Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika Diasporas in Historical Perspectives

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Abstract
This is a reconstruction of the history of some groups that migrated out of their original homelands in Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika to found new settlements or settled among other groups within and outside the Niger Delta. The study undertakes a historical examination of the causes of outward migration and processes of the creation of diasporas as well as the nature of their relationships with original homelands to establish trajectories of convergences and divergences. The work utilizes oral traditions, archival records, published and unpublished materials to reconstruct the migration history of these groups and establishment of diaspora communities. It argues that the movements were primarily caused by a combination of political, economic, and socio-cultural push and pull factors with settlement histories defined by economic and cultural transfers to warrant the retention of viable historical and traditional relations with their motherlands. The work concludes that the history of Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika diasporas are intertwined with a huge interchange of socio-political and cultural influences.

Introduction
One of the most contentious aspects of Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika oral tradition is that of the origin of their earliest settlers. The complexities associated with the traditions of origins, migrations and settlement of Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika communities in the Eastern Niger Delta are due to the jumbled nature of the narratives of royal houses or first settlers. After
critical analysis of the traditions, one can only streamline them into four major theories of state formations: Hamitic, Benin, Ijo/Itshekiri, and autochthonous. While some attribute the migrations to people fleeing from events in larger states like the Old Benin Kingdom, others claim to have migrated for other reasons ranging from environmental factors, trade to political conflicts in some distant centres of dispersion like Egypt. There is also a tendency to ascribe an autochthonous theory to proto-Ijo settlers of Nembe (Alagoa, 1972, p.125; Otiotio, 1981, pp.7-13), and a Central Niger Delta origin to most Eastern Niger Delta communities. According to Alagoa (1972, p.123), the city-states of Nembe, Elem Kalabari, Ibani and Okrika represent the high watermark in the development of the basic Ijo institutions to be found in the Central and Western Delta ... These states present a more obviously heterogeneous composition than any other ibe in the delta ... but the bulk of the people and their institutions clearly derive from the main Ijo stock of the Central and Western Delta.

However, Derefaka (2003), through comparative archaeological investigations and evidences from ancient settlement and dispersal sites in both Central and Eastern Niger Delta, demonstrated that some settlements of the latter were older than many of the former, which tend to deconstruct the thesis of migration from the Central Niger Delta to the Eastern Niger Delta region. Alagoa’s (1972, p.125) "proto-Ijo" of Nembe reflects an intention to refer to a "people who were the first settlers ... and who were in some sense linguistically and culturally Ijo, but who did not come from Central Delta dispersal points" (Horton, 1998, p.198). This position is strongly corroborated by Alagoa’s (1972, p.123) acknowledgment of the factor of heterogeneity in the formation of Eastern Niger Delta city-states but with an equal insistence on the Ijo dominance of their historical and cultural evolution and institution-building.
Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika diasporas may refer to emigrants who scattered and established permanent settlements in separate geographic locales yet acknowledge their origins and still identify with their roots (Tettey and Puplampu, 2005, p.4). Many factors accounted for the dispersal of these groups from their original domiciles in search of new and better land or settlement, especially economic and political conflicts. The functionality of the concept of diasporas and their relationship with sources of dispersion seems to be aptly captured in Shain and Barth's (2003, p.452) reference to “a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of the ethnic or religious homeland - whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control. Diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others - inside or outside their homeland - as part of the homeland national community, and as such are often called upon to participate, or are entangled, in homeland-related affairs”.

Niger Delta history and traditions identify a number of diaspora communities of Andoni (Obolo) origin in the Okrika territory and vice versa, as well as beyond the Niger Delta region, which historical processes of evolution show some convergences and divergences.

**Identifying the Andoni (Obolo) Diaspora Communities**

The Andoni (Obolo) were the first group to settle in the Niger Delta region (Anene, 1966, p.7), and its diasporas were either founders of settlements or contributors to the peopling of all groups in the Eastern Niger Delta. According to Alagoa (1972, pp.149-63),

The influence of the Obolo or Andoni (from the Ijo, Idoni) on the history of Bonny was significant. But this Eastern Niger Delta Fringe area featured in the history of the Okrika and of
the Kalabari as well. Several Kalabari towns have traditions of prior settlement in the Andoni country before being forced by Bonny hostility to move into the Elem Kalabari sphere of influence... Similarly, Okrika traditions refer to migrants from the Andoni country (such as Ikwo of Ogoloma traditions who later took over leadership of the place).

