Ilorin, State of Kwara, 2018.

Setting the Framework

Bargaining positions or peace agreements are susceptible to reversals, and studies have shown that a quarter would likely fail within a few years after their ratification (Collier, 2003), while some could remain fragile or even unsustainable altogether (Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild, 2002, Dahrendorf, 2003, de Coning, 2008). The factors responsible for these outcomes may include:

- a. inconsistent policies and fragmented boundary dispute resolution programmes (de Coning, 2008);
- b. the presence of spoilers among various interested parties in the dispute (Stedman, 1997);
- c. nature and changing aspects of the aftermath of the boundary dispute resolutions (Du Toit, 2003);
- d. economic opportunities offered by violent disputes (Collier, 2000); and
- e. the inadequacy of external and international assistance (Chesterman, 2004, Fukuyama, 2004).

Perhaps, there is no better example of intractable violent boundary disputes than the ones in Nigeria, where such disputes have occurred repeatedly over a long time. Some instances include the Igbara-Oke-Ilaramokin and Isua-Oba Akoko communities in Ondo State; Tiv-Ichen community in Nassarawa State; Berom-Hausa communities in Kaduna State; Aguleri-Umuleri communities in Anambra State; Modakeke-Ife communities in Osun State and a host of other cases. In the category of intractable violent boundary disputes that have made community development quite problematic is the one between Erinle and Offa communities in Kwara State, Nigeria. For over 60 years, these two communities have lived as hostile communities as a result of the separation that happened through the 1954-56 Local Government Administration Reforms.

Two Communities in Boundary Dispute

The two communities have a long history of boundary disputes that on many occasions have degenerated into violent clashes.³ They had lived in peace together for many decades before their separation through Local Government reforms. Before the reforms, Erinle was the headquarters of Odo-Ogun District, which also encompassed

³ B. Amida. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 18 September (transcripts in author's possession)

the Offa community (Gazette of Kwara State, 2008).⁴ However, the reform altered this structure and grouped Erinle and Offa communities under Oyun Local Government Area, with Offa as the new headquarters. With this development, Oyun Division became a separate administrative and political unit in Kwara State.

The Erinle community did not welcome the restructuring because they felt cheated and that it reduced their status. Thus, the relationship between the communities after the Local Government reforms has been quite acrimonious, making them antagonistic communities. They have engaged in many low-intensity and high-intensity violent boundary disputes, which often resulted in killings and destruction of property as well as long legal cases. Such cases came before several commissions and panels of inquiry or adjudication. These commissions include:

- a. Boundary Settlement Commission of 1972 under Dr Funsho Adaramola (the boundary commissioner's judgement was rejected);
- b. Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo Peace Accord of 1975;
- c. 1977 Panel of Inquiry under Brigadier General David Bamigboye (recommended that the land should be made a buffer zone);
- d. Colonel Peter Ogar Intervention Panel of 1997;
- e. 2006 Judicial Commission of Inquiry (that also declared the boundary land as a buffer zone for the two communities); and
- f. 2008 Judicial Commission Inquiry, among others.

The first series of major skirmishes occurred in 1961, 1970, 1971 and 1972.⁵ The violent clashes - believed to have been masterminded by the Erinle people - lasted over a long period and naturally, resulted in disturbances in all the surrounding communities and loss of lives and property in both communities. Another major incident happened in 1982 to 1983 when Erin-Osun or Erin-Oun - 'one of the communities that share historical development with Erinle' - formed alliances to engage in further violent boundary disputes with Offa.⁶ This time, the disputes took the form of solidarity and widespread rampages by Erinle youths protesting over the

⁴ K. Khalid. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 5 September (transcripts in author's possession).

⁵ S. Muhammed. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 3 August (transcripts in author's possession).

⁶ S. Adebayo, Sam. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 04 October (transcripts in author's possession).

boundary land in Oyun Local Government Area.⁷ The latest violent dispute, which took place in 2013 was as a result of the hostility and enmity within the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). Indeed, the violent dispute occurred not really over the boundary land between the two communities but because of the fragility of the peace in the locality.⁸ Available studies and fieldwork revealed two communities with a long history of animosities that were enmeshed in boundary land issues, indigene-settler dichotomy, and politics within the locality. These issues will be discussed next.

