



An Appraisal of The Status of IHIMA in The Eyes of Its EBIRA NEIGHBOURS Up To 2003

¹George Adava Ayo, ²Baba Isaac Ibrahim, PhD & ³Mohammed Suleiman Audu, PhD

^{1,2&3}Department of History and International Studies
Federal University Lokoja

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Abstract

Identity conflicts in many parts of Nigeria, Africa and the world have become prevalent in modern history, resulting in several crises and inter and intra-ethnic hostilities. It has also resulted in the loss of lives and properties. It is against this background that people sometimes recline to ethnic and clannish cleavages for whatever reasons. This study is set out to examine the intra-ethnic crisis of hegemony between Ihima and its Ebira neighbours up to 2016. Indeed, Ihima and its Ebira neighbours share the same ancestry and have close affinity in socio-cultural and political life; However, there has been a growing concern of mutual suspicion and cold war between the same stocks of people, which this study interrogates. The study adopts the historical methodology by relying on the use of primary and secondary sources, with the narrative presented in a thematic order. The study concludes that there are deep-seated misgivings about the personality of the various Ebira Districts, but that of Ihima is the most pronounced, which is coming from the past. It is clear that the negative impressions about each other have been formed already and has been handed from one generation to another. The study also revealed that what Ihima's neighbours perceived to be distrust and egocentric about Ihima is only Ihima's reaction to its neighbours' treatment over the years. The study, therefore, suggests that no matter the fallout of the past, it has to be forgotten and forgiven in the spirit of unity for the overall good of the Ebira people.

Keywords: Appraisal, Status, Ihima, Ebira, Neighbours

I. Introduction

Inter-group relations have been variously discussed by scholars but intra-group relations are scarcely discussed. There are several issues arising from intra-group relations that require attention, given that they predispose the people to negative

peace. Ebira-Tao people are homogenous, yet distinctive people with slight variations in character traits that have generated supremacist ideology and hegemonic conflict. The historical perception of Ihima in the eyes of its neighbours that make up the Ebira-Tao people of Kogi State has been replete with stereotypes and suspicion. The brothers represent the districts in Ebiraland, which are Okengwe, Adavi, Eganyi, Eika, and Ihima. Despite their similarities in cultural practices, sharing the same bloodline paternity, contiguous patterns of settlement, social and economic interactions, there appears to be a form of reservation of other districts towards Ihima. This study, therefore, examines the nature of such relationships, and the perception of the neighbours of Ihima, by tracing the historical origin of such perceptions, and how they have lived. The study also interrogates the fallout of such perceptions, and Ihima's reactions towards its neighbours, and offers a subtle recommendation on the way forward.

Geographical Location of Ebiraland

Ebiraland is a hilly inland area that stretches roughly twenty-three kilometres west of the Niger at Ajaokuta and thirty-two kilometres southwest of the Niger-Benue confluence. The range of hills rose to about six hundred and sixty-seven meters above sea level. Ebiraland, the home of Ebira Tao, is in the Central Senatorial District of Kogi State. It has a landmass of 3,426 km². The 1991 national census puts the population of the area at 722,032.¹ Another national headcount was undertaken in 2006. The provisional figure of 928,655 released by the National Population Commission (NPC) is being disputed. It is distributed as follows: Okene LGA (325,623), Adavi LGA (217,219), Okehi LGA (223,574), Ajaokuta LGA (122,432) and Ogori Magongo LGA (39,807).² It should be noted that Ogori Magongo LGA is not part of the Ebira Tao people, but part of the Central Senatorial District of the state and is



nearly contiguous with Ebiraland. The communities, which started as tiny villages, have joined together as nearby towns, gradually and progressively expanding towards one another with Okene as a city in modern times. Ebiraland, thus, presents an aerial view of one huge near-urban settlement with intervening barriers.³

Ihima and its Neighbours

Ihima and its neighbours are homogenous in socio-cultural heritage, political structure, and geographical features, in terms of topography and climatic conditions. Historically, Ebira People were known to have sojourned in several places before arriving at their present location, as available in oral traditions and some literature on the origin of the Ebira People. Ihima shared the same paternity with its neighbours and has been contiguously settled in terms of location. Their language, socio-cultural, economic and political structure are homogeneous; they have been known to have a common interest in terms of development yearnings and aspiration. Just as conflict is an integral part of human society, the general levels of interactions among these neighbours have been replete with conflicts. Each of them appears to have secretly nursed some levels of reservations towards one another, although not easily noticeable by outsiders, which shows their ability to manage each other despite some internal frictions, thus, showing the true spirit of brotherhood.⁴ The reservations are reflected in mutual suspicion, distrust and feeling of superiority.