Similarly, Ejituwu (1998, p.144) observes that,

while the Amabiniame ward of New Calabar, which provided pre-18th century leadership of the city-state, claimed migration from the Asarama-toro, so did the Ogoloma, Ogu and Bolo peoples of Okrika claim migration from the Big River, Idontoro, before the arrival of Alagbariya (Bonny) to the Eastern Delta. Idontoro (Idoni-toro: Andoni River), appears to be synonymous with Asaramatoro. All in all, the Asaramatoro area of Andoni became known as the general dispersal area of many of the peoples of the Eastern Delta today.

Andoni (Obolo) has a significant diasporic presence in Kalabari. The origins of the Akialame, Amabiame, Korome, and Endeme ancient wards of Elem Kalabari, first settled in the late fifteenth century, were traced to the migrations from Old Asarama (Asarama-Toru, Andoni) (Latham, 1973, p.11; Horton, 1998, pp.208-214; Tonye Diepriye Benibo, cited in Enemugwem, 2006, pp.16-17). Ende, founder of the Endeme ward, was joined at Elem Kalabari by "people from Eloma-Toru ... one of the creeks leading eastward out of the Bonny River toward Andoni (Obolo)" (Horton, 1998, p.209). The descendants of the Amabiame section who lay claim to the founding of Elem Kalabari and its earliest settlers, but have "long since scattered among the various latter-day Houses of the three daughter settlements of Elem Kalabari (Bakana, Buguma and Abonnema)", held that

The Amabiame traditions remembered Amabin, their patriarch, as the first settler and town-founder who started the fishing and salt-making settlement that evolved as Elem Kalabari, while the Korome endowed the metropolis with the Owamekaso, the national god (Horton, 1998, pp.208-14), which prompted the reference to the settlement as Owame. Alagoa (1972, p.136) and Miemiem Ayadokubo Briggs (8/3/1997) affirm an Asarama-Toru origin to Opukoroye, the founder of the Korome ward, contrary to Jones' (1963, pp.113-134) position that he was Efik. Owamekaso, like other national deities of the Eastern Niger Delta city-states, has an Andoni (Obolo) origin (Enemugwem, 2006, p.17). Old Asarama on the Asarama-Toru was the vibrant "large village" of Pereira’s account of the 15th century" in the Niger Delta, which provided a home for the Korome and the Amabiame, who claimed migration from the general dispersal area of Asarama-Toru (Ejituwu, 1998, pp.142-44; Horton, 1998, pp.208-14). Erekosima (1986) identifies the "large village" with Andoni as controllers of the Atlantic slave trade at its inception, while Ejituwu (1998, p.144) identifies it with Old Asarama "located in a creek north-east of the main channel of the Rio Real. And this creek was the Asaramatoro which derived its name from Asarama, and means Andony River (or Dony River as shown by Barbot)"

Regarding Ido or Kala-Ido (small Andoni), Alagoa (1972, p.135) observes that the founders of the little community of Ido (Otu Obulo) located near Buguma in Kalabari migrated from Andoni. There are two traditions for the
migration. One states that after the Andoni-Bonny War at the close of 17th century during which two sons of the King of Bonny were killed, Uwuile took a conquered Bonny royal sword to the market which was recognized by Bonny women who reported it to King Perekule I who sent a message to King Abbah to return it or face war. Since Abbah found the war unnecessary, he requested Uwuile to return it or fight Bonny alone. Uwuile escaped from his ancestral home with his household to Elem Kalabari (Alagoa, 1972, p.135; Ereforokuma, 1992, pp.32-4). Another tradition holds that the Uwuile family under Ewelle left Unyeangal around 1700 to Elem Kalabari due to the hostile political policies and slave raiding practices of King Nna Biget (the man of war) of Unyeangala, the Andoni (Obolo) equivalent of Agbaniye Jike of Bille, (Ejituwu, 1989, p.20; Enemugwem, 1990; Ejituwu, 1991). Following the Kalabari civil war of 1879, a descendant of Ewelle, Prawo, led the people out of Elem Kalabari to establish Kala-Ido near Buguma (Ereforokuma, 1992, pp.32-4).