Boundary Land Issue

To all intents and purposes, all the literature on the Erinle-Offa violent boundary land disputes identify land as a major factor in the antagonistic relations between the two communities. The issue has to do with the differential accounts of migration, by the respective communities, to the current location. Just like the case of many communities all over the world, neither the people of Erinle nor Offa are indigenous to their current location. Erinle and Offa were two peace-loving communities and long-standing neighbours with a shared commitment to developing an atmosphere of mutual trust and peaceful co-existence. Erinle and Offa communities are two ancient cities that migrated at different times. The Erinle people are said to have been an ancient Yoruba community that has existed since 1225AD, which is over 800 years ago, in this present location, at about the time of Oranmiyan's return from Bini⁹. As an agrarian community, Erinle is one of the oldest communities in Oyun Local Government Area. A royal prince of Ife called 'Gbaagba' founded it.

On the other hand, the Offa people are said to have been founded by a prince called Olalomi Olofa-gangan from the Oyo Kingdom, who was also one of the heirs to Oba Oranmiyan in Ile-Ife. Olalomi Olofa-gangan, a hunter well-known for his archer skills, founded the Offa community in 1395AD. Offa is noted for its weaving and dyeing trade. The dyes are produced from the locally-grown indigo tree and other plants. Offa is also known for the cultivation of sweet potatoes and maize, which are staple foods for indigenes in the community ((Kwara State Gazette, 1982; Kwara State Gazette, 1984; Kwara State Gazette, 1988; Kwara State Gazette, 1998).

⁷ A. Abduganiyu. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 7 September (transcripts in author's possession).

⁸ U. Akeem. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 10 October (transcripts in author's possession).

⁹ I. Adebayo. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 9 September (transcripts in author's possession).

The land in the boundary area between the Erinle and Offa communities is said to have been controlled by the former before the establishment of the latter. The Offa community later claimed to be as old as the Erinle community (Kwara State Gazette, 1982; Kwara State Gazette, 1984; Kwara State Gazette, 1988; Kwara State Gazette, 1998; Akinnusi., Alao, and Mavalla, 2019b).¹⁰ Based on the fact that ownership is often based on the first arrival, the Erinle people naturally regarded themselves as the landowner. Ascription of land ownership makes the Offa people, according to Yoruba tradition, mere tenants or residents who must pay tributes or royalties annually as a condition for continued use of the land given to them. As a result of this, Erinle made it compulsory for any Offa person who wants to farm on the land to pay tributes or royalty to Erinle landowners. Directly related to the land issue is the indigene-settler problem. While the Erinle people see themselves as the real indigenes, they regard the Offa people as settlers on their land, even though they have lived there for six hundred years. The concept of indigene-settler has implications for resource allocation and distribution, especially concerning land. Indigeneity confers certain land rights and privileges that settlers do not have (Ibrahim, 2012; Bamidele, 2018). To refer to someone as a settler in Africa means such a person cannot be treated equally with the indigene. The first violent boundary land dispute broke out partly in protest against the payment of tributes or royalties and the settler/indigene dichotomy.

The central question then is who owns the portion of land at the boundary? This has been the main cause of violent dispute in the locality. The answer remains elusive, as the two communities claim ownership through inheritance. In the words of a respondent, a spokesperson from Erinle:

the Offa inhabitants know they are occupants here. They only want to claim what is not their own. Those lands in the boundary belong to us. The land is our historical inheritance and they want to claim the land that belongs to Erinle people. We got to this land before them. Offa people cannot claim our land out of greed and because they have prominent people, occupying leadership positions in the country. The land in the boundary is our property. They are settlers on our land and this is our land. This land at the boundary was given to the fifth Olofa by the second king of Erinle.¹¹

¹⁰ I. Adebayo. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 9 September (transcripts in author's possession).

¹¹ J. Raji. 2018. Personal communication, Wukari, Taraba state. 19 August (transcripts in author's possession).

All the respondents from the Offa side opposed the notion of being occupants. In the words of High Chief Almaro of Olaniyi Balogun, Balogun of Offa, the High Chief Isiaka Adebayo Shittu of Asalofa of Offa community:

