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Idalu Ni Iselu: A Conceptual Guide for Conflict Identification and Resolution in Ijoku, Ososa Community, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

‘Community Ideation’ (*Idalu*) is considered a determinant of ‘Community Administration’ (*Iselu*). It is also considered a functional conceptual guide for conflict understanding and resolution in Ijoku, Ososa Community in Ogun State, Nigeria. How this conceptual guide was left unutilised or partially utilised in the traditional adjudication processes and its effects on the sociality of the community is the goal of this paper. ‘Ethnomethodology’ was basically adopted as theoretical framework to understand the phenomenon of conflict and its resolution in the study. The major instrument for the study was Ethnographic Data Collection Methods/Tools including Unobtrusive observation, archival documents, Key Informant Interviews (KII) Guides used in eliciting information from opinion leaders, and Focus Group Discussion (FDG) Guide. The study established the various meanings attached to names of people, persons and places in Ijoku, Ososa. The existence of well-grounded traditional mechanisms of conflict identification, management and entrenchment of peaceful coexistence, such as the Ile-Ilu-in Council and Osugbo-in-Council was identified. The study identified the underlying cause of the dispute that escalated into conflict, which stemmed from the inadequate application or outright abandonment of the traditional adjudication processes. It recommended a reconsideration of the community’s idea of *Idalu ni Iselu*, meaning ‘Community Ideation determines its administration,’ as a guiding framework in the adjudication process.

Keywords: Community administration, community ideation, Ijoku, sociality, Ososa

Background and Introduction

Developments in a sprawling community is a sign of advancement and forward-looking nature of any relatively small conurbation and its people (both locals and residents) intending to grow into a much larger one. With the desires for such development comes the natural human nature of advancing personal and collective interests, occupying territories, and laying claims to both traditional and modern practices to further such interests. This therefore led humans to engage in conflicts, as an inevitable aspect of human nature, to lay claim to ownership of what one perceives to be rightfully and truthfully his/hers, as established by traditions and customs, or as events play out, occasioned by interests and sometimes self-serving purposes.

In the light of the foregoing, the import of this paper is to take a deep look at the trajectory of local conflict resolutions processes for a community that has witnessed disputes arising from the inherent nature of man to lay claims to traditional titles, offices, and prestige, and the inadvertent disturbing consequences it has brought to the development of such a town as it contends with the forces in making a modest attempt at transiting from the current state to a more developed and advanced conurbation in light of these circumstances in contemporary times.

In specific terms, the development being experienced in Ososa has led to a gradual transition of the simple community into a complex one with a combination of both rural and urban features typical of a transiting community. The change came with attendant challenges that affected how things are done in a simple society compared with a complex one. One area that this paper is interested in is the recent conflict in the community, which centers on the use and abuse of names and sometimes name-calling, arising from the allocation, management, and control of community resources. The Community's idea of *Idalu ni Isele* meaning 'Community ideation determines its administration' became an ideal standard upheld by a section of the community rooted in the history of Ososa, while others advocated for newer approaches. This paper examines how this conflict, its management through both the traditional and modern court processes, and its effects on the community's social fabric collectively shape events in Ososa Community.

Materials and Methods

The Research Setting

Ososa community, located in Ijebu area of Ogun State, is a home to a fast-growing beverage industry in Nigeria, Rite Foods, the producer of Bigi drinks. This industry has significantly contributed to the community's growth into a budding industrial city. Aside the beverage industry, Ososa hosts Premium Cassava Plc, a Cassava processing industry, and an annex of the First University of Education in Nigeria, Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED). The community boasts of Ososa Comprehensive High School (OCHS), a secondary school with over 40 years of history, alongside three

government-owned primary schools and many private schools at both primary and secondary levels.

The hospitality industry in Ososa is growing, with the addition of hotels, resorts, and conference/event centers catering to the growing number of visitors and business professionals. A corollary to the hospitality industry, peculiar to Ososa, is the legendary Hubert Ogunde Museum, which regularly brings music, dance, and drama enthusiasts into the community.

A notable aspect of Ososa's industrial growth is its indigenous-driven development, with many indigenes returning home to contribute to their community's progress. This commitment, among other factors, has fostered a collective emphasis on social health and security, ensuring a peaceful environment that sustains Ososa's ongoing development.

Justification for the Research Setting

The study was conducted in Ijoku, a community within Ososa, among the Ijebu-Yoruba people of Nigeria. Ijoku, Ososa, was selected for an in-depth study of peace and conflict dynamics in Yorubaland, selected from seven communities with cases of conflict already adjudicated by the Ogun State High Court out of a total of two hundred and forty-two (242) cases. The major instruments for the study were Ethnographic Data Collection Methods/Tools including Unobtrusive observation, archival documents, Key Informant Interviews (KII) Guides used in eliciting information from opinion leaders, and Focus Group Discussion (FDG) Guide. The study established the various meanings attached to the names of people, groups, and places in Ijoku, Ososa.