On Tombia and Abalama, Alagoa (1972, p.140) notes that the former was founded by migrants from Ekpetiama in the Central Niger Delta who first settled at Nyakpo, Okpoma Daba Tombia in Andoni territory, and later at Iloma-Tombia near Finima in the Bonny area. Horton (1998, p.212) shows that Tombia and Abalama claim of proximate origin from the area of the Andoni-Bonny creeks is in clear majority compared to the claims to Central Delta Izon-speaking communities, which are in a clear minority. Traditions demonstrate that Abalama and Tombia moved from the Andoni creeks to the Kalabari territory (Alagoa, 1972, p.140; Ediyekio, 1984, pp.7-13; Owiye 21/1/96; Horton, 1998, p.218). The early settlers of Tombia migrated from Nyakpo (Old Ilotombi) due to an epidemic and the remnants started the settlement of Finima and the founders of Abalamie migrated from Old Asarama (Asarama-Toru) prior to the arrival of the Ibani (Alagoa and Fombo, 1972, p.3; Ediyekio, 1984, pp.10-12; Ejituwu, 1991, pp.23-69; Enemugwem, 2006, p.9). These Andoni (Obolo) settlers rendered critical assistance to the resettlement efforts of Alagbariya-led Ndoki migrants in
the founding of Bonny (Alagoa and Fombo, 1972, p.3; Ejituwu, 1991, p.68). Bonny quest to establish hegemony in the lucrative trans-Atlantic slave trade announced the fatal clashes that warranted the dispersion of early settlers to Kalabari, while the remnants founded Abalamabie and Finima and their subsequent absorption and assimilation into the Iban and Ndoki culture (Alagoa, 1972, p.154; Alagoa and Fombo, 1972, p.6; Ediyekio, 1984, p.57; de Cardi, 1899, pp.538-540; Enemugwem, 2006, p.11).

Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika Diasporas in Historical Perspectives (Oruwari, 1986, p.55). Okrika founder, Oputibeya, whose original name was Owele (an Obolo name) came from the Andoni creeks, though a version of the traditions claims a Nembe-Ijo origins via a migration through the Andoni creeks (Opu-Ogulaya cited in Alagoa, 1972, p.145; Ogan, 1988, pp.5-6; Horton, 1998, pp.214-6; Obuoforibo, 2012, p.84). Oputibeya, a fisherman, migrated from his ancestral homeland of Old Ilotombi on Ido-Toru (Andoni River) to Balabokiri then to the Rio Real and later into its northeast corner where he settled on a dry land linking the salt-water for his creek fishing. After his settlement at this vantage point around 850 AD, his brothers joined him and the abode was named Okopiri or Okochiri and the creek, Oko-Toru, after their father, Oko (Ogan, 1988, p.5; George, 1981, pp.11-13; Porter, 1933). Similarly, his kinsmen from Ilotombi led by Fenibeso, a fugitive who escaped punishment for killing his sister who usurped the patriarchal right of eating the head of a valued fish, joined him at Okochiri. Fenibeso demonstrated warrior qualities and prowess against their Mboli (Eleme) neighbours, and pirated the nearby rivers. However, population growth and unrestrained Mboli revenge attacks moved Oputibeya and his kinsmen from Okochiri to the Okrika Island. While at Okochiri, Fenibeso had emerged as the priest-king and took over the political leadership and religious functions of Okrika, and was deified and venerated as Okrika war and national god at death (Alagoa, 1972, p.146; Ibisiki, 1984, pp.8-66; Abam, 1999, pp.23-30). While Alagoa (1972, pp.145-6) points to Amassoma/Isoma-Bou and Andoni (Obolo) as primary and
secondary homes respectively, Horton (1998, pp.214-7) opines that the earliest settlers of Okrika might have migrated from the Central Niger Delta but they settled at various locations in the creeks of the Andoni (Obolo) before moving to the present sites.

Also, Andoni (Obolo) migrants led by Opu-Ogulaya to Okrika established Ogoloma in about 1200 AD (Nzenwunwa, 1983, pp.103-6; Enemugwem, 2006, p.13). Ejituwu (1991, p.33) and Obuoforibo (2012 p.49 & 84) affirm that Opu-Ogulaya and his people left Andoni (Obolo) to found Ogoloma due to his conflict with the Andoni ruler over fishing rights. However, a group of female migrants from Isoma-Bou in the Central Niger Delta settled among the Andoni (Obolo) settlers in the newly founded Ogoloma (Ibisiki, 1984, p.15; Nzenwunwa, 1983, pp.103-6; Enemugwem, 2006, p.13). Traditions of the founding of Ogbogbo and Ele also demonstrate that their ancestors were Andoni (Obolo) migrants who left Fibiri and Old Asarama respectively on the Asarama-Toru due to a conflict between two brothers.