Offa people have been the first Ibolospeaking community in the locality that was founded by the heir of Oduduwa – Olofa-gangan. Erinle people wanted to claim our land, which belonged to our fathers. In addition, Olofa-gangan’s successors brought the idea/tradition of royalty or tributes from Ile-Ife and Oyo, which made them lease out some portions of land at the boundary to Erinle and other neighbouring communities. The last violent disputes were as a result of land. Erinle people wanted to claim some portions of land at the boundary. Through our ancestors, we have known that Erinle people are strangers in the locality. Because they do not have much farmlands, they now said those lands at the boundary belong to them. They are the ones [who] recorded large casualties from the last battle because the Offa are well trained in the arts of war; ‘ijakadi loro Offa’, a Yoruba framing meaning ‘wrestling is our game’. In addition, ‘Offa’ means ‘arrow’ that is always used by the archers. Therefore, Erinle people’s claims are faulty.¹²

What we have observed is that Erinle and Offa communities have been laying claim to indigeneity. All the respondents from the two communities held passionately to their claims. While the Erinle people believe they are the original owners of the land, the Offa people see themselves as the original inhabitants of the locality stretching from Oduduwa kingdom through his heir, Olofa-gangan. The implication of this is that permanent peace is still far away from the two communities. Disputes over the real ownership of the boundary land are therefore a major source of violence. The inability of the government to establish and declare a clear-cut boundary between the two communities has further compounded the problem.

The Politics of Fertile Land

The notion of fertile boundary land aiding violent disputes in the Erinle and Offa communities has commanded huge attention in the literature. The Erinle-Offa case is captured within the framework of the resource conflict called “Green War”. The essence of the “Green War” (Environmental Scarcity) perspective is that the declining nature of natural resources often intensified by population pressure is a major cause of violent conflict. There are three dimensions of environmental resource scarcity that

¹² High Chiefs, Almaro of O. Balogun, the Balogun of Offa, and I. Adebayo, the Shittu of Asalofa of Offa. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 26 September (transcripts in author’s possession).

may lead to conflict. The first one is ‘supply induced scarcity’, linked with the depletion and degradation of an environmental resource. The other one is ‘demand induced scarcity’, linked with population growth and the consequent extra pressure on existing resources. The third dimension is ‘structural scarcity’, which arises due to unequal distribution of resources concentrated in the hands of a relatively few individuals or social groups (Gleditsch, 2007). The above debate has obvious implications for conflict scenarios between Erinle and Offa.

The last violent dispute/conflict occurred over a portion of fertile agricultural land in the boundary area. Most studies have yet to interrogate the politics of fertile land in the locality. Curiously, the portion of land belonging to the Erinle community is said to be more fertile than the land in the Offa axis. Therefore, Offa’s only prospect of fertile land for better farming is the disputed land in the boundary area between the two communities. The Erinle community controls 70% of available fertile land. For the Offa to have that kind of advantage, they would have to usurp the disputed land in the boundary, being the only place that could give them the much-needed fertile land for farming. This explains why the land has to be fought for. High Chief Almaroof Olaniyi Balogun, the Balogun and spokesperson of Offa people, decried the fact that the Erinle people control so much land, vowing that the only way there would be peace was to apportion more land commensurately to his people in the boundary area.¹³ Recourse to violence is a product of the interplay of these factors. In other words, all violent disputes in the locality are invariably traceable to the foregoing factors.

Recounting the Cost of Boundary Land Disputes

Of all the violent disputes and skirmishes between the two communities, that of January 2013 was the most awful for its high intensity and a large number of casualties. It involved the use of guns locally fashioned in Erinle and Offa as well as sophisticated weapons bought with millions of naira contributed by wealthy sons and daughters of the two communities and used by thugs and youths. Both communities armed their youths with dangerous weapons including cutlasses, axes, and gun.¹⁴ The violent dispute broke out in broad daylight in January 2013 following the seemingly innocuous transportation of a passenger by an Erinle NURTW driver to an Offa NURTW base at the Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The Offa NURTW saw that as cheating and pursued the Erinle driver who ran away to mobilise fellow Erinle NURTW members.

¹³ O. Bello. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 26 August (transcripts in author’s possession).

¹⁴ O. Rasheed. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 21 September (transcripts in author’s possession).