However, historically, Ihima seems not to have been a good light of its neighbours, because it appears to be on the receiving side of the suspicion, distrust and the quest for superiority. Ihima appear to have been stereotyped with reference to perceptions and interactions in the eyes of its neighbours and Ihima is also known to have been nursing reservations towards its neighbours. These reservations, distrust, mutual suspicion, and feelings of superiority expressed among neighbours has resulted in a cold war. Commenting on stereotyping, Ireyi⁵ stated that stereotyping is a common phenomenon among humans which cuts across the board and is not limited to Ebira people. He further stated that every district has some sort of reservations for one another, citing an example that some districts perceive Eganyi as not a proper child of Itaazi. Some believe that Eganyi is more comfortable in interacting with Igala than its Ebira neighbours. This may be due to its proximity to Igalaand, which is just by the coast of the River Niger, hence its affinity with Igala than its Ebira neighbours. Such view held about the Eganyi can be

considered as stereotyping. In a similar vein, Suleiman⁶ in his response to stereotyping, agreed that it is natural for people to stereotype each other based on their perceptions and where they do not share similar beliefs over a subject matter. He also posits that other districts have held the belief that Adavi has been at the height of the internal crisis in Ebiraland, he also observed that no single district has been exempted in terms of crisis and it would be unfair to pin the crisis on Adavi. To him, the Adavi community is by the side of the Federal Highway which makes her activities visible to all including travellers who may sometimes be forced to return to other travelling routes, so to assume that Adavi is the most notorious for crises would amount to stereotyping. Therefore, whatever belief Ihima holds, is not limited to them alone. Suleiman⁷ also states that Eika is said to have been the first son of Itaazi (father of Ebira), but dealings over the years have not clearly shown such regard and honour to Eika. Hence, it has posed a concern with the people of Eika.

General Perception and Cause(s)

To limit our scope to the subject of this study, it is important to examine the perception of Ihima in the eyes of its neighbours. Through contacts, interviews, interactions and testimonies on the account of the same submissions, it appears that people of other districts of Ebiraland have their reservations about Ihima people as earlier stated, which is still being nursed and has made neighbours of the same ancestry to see each other with the feeling of superiority over one another. This may likely continue if not addressed and nipped in the bud. Interacting with Ahuoiza from Adavi but resides in Kuroko,⁸ she recalled when she attempted to marry someone from Ihima, upon informing her parents about it, her announcement was greeted with stiff opposition and their reason was that Ihima people are deceptive by nature and never to be trusted, as such the relationship was brought to an end. This, to her, is one out of several similar testimonies on the alleged incompatibility of marriage to sons and daughters of Ihima as someone from Kuroko in Adavi district.

In a similar vein, Ohunene⁹ from Eika recounted her experience of her marriage to a man from Ihima, which did not come on a platter of gold as he was subjected to a series of scrutiny on the account that he was an *Anihima* (an Ihima indigene). In her case, it was not her biological parents who opposed them, but her uncles and her aunts who strongly opposed a union between them and *Anihima*. In an attempt to inquire why such a



stance was upheld, she was told that *Anilhima* are not to be trusted and some marriages that had taken place between then and Ihima had ended up in divorce, although few of such marriages have equally been successful. Considering the above narratives, it shows that Ihima appears to be seen as being deceptive and has faced stiff scrutiny when attempting to marry from other districts. A further interrogation also shows that apart from being perceived as deceptive, it is also difficult to guarantee the support of an *Anilhima* on issues that bother on the welfare of the Ebira people. Jatto¹⁰ recalled incidences where he had been betrayed by *Anilhima* and may not want to venture into any form of alliance with *Anilhima*. Again, such an allegation is a clear case of a social identity theory, where a group is judged by a general perception without recourse to assessing individual character traits. From the testimony of interviewees, such a level of accusation is shrouded in the history of these neighbours.

Ireyi,¹¹ appears to give a clue as to why the Ihimas are alleged to be deceptive. To him, as a student of the University of Ibadan, there was an umbrella body that saw to the welfare of the students of Ebira descent, which was the National Association of Ebira Students NAES. But it was rather surprising that students from Ihima went on to float another body named Ihima Students Union ISU. This move did not go down well with others because similar events were replicated in other institutions of higher learning across the nation then, which made it appear as a conspiracy among Ihima students. This development, however, set the tone for the variance of Ihima students, hence, their perception as being deceptive.