For Bolo, migrants left Old Ilotombi (Ilotombia) in Andoni (Obolo) due to a civil war caused by the death of an only male child of a prominent woman in a stampede associated with a fight over soup of tilapia fish vis-à-vis a deadly curse placed on the community by the woman. As a result, the people fled first to Okopiri (Okochiri) to the site of present-day Bolo (Ibisiki, 1984, pp.32-3; Oruwari, 1986, pp.1-55; Ejituwu, 1991, p.28; Allison, cited in Ereforokuma, 1992, p.49). Another tradition suggests that Bolo ancestors immigrated from the ancient Benin Empire and settled first at Amasoma in the Central Niger Delta from where they moved to Olom-Tombia then through Ido-Toru (Andoni River) to Olom-Bolobie (Fiberesima, 1990). Obuoforibo (2012, p.355) shows that the founders of Bolo left Amasoma and moved “to Ilotombia where they finally settled among the Andonis” before reaching the present abode. It was at Ilotombia that Luka, the son of Abalamaya Opuoso, their patriarch, took over the group leadership from his father (Fiberesima, 1990; Obuoforibo, 2012). For the Okrika community of
Ogu, Derefaka (12/3/2012) and Obuoforibo (2012, p.287) agree that its primeval ancestors migrated from the Old Asarama Kingdom, a relic of the old continent of the Atlantis, which previously covered the present Bight of Bonny (formerly Biafra). It was during the reign of King Oboro who died at Asarama in the final days of the submergence of the land that the people started their northward voyage in search of a suitable highland for settlement. Ogu and Ele communities came from the same source (Obuoforibo, 2012, p.257).

Another important Andoni (Obolo) diaspora community in Okrika is Okuru-Ama whose founders migrated from the Andoni (Obolo) community of Ido in Elem Kalabari in 1815 (Okara, 1984, p.8; Ejituwu, 1991, p.28; Obuoforibo 2012, 397-9). Their leader, Ikalile, led Owele, Etete, Otikor, Abisorom, among others, to locate his friend, Oruboko, in Okrika, in escape of the “frustration over deprivation of natural rights by other relatives at home”, and was given the dreaded Oruikpu Forest reserved for the burial of abominable deaths to settle, which became Idoni-polo (Andoni quarters) in the Egweme-Biri in Okrika mainland (Obuoforibo, 2012, pp.397-8). At Idoni-polo, Ikalile begat Legbara who begat Okuru and adopted Mgbagwu (Ngerialabo). His house comprised the six families of Etete, Ala, Tamuno, Opuamabo, Okuru, and Ngerialabo, under Okuru as Head of Ikalile/Oruboko House. Okuru was an adjutant to Chieyeiniabouso (Okujagu) in the Ado-Egweme War of 1892 that caused the disintegration of the Oruboko/Kaliile House and movements to Okujagu-Ama, Ogbogbo, and Okrika. In 1905, the Ikalile House under Okuru was granted a portion of land to settle by Abuloma. This is where Okuru-Ama, referred to by Okujagu-Ama as Ayama (New Town in Obolo), stands till today (Obuoforibo 2012; 398-9).

Regarding Bonny, the Andoni (Obolo) featured as its earlier settlers prior to the arrival of the Ibani and Ndoki. Andoni (Obolo) settlements of Ogwede (Egwede), Ayambo (Ayamboko), Aganya (Agana) and Iwoma
with a population of over 300 near the present site of Saint Stephen’s Anglican Cathedral metamorphosed into quarters in Grand Bonny (Epelle, 1955, pp.9-39; Cookey, 1974, p.15; Crowther, 1882; Enemugwem, 2006, p.9). Also, Ibani’s national deity, Ikuba, and the popular House of Skulls originated from Andoni (Obolo) (Jones, 1963, p.105; Alagoa, 1972, p.154; Alagoa and Fombo, 1972). However, the newly arrived expatriate Ibani and Ndoki groups initiated deep and extensive socio-cultural interactions with the indigenous settlers and assimilated them linguistically and culturally, though they retained "their names and those of their guardian deities ... as evidence of their original identities" (Horton, 1998, p.222; Enemugwem, 2006, p.11).