Data Collection Process and Bio-data of Respondents

Two Key Informants were interviewed from the Claimant's side and one from the Defendants side. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), comprising eight participants on the side of the Claimant and five on the part of the Defendants according to the Case file from the Courts, were conducted. The Claimant's side had a total of 10 respondents, ranging in age from 37 to 69 years. Seven were Muslims, while the remaining were Christians. All participants were married men with diverse professions, including building contractor, painting, plumbing, clerics/religious leaders, and artisans. The Defendant's side comprised six respondents: five for FGD and one (1) Key Informant. Their ages ranged from 39 to 69 years. This group also comprised of married men, with four Muslims and one Christian. The group consisted of traders, farmer, a cleric and a medical practitioner.

Key Findings

This study identified the name/title of the Oloritun of Ijoku Quarters in Ososa, located within the Odogbolu Local Government area of Ogun State, as the epicentre of the conflict in the study area. Upon inquiry about the meaning of the title "Oloritun," it was revealed that it signifies the Quarter Head of Ijoku

Community in Ososa. This is in tandem with the social structure observed in many societies, where community heads are installed to oversee the administration and maintain social order within the community.

Ososa, meaning “Lagoon Path” (derived from Ese Odo Osa), comprises seven (7) quarters: Ijoku, Oke-Ala, Odolakoye, Odo-Alere, Odo-Owa, Oke-Esin, and Idomowo. Among these quarters, Ijoku stands out for its traditional significant role as the sole producer of the King of Ososa. This unique role elevates the title and position of the Oloritun of Ijoku Quarters in Ososa, making it highly coveted. The Oloritun’s status stems from the fact that the overall King of Ososa known as the Gbegande of Ososa cannot be installed without their direct involvement.

Before ascending the throne as *King in Ososa*, the chosen individual must walk through an ancient pathway/route that his ancestors walked, known as “*Oba nrin Ona*” – the King is walking the route. The current King followed this same tradition, guided by the Oloritun of Ijoku, who performed all necessary rites before his installation. These rites and roles underscore the importance of the *Oloritun* in the emergence of any King in Ososa. (KII, Male, Ososa)

The study also revealed that there are four major ruling houses traditionally, customarily, and legally recognised as producers of any Gbegande of Ososa. These four ruling houses (Ogunroyega, Ladugba, Songbade and Seke) belong to the Ijoku Quarters at Ososa. This further underscore the influential role of the *Oloritun* of Ijoku in the king-making process in the community. The Oloritun’s office serves as a gateway to the kingship process, with the occupant acting as the primary gatekeeper into the Kingdom of Ososa, alongside the four ruling houses. This position holds significant power and influence, shaping the trajectory of leadership in Ososa.

Due to the inherent significant of the Oloritun of Ijoku in Ososa, he is considered a key custodian of the king-making process. The Oloritun knows the costumes, traditions and rites for the installation of king making process in Ososa. As such, the office must be managed carefully to ensure peace, progress and stability within the community. This perspective was agreed to by two FGD sessions representing the conflict sides, which highlighted the stabilising role of the *Oloritun* in peace and conflict management.

One of Oloritun’s primary responsibilities is to mediate disputes among community members. Such disputes are typically brought to the *Oloritun* official house (Ile-Ilu) for resolution. If the *Oloritun* is unable to settle the conflict, the matter is escalated to the community elders, known as *Osugbo*, which functions as the traditional court of appeal. Before the establishment of the

Customary Courts, *Osugbo* was solely responsible for adjudicating and resolving disputes in the town. Comprising elders from the seven communities in Ososa, *Osugbo* is led by *Oluwo* and supported by the *Apena*. It addresses disputes among all the residents of Ososa, whether indigenes or non-indigenes. Notable in *Osugbo* is that it is a taboo for any town in Ijebuland to have more than one (1) *Osugbo* simultaneously (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa).

Aside from the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the *Oloritun*, as the custodian of the community's culture, holds the authority to approve or reject any traditional rite. For example, the *Oloritun* must be consulted before the community and sub-community can take action, and anyone who disobeys these rules will have challenges with authority of Ijoku community. As a result, no traditional rites can be carried out without his knowledge or approval.

This follows the respondents' view that traditional structures for conflict resolution exist, providing for both the first hearing and an appeal in cases where claimants are dissatisfied with the adjudication.

The removal of the *Oloritun* of Ijoku in Ososa was considered as a fracture in the peace of the community, as the residents strongly believed in the leadership of the deposed *Oloritun*. This removal was also viewed as an abuse and insult to the entire Ijoku community. The faction of the community loyal to the deposed *Oloritun* described him as not only a trust worthy personality but also a development driven leader. According to them:

Our *Oloritun* was the one who gathered money from various levies in Ijoku to construct the Ile-Ilu, which never existed before. The Ile-Ilu is now the official venue for meetings concerning the Ijoku Community. He is a committee-driven decision-maker who has improved the process of community administration since his ascension to the position of the *Oloritun* of Ijoku. Before now, we did not resort to government courts on any matter, as all issues were resolved amicably in our Ile-Ilu under the leadership of our *Oloritun*. The introduction of modern litigation and court processes into our conflict resolution process is strange to us. We have relied mostly on community conflict resolution processes, which have worked well. Modern court processes would only lead to division within the community as we are now experiencing which is why we are still in the Appeal Court (FGD, Claimant-Side, Ososa)

On the one hand, the claimant side argues that the removal of their leader (the deposed *Oloritun*) in the Ijoku Community through the courts is unacceptable to them, as they vowed to fight the removal all the way to the Supreme Court

of Nigeria. They believe that the current use of the court processes is not beneficial to the community because the court decision cannot bring justice to the community even if a judgement is delivered. They fear that the unity of the community will never be the same again.

