

## REVIEW OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF IKWERE ETHNIC GROUP IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

**Chinda, C. Izeoma**

Department of History and International Diplomacy,  
Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University,  
Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt.  
*izeoma.chinda@ust.edu.ng*

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### Abstract

Although there exists a body of literature on histories of Nigeria, southern Nigeria and the Niger Delta, those of the Ikwerre was subsumed as a pan- Igbo nation, and have either been mentioned in passing or neglected entirely by scholars. This article therefore, resonates with the call for overall historical studies of the African societies by K.O. Dike (1980:19) when he avers “the priority of the African historian at present time should be wide spread in-depth historical studies of African societies, large and small to provide us with the data we seek as basis for generalization and theories”. Obarolkimi, (1972: xxi) posits that such studies would make for a mutual understanding of the various groups as it will make the history of “Nigeria a little more complete than it has hitherto been”. This article is, therefore, an attempt to fill this gap. This paper surveyed fifty works that are of interest to scholars of Ikwerre history.

**Keywords:** History, Ikwerre History, Studies, Literature Review

### Introduction

Ikwerre people inhabit a substantial part of the Northern half of Rivers State in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. They constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Rivers State and Niger Delta. From Rumuekpe in the extreme west to Elemenwo in the extreme east, and from Rebisi in the south to Ubimini in the north, is a vast flat land mass devoid of geographical extremes. The geography of the area shows the balance of nature when one takes a look at the outside world. It is situated within the co-ordinates 4<sup>o</sup> 50’N, 5<sup>o</sup> 15’ N, 6<sup>o</sup> 30’E and 7<sup>o</sup> 15’ E covering a land area of about 21400km<sup>2</sup> which is about 20 percent of the total cultivable land in Rivers State (Wahua,1993:125).

In spite of the fact that the history of the Ikwerre has had scant mention in works in Nigeria, southern Nigeria, Niger Delta and Rivers State, is important to note that the Ikwerre has in recent times attracted a lot of research and publications. Njaka, in Chinda (2015), observes that if a race of a people has no record of its past, it is lost to posterity. That such a race is like an empty and hollow trunk that makes a lamentable sound to which no body responds. Elechi Amadi (1993), notes that “For any group of people to make any meaningful progress in the modern world, it must be self-aware. Self-awareness is not practicable without literacy, and literacy is impossible without literature...” It should be able to contribute greatly to the social, material, and intellectual progress of Ikwerre land’.

This study therefore, is a survey of the historiography of fifty works on the Ikwerre. The richness and poverty of these works will encourage students in the study in Ikwerre history. To achieve this objective, the publications are divided into four sets. First, general histories of Nigeria which make

reference to the Ikwerre, second are works on southern Nigeria, third and fourth are works on Niger Delta and Rivers State respectively, finally, are works on the Ikwerre.

### **Ikwerre in General History of Nigeria**

Beginning with M. Crowder's (1966) *A Short History of Nigeria*, E. Isichei's *A History of Nigeria* (1983), O. Ikime, (1977), *The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest*. Equally important is Obarokime's (1980) (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. These works give an account of Nigeria's past from pre-historic times, and also deepened our knowledge of Nigerian history.

J.U.J Asiegbu, (1986) *Nigeria and Its British Invaders 1851-1920* is a compilation of documentary extracts relating to areas of conflict between Britain and Nigeria communities during the period under study. The work revisits the motives of the British colonial enterprise in Nigeria and the basis of the indigenous people's reaction to the ineluctable foreign thrust into their land. He also analyzed the methods employed by the British to subjugate Nigerians, particularly their use of minor and major expeditions. Asiegbu also reports the subjugation of some Ikwerre lands of Isiokpo, Elele, Ubele (Obele), Ibaa, Alimini under the command of Major Mackenzie between 1901-1902.