Of Andoni (Obolo) diasporas in Nembe, Oboloma (founded by Obolo migrants) was one of the original settlements of the city-state of Nembe-Brass (Tepowa, 1907, pp.83-6; Alagoa, 1964, pp.34-42; 1972, pp.124-34; Otiotio, 1981, pp.7-13). According to Alagoa (1972, pp.125-6), the earliest settlers of Nembe "appear to have been proto-Ijo, since all the traditions refer to them as Ijo, but cannot assign a place of origin for them ... The traditions generally refer to (the) rulers as Olodiama pere, Oboloma pere, and Onyoma pere, ... a priestly kingship akin to the High Priests of the national gods of the ibe of the Central and Western Delta." Similarly, Yok Obolo, the first king and national god of Andoni (Obolo), always chose his High Priest personally (Ejituwu, 1995, p.100). More so, Olodiama and Oboloma were "the most important settlements in the area", which the Itshekiri migrants from the Kingdom of Warri later dominated due to unresolved differences over fishing rights (Alagoa, 1972, p.127). The dispersion of Oboloma populations westwards led to the founding of "Buseni, Okodia, and Oruma in the Central Delta; and eastwards to found Sangama (Kalabari), Nkoro, and Owolomabiri (Okrika) ... These migrations establish Nembe (Oboloma) ..." (Alagoa, 1972, p.132).
Migrants who left Andoni (Obolo) to avoid the slave raiding activities and vengeance of Nna Biget founded Ibeno. The Ibeno group had earlier separated from their Andoni (Obolo) kith and kin in the course of migration from Ramby in the Cameroons and settled in Obutong in the Cross River area, but later joined their brothers in the Eastern Niger Delta after being driven by Abakpa people. In the secondary migration, they moved with the deity, *Yok Obolo* (Abasi Ibeno), and *Ewitaraba*, through Okot-Ete or Okoroete in the present-day Eastern Obolo who referred to them as *Ebi Ifoni*. From Okoroete, they moved eastward towards the Qua Iboe River and settled at Efa, then to Ikot Aquaha and later to Ikot Ndito Ison. Due to conflicts with the Ibibio of Eket, they moved across the Qua Iboe River and founded Okoroutip, named after the *Utip* tree and the goddess, *Utip*, on the river bank (Enemugwem, 1990, p.60; Ereforokuma, 1992, p.35).

From Okoroutip, some migrants went to Oron. They exchanged the products of the fishing and salt-making occupation, which they brought from Andoni (Obolo), for the food crops and vegetables of the Ibibio neighbours. The local long-distance trade and exchanges of Okoroutip and the Ibibio led to the founding of more Ibeno villages, inter-marriages, cultural integration and the adoption of the Ibibio language. However, the Ntafit and Ibra-Obolo were able to retain aspects of the Obolo language and culture. The village of Ukpanak (Aqua Obio, Orua Iboe or Big Town) housed the shrine of *Yok Obolo* until it was removed when Jaja of Opobo attacked in 1881, while Upenekang was named after the ancient Andoni (Obolo) *Ekan* cult (Ereforokuma, 1992, pp.36-9). Presently, the Ibeno speak *Ibino*, a mixture of Obolo and Ibibio, due to the uncontrollable polygamous marriages to Ibibio women but were able to retain their founding Andoni (Obolo) lineages and a good degree of cultural practices (Enemugwem, 2006, p.7).

With respect to Oron, tradition claims that Obolo and Oro (the patriarch of the Oron) were of the same stock, migrated to the Niger Delta and settled
together in Andoni (Obolo) before moving out due to fratricidal quarrels through Eket to their present abode in the Ibibio country (Uya, 1984, p.26-9). According to this tradition, Oro’s three canoes left Andoni (Obolo) to the Ibibio country where his two sons, Oyoku and Ati, established the *atak atak Oro*. Another version of the tradition suggests that the Old Asarama-Okrika war led to an Okrika-Ngwa alliance and the frightening spectacle of the cannibalism of Ngwa mercenaries warranted the migration of Usoro and Udoenyi families from the Mbaba House in Unyeangala through Egwanga (Ikot Abasi) and Eket to found the villages of Oron (Ereforokuma, 1992, pp.42-4; Enemugwem, 2006, p.5).