On the other hand, the defendant group holds a contrary view, claiming that the Ijoku Community is now peaceful than ever before. They assert that the entire community has remained calm since the judgement was pronounced at the lower court. According to them:

Immediately the judgment was delivered (at the lower court), the entire Ijoku community experienced peace of mind. There are no more hiccups here and there like before (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa)

The argument about the existence or absence of peace in the Ijoku Community is consequence of the application of modern court processes to settle disputes in a purely simple community. As reiterated by the respondents, “We cannot return from court and still maintain good or friendly relationship.

Use and Abuse of Names in Relation to Conflict in Ososa

The objective of the study was addressed by asking the respondents about the roles and functions or job descriptions of the title holders to determine the likelihood of use and/or abuse of names, which is ‘title’ in this case, and how this eventually led to the conflict that had to be settled in courts.

The Oloritun is both the physical and cultural-spiritual custodian (not religious) of the Ijoku Community. He is in charge, on behalf of the entire people, of their belongings both material and immaterial. He is agreed to be the natural leader of the community by both warring sides. When asked if other Quarter Chiefs can also perform the installation rites of the new King, the Key Informant responded emphatically:

No! *Idalu ni Iselu* – the way a community is created determines its administration. They cannot perform these rites to any new king because it is not their cultural role, nor are they culturally assigned that responsibility. I have performed these rites on two Kings: *the late Gbegande* and the current *one*. I am the one culturally assigned to place the bead on the previous Gbegande and the current one before he was announced as the King to the people. Without me doing this, no one can emerge as the king of Ososa. Each quarter has its own cultural role in overseeing the affairs of their people. In Ososa, no King is permitted to go to any of the seven (7) quarters to claim anything simply because he is the King. Such behaviour is not permitted, and there has never been any

previous King who did so. The King is just a central coordinator (KII, Male, Ososa)

Apart from being the cultural-spiritual custodian (not religious) of the Ijoku Community, the respondent Key Informant affirmed that the Oloritun is the custodian of the property of Ijoku Community. He administers landed property on their behalf. It was during the performance of such role that the deposed Oloritun claimed to have allotted plots of land to the current King to build his house in his Ijoku Quarters.

This current Oba in Ososa has benefitted from my role as the Oloritun as I allocated plots of land to him to build his house. It was I, as the Oloritun of Ijoku, that gave him the land and he published it to show his appreciation. It was clearly written in the publication that the Oloritun of Ijoku, under my leadership, gave him plots of land to build his house (KII, Male, Ososa)

It is clear from the information gathered through the KII that the community truly has its history that shapes current events. The leadership and the community have culturally prescribed roles and functions as the social structure, which regulate social order in the community. Any injury or fracture in the culturally prescribed roles and functions is a threat to the social order and stability of the community. By implication, *Iselu* is a function of *Idalu*, which is 'Community Administration' is a function of 'Community Ideation'.

Having established that the culturally prescribed roles and functions are the social structure of the communities being studied, investigations were carried out to identify the real cause of the conflict that led to the litigations and Court Cases.

Proposed Palace Site as Source of Conflict at Ijoku Community, Ososa

Regarding the proposed site and actual construction of the new palace of the Gbegande of Ososa, it was gathered that:

This is where the controversy began. When the previous late Oba Gbegande informed the community of his intention to build the palace, he proposed the site adjacent to Ososa Police Post, which was also the location of a market. As the Oloritun at the time, he told me that since the site had been approved by the government as a market, he would need to obtain a revocation of this approval from the local government, and he agreed to do so. Additionally, an architect from Ososa had already designed the palace. However, just fifteen days (15) before the planned launch of the proposed site, Oba Gbegande passed away. The Ijoku community had donated the proposed palace site to the late Oba Gbegande. Before

his passing, preparations for building the palace were underway, and the people of Ososa, not just Ijoku, had raised over sixteen million, five hundred thousand naira. (KII, Male, Ososa)

This was the remote cause of the conflict as the new King preferred another site as against the one earlier prepared for the community. The community chose the site because it offered opportunities for expanding development within the community. However, the new king rejected the previous site due to its distance from the Central Business District (CBD) of Ososa.