Responding to these allegations, Yakubu¹² commented on the NAES and ISU incidences as cases where Ihima students have held the perception of being cheated and played out on the scheme of things by their Ebira neighbours, on the account of being the youngest, which has led to series of perceived marginalization. They are always apportioned the least in the share of any largesse, looked upon with disdain and sometimes were grossly undermined, hence the need for the establishment of ISU to cater for the welfare and the immediate needs of students of Ihima descent. To him this did not go well with students from other Ebira districts, hence the name-calling and stereotyping. Ireyi¹³ in his response, differed from Yakubu, because each student was treated equally and as a student in the University of Ibadan there was never a time when largesse or welfare packages were distributed based on district, rather it was

based on individuals. But in his account, Obaro debunked the claims made by both Ireyi and Yakubu, stating that the establishment of ISU preceded that of NAES. ISU was formed in 1959, while NEAS was established in 1981, so the claim that Ihima students formed a parallel association as a protest against NAES was baseless.¹⁴

In the account of Onoruoiza,¹⁵ it appears to be a matter of being under the influence of some sort of jinx, whereby, involving *Anilhima* in any venture would be difficult to achieve. When asked if he had experienced such, he responded that it is a testimony passed to him by his father and ancestors. Jatto¹⁶ corroborated this that inviting *Anilhima* into a deal is like inviting problems because they always claim to be wiser and smarter than anyone else. Kazeem¹⁷ in his account, posits that Ihima people, although of the six districts in Ebiraland, is generally seen as more allied with the Yoruba, which is manifested in their names, as it is common for Ihima people to bear Yoruba names.

The pattern of migration for most people from Ihima was usually towards the south-west region and even the lifestyle of the Ihima people shows affinity with that of the Yoruba. This is not common with people of other Ebira districts, hence its neighbours, hence, relating Ihima with Yoruba. Kazeem also stressed the fact that hardly is there any compound in Ihima where you would not find at least someone with a Yoruba name and that majority of Ebira Christians are from Ihima. The fact is that most Ebira who have made the south-western Nigeria (Yoruba communities) their second home are from Ihima, where marriages between them have given birth to second and third generation progenitors. Adding these up, makes other Ebira to see the Ihima people as closer to Yoruba than Ebira people and, therefore, stereotyping Ihima to be Yoruba. In another account, Zubair¹⁸ an indigene of Ihima but raised in Obehira, agreed with the stance of Kazeem, that Ihima people are seen as Yoruba by some people of other districts such as Adavi, Okengwe, while Eika seem not to agree with such position. To her, Eika shares common sentiments with Ihima, hence, it is allured that they are the closest in terms of interactions and affinity. Isah Suleman corroborated Mariamoh's claims that Eika and Ihima have shared similar ideologies and have also related more historically than with other districts.

Commenting on this also, Enero¹⁹ an indigene of Eika supported the position of Mariamoh, because most Ebira people who farm in places like Owo in Ondo State, Ikole in Ekiti State and others parts of the South Western states are



majorly from Ihima. To him, this may be due to the availability of farm land and the nice treatment they receive from the Yoruba and again since most of the Ihima people could easily understand and speak little of Yoruba. He also submitted that Ebira people from other districts are equally spread across the Yorubaland, so it is no longer an Ihima thing alone.

One thing is common from the aforementioned, and that is judging from the narration, Ihima is perceived as being deceptive, cunning and crafty in most of their dealings, which has left an impression in the heart of its neighbour from other districts. Deducing from the above, it is obvious that despite being of same paternal ancestry, they lived together by reason of their contiguous pattern of settlement, they have shared similar cultural heritage, inter-married. Nevertheless, the relationships between Ihima and its neighbours are not without suspicions, allegations and counter-allegations, internal rancor, rivalries, stereotyping, prejudices, reservations and cold war, among others. The saying that “there is no smoke without fire”, readily comes to mind as people would not just develop a cold foot towards a sibling, hence, the need to enquire what may have led to such perception. Is Ihima just being a victim of circumstances or have they carried out an abominable act of sacrilege? Obaro²⁰ reacting to the allegation that Ihima people have affinity with the Yorubas, stated that it is natural for people to migrate towards where they share a common boundary, and that Ihima shares boundary with Okun, particularly the Ijimu. Stressing that migration is a common feature in Ebiraland and this d it is due to several factors, such as seeking for fertile land for farming, since farming was and is still a major occupation of the people and for the *Anilhima*, migration westward was easier to achieve.

Omanayin²¹ corroborated Obaro’s position. According to him, migration of *Anilhima* towards the Yoruba land was necessitated by the quest for farming to avoid famine, as the entire Ebiraland did not have enough land to carter for the need of her farmers, while the people of Adavi, Okengwe and Eika migrated northward, Ihima’s proximity to the west naturally attracted them. Eriyi’s²² view also painted a clearer picture to study. He states tha when people migrate for any reason and find the new land hospitable, settlement in such areas become easy and what usually follows is the gradual adoption of the lifestyle, beliefs and sometimes the culture of the host by the migrants; therefore, since *Anilhima* have been in the west for long, it is natural for them to adopt their names, lifestyle and even culture, but

that should not be enough reason to refer to them as Yoruba. Asun²³ also gave another dimension to the situation, as he believes that since Christianity came into Ebiraland through Ihima from the west, it is, therefore not unusual for an *Anilhima* to be able to speak Yoruba and to also adopt Yoruba names. He further stated that Ihima people are not the only ones who bear Yoruba names in Ebiraland, as people from other districts also bear Yoruba names, citing the example of the late Ohinoyi of Ebiraland: Late Alhaji Sanni Omolori. “Omolori” he said is a Yoruba name.