Ohafia originally known as Mben, has a significant percentage of Andoni (Obolo) diasporas. Traditions (Ike and Okori, 14/5/1992; Urum, 15/5/92) posit that Andoni (Obolo) and Ohafia were related. The Ohafia (Mben) showed dexterity in wood-carving, handicrafts, iron and bronze casting, and farming, with the custom of headhunting intended to advance bravery and full manhood. They were credited with the production of the bronze arts found in the shrine of *Yok Obolo* at Agwut-Obolo and transported to Britain following the colonial expedition against Andoni (Obolo) in 1904. Oral traditions suggest that the cannibalistic content of the headhunting culture and search for an exclusive settlement warranted the migration of the Ohafia, a war-like society and popular for its war dance, from Okwala Andoni (Obolo) (Ike, Nwafor, Nnaoke, Bom 14/5/1992). Urum (15/5/1992) recounts how Ohafia opponents utilized a peculiar kind of club with fire on its bullets to kill them in great numbers to warrant their emigration under the leadership of Atita Akpo to Isieke-Ibuku near Umuahia from where they embarked on another phase of migration under their new leader, Ezema Atita. While Eddah separated from the group at Abam, the Mben continued the search for a better settlement and became known as *Ndioha Afia* (people who can walk in the bush), later corrupted to Ohafia to replace Mben. They finally settled at Elu Ohafia from where they spread to found new villages.
and transitioned from a patrilineal to matrilineal succession system (Ereforokuma, 1992, pp.54-60).

**Locating the Okrika Diasporas Communities**

The establishment of the Okrika federation, *Kirike Se*, was the outcome of multiple migrations from different areas and evolution into a community of people speaking one language and living one culture. However, there is a dominant tendency to assume that the first settlers Okrika came from the Ijo settlements of the Central Niger Delta (Obuoforibo, 2012, p.2). However, evidence also suggest that non-Central Niger Delta migrants established many Okrika settlements and contributed to the institutionalization of its traditions, customs and culture. Okrika traditions of origins collected by Alagoa (1972, p.145) show that there were mixed migrations from the Ijo country of Central Niger Delta and Andoni (Obolo) of the Eastern Niger Delta in the founding of Okochiri, Ogoloma and Okrika island. It is also shown that the dispersion of the ancient Obolo group or proto-Ijo settlers of the pre-Nembe settlement of Oboloma and the movement of its populations eastwards led to the founding of Nkoro and Owolomabiri in Okrika (Alagoa, 1972, p.132).

The most prominent Okrika diaspora community is Nkoro (Kala-Kirika or Little Okrika) in the Andoni (Obolo) territory. The group that founded Nkoro left Okrika due to unresolved disputes and settled briefly at Okochiri, Bolo and Iyoba near Ataba in Andoni (Obolo) where they attacked and killed Andoni and Ogoni men. The reprisals made Iyoba uninhabitable for the Nkoro group thus prompted a further movement to *Ibiangafurute* (seize a vantage point) in Ogoni. Incessant and unrestrained Ogoni attacks on Kala-kirika prompted another migration to the establishment of Korika-Ama before moving, due to conflict with the Ndoki, to the present site of Nkoro near New Asarama in the Andoni (Obolo) territory. The old island of Korika-Ama is renamed as Olom Nkoro (Alagoa, 1972, p.166). Meanwhile, it is important to note the migrants from
the historical dispersion of Oboloma (founded by Obolo), the cradle of Nembe, were the populations that founded Nkoro and Owolomabiri in Okrika (Alagoa, 1972, p.132), signifying that Nkoro could also be considered as a diaspora community of Andoni (Obolo).

Another Okrika diaspora community is Umu-Ebule II in Etche that started during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Local traditions record that Okrika slave merchants regularly had stopovers running into days at Umu-Ebule on their return trips from the hinterland markets in Mbaise and Obowo in present-day Imo State. This practice continued into the period of the palm oil economy when Okrika formed an alliance with Umu-Ebule against the Ohafia. At the end of the war in 1861, the Okrika/Umu-Ebule alliance was victorious. Consequently, Umu-Ebule gave some parcels of land to Okrika in appreciation of their strategic assistance. The Okrika merchant-settlers such as Papamie George, Ogbuagu Dikibo, Ikiriko Daka, Paul Orupabo, Philip Fiberesima, Marcus Iniwuari Oruene, Charles Ngeri, and Sam Roland began to cultivate crops like rubber, palm fruits, and other export crops on the land, which became known as Okrika Plantation and later Umu-Ebule II, as an emergent 19th century commercial centre (Adubo, forthcoming). On the other hand, it was said that Oju Daniel-Kalio, Paramount Chief of Okrika, acquired the land where Umu-Ebule II is located in 1911 for Okrika palm oil traders (Obuoforibo, 2012, p.407)