Some works that x-rays the Nigerian civil war are, Olusegun Obasanjo, (1980) *My Command: Account of the Nigeria civil war, 1967-1970*, and Elechi Amadi; (1973), *Sun Set in Biafra*. These works are records of their experiences during the war. In May 1969, Obasanjo was appointed the General Officer Commanding the 3 Marine Commando Division of the Nigerian Army an office he held until the war ended in 1970. His operations area of war, with 16 Brigade and 14 Brigade covered Ikwerre communities of Elele and Igritta (Igwuruta), Elele-Alimini, Umu-Nelu (Omarelu), Apani, Ibima (Ubima) to relieve pressure on the communities to push the rebels further away from Port Harcourt. Amadi, who led the Federal government against the Biafra, reveals the challenges faced by some Ikwerre who were imprisoned as they were suspected to be saboteurs.

Equally important are works on the role that Christian Missionaries played in the entrenchment of European imperialism in Nigeria is analyzed in E.A. Ayandele's (1965), *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. Ayandele stresses that trade, social life and politics in the Niger Delta were closely bound with missionary enterprise in the last four decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He posits that Christianity in the Delta city states of Bonny, Brass, New Calabar (Kalabari) and Okrika basically became the explosive force within few years of its establishment due to social and economic concern rather than spiritual consideration. He goes on to observe that King Jaja of Opobo was one of the few Niger Delta Chiefs to discern the disruptive and subversive effects of missionary propaganda in Niger Delta. That King Jaja's anti-missionary activities extended to the palm oil markets in Ikwerre land, especially Ndele oil markets, when in 1883 he took sides with the Okrika and Kalabari to seize the oil markets from Bonny (1965:93).

With regards to works on the economic history of Nigeria, A. Akinjobin and S.O. Osoba (1980) (eds) *Topics on Nigeria Economic and Social History* and K.O. Ekundare (1972) *An Economic History of Nigeria 1860 – 1960* (1972), takes a panoramic survey of economic developments in Nigerian history, spanning from pre-colonial times to the post-independence era. They discuss the development of railway and sea port of Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria, all of which were significant events in Nigeria. Of interest is A.E. Afigbo's article entitled "The Economic Foundations of Pre-colonial Igbo Society" which attempts to delineate the economic dynamics of a typical Nigerian society. Although Port Harcourt was mentioned, no reference was made to the economic contribution of Ikwerre people who are the indigenous inhabitants of the area and on whose land the Port is built.

From the above, it is apparent that the general history of Nigeria is generalized and therefore did not consider the different indigenous societies that constitute what later became known as Nigeria as such, had very little on Ikwerre studies. Although gaps exist in these works, they are nevertheless interesting. This then makes it imperative to look at existing works on southern Nigeria.

### Works on Ikwerre Historiography in southern Nigeria

On Southern Nigeria, Leonards' (1906) *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes*; Talbot (1926), *Peoples of Southern Nigeria Vols1 – IV*; Anene (1966), in *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1884 – 1906: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate*; Jones' (1963) *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: The Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*; Jones' (1963) *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: The Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*; Afigbo's (1973), *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891 – 1929*; Ifemesia (1978), *Southeastern Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century: An Introductory Analysis*; Afigbo (1980) *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture* are works and records of the events which advanced our historical knowledge of the peoples of the southern part of Nigeria. These include the transitional history from traditional to colonial administration; the works outline the traditional philosophical and religious life of the people. Although these works provide information on some Ikwerre villages, the major flaws in them is that they subsume Ikwerre under Igbo of Southern Nigeria as the Ikwerre is described as "Those of the nation (Ibo) who dwell to the east of the Sombreiro" and refers to the people as "Ikwerre Ibo".

Ofonogoro (1979), *Trade and Imperialism in Southern Nigeria, 1881 – 1929* (1979), explored European involvement in the economy of Southern Nigeria and the impact of economic transformations instituted by British interests. The work establishes the subjugation suffered by the people of Ikwerre. An instance was the military operation in 1898 undertaken against Chief Wogu of Rumuokoroshe. It further records the attacks on Elele Alimini, and Agwa leading to destruction of a total of 1700 guns. The work discusses Ndelle as one of the places where traders secured accommodation for their goods. He further states that *Ojukwu* Diobu, a popular oracle associated with *Ebinokpabi*- (long juju of Arochukwu) played a crucial role in intergroup litigation amongst traders. The work is quite instructive as it brings to the fore Ikwerre participation and experiences during the period under study

Another important report was the Intelligence reports. Intelligence reports were information and data collected by British administrative officers from the various groups of Africans in their administrative areas, primarily through field work and interviews among the peoples, concerning their history, culture and especially the traditional system of government of the groups. These were for the effective administration of the area.