Ordinarily, this situation should not have escalated into a conflict if both parties had considered the historical fact that nearly all Oba's palaces in Yoruba land are typically built near major markets in towns. There are examples such as *Oja-Oba* (the King's Market) in Ibadan in Oyo State, *Oja-Oba* in Ilorin, Kwara State; *Oja-Oba* in Osogbo, Osun State; *Ita-Ale* (the Evening Market) in Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State, among many others. However, as soon as contradictory opinions emerged from the two leading authorities regarding the site for the new palace under the current king, community members began to align themselves behind their preferred leader. They presented various justifications, both genuine and fabricated, which ultimately led to conflicts that threatened the unity of the community.

During the data collection process, further investigation revealed that a dispute had occurred prior to the issues surrounding the proposed construction of the palace. This dispute involved the installation of a new Chief Imam at the Ijoku Mosque following the death of the previous one. The dispute significantly escalated, engulfing the entire Muslim community in Ijoku and dividing the broader Ososa community into two major factions that opposed each other.

...this conflict began during the nomination process for the Imam at the Ijoku Mosque before the coronation of the current Gbegande. Many people view the conflict as having started in the Ijoku community due to the nomination of a non-Ososa indigene as the Imam of Ijoku. This nomination created divisions, factions, and animosity among the residents of the Ijoku community. (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa)

This was the foundation of the conflict that later got escalated engulfing the entire ososa community.

Proposed Market Site as Source of Conflict at Ijoku Community, Ososa

The proposed site for the market in the Ijoku community was the second reason for the escalation of the conflict. Notably, the name of the proposed market is *Obu Oba*, meaning “the King's Market”. *Obu* is the local dialect of the Yoruba name for market. This indicates that if all stakeholders had exercised patience

and understanding regarding the choice of sites for both the palace and the market in Ijoku Quarters of Ososa, there would not have been any conflict from the outset.

Upon examining the social realities that ignited the conflict, it was discovered that the issues were rooted in a background dispute over the selection of the Chief Imam of the Ijoku community and the initial disagreement over the proposed palace. The project was aborted without adequate consideration for social relationships, which are crucial for community cohesion. In Ijoku, as in other Yoruba communities, people place great importance on both individuals and locations. The failure of the palace construction to materialise on the land chosen by a section of the Ijoku community was perceived as a personal affront and a psychological blow, leading to bitterness towards those seen as responsible for the project's failure.

Fifteen (15) members of Ijoku community visited me, claiming they heard that the Kabiyesi was selling the market land. I had no choice but to follow them to him for clarification. Upon arriving, I asked him, "Kabiyesi, sir, we have heard that you are selling the market land. Who are the signatories to the account where the money was deposited? He replied that if we wanted to see the account, there was evidence of his contributions, constructing a borehole, providing electricity and the rest. He then asked us who was spreading the false information that he was selling the market land. He mentioned a term "Land Use," which is the receipt he issued to them. He said it categorically in front of the fifteen (15) members of the community that he did not issue receipts but he gave them "land use". After leaving that day, this incident created another grievance against me, as he believed I was behind the community members' inquiries. (KII, Male, Ososa)

Following the encounter regarding the accusation of land sale, suspicions began to build between the two leading authorities, leading to further disputes among their followers within the community. Relationships at both vertical and horizontal levels of the community started to deteriorate, with risks translating into threats and eventually resulting in losses for all stakeholders in the Ijoku and Ososa communities in terms of development, peace, and progress.

Regrettably, as noted by a Key Informant, a major loss for the entire community was the failure of development projects that were envisioned, planned, and ready for execution but ultimately did not materialise due to their inability to manage internal differences.

The Promoter of the development projects informed the entire community that he intended to build a befitting palace at the market site, as proposed by the community, with a budget of six

hundred million Naira (N600,000,000). He envisioned the palace, to be located in Ijoku community, as a model for neighbouring communities to visit. Additionally, he planned to construct a community hall in the same area, with the intention of using the revenue generated from it to maintain the palace. Further development plans included expanding the community road network, starting with the construction of a new roundabout at *Oke-Ala* junction to facilitate smoother vehicular movement. Any houses affected by this project would be demolished, and new buildings would be erected as compensation for the affected families. (KII, Male, Ososa)

The position and submission of this Key Informant were later corroborated during two FGD sessions with other community members. However, there seemed to be a misrepresentation of the process of initiating the development projects by some sections of the community who argued that:

We were informed that someone proposed to demolish the Palace, Town Hall and Market. The plan was to construct a new palace on the site of the current market, while converting the current palace site into the Community Town Hall. It was decided that Elders-in-Council and other Elders in Ososa Community such as Ososa United Society (OUS) and some other notable personalities must first be informed about the development decisions. Also, that all parties concerned must seat on at a round table to iron things out and decide how the entire process would go (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa)

There were significant disagreements, bordering on conflict, between the deposed Oloritun and the Gbegande, as well as among different sections and members of the Ijoku and Ososa communities, regarding the execution of the development projects. At this point, egocentrism emerged between the deposed Oloritun and the Gbegande, leading community members to align with the faction that best served their interests. Subsequently, covert and later overt support from other Quarter Chiefs for one of their own against the Gbegande ensued. Meetings were held at the Traditional Council Chambers to discuss the proposed development projects initiated by the Promoter, but both parties were unable to reach useful agreements on the modalities for implementing these projects.