In no time, the scuffle spiralled into full-scale mayhem, with the Erinle hoodlums burning the homes of neighbouring Offa people. Apart from the NURTW fracas, an underlying violence trigger between the two communities was over the construction of a building project on a piece of disputed land already classified as a buffer zone between them. As revealed in various interviews, the Kwara State government had approved a building project for the Offa community but decided to locate the building on the disputed land at the boundary. Erinle people protested. The building was razed to the ground, and the Offa people believed that the Erinle people did it. Thus, they made their own attack, in the name of a revenge mission.¹⁵

Available data show that within a month, property worth billions of naira was destroyed. Along the boundary, a multi-billion naira sawmill, which was the biggest in Offa, was razed to the ground, completed and uncompleted buildings were destroyed, and over 100 people were killed, and many families were displaced.¹⁶ According to Jimoh Raji who served as the spokesperson of the Erinle community, two filling stations along Erinle road were demolished, the plank market was burnt to ashes, and Shoku Complex was also destroyed in Erinle.¹⁷ In a report submitted to the State Government's Judicial Commission of Inquiry, the Offa people claimed the loss of more than 300 cars and trucks on display at the showroom of Haji Allah Motors, the burning of 14 churches, 13 hotels, 10 estate buildings, and over 40 cars at mechanics' workshops, as well as one Nissan Pathfinder SUV.¹⁸

In the same vein, the Offa people accused the Erinle people of killing 340 people, in addition to destroying 300 buildings in the Offa community.¹⁹ Although these claims could not be verified, it was obvious that the violent boundary dispute resulted in wanton killings, destruction of lives and property and family dislocations and displacements. In addition, counting the economic losses for the two communities, a Kwara State Government White Paper revealed that from 1970 to 2013, in buildings, economic trees, and electrical/mechanical assets; Offa lost US\$237,204, US\$75,444, and US\$190,372, respectively, with the grand total of US\$488,445 in compensation. Erinle lost US\$193,899, US\$68,667, and US\$178,859,

¹⁵ I. Bhadmus. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 21 September (transcripts in author's possession).

¹⁶ B. Adeyemi. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 14 October (transcripts in author's possession).

¹⁷ I. Abdulrauph. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 28 September (transcripts in author's possession).

¹⁸ S. Abdulkareem. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 13 September (transcripts in author's possession).

¹⁹ I. Abdulrauph. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 28 September (transcripts in author's possession).

respectively, with the grand total of US\$440,579 in compensation.²⁰ The scars of violent boundary disputes are still visible in the communities.

Boundary Land Dispute Resolution and the Peace Process

After years of bitter violent dispute that led to killings, destructions of property, and dislocation and displacement of families, peace gradually returned. The peace process took a complex interaction of various actors and institutions including the state, community and youth leaders of the two communities.

The State

The prolongation of violent disputes could be blamed on the inability of the state to respond appropriately. The national security agencies did not intervene until the end of the crisis, one year after the commencement of the violent dispute. Thus, the two communities had to resort to self-protection and resistance. Eventually, the government responded by sending national security agencies to the locality, which helped to stop the deadly hostilities. It should be noted, however, that the success of the national security agencies was aided by the fact that the two communities had become weary of violence.²¹ The ensuing calm enabled the state government to wade in by setting up a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to look into the boundary land dispute. The Judicial Commission of Inquiry collected reports from all the parties and actors and submitted its findings to the government, but the findings were never made public.

Community Leaders

In the two communities, the national security agencies' achievements only resulted in temporary relief, not permanent peace. Erinle and Offa communities remain in palpable fear of attacks and there was little interaction between them. It was at this stage that the community leaders decided to step in by forming alliances across the lines, with support from the state governor. On March 20, 2013, Governor Abdulfatah Ahmed hosted the leaders at a peace dialogue in Ilorin. Two paramount traditional rulers led the community leaders: the Elerin of Erinle Kingdom (a first-class traditional ruler in Oyun Local Government) and the Olofa of Offa.²² Traditional chiefs, and

²⁰ Kwara State Government's White Paper from 1970 to 2013 report. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 3 August (transcripts in author's possession).

²¹ N. Sakama. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 3 September (transcripts in author's possession).

²² N. Sakama. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 17 August (transcripts in author's possession).

religious, political, youth, and opinion leaders from the two communities supported them. At the peace gathering, all agreed to embrace peace.

Immediately they returned home, the situation changed, and the disputing groups sheathed their swords. The success of the community initiatives became a model strategy for the state government to secure the locality. The governor built a network of informants through a bottom-up peace approach. Through this, it always had first-hand information about the impending breach of peace, which he always quickly addressed through the community leaders. Part of the method was hosting leaders and representatives of youths at quarterly peace dialogues in his office. In that way, the community peace approach proved far more successful than the national security agencies' approach in maintaining and promoting peace between the two communities.