One of such reports was that of the Obio clan (1930), which stresses that the Ikwerre is distinct from Igbo. The report notes that the people called Ikwerre are made up of different clans (1930), but that it was doubtful whether a common ancestor existed for them. It further explains that, although some claimed Ekpeye or Igbo origin, the people were neither Igbo nor Ekpeye. The report could not determine where the Ikwerre people came from.

With the deficiencies in works on southern Nigeria, the Ikwerre majorly subsumed as Igbo, the researcher proceeds on to Niger Delta and Rivers State where the Ikwerre is located.

### The Ikwerre in Niger Delta and Rivers State Historiography

One of the earliest works on the Niger Delta historiography, is Dike's (1965), *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1883*. It discusses primarily the British economic activities in the Niger Delta, and the eventual introduction of British administration in the area. It highlights the intermediary role of the peoples of the Delta city-states and their encounter with the hinterland communities as suppliers and producers of slaves, palm produce and other items. According to Dike, Ikwerre land was one of the sources of goods for the overseas trades dominated by the Kalabari chiefs. Also, Ejituwu, (2002:277-284), "Atlantic Trade"; Alagoa's (1972), *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*; Alagoa and Fombo (eds.) (2001), *Chronicle of Grand Bonny*. For Ejituwu, Ikwerre land was one of the major trade routes of the British traders at the Rio-Real, Alagoa makes reference to Elele community with regard to its market as one of the areas adjoining the eastern Niger Delta. Consequently, Alagoa and Fombo posit that the series of wars between Kalabari and Bonny was in their

bid to control the palm oil trade routes and market in Ndelle and Rumuekppe in Ikwerre land. Changes in the economic system produced disturbances in their political lives that Bonny obtained the help of Chief Mpi of Isiokpo-Ikwerre in its war against Elem Kalabari. Reference was made to Ikwerre mainly because of its markets and it did not go beyond that. The flaw of these works is that it glossed over the contributions of Ikwerreland and its people to the wealth and development of the nation.

In his *The Church in the Niger Delta*, Epelle (1955), states that Ikwerreland was evangelized by the African traders from the eastern Niger Delta city-states of Bonny, Kalabari and Okrika. Epelle traces how King DappaPeppe had, in 1864, invited the Church Missionary Society (CMS) for purposes of evangelization, a mission which later began in 1865. That the wave of Christian gospel, then spread to Kalabari in 1873 and Okrika 1880. In his words, Ibaa was one of the first places that held the gospel well. Other Ikwerre towns that did the same were Isiokpo, Ndele, Rumuewhor, and Ogbakiri. The Ikwerre towns of Elikohia, Oginigba, Woji, Rumuokwursi, Elelenwo, and Rumuomasi and so on, were converted by the Okrika Christian traders. Some Ikwerre converts at the early stages of conversion had to attend church services at Abonnema and Okrika because they had no place to worship in Ikwerreland. By 1920, there were about 1,383 Christians and 33 mission stations throughout Ikwerreland. By 1927, the Ikwerre Churches in Woji, Elelenwo, Rumuokwursi, Rumuodara, Oroigwe, Atali were put under Okrika ecclesiastical district; while Ogbakiri, Ndele, Ibaa, Isiokpo were under Kalabari, with the headquarters at Abonnema.