Proposed/Actual Town Hall Demolition as Source of Conflict at Ososa Community

The initiation of the demolition process of the Town Hall without the consent of the Gbegande was the final straw that broke the camel's back. This led to a

gulf in the relationship between the entire Chiefs from the seven quarters and the Kabiyesi (This was a conflict associated with the entire Ososa Community as distinct from the ones previously domesticated at Ijoku Quarters between the deposed Oloritun of Ijoku and the King).

It was indeed a total collapse of order in Ososa, where the centre could no longer be held for the sake of peace and progress. Issues escalated daily, turning into weeks, months, and years of disunity, replaced by superficial relationships within and outside the community. For example, the deposed Oloritun was invited by the Ijoku Community to answer to some issues including the demolition process of the Town Hall without 'the consent of the Gbegande' who is presumed to be the coordinator over the entire Ososa Community under whose purview the Town Hall falls. These elders believed they had the right to summon him for clarification, as they were the ones who had elected him as Oloritun (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa).

The non-attendance of the Elders' meetings called to settle the conflicts between the Oloritun and the Gbegande soon began to affect the performance of the traditional role of Oloritun, as he was alleged to have stayed away from meetings. The issues became so acrimonious in the community such that one section, allegedly, was planning to remove another as traditional officer from the traditional stool. Attempts to prevent and/or recover any loss of stool led to various antics from both sides, resulting in legal battles.

Conflict Identification, Management and Entrenchment of Peace in Ososa

The procedure in place for conflict identification, management and entrenchment of peaceful coexistence in the study areas was investigated. For Ijoku Community in Ososa, it was established that traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution have been in place since the inception of Ijoku. This is in tandem with the KII respondent's statement about *Idalu ni Iselu* meaning 'Community ideation determines its administration'. This suggests that there were social structural arrangements specifying adjudication processes for maintaining social order and stability within the Ijoku Community, both before and after the establishment of modern courts in Nigeria. Indeed, these traditional adjudication processes have continued to coexist alongside modern courts throughout Nigeria's history.

The first step in initiating a conflict resolution process in Ijoku and the broader Ososa Community involves the claimant submitting a report at the Ile-Ilu, the traditional administrative sitting, often presided over by a Quarter Chief, who, in the case of Ijoku Quarters, is the Oloritun. The claimant must support their report with a certain amount of money to demonstrate seriousness and to warrant attention from the Council of Administrators.

It is only then that the Defendant is invited to answer to the allegations levied against him or her. The Defendants also must pay a higher amount than the Claimant for the case to be heard and for proper resolution and administration of justice, ensuring social order and community stability. Any

case that either party is dissatisfied with could only be referred to the Osugbo in Council, which is the Central Body in charge of both Appeal and final arbitration in Ososa.

Any disputes or conflicts unresolved at the Ile-Ilu may be transferred to the *Osugbo*. The *Osugbo* will summon the parties concerned, and its decision on the matter remain the final. Traditionally, we can refer to the *Osugbo* as the “apex court” (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa)

This system has proven to be effective for several decades from historical times up to the present. In fact, the use of formal courts for conflict resolution has never been part of their community, as claimed in the FGD sessions.

The traditional Ogboni society was part of the checks and balances system in Yoruba kingdoms. They served as kingmakers and had both religious and judicial functions. They also had the power to dethrone the Oba (the king) and could order him to take his own life (or provide him with poison). Ethnographic work on their role and function dates back to the 1930s, so there is limited in-depth knowledge about their structure and inner workings after independence. However, they are believed to still wield considerable local influence, forming part of the traditional power network that regulates societies and controls resources. It is assumed that through their membership, they also have strong connections to official state structures, such as the police, judiciary, and universities (ACCORD/UNHCR Nov. 2002, cited in Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa, Canada, 2005)

In specific regard to the case of the deposed Oloritun in Ososa, since the case involved senior leadership positions, it could not be brought to the Ile-Ilu for adjudication. Instead, the same leadership in the Quarter initiated the Elders Council and involved community members both locally and from afar to intervene in the ongoing crisis as a means of addressing the conflict. However, the Elders Council made little progress. The Osugbo was not directly involved because no formal report or referral was made to it as an appellate traditional court.

The Ososa United Society (OUS), established in 1929, has been at the forefront of promoting peaceful coexistence in Ososa as a strong and indivisible entity. The association has been involved in peace and confidence-building initiatives in Ososa, with notable interventions aimed at uniting all sons and daughters of Ososa. In the spirit of unity, OUS intervened in the matter to mitigate the conflict among the warring chiefs. Notably, the Ososa

Town Hall, which was part of the reason for the conflict, was sponsored by OUS in 1961. Additionally, some concerned professionals took initiatives to resolve the matter until it eventually ended up in the law courts, where a judgment was passed on December 6, 2019.

What was clearly lacking in the entire conflict resolution process concerning the Oloritun case was the role that the Four Ruling Houses could have played. Some respondents noted that they failed to play a significant mediating role in the conflict situation as expected. This was the view of a key informant in the study, who highlighted the complicity of some of the kingmakers in the process and their inability to make a positive impact that could have stemmed the tide before the court proceedings and the 'judgment without justice' that only divided the community until the present.