Tracing the Misgivings

It suffices to say that the actual misgiving between Ihima and its neighbours are quite historical. The genesis of it is dated back to the period of the series of migration that the people underwent in their quest to remain free and self-dependent.²⁴ In fact, the resolution of the people at “*Opete*” amidst incessant wars threatening the region, was that they should relocate to a more secured place, possibly a hilly terrain, that would prove difficult for their enemies to get through to them.²⁵ As a matter of fact, at this time, the “Bini” and the “Yoruba” were already at the war around 1713.²⁶ The urgent need to secure a better alternative place of settlement became ever paramount. After much deliberation upon it, Okehi hill was unanimously accepted. Ofcourse, the hill caves; undulating peaks made it difficult for the enemies to penetrate them.²⁷

Ogido²⁸ posited that in a matter of moment, the people began their movement to the hill in a clan group. Adavi as the eldest was effectively in charge of the exodus ensuring a hitch free journey to their marked destination. To be precise, Adavi generally regarded as the elder was following behind to ensure all his junior ones including their surviving mother were in the front. Of course, Okengwe who was alleged to be the next to Adavi in term of seniority was in the far front to give a complementary role for a successful movement towards the hilltop. After a lengthy walk in which they were almost approaching a hill, a hitch developed in their movement²⁹ Okengwe clan leading in the front saw a depression on a road at the foot of the hill, which was quite suitable for extraction of palm oil. He was instantly attracted to it and he convinced others on the need for them to settle therein, so they exploit the rock for economic gain. They all reasoned with him to erect their tent at *Uko-angwe* contracted as Okengwe meaning at the foot of the hills.³⁰



Meanwhile, the safety of the people at their new settlement seemed not quite assured given the “Bini” and the “Yoruba” war ravaging the region. Although, some of them were being carried away in their newly found trade (palm oil extraction), while majority were in perpetual fear. In view of the situation, Ihima’s resolve to move to Okehi hills ahead of others incidentally came to pass during one of his hunting expeditions to the hills. Ihima of course, was a great hunter who had made the hill top his hunting zone. As fate would have it, he killed a Buffalo on a faithful day of his final resolution not to go back to his brothers at *Okengwe Ehi* settlement. He has made up his mind independently as against the unanimous resolution to his brethren. The brothers who were already exhausted, after the day’s work on farm could not go in search of him.³¹

The mother of Ebira people (*Inyi-Oyiza-Upayi-Onyinoyi*) who was restless went out very early the following day and traced him to his hunting zone. After a long search she found him eventually with the kills. She persuaded him to go and invite his elders for helping hands to convey the animal home. He turned down the request, but he let the mother to understand that by virtue of being the youngest, he deserved extra protection provided by Okehi hill, and he had taken the initiative and no amount of rhetoric would make him shift ground. He was frank with the mother.³² The mother realising, that he was very adamant in his resolution, decided to go back home to get the brothers informed of the development. They received the news with mixed feelings. They could not comprehend the rationale, why Ihima has decided so soon, to continue to stay there. They were completely disappointed in his premature resolution considering the fact that they were not decided by them as his seniors. They felt it was too brave and ambitious of him to go independent. They were left with no alternative than to descend heavily on him with scores of abuses. This unfolding scenario tended to mark the beginning of the misgivings.³³ The misgiving, however, continued to acquire weight when the mother of Ebira people finally resolved to go and squat with Ihima for the rest of her life. The brothers of course, were not disposed to the mother’s decision, but they could not hold her back against her resolve. It is an observable fact that Ihima being the last born enjoyed exceptional attention from the mother.³⁴

The Sickness and Death of Inyi-Oyiza-Upayi-Onyinoyi. According to oral tradition, the mother had a lengthy stay with Ihima, playing supportive roles to the wives and the rearing of her

grandchildren, subsequently took ill and her health quickly deteriorated. Ihima promptly reported her predicament to his elder brothers and he was told to go and take care of her and ensure that she did not give up the ghost. Her condition, however, got worse and she eventually died.³⁵ Ihima then went to his brothers the second time to reiterate the ill health situation, but he made up his mind never to disclose the sudden death until they come and find out themselves. It was in the light of this vehement report by Ihima, that Eika was delegated to come and find out the situation of the mother’s health. To his dismay, he found that the mother was dead. He was quite agitated and slapped Ihima for withholding the truth about the mother’s condition. Ihima of course, was not too sure of their likely reactions being alone before the brothers. He would rather want them to come and confirm it, so that if at all they wanted to make case against him, his family would be available to rescue him.