The Youth Leaders

The success of Governor Abdulfatah Ahmed's approach relied on the support from the youths, their leaders in particular. The state government realised the value of the youths in securing peace and engaged their leaders through constant dialogues and recognition. The roles of the youth leaders were very important because only they could call other youths to order, which they did. They were also influential because they heeded the directives of the traditional and political leaders who called for the cessation of hostilities. This showed that the youths involved in the Erinle-Offa boundary land dispute were not against the authorities or the powers that be.

The Aftermath of the Violent Boundary Dispute

One major flaw in the peace agreement and procedure organised by the state government was the absence of post-conflict engagement strategies for thousands of youths that took up arms in the violent boundary dispute. Thus, after the violent dispute had ended, the youths became idle. Having received some form of auxiliary militia training and in possession of arms and ammunition, the localities became a beehive of crimes. Occurrences of armed robbery, kidnapping, rape and thuggery became very rampant. The communities changed for worse, with the inhabitants palpably disturbed. The national security agencies became overwhelmed, with almost daily incidents of killings in the two communities.

It got to a point that something had to be done. It was at this point that the leaders of the youths from both Erinle and Offa decided to stem the growing criminality. The youths from the two communities had attained such ruthlessness in

the in-boundary ‘wars’ that they were now feared by everybody within their communities. They met and issued orders to fellow youths to put a stop to criminalities and arrest any offenders. Thus, the youths from the two communities became a force to be reckoned with. Within a short time, the rate of crimes dropped and the communities heaved a sigh of relief.

In recognition of the efforts of the youth leaders, the Kwara State government, under Governor Abdulfatah Ahmed, took a decision to entrust them with the security of the communities. Thereby, Erinle youths would secure the Offa side and Offa youths would handle the Erinle axis. Thus, Boundary Security Services, owned by Offa youths was given the entire Erinle axis, while Erinle youths got the contract to secure the Offa area. The two then erected boundary checkpoints in the boundary buffer zone and in all the nooks and crannies of the localities.²³ They recruited fellow youths to man the checkpoints. The implication here is that the two youth groups have the entire localities under their watch. All acts of crime or anything capable of breaching the peace were reported to the youth leaders who always took prompt actions.

The youths involved were not allowed to carry sophisticated weapons, even as they worked together with national security agencies. When they suspected any disturbances and breach of peace, they moved in to apprehend or neutralise. They also engaged police officers from the zonal offices situated in the localities when facing some difficult situations. Youths from the two communities collect remuneration from the government on monthly basis and pay their operatives and as well give allowances to the government security operatives they work with.²⁴ The inhabitants of the two communities have greater trust in them than in the state security operatives. Virtually all respondents attested to the success of the youths.

What Kind of Peace in the Communities?

Based on fieldwork, one can say that there is peace in Erinle and Offa communities of Kwara State. However, the question is what kind of peace? From the discussion so far, it is clear that what is obtained in the two communities is a tentative peace. Two issues indicate this. The first is that the peace in the locality is being sustained by the youths. How long can the peace supervised by youths last? What happens if the present youth leaders exit? What will happen when new youth leaders emerge? Research findings show that the kind of peace being supervised by the youths may not last long. Second, the issue of boundary land that was responsible for the violent

²³ B. Azeez. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 15 September (transcripts in author’s possession).

²⁴ B. Ajia. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 8 October (transcripts in author’s possession).

dispute is yet to be addressed. As indicated in respondents' comments, both communities lay claim to the same piece of land at the boundary, and neither is ready to let go. In the words of High Chief J. B. Akinola, the Ojomu of Offa community in Offa:

there is peace between the two communities at present and no community has the right to claim those lands at the boundary because based on the peace accord and other land legal cases, those lands belong to Offa people. Offa people are now interacting with Erinle people. The peace will continue between the two communities as long as the Erinle people desist from claiming those lands at the boundary. So let the two communities stay away from using the boundary like that have been referred to as the buffer zone but it is still a land that belongs to Offa community. Erinle should stay away from our land.²⁵

In the same vein, J. Raji, a son of the Erinle community, says:

according to the 1973 judgement of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, the boundary lands belong to Erinle community. It is our property. Although, the boundary land has been declared buffer zone, it is still our land. Offa community should not claim that land at all. They are the settlers on the land that belongs to Erinle people. When we look at the situation presently, we are together and we have started again as brothers and sisters. Our community has been inviting them to programmes and festivals. But the Offa community should not lay claim to the land at the boundary and they should not do anything there. It is our land given to us by our fathers to occupy and have our living.²⁶

The implication of this is that violent disputes are not over, and all indications point to impending relapse. What obtains at the moment is therefore relative peace. A number of concerns came out in the case study. The first is the cessation of hostilities as a result of the mutual violence fatigue of the communities. The second is the role of community leaders in the dispute resolution. The third is the place of the youths in maintaining peace in the two communities.