Discussion of Findings

Sociology is the science of society, not merely based on common sense, due to its application of the scientific method in understanding, analysing, and interpreting social events and phenomena. The scientific method in this context involves the systematic collection of data on social relationships through methods such as surveys and observations. This approach aims to understand why or how these relationships function and what factors sustain or hinder them, often revealing insights that are not readily apparent to the untrained observer.

The issue under investigation in this study concerns the nature of conflicts in the Ijoku Community of Ososa, with a focus on how names are used and abused as tools for resource control in understanding peace and conflict. Notably, the study confirmed the fundamental requirements necessary for overseeing a community, highlighting the concept of 'Idalu ni Iselu.' This concept establishes a core relationship between the origin of a community and its administrative functions, which are crucial for the peace, progress, and development of the community.

In essence, 'Iselu' (community administration) is dependent on 'Idalu' (community ideation), meaning that no community operates outside its original foundational idea, which shapes its operations to maintain order and stability. This empirical finding is supported by the position that:

For any society to survive and develop, its social structure must be enduring, orderly, and predictable. This structure is institutionally arranged around two major constituents: basic institutions and ideational features, which together shape the society's general outlook. Consequently, a proper understanding of a society's basic structure should not be limited to its institutional arrangements alone but must also encompass its ideational features, including the underlying values and belief systems, as well as how these evolve over time." (Oyekunle, 2002:4)

In essence, the concept of creation around Ijoku was a deliberate and collective effort by a people who are aware of their origin, structure, culture, and the functions of the institutions embedded within it, both historically and in contemporary times.

The position of Ijoku is clearly defined within the broader social structure of Ososa, which developed later. Ijoku was initially an independent community that voluntarily joined forces with six other similar independent communities to form Ososa under a king who was collectively accepted as a coordinating ruler. The relationship among these seven quarters is characterized by each maintaining reasonable control over its domain while cooperating with the central authority to ensure peace, order, and stability.

For instance, this arrangement explains why the Gbegande, as the King of Ososa, does not have absolute authority over land in Ososa; he does not own any land. All lands belong to the respective communities within their quarters, under the leadership of the Quarter Chiefs or Oloritun, who derive their authority naturally from the *Idalu* of each quarter.

The natural social setting of origin, or *Idalu*, found in Ososa's social arrangement, fits into a template of checks and balances in this culturally and historically rich community. This template is useful for reinforcing cooperation and mutually beneficial dependency between the central authority and the constituent parts that make up the whole.

The selection of a new Oloritun is a function of the affected community, with the Gbegande playing no role unless a crisis threatens the entire Ososa community. In such a case, the Gbegande may intervene to ensure peace, without interfering in the natural selection process as outlined in the *Idalu* of each quarter, which already specifies their own *Iselu*.

The concept of creation (*Idalu*) of the quarters in Ososa, including Ijoku, which is the focus of this study, is naturally, culturally, and historically rooted in the human inclination to live cooperatively as community members. The Ijoku community remains in a relatively simple state, where society is organized and driven by '*Ajobi*'—defined as consanguinity, based on lineal and collateral relationships tied to blood and birth (Akinwowo, 1980; Adetola, 2021). In such relationships, all lineage members know and support each other, embodying the principle of being one's brother's keeper."

What this signifies is that *Iselu* process and the occupier of any level of authority should be aware of the social reality and underlying social processes in handling the community. This is considered fragile because of the slow process of transition from a simple state of *Ajobi* to a more dynamic and complex state of "*Ajogbe* -(defined as **co-residentship**) - the fact of sharing same or contiguous shelter whether or not the sharers are related by blood" (Akinwowo, 1980).

This understanding is crucial for leadership, as it has implications for the adjudication process. While the community-based adjudication process, where reports are presented at the Ile-Ilu in Council, can be effective in resolving disputes with positive outcomes that respect the core sociality of the

community based on the Ajobi concept, the modern court process may be counterproductive. This is because modern courts often lack recognition and respect for the community's sociality.

Indeed, the symbol of judicial authority—a blindfolded woman representing impartiality—commonly displayed in modern courts, would in this context signify a lack of recognition and respect for the community's core sociality rooted in the Ajobi idea. In essence, modern court processes may better fit more complex societies characterized by "Ajogbe" (co-residentship).

This is why the introduction of modern court processes, despite their sophistication, is not entirely accepted as a superior option for adjudication in simple communities like Ijoku in Ososa. Although judgments have been made in many cases, some individuals still feel that justice has not been served, necessitating appeals to higher courts—a situation that some see as exacerbating tension in the quiet community.

Simple rural and semi-urban Nigerian communities often prefer traditional court systems for matters concerning them due to the numerous advantages they offer. These advantages include inexpensive, less time-consuming, and less cumbersome processes compared to modern courts, as well as transparency and a common language of adjudication, among others.