Similarly, Obuoforibo (1990), *A History of the Niger Delta: Anglican Communion 1864 – 1980* gives a synopsis of the beginning of the Anglican Church in the eastern Niger Delta, which he traces to the evangelistic efforts of Bishop Crowder and his African agents in Bonny, Brass, Opobo, New Calabar (Kalabari) and Okrika. It was from these coastal towns that Anglicanism spread to Ikwerreland. An important development that took place in Anglican Churches in the Niger Delta was the translation of the Bible, Canticles and hymns into the indigenous languages. With this initiative came the publication of the first hymnal and Book of Common Prayer in Ikwerre entitled *Eri-Nye-Ai*. The works of Epelle and Obuoforibo explain the advent of Christianity in Ikwerreland.

There are three works reviewed on Rivers State, namely: Tamuno and Alagoa (eds.)(1980) *Eminent Nigerians of Rivers State*; Alagoa and Tamuno (eds.) (1989) *Land and Peoples of Nigeria*; *Rivers State*; and Alagoa and Derefaka (eds.) (2002) *The Land and People of Rivers State: Eastern Niger Delta*.

Tamuno and Alagoa (eds.) (1980) give an account of the biographies of fourteen personalities whose contributions to their communities in various areas deserve recognition. Two articles in the work make reference to Ikwerre personalities. In an article “King Nnyevunwo of Ogbakiri” Okpara (1980:59-70), examines the life and times of King Nnyevunwo, the son of King Orlugodo of Ogbakiri. He argues that King Nnyevunwo ascended the throne about when King AbiAmakiri (Amachree IV) was enthroned in 1863 as the King of the Kalabari. He also discusses King Nnyevunwo’s mediatory role in the civil strife among the Kalabari and between the Bonny and Andoni, the royal visit of the King to King AbiAmakiri in 1871 and his death. The work reveals that Ikwerre had been in relations with her riverine neighbours before their contact with the Europeans.

In the same work, Somba’s (1980:160-165), article “Madam ErinwoWojiewhori of Ibaa” discusses the role played by Madam Erinwo in planting Christianity in Ibaa. According to Somba, about 1890, Erinwo’s visit with her husband to Abonnema aided her conversion to Christianity. As a missionary, she fought relentlessly against the obnoxious practices that were prevalent at the time. In 1901, Madam Erinwo built the first church hall in Ibaa under the Niger Delta Protectorate. By the time she died in 1918, she had opened other branches at Isiokpo, Elele-Alimini, Omudioga, Omarelu, Ubima and Omuanwa. The work traces the origin and spread of Christianity in various communities in Ikwerre land. Somba’s study is very important because much historiography on Ikwerre land has not given enough space to the role of women. This is due to the patriarchal nature of Ikwerre culture. Although they are biographies, they are richly documented but only two Ikwerre personalities were discussed.

Alagoa and Tamuno (eds.) (1989) deal with the historical linkages of the ethnic groups in Rivers State and give an objective account of the contributions of the people of Rivers State (Ikwerre inclusive) to the development of Nigeria. The work discusses the natural environment, human environment, culture, history, politics, government, economy, gender and social development. Similarly, Alagoa and Derefaka (eds.) (2002) *The Land and People of Rivers State: Eastern Niger Delta* is a publication which arose after the creation of Bayelsa State from Rivers State. The works reviewed are instructive, especially at a time when the diverse components are searching for their identity and authenticity. However, they do not give the desired coverage to Ikwerre.

From the reviewed works it is clear that there is an apparent neglect of Ikwerre history by some scholars and historians, as Ikwerre is subsumed under Igbo ethnic nationality, and regarded as an outpost of trading activities in the Niger Delta. The neglect may have stemmed from the fact that the works do not have Ikwerre as their focus. With the above challenges, we now turn our attention to works that have bearing on Ikwerre historiography.

### **Specific Works on Ikwerre Historiography**

Works beneficial to this research are Nduka, (ed) (1993; 2003) *Studies on Ikwerre History and Culture Vol I & II* and Woke, et al (1993) *Akwa: An Ikwerre Socio-Cultural Journal*. While Nduka (1993; 2003) are divided into five and six parts, respectively; Woke (1993) has fourteen articles. In Nduka's (1993:16-25) article entitled "The Ikwerre in Historical Perspective", he subscribes to the view that the Ikwerre are a distinct ethnic group, howbeit a heterogeneous one. He further outlines four different hypotheses concerning the origins and migration of the Ikwerre. He also notes that although the physical and territorial boundaries of the Ikwerre are not in doubt, there is need for further research concerning the origin and ancestry of Ikwerre people.