²⁵ High Chief J. B. Akinola, the Ojomu of Offa. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 3 September (transcripts in author's possession).

²⁶ J. Raji. 2018. Personal communication, Kwara state. 3 September (transcripts in author's possession).

Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between the Erinle and Offa communities in Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara State. The two neighbouring communities have been at daggers drawn for hundreds of years of their existence. The adversarial relations have been based on disagreements over boundary land, indigene-settler dichotomy, and community politics. A combination of these issues often triggers violent boundary dispute, three of which have been prominent. However, of all the resultant violent clashes, the last fought in 2013 has been the most devastating in terms of casualties and other adverse consequences for the two communities. Stoppage of the violent dispute involved the interplay of the state, community leaders and the youths.

However, a major lacuna in the peace process was the lack of provisions for the teeming youths that have received militia training during the clashes and are armed with sophisticated weapons. This led to an unprecedented rise in crimes shortly after the resolution of the boundary land dispute of 2013. It got to a point that the available national security agencies could not cope and the youths themselves had to come in. The success of these youths' initiatives encouraged the state government to contract out the security of the two communities to them. Thus, the two communities' youth groups were given contracts to secure their communities. So far, there has been peace. However, the study submits that the current peace in the locality is nothing but a relative one. This conclusion is based on two grounds. The first is that land issue at the boundary, which is the main source of violent disputes, is yet to be resolved by the state government. Therefore, the two communities still lay claim to the same land at the boundary. The second reason is that any peace superintended by the youths leaders or other armed groups cannot really be permanent.

References

- Akinnusi, A. D. Alao, D.O, Ayuba, G. M. (2019a). Interrogating governments' interventions in communal clashes: The Erin-Ile/Offa conflicts in perspective. *Global Journal of Human-Social Sciences: Arts & Humanities - Psychology*, 19(6-A), 1-12.
- Akinnusi, A. D. Alao, D.O, Ayuba, G. M. (2019b). The effects of communal clashes on socio-economic development: A Study of Erin-Ile and Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria. *Social Science and Law Journal of Policy Review and Development Strategies*, 7(1), 46-59.

- Alabidun, S. A. (2017). The cognomen of "Ijakadi L'oro Offa" and benevolence history of Offa people. *Ilorin News*, 27 December. <https://www.ilorin.info/fullnews.php?id=22217>.
- Alao, O.D. (2012). *An Assessment of Ethno-Communal Conflicts in Saare/Tsaragi Communities of Kwara State, Nigeria*. PhD Thesis, Babcock University.
- Bamidele, S. (2018). The Settler has nowhere to feed and the Indigene has all the pastures: Re (visiting) the Indigeneity-Settler Crisis in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Economy and Development*, 3, 49-67.
- Basset, T. J. (1993). Introduction: The land question and agricultural transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Basset, T. & Crummey, D. (eds.), *Land in African Agrarian Systems* (pp. 3-31). University of Wisconsin Press: Madison.
- Bob, U. & Bronkhorst, S. (2010). Environmental conflicts: Key issues and management implications. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 10(2), 9-31.
- Bob, U. (2010). Land-related conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 10(2), 49-64.
- Bogale, A. Taeb, M. & Endo, M. (2006). Land ownership and conflicts over the use of resources: Implication for household vulnerability in eastern Ethiopia, *Journal of Ecological Economics*, 58, 134-145.
- Bohannan, P. (1960). Africa's land. *The Centennial Review*, 4(4), 439-449.
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chesterman, S. (2004). *You, the People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Collier, P. (2000). Doing well out of war: An economic perspective. In Berdal, M. & Malone, D. M. (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil War* (pp. 91-111). Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO.
- Collier, P. Elliott, L. V., Hegre, H, Hoeffler, Anke, Reynal-Querol, Marta; Sambanis, Nicholas. (2003). *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*. Oxford University Press/World Bank, Oxford.
- Dahrendorf, N. (2002). *A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change* King's College,

London.<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/94B0FD1A8877A55FC1256D080046EF36-kings-peace-03.pdf>