Other Okrika diaspora communities include Azuabie and Okujagu-Ama in the Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, Akpajo in the Eleme Local Government Area, and an assimilated group in Elelenwo in the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Till date Azuabie has retained the Okrika language and continued to maintain socio-cultural affinity with its motherland. Like Umu-Ebule II, Okujagu-Ama started as a resting place for Okrika merchants returning from the hinterland slave markets. However, during an attempted invasion of Oginigba by Rumubiakani, the former obtained the support of Okrika represented by
the Kpeya War-Canoe House, probably the dominant group of Okrika merchants utilizing the cultural and environmental facilities provided by Oginigba in their commercial ventures. The eventual Kpeya (Okrika)-Oginigba alliance against Rumubiakani gave Oginigba victory and the Kpeya House was rewarded with a part of Oginigba land which subsequently became the settlement of Okujagu-Ama.

The Okrika diaspora community in Elelenwo was established by migrants from Kalio-Ama (Okrika) during the era of palm oil trade. The present-day Ikpuruba market formerly known as Obufe (backyard market) in Elelenwo was exploited by the settlers of Kalio-Ama (Okrika) for their palm oil products. Due to increasing market opportunities, gradual residential efforts were developed by Kalio-Ama (Okrika) settlers. Oral accounts also show that Oju Daniel Kalio, a Warrant Chief from Okrika, had settled on a spot between Elelenwo and the present Akpajo, in close proximity to the market, to collect and handover taxes from the people for the British colonial authority. The Oju Daniel Kalio’s factor combined with the Obufe dynamics to attract migrants from Kalio-Ama (Okrika) to develop a permanent settlement known as Akpa-Oju but corrupted to Akpajo.

Outside the Eastern Niger Delta, there is also an Okrika diaspora community of Umu-Okrika in Mbaise, Igboland. Oral account states that Umu-Okrika evolved during the era of the palm oil trade from the status of Okrika traders' resting-place in Mbaise on their return journeys from the hinterland markets which spanned days and even weeks. Subsequently, the traders began to settle permanently with their families in the area and became known as Umu-Okrika. Nwigwe and Nwoko (cited in Agbavu Digest, 2012) state that this Okrika diaspora community is one of the five settlements that make up the Ekwerazu Clan of Mbaise viz: Oparanadim, Mpam, Ihitte-Afoukwu, Umu-Okrika and Obolia. Umu-Okrika is identified with the two outstanding markets of Okrika Nwankwo and Okrika Nweeke.
The former is made up of Umuagbavu, Okrikama, Umugwa and Umuezuo, while the latter is made up of Umuevu and Akpim.

Andoni (Obolo)/Okrika Diasporas and Original Homes: Continuity and Change

Obviously, some diasporas show evidence of being acculturated and absorbed into host communities and forced upon them a sense of detachment from the homelands, some others rejected acculturation and resisted the replacement of original cultures, and yet others developed practices to generate forms of hybrid cultures and identities in new communities of belonging. While most Andoni (Obolo) diasporas were victims of cultural absorption and canonical assimilation making continued attachment to original home cultures very difficult, Okrika diasporas, especially Nkoro, continued to retain their cultural identity or, at best, adopted some form of cultural pluralism or hybridity through the processes of cultural diffusion and syncretism with a high degree of homeland attachment. However, like those of Andoni (Obolo), Okrika diasporas in Elelenwo, Akpajo, Umu-Ebule II (Etche), and Umu-Okrika (Mbaise) have been assimilated and absorbed into the host cultures. Nevertheless, the diasporas have continued to demonstrate a sense of historical and cultural relationships with the homelands in diverse ways.

In their explanation of the complexities associated culture retention and homeland (de)tachment, Tettey and Puplampu (2005, pp.17-18) argue that The spatio-psychological fluidity that accompanies these interactions suggests that, far from being dissociated from their places of origin, diaspora communities need to be seen as constantly evolving communities that are products of ‘a socio-political process involving negotiation of who we are and what it means to be who we are during particular performative moments’, not only in the context of their host societies, but in relation to their societies of origin as well.
This encapsulates the degree of complexities associated with the diasporas’ capacity to either retain original culture and continuously remain attached to, or detach from, homeland in their critical navigation of their deterritorialized environments. It is not difficult to see among Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika diasporas the identified experiences and a demonstration of significant linkages with their communities of origin that cover a considerable array of interactions and some sort of cultural and economic transfers from the original homes to host societies, and the re-enactment of traditional peculiarities. The linkages clearly manifested in the degree of replication of original customs and traditional rites that demonstrate the diasporas' avowed identity with the motherland socio-cultural milieu, even as they continue to struggle to adapt to the vagaries of the new locales. For instance, at foundation, the Umu-Okrika diasporas maintained linguistic and socio-cultural link with the Okrika, but with the passage of time they were absorbed and integrated into the Mbaise society.