On his part, Amadi's (1993:1-9) "The Ikwerre People: A Study of their Origins and Migrations", affirms that the Ikwerre are heterogeneous and he discusses four hypotheses of their origin and migration, such as the Benin tradition, the Igbo factor, the linguistic evidence in respect of Igbo, the Ijo tradition and autochthony. He also subscribes to the different waves of migration. He contends that the physical environment of the Ikwerre people enabled them to evolve as a group with a common experience in the interplay of potent, geographical, economic and political factors long before the advent of colonial rule.

Wahua's (1993:124-142), "Farming Systems in Ikwerre", takes a detailed descriptive analysis of the agro-ecology of Ikwerre land. Wahua describes Ikwerre land as fertile and an indispensable food basket for Rivers and Imo States. He examines the farming systems involving crops, livestock production and fishing, and the constraints faced by the farmers. He identifies the major constraints facing farmers as transportation, which is made difficult due to very bad roads either from the farm to the village or from the village to the nearest market.

The focus of Onuegbu's (2003:118-132), "Crop Pests and Diseases in Ikwerre Land over the Years" is the problem of crop, pests and diseases in Ikwerre land. He avers that the people believe that plant pest attacks and diseases are associated with the defilement of the earth goddess, the goddess of fertility –called "Eli". On the contrary, he contends that fungi are the cause of plant diseases and not gods / goddess. He goes on to list the diseases and ways of controlling them.

While examining the system of land tenure; the way land was held and used in Ikwerre, Omereji (2003:65-86), "Ikwerre Land Tenure", deals with the issue of the strange phenomenon of landlessness in Ikwerre and the attendant consequences. According to him, land in Ikwerre is more than just a property, and land tenure rules form a part of the whole complex of the people's culture. Unfortunately, most Ikwerre communities have been embroiled in conflicts because of the disregard for this sacred tradition of land tenure.



On religious belief and cultural practices of the Ikwerre, Amadi and Wotogbe–Weneka’s (1993:106-122), article entitled “Divinities and Ikwerre History and Culture”, contend that culture is greatly influenced by religion, which forms its bedrock, its unifying and rallying point. They state that of the five elements of religion, the influence of the divinities is the most powerful in Ikwerre traditional life. The work also deals with the names and origins of some Ikwerre divinities as well as their characteristics, functions, modes of worship and the benefits the devotees derive from worshipping them. It also examines why the people still pay allegiance to these divinities even in these modern times. These divinities are still fulfilling their functions which their devotees expect of them. This is, however, without prejudice to recent need to adapt the image to fit the spirit of the modern times.

Amadi’s (2003:88-97), article entitled “Owho–N’ Ogwu: Deified Concepts of Justice and Retribution”, posits that *Owho-n’ Ogwu* are unique deities created out of ethical concepts. The concept of *owho-n’ogwu* affirms and guards relentlessly the moral integrity and enhances the social stability and cohesion of the Ikwerre people. So those who invoke it must do so with clean hands or face its wrath. It is expected that they would not have gone contrary to the norms.

Wotogbe-Weneka’s (1993:16-22), “Western Religion Versus Traditional Religion in Ikwerre – which way forward”, states that the traditional religion of the Ikwerre is indigenous to the people. The encounter of Ikwerre people with the West has set off a revolutionary phenomenon, the traditional morality and corporate life of the African (Ikwerre inclusive) have been compromised, as the norms and taboos are no longer highly prized. He concludes by stating that any religion that hopes to survive and expand in contemporary Africa must be sensitive to the changes occurring in the society where it is being practised, and be flexible, adaptable and dynamic.