Eika, however, reported the sad news to the brothers and resolved that Ihima should continue to preserve the dead body until such a time when they would have gathered enough to give her a befitting burial. Such was the case in the olden times, where the dead could be conserved for a long period by subjecting it to serious heat to dry off the body—an equivalent of the modern mortuary facilities for preserving the dead.³⁶ The way and manner Ihima, being the youngest handled the case of his mother’s ailment further heightened the already held grievances against him caused by the choice of keeping their mother with him.

The Final Burial: As the chosen period for the befitting burial drew close, the elders resolved that their deceased mother be taken and buried at the general home base (*Okengwe Ehi*). But this position by the brothers, seemed not to go down well with Ihima and his family who had all along hoped that the mother would be buried in Ihima. So, Ihima and his children vehemently turned down the request and refused to grant the brother’s the singular opportunity of burying the mother at the home base. Reluctantly, the mother of Ebira people (*Inyi-Oyiza-Upayi-Onyinoyi*) was buried eventually at Ihima *Etinoyi* (land of purity). This accounted for why at the vicinity of her tomb at Ikuehi, a hill was named in her honour. The land was dedicated to her in view of the useful life well spent with Ihima district. Archaeological remains of her fingerprint are still available up till date.³⁷ Meanwhile, the eight days follow up ceremony came up as usual, palm wine was made available in several jars, some content of the wine was to be sprinkled on the grave as a mark of traditional rite to be performed, thus occasioning



the yearly *Echirikuta* (festival of the tomb), celebrated only by the Ihima district.

Following the tomb rite, Ihima went ahead to have a taste of the wine which was not supposed to be considering the fact that he was the most junior and his action was tantamount to disrespect for tradition. Thus, the elders believed that Ihima's unbecoming attitude had to be checked. So, he was again reprimanded with a humiliating slap. Ihima's children were touched with the sordid development and so decided to avenge.³⁸ They quietly stood up and ran to the nearby bush to source for long canes and to the utter consternation of the bewildered uncles who had come to Ihima with their respective families and friends for the funeral, Ihima's children emerged from the bush with their canes and began to whip the august visitors with impunity. The guests ran and fled with their families and dogs. The attack was adjudged as the height of incivility by all and sundry. It was this particular incident that seemed to have given rise to the perpetual misgiving between Ihima and other districts. Hence, the ill-mannered tag on Ihima.³⁹ Reacting to this claim, James Otaru,⁴⁰ stated that from oral tradition, Ihima's children were embarrassed at the way and manner their father was treated by his brothers. To them, they could no longer tolerate the humiliations melted on their father with abuses, accusations, slaps, insults and dehumanisation, on the account of taking care of their grandmother, whom they saw the extent their father went in nursing. While she was sick, Ihima, singlehandedly, did all of that up until even her burial, without support from any of her other children (their uncles).

Left with no choice, they rose to the defense of their father. To Otaru, no responsible child or children would watch their father being publicly humiliated and not react. Obaro,⁴¹ corroborated Otaru by saying that Ihima's children's actions was not to insult their uncles, rather, it was a move to defend their father who was being taunted by his brothers for taking care of their sick mother without any honour of appreciation. It is interesting however, to note that while other clans viz: Obaji clan (Eika) Ododo clan (Okehi) Adaviruku clan (Adavi) later joined Ihima clan at the hill, Uga clan (Okengwe) refused to follow suit. Uga clan remained in the home base, in order to attend to his palm oil extraction, thereby, undermining the consequences of war and enemies that abound in the region. It then means that Uga clan was the only clan that continued to stay at home (*ehi*). Hence, they were called *Okengwe-ehi*.⁴²

From the foregoing, the historical development in Ebiraland has demonstrated the

genesis of the various ill-feelings held against Ihima district. The action of the children of Ihima against their uncles was not only bad, but out rightly condemnable. No matter what, they ought not to have transgressed the traditional regards for ties, norms and values of according elders their due respect. On the other hand, it also goes to warn that one should be careful the way he treats his younger brothers with grown up children. That being the case, it may not fall within our jurisdiction in the present era to judge what was done in the past. There are lots of past misdeed or some acts of man's inhumanity to man. It must be admitted that such was not unusual, considering the fact that there was no comprehensive law checking the excesses of the people. The situation was likened to the law of the jungle, where people often engaged in a game of might is right, as the biblical case of when there was no law in Israel, people did what was pleasing to them.⁴³

Therefore, it could be suggested that the ill-perception of Ihima people, were merely moved by stories that have been passed to them by their progenitors. As long as that remained the case, they may never see anything good about them. The glaring politicking that often remains the main substance in their criticism has therefore made meaningless of the actual historical fact. It may not be surprising that several stereotypes among the Ebira were easily fabricated or concocted to drive their point home. But the commonest ones are that Ihima people are bad, irresponsible, crafty and mistrusted, people who exuded superiority complex and hence the fear and hatred others usually nursed against them. This could be traced to the historical antecedent of how Ihima handled the ill health, death and burial of their mother, the memory of which may linger for eternity in the mind of his elder brothers.