A few of the diaspora communities retained their distinct identities and showed continued historical and socio-cultural relations with their Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika motherlands. The fraternal bond between Andoni (Obolo) and its diasporas was demonstrated by the regular visits of the latter during the annual ritual sacrifices of Yok Obolo, the national god, the festival dance of Mgbebergbe, Njaka Okwan rituals, etc., in which processes cultural relational experiences were re-enacted (Ejituwu, 1991, p.215; Ereforokuma, 1992, p.73). Also, there is in existence the shrine of Yok Obolo in Okoroutip (Ibeno), Elem Tombia and Ido (Kalabari) with the observance of ritual sacrifices. Masquerade types, dancing patterns and cults such as Akumute, Egbe and Ofiokpo in Andoni (Obolo) are also found in Ibeno and Ohafia. The costumes and head gears carried by special persons in the Ohafia war dance has the semblance of Mgbebergbe festival dance and the Andoni (Obolo) war dance with the exception of the sword in the Ohafia case (Ereforokuma, 1992, pp.40, 66-7). Similarly, Nkoro families had continued to attend crucial cultural and traditional functions and meetings.
with their kith and kin in Chama, Jama and Biriwu Houses of Ayungubiri in Okrika to maintain viable socio-cultural affinity with the motherland.

In 1921, some Ibeno lineage heads visited Andoni (Obolo) in an apparent show of a homecoming. Subsequently, the Ibeno and Oron turned down invitations from the Ibibio to join the Ibibio State Union (ISU) formed in 1928 "on the ground that it did not reflect their own Obolo origin" (Ereforokuma, 1992, p.70). Unrestrained pressure by the Ibibio ethnic group and complex urban situation that threatened to detribalize and neutralize their Ibeno and Oron identity warranted a delegation to Andoni (Obolo) in 1949 for an urgent need to explore the possibility of an all-inclusive union for Ibeno, Oron, Ohafia, and Obolo. This visit resulted in the formation of Obolo State Union (OSU) in 1949 with headquarters in Agwut-Obolo to stimulate group unity and create socio-political consciousness for Andoni (Obolo) and its diasporas (Ejituwu, 1991, p.214). In the course of time, OSU successfully raised the level of socio-political consciousness in the motherland and among the diasporas, and heightened the appreciation of indigenous/original home culture. Also, OSU advocated and applied to the British Colonial Government for the creation of an Obolo-Ibeno Division in the former Calabar Province of the colonial administration. However, it was not granted and the Ibeno group have continued to be treated as a vulnerable minority by the Ibibio into the contemporary post-colonial period.

Conclusion
The concept of diasporas has multiple meanings. The reconstruction of the histories of the diasporas is one of the fastest growing subjects in the discipline of African history and development studies. However, there appears to be a considerable preference for African diasporas across the Atlantic without an equivalent attention on the historical internal mass movements and settlement outside motherlands within African societies and construction of diaspora communities, which had generated huge
indigene-settler or minority-majority tensions and contributed to the high scale of insecurity and internal social conflicts. The reconstruction of the history of Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika diasporas is an attempt to contribute to the growing body of historiographical literature of internal migrations and establishment of settler communities outside their homelands with consequential experiences. A panoply of factors: political conflict, economic and socio-cultural issues and environmental disadvantages compelled Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika populations to migrate from their primary homes to secondary settlements and became categorized as diasporas.

Research demonstrate that many emigrants of Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika origins have undergone comprehensive cultural changes and adaptation in the new homes, yet they continue to maintain and show traces of historical ties and traditional affinity with the donor cultures. Still a lot others have been completely absorbed and acculturated by the host cultures to warrant them to lose touch or memory of their primary cultures, while retaining a sense of historical origins. The analysis of Andoni (Obolo) and Okrika diasporas demonstrate a commonplace proof of economic and cultural transfers defined by continued practice of traditional occupational activities as noted among the Ibeno of Andoni (Obolo) and Nkoro of Okrika.

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