- de Coning, C. (2008). The coherence dilemma in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 8(3), 85-110.
- Denzin, N. (1978). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Denzin, N. (2006). *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook*, Aldine Transaction, Chicago, IL.
- Du Toit, P. (2003). Why post-settlement settlements? *Journal of Democracy*, 14(3), 104-118.
- Fatile, J. O. (2011). *Management of Inter and Intra States Boundary Conflicts in Nigeria: An Empirical Approach*, Dorrance Publishing, Pittsburg.
- Fukuyama, F. (2004). *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- George, A.L. & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Gerring, J. (2007). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (2nd ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Gerring, J. (2016). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (5th ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- GIM (2005). Solving land conflict in Africa; Cadastre alone is not enough. Available from: http://www.gim-international.com/issues/articles/id655-Solving_Land_Conflict_in_Africa.html
- Gleditsch, N. P. (2007). Environmental Change, Security, and Conflict, in Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson & Pamela Aall (eds.), *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World* (pp. 177-195). Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Ibrahim, J. (2012). Indigeneity and the bifurcation of citizenship rights in Nigeria: The search for a political solution. In Ibrahim J. and Hassan, I. (eds.), *Citizenship and Indigeneity Conflicts in Nigeria* (pp. 68-87). Abuja: Centre for Democracy and Development.

https://www.academia.edu/31682195/Citizenship_and_Indigeneity_Conflicts_in_Nigeria

- Kagwanja, P. (2009). *Ethnicity, Land and Conflict in Africa: The Cases of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda*, Africa Policy Institute Working Paper Series, Africa Policy Institute, Nairobi, 2009.
- Kwara State Gazette vol 16 March 19, 1988.
- Kwara State Gazette vol. 1 January, 2008
- Kwara State Gazette vol. 16 March 19, 1998.
- Kwara State Gazette vol. 16 September 16 1982
- Kwara State Gazette vol. 18 February 9, 1984
- Le Billon, P. (2001). The political ecology of war: Natural resources and armed conflicts, *Political Geography*, 20, 561-584.
- Lund, C. (1997). *Land Tenure Disputes and State, Community and Local Law in Burkina Faso*, Dryland Networks Issues Paper no. 70, International Institute for Environment & Development, London.
- Lund, C. (1998) Struggles for land and political power, on the politicization of land tenure and disputes in Niger. *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 30(40), 1-22.
- McDougal, T. L. & Almquist, L. (2014). The effects of agricultural cooperatives on land conflicts, violence, and community trust: Household-level evidence from rural Burundi. *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, 9(2), 5-18.
- Odgaard, R. (2005). The struggle for land rights in the context of multiple normative orders in Tanzania. In Evers, S., Spierenburg, M. & Wels, H. (eds.), *Competing Jurisdictions: Settling Land Claims in Africa* (pp. 243-264). Leiden: Brill.
- Peters, P. (2004). Inequality and social conflict over land in Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 4(3), 269-314.
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Sartori, G. (1984). *Guidelines for Concept Analysis*, (ed.), Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.

- Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misformation in comparative politics. *American Political Science Review*, 64, 1033-1053.
- Seay, L. (2014). Land rights and conflict in Africa', *Washington Post, Monkey Cage*, 15 August. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/08/15/land-rights-and-conflict-in-africa/> (accessed 4 June 2020)
- Sekeris, P. (2010). Land inequality and conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 16(2), 2-18.
- Stedman, S. J. (2010). Spoiler problems in peace processes. *International Security*, 22(2), 5-53.
- Stedman, S.J., Cousens, E.M., & Rothchild, D. (2002). (eds.) *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO.
- Theron, J. (2009). Resolving land conflicts in Burundi. *Conflict Trends*, 1, 3-10.
- Udoekanem, N. B, Adoga, D.O, Onwumere. V.O. (2014). Land ownership in Nigeria: Historical development, current issues and future expectations. *Journal of Environment and Earth Science*, 4(21), 67-90.
- United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, (2012) *Land and Conflict: Toolkit and guidance for preventing and managing land and natural resources conflict: Land and Conflict*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full%20Report_1037.pdf
- Ututama, A. (2008). The Land Use Act and the challenges of Millennium Development Goals. *The Guardian Newspaper*, 31 March, p. 41.
- Verpoorten, M. (2012). Leave none to claim the land: A Malthusian catastrophe in Rwanda? *Journal of Peace Research*, 49(4), 547-563.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, The Guilford Press, New York.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (5th ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.