However, Asun,⁴⁴ refutes such assertion that Ihima people are bad, to him, the claims of other Ebira sons Ihima are born out of envy, jealousy and mere assumptions. Ihima people have been known to abhor injustice, they tend to resist any action that would suggest injustice, they have been reputed to have excelled in their endeavours due to their hard work, dedication and committed to their resolve on any vision they seek to achieve. To Asun, these could have attracted envy from his brothers. When one knows his rights and stands to defend it, he may be perceived as being arrogant and proud, which are false and lacks objectivity Again, Ihima people are among the earliest Ebira who migrated outside its shores and attracted goodies, such as education and even the Christian religion.



Effects of the Perception

The apparent mutual cooperation that existed between Ihima and its neighbours has no doubt been replaced by mutual suspicion and unhealthy reservation between the two ends. Such unnatural dispositions could not be in the interest of the larger society. The situation by summation could be likened to a proverbial case involving three persons: a diviner, customer and his rival. The diviner has persistently warned the customer to be wary of his rival, because he is a harmful being. Although the customer is yet to see any dangerous overture from the rival as predicted by the diviner, he always tried to hold his rival on mere suspicion.⁴⁵ The result of this has lingered over the centuries as siblings no longer trust each other. The other Ebira had lost trust and confidence in their kid who had shown flagrant display of arrogance, pride and insubordination in the way went about the settlement and most crucially, the way he handled their mother's health, sickness, death and burial. The resultant effect is reflected in the followings: loss of mutual trust for Ihima by its neighbours, suspicion that has lasted years and no sight of ending, disunity among siblings, emotional and psychological trauma, trans-generational rivalry, superiority complex and claims, reluctance in giving out and receiving innocent children in marriage, stereotyping of each other, among others. What however, appears to douse such perception was that even some *Anilhima* appear not to hold a view of perceived stereotyping, as they did not see such attitudes as an affront on their person, rather, a part of human nature.

It is important to state that the effect of the aforementioned misgivings had lasted for years and has equally reflected in almost all spheres of the life of the people where unity, diplomacy and agreement should have been upheld. For instance, one of the claims by *Anilhima*, is that Ihima people had been marginalised in the aspect of politics. In his account, James Otaru stated that the political marginalisation is reflected in the fact that since the practice of democracy in Nigeria, both during the Second Republic and the return to civil rule in 1999, Ihima is yet to produce a senator to represent the Kogi Central Senatorial District. Senatorial position in the central has evolved among other Ebira districts apart from Ihima.⁴⁶ In similar vein, Obaro corroborated the Ohiomata claim that most times, the commissioner's slot usually allocated to the central are usually shared by among other districts except on few occasions.⁴⁷

While reacting to this, Adagiri⁴⁸ in his account opined that politics, especially in a democratic setting is purely a game of number where majority would always carry the day. To him, Ihima people usually align with the opposition which makes it difficult to produce a senator to represent the central, therefore, the claim of political marginalisation by Ihima calls for questioning. For Ahmed Beida,⁴⁹ it is very possible for an Ihima person to emerge as a senator if there was a gentleman agreement and cooperation from them. Politics to him requires diplomacy which is lacking among Ebira people, until 2016, which the narrative began to change owing to the emergence of Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State who is an Ebira man. While it is easy to start a fight, at times, it may not be easy to end such. In the case under discuss, which has to do with the dynamics of the relationship between Ihima and its neighbours, what started centuries ago has evolved into a huge monster that has impacted negatively on their mutual trust, cooperation and suspicion between them and it appears that an end to such is still not in sight.

Reaction from Ihima

While Ihima's neighbours had taken a stance on his alleged historical misdemeanor, which is characterised in perceived marginalisation, belittling and stereotyping occasioned by an event that was supposed to be oblivion to the present generation. Ihima is, however, seen as unremorseful and has chosen to tread on the path of his progenitor. In his statement, Adagiri,⁵⁰ posits that Ihima people have assumed a posture of misinterpreting and misconstruing any action from other Ebira as a move to marginalise them, even when such is not the case, due to their claim of being smart. To him, this trend has to stop for the total unity of *AneEbira*. As part of Ihima's reaction to the claims of its neighbours, Anataku in his work appears to show some measures of grievances towards the people of other districts as perceived in their attitudes towards Ihima. To him:

From a realistic point of view, the assault against Ihima people is merely baseless, because the attackers themselves cannot always justify their claims. The fact that they usually remain anonymous in their observation, aptly lend credence to the fact that they have no basis for attacking the integrity of a people that are always poised for action. The fact that Ihima as a people always try to exhibit self-dependence was to be able to do things for themselves and equally contribute their quota to the general well-being of Ebiraland. This should not



be misconstrued to mean a different thing; the bases on which the attacker probably gives in for varying mentality in the historical duplication of fact to unleash their attack on the people⁵¹

While Anataku's response may be considered too personal, perhaps, it is a reflection of how many *AniIhima* had perceived the treatments from other *AniEbiras*, with such response; their reactions could further heighten the age-long silent animosity. While some Ihima people feel their neighbours have stereotyped and marginalized them, some appeared to differ in their opinion; because to them, they never experienced such perceived stereotyping from friends and ally of other districts. Lawal⁵² an indigene of Ihima, whose wife is from Kuroko recalled a smooth process in his marriage proposal and the eventual marriage rite, without being subjected to any form of scrutiny on the account of being from Ihima and his wife from Kuroko. He further stated that such belief, perhaps, was no longer upheld. To add credence to Lawal's position, Damisa⁵³ opined that it is true that there was some sort of stereotyping against Ihima, but such is no longer in vogue as societies have evolved over the years and whoever is still upholding such belief and practices should not be taken seriously. To him, he is from Agasa yet married to *Onee AniIhima* (an Ihima woman) and his marriage was free from any form of issues arising from stereotyping.

Going by the evidences provided in the course of this study, there is no doubt that a sibling's relationship that was based on blood connection between Ihima and its neighbours who are Eika, Adavi, Okengwe, Eganyi and Okehi was a smooth, cordial, interesting, forthright, visionary and enshrined in unity and singleness of purpose at some point in history, especially during their early settlement at Opete but has tended to grow sour. The study shows that the handling of the health; ill health, death and burial of the mother of Ebira by Ihima did not go down well with his brothers. Perhaps an apology from Ihima could have pacified his elder brothers, but the unruly behaviour of Ihima's children further aggravated the quagmire, hence creating an impression in the hearts of his siblings that portrayed and indicated deceits and arrogance. But the views of *AniIhima* like Obaro, Otaru, Asun and Jegede, state otherwise, they are of the view that the position held by the neighbours of Ihima against *AniIhima* are baseless and should not hold sway. Again, while critical assessment of the situation would never applaud Ihima's role in the scenario, the extent to which the perception and

alleged reactions have been dragged on to left nothing to be desired, especially from siblings.

Observing the Ihima and its neighbours long standing feud, Social Identity Theory of conflict as proposed by Henry Tajfel and J. C. Turner⁵⁴, readily comes to mind. It states that perceptions play a huge role in people's relationship. The theory is predicated on the assumption and perception that an individual develops his or her self-concept on the basis of his or her attachment to a significant group. The assumption here is that the other Ebira neighbours had developed a self-concept about Ihima, and Ihima had also developed a self-concept about its neighbours. It meant that an individual is dependent on his or her membership to a significant group. By the individual's membership to that group, the self-concept is developed and actualized. The alleged stereotyping and marginalisation was a perception of Ihima and the fact that their neighbours saw them as arrogant, deceitful and unruly is equally a perception which are all the fall out of an event that happened several generations before now.

II. Conclusion

The study interrogated Ihima in the eyes of its neighbours, by examining the dynamics of the relationships they had maintained over the years. The study clearly divulged that there is a deep-seated misgiving arising from mutual distrust, suspicion and name callings about the personalities of each other, but the most prominent of it is that of Ihima. While these misgivings may be deeply rooted in their history, the remote cause shows an allegation of usurping of rights and privileges by Ihima over its neighbours, despite being the youngest, which set the tone for what was going to be a long-standing problem. On the other hand, Ihima has also alleged marginalization, distrust and name callings from its neighbours and Ihima's reactions did not resolve the problem, rather has strengthened the animosity between them. Again, the study reveals that the allegations and counter-allegations were premised on hearsay and, therefore, needless for neighbours who share same ancestry and had lived together over the centuries. The opinion of select few is not sufficient to put away the cord that binds them, rather, they should embrace peace, as that would foster the progress of the entire Ebiraland. Contrary to the opinion that Ihima is cunning, crafty and not to be trusted, resulting in name calling, mutual suspicion and hegemony among others, the study revealed that Ihima's actions were reaction to its perceived marginalisation and lack of confidence as



a result of the treatments it has received from its neighbours over the years.

Endnotes

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³Husani Ibrahim. *The Culture of the Egbura/Ebira/Igarra Etuna Vol.1.* (Zaria, Rockdove Printers, 2009). 19.

⁴Z. I. Anataku. *Historical Perspective of the Clan Structure in Ihima.* (Kaduna: Alnur Comm. Printers. 2002), 117.