On his part, Oloko (1993:55-63), “The Sociological Significance of the Hozuzu Festival in Elele”, examines the sociological significance of *hozuzu*, an annual new yam festival celebrated in Elele and EleleAlimini. He claims that this has helped in resisting the domination of other cultures and has led to the promotion of societal norms, and reinforced the solidarity of the group. Also, Tasie, (1976: 63-71) discusses *Ejiji* as an important traditional ritual and initiation rite into adulthood among the Omodioga people in Elele group of Ikwerre.

In outlining the qualification for membership into Ohna, Waga’s (1993:12-20), “The Ohna Institution in Ikwerre”, notes that one must be the eldest male member of one’s family group. *Ohna* is an age-long traditional institution which is a system for the effective administration of the community. However, this institution is being threatened by Western influences. Thus, he calls for resistance to such destruction of Ikwerre culture.

In the same vein, Otonna’s (1993:66-86), “The Social Structure and Organization of Ikwerre land”, discusses the Ikwerre social groupings as the family; marriage system; the cosmology of Ikwerre people and its effect on their village administration; the Ikwerre jurisprudence and the maintenance of social control, economic activities and how they are organized, and death and burial rites, and succession and inheritance in Ikwerre society. This implies that the Ikwerre have a social structure which they maintain.

In examining the social and political state of Ikwerre before the birth of Nigeria in 1914, Aguma (1993:87-93), “Social and Political Development in Ikwerre”, also discusses the factors that militated against the social and political development in Ikwerre, and how the level of academic attainment, exposure, maturity and commitment of the Ikwerre people has added impetus to the social and political consciousness of Ikwerre people. Chinda (2006) x-rays the influence of the socio–cultural practices of Ikwerre people, her neighbours and the outside world. The author opines that most of the cultural practices have been modified, while some are no longer practiced. Similarly, Peter’s (2000) examines the rich cultural practices, socialization values and attitudes of the Ikwerre and how they have been affected in modern times. Peters focuses on Elele-Alimini.

The role labour and slavery has played in the economic life of Ikwerre people engaged the attention of Achinewhu, (1993:143-146). He identifies the following as the sources of labour: self, age group, co-operative, family and hired labourers and acquired slaves. The result of this was the tendency to have more wives and bear more children as farmhands.

Orlu (1993:147-152), "Internal and External Trade in Ikwerreland" highlights farm products, types of storage facilities, various markets for the farm produce and the mode of exchange in Ikwerreland. The farm produce include yam, cassava, cocoyam, plantain, vegetable, melon, coconuts, fermented cassava among others, and household goods (such as clothing, furniture, building materials).

In a paper entitled "Land Acquisition and Ikwerre Development" Asor (1994) asserts that the acquisition of Ikwerre land by the State Government would progressively lead to the loss of ethnic identity of the Ikwerre man. He suggests that proper negotiation or consultation be made if government must take the people's land. Thus, implication of this is for proper Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ikwerre people and government and other land-acquiring agencies which will serve as sustainable development for the Ikwerre and their future generations.

Achinewhu, (1994) *The Case of Ikwerre Ethnic Nationality* argues that Ikwerre ethnic nationality has the highest contribution of land to the state, federal governments and also to corporate bodies and individuals for industrial and residential purposes. He decries the marginalization of Ikwerre ethnic nationality in the employment in these companies.

In providing insight into the history of educational development in Ikwerreland, Amadi (2010) uses the career of her first graduate, John EmejuruOhochuku who earned a B.Sc degree in Physics and Mathematics (London) in 1951 from the University College Ibadan (now University of Ibadan).

Amadi (2006), in "The Life and Times of Chief WorguWokeke of Rumuokwursi, 1858-1898" examines the action of Chief Wokeke when he closed the roads leading through the town to the hinterland to all commercial traffic on account of trade dispute between them and the Okrika. Overtures by the British administrative officers at peaceful settlement were defied by the Rumuokwursi. Thus, the British in 1898 carried out military operation against them. Amadi, considers Wokeke's fate within the context of the relative strength and weakness of the combatants. He states that in spite of his fall, Chief Wokeke emerged as one of the most uncompromising defenders of the local autonomy of Nigerian communities against external domination.