Situating the Empirical Findings within the Ethno-methodology Theory

In relating the theoretical orientation of this study to the empirical findings, it is again important to stress the role of ethnomethodology, supported with symbolic interactionism, as tools to aid the understanding of conflict and its resolution in the study area and by extension Yoruba land. The explanatory capacity of ethnomethodology is rooted in its assumption that people adopt various frameworks of meaning in different situations as a result of which they construct various rationalities for different situations.

One way to appreciate the framework of meaning in different situations within the human collective process of interaction is to focus on the conversational analytical aspect of ethno-methodology, which stresses the importance of what is said that are internal to the conversation itself and not external forces that constrain the conversation (Ritzer 2011). Adetola and Yakubu (2023) argued that in the conversation process, whatever is spoken at any given moment is determined by the precursory sequential circumstances of the conversation. The verbal narration in the present becomes part of the circumstances for future turns.

Relating this theoretical position to the conflict in Ijoku as the study area, it is established by the respondents in the Focus Group Discussions, that the meanings attached to the status of an Imam as a tool for resource control in the religious circle laid the foundation of the conflict. The process of selecting an Imam in Ijoku was restricted to only Ijoku indigenes as part of the inclusion criteria. However, the idea of bringing in non-indigenes led to the exclusion of the Ijoku indigenes from their 'sole right' to the seat of the Imam creating an

‘exclusion’ criterion for them under that circumstance. The consequence of this was the development of the various ‘in-context’ and ‘out-of-context’ conversations that began to break down the peaceful social relationship enjoyed in Ijoku during the pre-conflict period.

The daily experiences of the Ijoku community began to exhibit sharp differences and a notable shift in the nature and dynamics of relationships due to changes in conversational attributes among the people. These changes had significant consequences on their underlying social realities and circumstances, which were not immediately apparent at the onset of the conflict. This became the underlying remote cause of the Ijoku community conflict, as noted in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session.

Participants stated that the conflict began with the nomination of an Imam for the Ijoku Mosque before the coronation of the current Gbegande. People perceived the conflict as having started in Ijoku due to the nomination of a non-Ososa indigene as Imam, which created divisions and enmity among community residents (FGD, Defendant-Side, Ososa)

The immediate outcome of the dispute that escalated into conflict was a change in the relational positions of individuals within the conversation circle. The study provided insight into how each person's relational position within conversations in Ijoku was shaped by various factors, some of which are sensitive. This helped categorise people as either 'inclusive' or 'exclusive' based on the names they used in conversations.

As mentioned earlier, 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' expressions can manifest in both private and public conversations. Notably, nearly all private conversations in today's society are now made public through social media, which has become a potential conflict aggravator and a threat to peaceful coexistence in many societies worldwide.

Rather than devising a methodology to address the dispute early precisely before the removal of the deposed Oloritun, the relational divide both before and after the court judgment became widened instead and the community stakeholders failed to resolve the dispute. The court, as a modern adjudication process, remained oblivious to the sociality of the people in terms of their *Idalu* and *Iselu* concepts. Consequently, it could only offer judgments without considering or respecting the peaceful sociality that once existed before the conflict escalated.

Summary

The study established the various meanings attached to the names of people, persons, and places in the study area. The title of Oloritun holds significant importance for the people of Ijoku. Regardless of the individual bearing the title, once conferred, the bearer represents the entire community and must be

respected as a symbol of the community with the authority to act on its behalf. This includes traditional, customary, social, cultural, economic, and other communal dealings. Consequently, any respect or honour shown to the bearer is an honour to the entire Ijoku community, and conversely, any disrespect or injury to the bearer is an injury to all community members, as they are seen as the community's alter ego. The Oloritun represents the symbol of the Ijoku entity and should be treated as such in all relationships within and outside the community by all stakeholders.

The study found instances of both correct use and abusive use of names in the past and present within the community. There were cases of title holders being removed, both rightfully and arbitrarily, as confirmed in existing literature from Yoruba and Ijebuland. The situation in the Ijoku community involved a removal facilitated by legal instruments, where a judgment was delivered, but the community lost its peace, cooperation, unity, and camaraderie that define a communal and relational society.

The community's social fabric was considered severely impacted by the modern court system of adjudication, which, despite appearing impartial, failed to account for the simplicity of a society like Ijoku that has not yet evolved into a complex society requiring complex legal procedures. The removal of the Oloritun was viewed as an abuse of the title by aggrieved community members. Furthermore, the installation of another Oloritun through the court process was equally unsettling for the Ijoku community due to the disregard for their traditional selection processes. Where abuse was suspected or real, the community was likely to suffer in terms of its social cohesion, which could begin to deteriorate rather than progress.

The study confirmed the existence of well-established mechanisms for conflict identification, management, and promoting peaceful coexistence in the study area, typical of Yoruba communities. The Ile-Ilu-in-Council serves as a traditional court of first instance, while the Osugbo-in-Council functions as both an appellate and supreme final court of adjudication in Ososa. This mechanism has been relied upon by the community to handle numerous cases with sensitivity to the need for order, peace, and tranquillity—values that modern courts may not fully appreciate. In our interaction with the King of Ososa, he noted that during adjudication, both claimants and defendants are often pacified by the adjudicators because the community members are bonded by blood or cultural ties, prioritising peace.