⁵HRH Mohammed Bello Ireya, Ohi of Adavi, 75years Ogaminana, 06/05/2022.

⁶Alh Isa Suleiman, Ohi of Eika Elect, 67years, Otite, 07/05/2022.

⁷Alh Isa Suleiman, Ohi of Eika Elect, 67years, Otite, 07/05/2022.

⁸Ahuoiza Samuel, Business Woman, 48 years, kuroko, 08/05/2022.

⁹Sarah Ohunene, Student, 26 years, Ogaminana, 08/05/2022.

¹⁰Jatto Abdulazeez, Lecturing, 57years, Lokoja, 12/11/2022.

¹¹HRH Mohammed Bello Ireya, Ohi of Adavi, 75years Ogaminana, 06/05/2022.

¹²Zubairu Yakubu, Retired Teacher, 67 years, Inike, 06/05/2022.

¹³HRH Mohammed Bello Ireya, Ohi of Adavi, 75years Ogaminana, 06/05/2022.

¹⁴Peter Obaro, Secretary, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years, Oboroke, 11/05/2022.

¹⁵Jimoh Onoruoiza, Engineer, 32years, Ageva, 06/05/2022.

¹⁶Jatto Abdulazeez, Lecturing, 57years, Lokoja, 12/11/2022.

¹⁷Mall Yunusa Kazeem, Islamic Scholar and Imam, 55years, Enyiruwa Mosque, Obehira, 06/05/2022.

¹⁸Mariamoh Zubair, Business Woman, 53 years, Enyiruwa-Obehira, 06/05/2022.

¹⁹Boyi Enero, Civil Servant, 37 years. Eika, 07/05/2022.

²⁰Peter Obaro, Secretary, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years, Oboroke, 11/05/2022.

²¹Siyaka Omananyi, Farmer and Bricklayer, Oboroke, 68years, 11/11/2022.

²²HRH Mohammed Bello Ireya, Ohi of Adavi, 75years Ogaminana, 06/05/2022.

²³Rev. Zaccheaus Ovurevu Asun, a Retired Clergy and Civil Servant, Ihima, 75years. 07/05/2022.

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²⁹HRH Ahmed Abdulrahim Ogido, 67 years, Ohi of Ihima. Ikuehi, 05/05/2022.

³⁰HRH James Otaru, Ohiomata of Odumi Clan, 72 years, Ihima, 11/03/2022.



³¹ Peter Obaro, Secretary, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years, Oboroke, 11/05/2022.

³² Chief I.A Jegede, Chairman, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years. Ohueta, Ihima, 07/05/2022.

³³ Peter Obaro, Secretary, Ihima Kingmakers Council, 79 years, Oboroke, 11/05/2022.

³⁴ Esther Adebayo, *Onoku* (Spiritualist), 28 years, Oboroke/Ihima, 29/12/2022.

³⁵ Esther Adebayo, *Onoku* (Spiritualist), 28 years, Oboroke/Ihima, 29/12/2022.

³⁶ Z. I. Anataku, *Historical Perspective of the Clan Structure in Ihima*, (Kaduna: Alnur Comm. Printers. 2002), 118.

³⁷ HRH Ahmed Abdulrahim Ogido, 67 years, Ohi of Ihima. Ikuehi, 05/05/2022.

³⁸ Alh Isa Suleiman, Ohi of Eika Elect, 67years, Otite, 07/05/2022.

³⁹ Alh Yusuf Abodini, Politician, 64years, Ebiya-Eganyi, Ajaokuta. 12/11/2022.

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⁴² Alh Yusuf Abodini, Politician, 64years, Ebiya-Eganyi, Ajaokuta, 12/11/2022.

⁴³ Amplified Translation of the Holy Bible, Judges Chapter 21 verse 25.

⁴⁴ Rev. Zaccheaus Ovurevu Asun, a Retired Clergy and Civil Servant, Ihima, 75 years. 07/05/2022.

⁴⁵ Z. I. Anataku, *Historical Perspective of the Clan Structure in Ihima*. (Kaduna: Alnur Comm. Printers. 2002), 118.

⁴⁶ HRH James Otaru, Ohiomata of Odumi Clan, 72 years, Ihima, 11/03/2022.

⁴⁷ Hon. James Obaro, Secretary Udumi Clan, 60years, Ihima, 06/05/2022.

⁴⁸ Haruna Adagiri, Politician/Business Man, 66 years, Okene, 29/12/2022.

⁴⁹ Ahmed Beida, Politician/Youth Leader 34 years. Idoji 29/12/2022.

⁵⁰ Haruna Adagiri, Politician/Business Man, 66 years, Okene, 29/12/2022.

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⁵³ Suleman Damisa, Farmer, 66 years, Okene, 29/12/2022.

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