Obah (2002:197-206), article entitled, "Madam Mabel WosaDidi and Ikwerre Cultural Development", explores the role women played in Nigerian history, especially the contributions of Madam Mabel WosaDidi in her songs, with their philosophical and patriotic messages. Obah describes her as the "Lady of songs" with *Ikwerrenweadidi; Ikwerrechimaari nu gbuawaa; Ikwerrekwagbulaand Nye mara alia* released to her credit.

The activities of Bishop Sam O. Elenwo the first Ikwerre Bishop of Niger Delta Diocese of the Anglican Communion is well captured by Wotogbe–Weneka, (2002). He submits that Elenwo's passion for evangelism, particularly in Ikwerreland culminated in the creation of the Diocese of the Niger Delta North (DNDN) in 1996.

Equally informative are the works of Obinna (1986), "Religious change in Emohua from Pre-colonial Times to the Present", Nwuzor (1987), "Impact of Christianity on the Traditional Institution of Elele, Alimini" and Tasie (1994), "Africanization of Christianity in Isiokpo".

The Ikwerre also had contact with Islamic religion. Uwarizie, (2011) "Islam in Ikwerreland" traces the origin of Islam in Ikwerre to 1896 when some Hausa elephant hunters from Katsina came to Elele – Ikwerre land. Islam did not record any growth or success in the land until the indigenous people began accepting Islam. Some Ikwerre people have been converted to Islam and mosques have been built in all the local government areas occupied by Ikwerre people.

Ajoku (1991), "Traditional Burial Rites in Elele" and Tasie, (1999) "Death, Burial and the After-life in Isiokpo-Ikwerre" explain the burial rites which focus on the belief and practices relating to death, burial and the afterlife. They argue that a people's way of life is not static and that, the coming of agents of modern changes have greatly impacted on the burial rites of Ikwerre land.

Ekwulo (1993:153-162), "Customs and Traditions of Ikwerre People with special reference to Ikwerre Language", traces the development of the Ikwerre language and also points to the official recognition of Ikwerre language with its orthography as one of the Nigeria languages. Such other works which discuss the Ikwerre language and literature are Ekwulo's (1975) *Elululkwerre*, a bilingual text which consists of a collection of Ikwerre proverbs with their English translation. Williamson, Ekwulo, Aleruchi, Wali, and Weje's (2010) *Reading and Writing Ikwerre* is a detailed survey of the twenty-four dialects of Ikwerre language. It identifies seventeen vowels; nine of which are oral, while eight are nasalized. Tone classes and grouping are established for both nouns and verbs. The work also focus on numerals, body parts, human relationships, food, animal and birds and also gives a list of standard Ikwerre words and things. Chuku and Eke's (2003) *Omanastics in Ikwerre* tries to use the naming system in Ikwerre to reconstruct the culture, which is endangered in the growing urbanization and modernization of Ikwerreland. *Okwukwo EriChiokike*, (2010), is the third edition of a hymnal written in Ikwerre and published by Ikwerre Language Committee.

## **Conclusion**

The reviewed works have provided insight into Ikwerre history. The works on Nigerian history, by their nature, reveal that they are generalized and, therefore, do not consider detailed study of the indigenous societies. Especially the minority, to which Ikwerre belongs, was studied with regard to the majority group. Also, the works on Southern Nigeria show the neglect of Ikwerre land and people by some scholars and the subsuming of Ikwerre under Igbo. The works on Niger Delta demonstrate that the Ikwerre people are regarded as a trading outpost of their (coastal) Igbo neighbours.

The works on Rivers State are quite instructive, but they do not attempt any detailed account of the Ikwerre people; rather they mention Ikwerre as inhabitants of the same state and region. Works on Ikwerre provide us a better insight on the history of the Ikwerre which encompass, their traditions of origin, their economic, religious, cultural lives among others. This further lends credence to Obarokimi's, (1972:xxi) positions that studies on smaller would make for a mutual understanding of the various groups as it will make the history of "Nigeria a little more complete than it has hitherto been".

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