The study also confirmed the existence and functionality of modern courts, which are frequently used by the people, with many cases pending due to adjournments typical of any court of law. Ososa has a Customary Court that handles various cases due to its developmental stage as a community transitioning from simple to complex. Cases commonly brought to these courts involve landed property matters related to ownership, transfer, purchase, gift, and trespass. Interestingly, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are also still in use for resolving similar landed property cases. If these fail, cases may be brought to modern courts for further adjudication.

Overall, the conflict resolution process observed in Ijoku, Ososa, Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria, indicates a management procedure that values peaceful coexistence. The use of both traditional and modern court facilities is commendable, although it has not resolved all conflict situations, as is common in communities worldwide.

The abuse of names, particularly name-calling, is prevalent among the people, as reflected in interviewee responses. Several instances of name-calling and pejorative appellations were reported between groups during the conflict and court processes, as gathered during the study.

Name-calling or labeling in communication goes beyond the mere use of a name, which is a neutral descriptor, to the deliberate use of descriptors that convey a specific mindset. This is designed to achieve a particular objective through communication. According to Nendauni and Sadiki (2019, as cited in Adetola & Yakubu, 2023), name-calling involves labeling others with derogatory or negative words, linking them to a negative symbol or image (Adetola & Yakubu, 2023)

Name-calling was identified in this study and led to court cases and counter cases, where individuals were fined by the courts for using pejorative appellations during conflicts in the Ijoku Community.

The study successfully identified the underlying remote cause of the dispute that escalated into conflict. This identification was facilitated by the theoretical framework designed for the study, which guided the data collection process in the field. The collected data was aligned with the theory to provide an explanation that points to suggestions for quickly identifying similar issues in the future and addressing them before they escalate and threaten the community's social fabric.

Conclusion

This study focused on the meanings, attributes, and roles of names of persons, people, and places in understanding peace and conflict in Yoruba land. It carefully selected communities that had experienced conflicts known to the courts and whose cases had been adjudicated. In the case chosen for investigation, it was empirically validated that names have no inherent value except for the meanings and values attached to them by people. Names of persons, people, and places are ordinary unless they convey values, particularly in relation to resources. In such situations, names can be used beyond their descriptive value and can also be abused, as long as values are attached to them. This is where names can become tools in the hands of those with the power to use or abuse them in relation to the resources in question.

Policy Recommendations

Arising from this study, the following recommendations are made to stakeholders in the conflict resolution industry to enhance existing efforts geared towards improving the quality of adjudication in Nigeria:

1. **Community Consideration in Court Establishment:** The nature of the community should be considered when establishing and administering court systems. Simple communities that are yet to become complex in their sociality should be encouraged to use traditional adjudication mechanisms to maintain peace and progress. The concept of '*Idalu ni Iselu*' (community ideation determines administration) should be reconsidered in the adjudication process. Communities living with strong bonds through blood and culture (*Ajobi*) are likely to value traditional adjudication, which maintains the sanity, communality, and relational values of such societies without disrupting the Nigerian state. Recognizing the *Ajobi* system in conflict resolution adds value to Nigeria's litigation system (see Busari, Owojuyigbe, Okunola, and Mekoa, 2017; Owojuyigbe, Busari, Taiwo, 2021; and Fakorede, 2025).
2. **Transitioning Societies:** Communities transitioning from simple to complex societies should be encouraged to use modern court systems for cases involving *Alajobi* and *Alajogbe*, as there are no blood ties between them. The bond between an *Alajobi* and an *Alajogbe* is weak and would not significantly impact the society even with severe court decisions.
3. **Hybrid Court of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):** An ADR hybrid court should be encouraged in the adjudication process through legal counseling for simple communities if traditional mechanisms fail. ADR offers advantages over normal court processes, being less formal, inexpensive, and less stressful (Fayemi, 2009; Idornigie, 2007; and NBA, 2007).
4. **Addressing Lingering Issues:** In cases where decisions have already been made, such as in the Ijoku Community, but a section of the community remains aggrieved, the ADR process should be activated to address these issues. This helps rebuild confidence, restart development projects as tools of unity, and reengineer the community socially for peace and progress. Techniques like direct negotiation, conciliation, facilitation, mediation, and arbitration should be deployed, involving community relation experts in the adjudication process.
5. **Handling Cases Involving Quarter Chiefs:** Cases involving Quarter Chiefs should be handled by the Osugbo-in-Council as a court of first instance rather than an appellate court. If unresolved, an appeal can be made to

ADR to reach a consensus and settlement that aligns with community sociality.

6. Cases Involving Kings or Obas: Cases involving Kings or Obas should be handled by ADR, exploring appropriate approaches to reach consensus and settlement that supports community sociality for true peace and harmony.
7. All these steps are necessary to develop the systems of adjudications that support community efficiency while upholding the sociality of the same community.

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